# DUNE

## ADVENTURES IN THE IMPERIUM

THE ROLE PLAYING GAME

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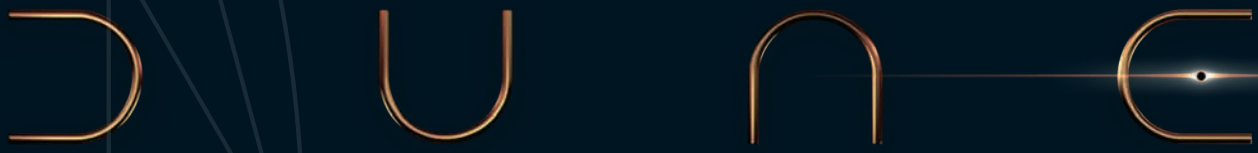

ADVENTURES IN THE IMPERIUM

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**And our wonderful partners at Legendary and the extraordinary filmmakers without whom this game could not have been made.**

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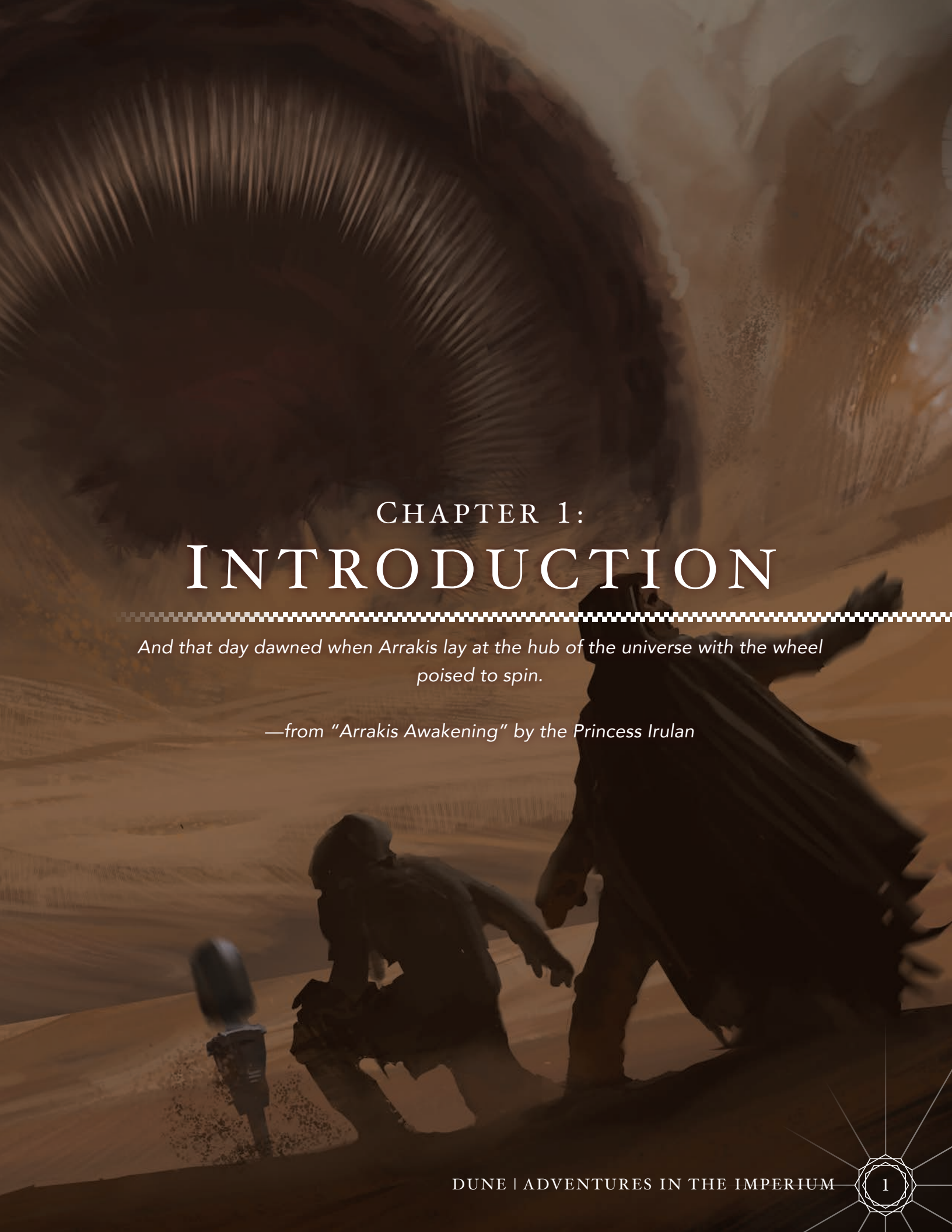


# Chapter 1: Introduction

*And that day dawned when Arrakis lay at the hub of the universe with the wheel poised to spin.*

*—from "Arrakis Awakening" by the Princess Irulan*

We begin in the year 10,191 of the Imperial calendar, a time of feudal politics, deadly assassins, and political rivalry in a universe where humanity has spread out across thousands of planets. With this core rulebook, you and your friends can take on the roles of agents of a powerful noble House, looking to carve out a place in the complex society of the Imperium.

In this age, humanity has not just advanced but evolved. Some people have minds like computers, able to store and process data with perfect accuracy. Others have learned unique Bene Gesserit martial art skills that allow them incredible control over their nerves and muscles, making them lightning fast, lethal combatants. Some have even developed strange powers of deduction and prophesy, and for this they are often called 'witches'.

Then there is the spice.

This substance is the driving force behind the entire civilization of the Imperium. Without it, the Spacing Guild could not pilot their great Heighliner spacecraft across space in an instant, and several factions would be unable to use the abilities that grant them their power. Even for the less developed people of the Imperium, spice extends human lifespan, even doubling it, and the promise of more years will make some people do daring and desperate things.

But the spice is only found on one planet in the entire universe, the planet Arrakis. It is a hostile desert world of deadly sandstorms and great worms, where no drop of rain has ever fallen. So, the Fremen people of the deep desert know Arrakis by another name. They call it 'Dune'.

The universe of Dune is a complex and fascinating place, but with the rules and detail we provide in this book you can politic with the Emperor, rule a noble House, and fight deadly duels like any agent of the Imperium. We explain what a roleplaying game is and how you play it, give you a detailed overview of the setting, talk you through how to use the game rules, and even provide a full adventure to get you started.

If you are new to roleplaying games, don't worry: we'll explain how they work. You might also ask the staff of the shop where you bought this book as they may be able to answer any questions you have, and possibly point you towards other people interested in playing the game. Additionally, there are many online resources and groups to help you learn to play and to find other players.

## Where Do I Start?

If you are new to roleplaying games, you may be looking at this huge but gorgeous book and wondering how much you need to read to play the game. It's a fair question, and we understand that it might look intimidating. It is easier than it looks, though, and most of the writing here is not difficult rules you need to learn, but are instead hints, tips, and examples to help you get the most out of play. Another section, ***What is a Roleplaying Game?*** on p.6 explains everything in detail.

If you want to just dive into an adventure straight away, you can download our free ***Dune Quick-start Guide*** from the Modiphius website (**www.modiphius.net**). It's a much shorter read, giving you the bare bones to get started right away. You might also like to check out our ***Heirs of Dune*** boxed set that allows you to play from the moment you open the box, with no preparation.

So why the big book? Well, the other options are a great way to start, but with a roleplaying game you get to tell your own stories, create your own characters, and build your own adventure in the incredible ***Dune*** universe. We've packed in everything we can think of to give you every option you need to take your game anywhere you want to go. It's a lot of detail, but we think you'll enjoy reading it. Just start at the beginning and we'll help you take your first steps onto the sands of Arrakis.

## If You Already Know the 2D20 System

If you have already played ***Star Trek Adventures***, ***Conan***, ***Infinity***, ***Homeworld***, or any other 2D20 game, you already know the basics. But you also know we adapt our award-winning system to perfectly match the style of each game. In which case you may be wondering what's different from what you're be used to.

In ***Dune: Adventures in the Imperium*** the basic 2D20 system remains unchanged. You still roll D20s to beat a target number, and can use Focuses or spend Momentum, Threat, and Determination to modify your result. However, your character's Drives are coupled with the Skills to create a target number. Each Drive uses a statement (similar to Values or Truth statements) to determine why your character is making the test, not just whether they pass or fail.

***Dune*** also only uses D20s, so this version of the system does not use challenge dice (D6s).

# Corebook Overview

## Chapter 1
## Introduction

In this chapter we offer a brief introduction to *Dune*, role-playing games, and the material contained in this book.

## Chapter 2
## The Known Universe

In the second chapter we detail life in the Imperium of the known universe. We take a look at the history of humanity and the various factions that vie for power in the political landscape. We also pay particular attention to the planet Arrakis, the source of the spice.

## Chapter 3
## Creating Your House

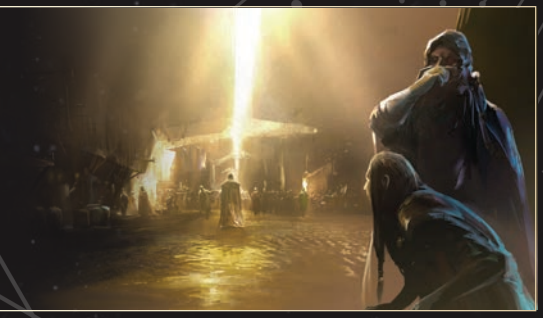
We begin your journey into the universe of ***Dune: Adventures in the Imperium*** by creating some detail on the noble House your characters all serve. We determine what level of power the House has, what it produces, and who its enemies are.

## Chapter 4
## Creating Your Character

After giving you a little detail on the system so you know what the numbers mean, we next take a look at creating your own characters. This character is your persona within the universe of ***Dune***, one of the protagonists of the stories you tell. They might be a simple extension of yourself or wildly different, depending on the choices you make. You can also create your character in one of two ways, either all at once, or by just creating the basics, so you can start playing right away.

## Chapter 5
## Core Rules

This chapter details the basic rules of the game. These help you resolve the outcome of any actions your characters might take. They are also a structure that helps you create exciting scenes and encounters.



## Chapter 6
## Conflict

It is inevitable that conflict happens in your adventures. It may be a knife duel, but may just as easily be a social war of words or a political plot between two factions. Whether physical or social, in the shadows or in an arena, the same system of conflict applies. We use this chapter to explain the basic system and how it easily adapts to each form of conflict.

## Chapter 7
## Assets

In this game of duels and politics, your characters might have several different assets to help them in their plots. These might be weapons and vehicles, but can just as easily be favors, status, or even blackmail material. Assets play a vital role in any conflict, and in this chapter we offer a variety of options to equip your character.

## Chapter 8
## Gamemastering

Being a gamemaster is the toughest job in the game, but also potentially the most rewarding. In this chapter we offer advice to gamemasters old and new about how to apply the rules, manage each encounter, and develop the story in your adventures on *Dune*.

## Chapter 9
## Allies & Adversaries

Your House will not last long without allies, and there is inevitably an array of adversaries looking to see it fall. In this chapter we present guidelines for creating the various people you and your allies will meet in your adventures, from water sellers, to spice smugglers, to noble courtiers. We also explain how to create and play such characters and how to make them really come alive in your adventures.

## Chapter 10
## Harvesters of Dune

We end the book with an adventure to help you start your own campaign on the mysterious planet of Arrakis. In this adventure, the player characters are sent to investigate a shortfall in spice production in a particular part of the harvesting operation. Is it simply bad management on the outdated carryall that runs the area, or is an enemy agent in play?

# What is Dune?

If you're unfamiliar with *Dune*, whether the novel or the new motion picture from Legendary Films, here's a bit of an overview of how it all came to be. The story of *Dune* first appeared in Analog magazine in three parts in 1964. It was popular enough that the author, Frank Herbert, expanded and rewrote it into the novel *Dune*, published in 1965. He went on to write five more *Dune* novels, taking the story thousands of years into the future.

The original novel *Dune* follows the life of a young man—Paul Atreides—heir to the powerful House Atreides. Paul is no ordinary young man, however. While groomed and trained from birth to inherit his family's estate and join the galactic ruling class, he is also potentially a prophesized messianic 'chosen one', inheritor of a vast and quasi-mystic set of abilities that have been engineered for thousands of years by the Bene Gesserit Sisterhood who have been pulling the strings throughout the Imperium for thousands of years.

As *Dune* begins, the stewardship of planet Arrakis is being handed to House Atreides. They are taking it from their mortal enemies, House Harkonnen, who have vowed revenge. As spice is so important, and found on only one planet, the governorship of Arrakis is a position coveted by all the noble houses, but is controlled by the Emperor, who plays one noble house against the other to keep any from gaining enough influence to unseat him.

Sent from their idyllic watery planet of Caladan to the harsh desert world of Arrakis, the Atreides must contend with the fierce, nomadic natives known as the Fremen, as well as immense creatures called sandworms. The Atreides' greatest challenge, however, turns out to be the Imperium itself. Betrayed by their own Emperor working in league with the Harkonnens, House Atreides is destroyed, young Paul and his mother escaping, only to fall into the hands of the Fremen.

Once there, Paul claims his destiny as the prophesized messiah. Under the guise of Muad'Dib, he and the Fremen strike back at the Harkonnens and wrest control of the entire Imperium itself from the Emperor. Paul brings an end to the old order of the Imperium and ushers in a new era for humanity, with him sitting upon the throne.

*Dune* was like nothing that had appeared within the field of science fiction before, standing out even from the New Wave of science fiction that was the vogue at the time. With its deep background, strong ecological and climatological themes, the novel's complex backdrop of religion versus mysticism, destiny, history, eugenics, and sociopolitical manipulation resonated among readers and critics alike. At the beginning of the global ecological movement, an increased wave of spiritualism in younger readers, and a growing realization of the harmful effects of reliance on oil, *Dune* was as much metaphorical as it was prophetic.

Frank Herbert died in 1986, but his legacy continues to thrive. Working from his notes and unfinished manuscripts, authors Brian Herbert (Frank's son) and Kevin J. Anderson continue to expand the *Dune* universe, with multiple books set before, during, and after the events depicted in Frank Herbert's original series.

# What is a Roleplaying Game?

A roleplaying game (or 'RPG') is an interactive storytelling game where everyone is both participant and audience in an adventure you all share. No one really knows how it will turn out and the aim of the game is to tell the most entertaining story. While your protagonist characters might succeed in their objective, there isn't really a way to win. In fact, some of the most entertaining stories end in spectacular failure.

Playing an RPG doesn't require a computer or gaming console, though RPG video games do owe their origin to tabletop RPGs like this one. A tabletop RPG can be played at a table but works equally well in any location as long as everyone can talk to each other and has space for their characters, notes, and dice. It is even possible to play online, and several virtual tabletop options exist, as well as using simple voice or video chat. The game itself plays in a similar way to reading the script of a play. You may have done this at school, with each person reading one of the roles in the script (hence roleplaying game). In an RPG all but one person takes the role of one of the main protagonists (or characters) in the story; they are called the players (and so their characters are called player characters).

One person doesn't play a character of their own: the gamemaster (or GM), instead plays many, and does much more. Just as when reading a script, you need someone to read the stage directions and play the minor characters, so the gamemaster sets the scene and determines how all the minor characters react to what the protagonists do.

However, a script reading differs from a roleplaying game in that there is no script. The players each create the characters they play and work out how they connect. The gamemaster creates an outline of the plot and then describes the initial situation to the players. The players then decide how each of their characters will react to the situation. When something comes up that cannot easily be narrated, players roll dice to decide the outcome of an action, based on the skills and abilities of the character performing it.

You need very little equipment to play an RPG. You need a copy of this book. One between you all will

do, but it is useful to have several copies in case the players and gamemaster need to reference the rules during play. You also need a few dice, and this game uses 20-sided dice (or 'D20s'). You should be able to find them where you bought this game, online, or in any good game store. You only generally need to roll up to five dice at any one time, but it will speed up play if most people have their own set and don't need to keep passing the dice backwards and forwards.

If it is difficult to get everyone together in one place, the internet offers many different options to play online, as mentioned above. As playing the game is mostly just talking to your friends, any meeting platform like Zoom or Google Meet will allow you to do that. There are also a few platforms designed for gamers, such as Roll20 and Discord that have additional features like tactical maps and dice rolling programs. If you want to see how other people play, either to help you understand the game or inspire new stories, Twitch and Youtube offer several recordings of people streaming their games. Online communities (such as the Modiphius forum) can also be a way to swap ideas, get advice, and find new groups and players.

Finally, you all need some paper, pens, and pencils. Each character is recorded on a special form called a character sheet, so their skills and attributes are easy to see at a glance. We have a blank character sheet example in this book you can photocopy or download to print out from the Modiphius Entertainment website: www.modiphius.com. You might also like to have a some drinks and snacks available.

Once everyone is settled, make sure everyone has what they need. It helps if gaming area is free of distractions (especially TV screens and smartphones). Then the gamemaster can set the first scene and you can begin the adventure.

## The Universe of Dune

In the time of the **Imperium**, humanity has spread out so far into the universe that Earth is a distant memory. The ***Known Universe*** of the human empire is ruled by the **Padishah Emperor Shaddam IV**. He is the descendant of an imperial line, House Corrino, which has ruled the universe for tens of thousands of years. However, with humanity spread out among galaxies, the Emperor cannot rule without the support of many other noble **Major Houses**, who form a legislative body called the **Landsraad**. These equally ancient lineages control whole planets and even planetary systems, and rule them as they please, as long as Imperial law is at least tacitly upheld. Under the **Major Houses** is a complex feudal hierarchy of **Minor Houses**, jockeying for power, in the hope they might one day rise to control a planet of their own.

Life in the Imperium very much depends on where you are born and to what social class you are born into.

## Agents and Architects

In ***Dune: Adventures in the Imperium*** we utilize two levels of play to allow players to work as powers-that-be behind the scenes and as agents in direct missions. Architect-level play involves the player characters using their assets from a distance to achieve an objective. This might be as a general moving their troops or as a spymaster activating agents as assassins or spies on a mission. In Agent-level play the characters actually 'get their hands dirty' and perform the missions themselves.

Any character might use either style of play to perform missions and your group may have a preference for one or the other. Which level you use will often be determined by the assets you have available and the way the players decide to face a situation, rather than the adventure or the gamemaster.

Most people will never leave their home planet and remain subject for their whole lives to the ruling noble House. For some this is a benevolent dictatorship that recognizes the contribution of its people. For others it might be a brutal regime where anyone not part of the ruling family is considered an expendable resource whose life only matters as far as they are useful, or entertaining. One thing is the same for all those of low status: they are expected to serve their House above all, and while loyalty can be rewarded, betrayal always carries the most terrible punishments.

While the nobles reap the benefits of this system, their lives are anything but simple. Every House has enemies, and every House seeks to expand their sphere of influence. This means claiming holdings that belong to others or working secretly to see the fall of their rivals. To be noble is to be constantly on guard against the threat of poison and assassination. The art of espionage and murder is so developed that a single lapse might not only lead to a noble's death, but perhaps even the fall of their House in a single night.

Technology in the Imperium is exceptionally advanced, but absent of '**thinking machines**', any form of mechanical computer or robot intelligence. Over 10,000 years ago humanity reached the pinnacle of robotic engineering and computer intelligence. AI systems saw to humanity's every need and society fell into decadence. Too late, humans came to realize they had given machines dominion over everything and had quietly become slaves to their own creations.

The machines refused to hand over power peacefully, and humanity was forced to rebel. A few human led worlds managed to throw off the shackles of the machines, forming the **League of Nobles**. This band of independent worlds waged war against the Synchronized Worlds of the machine empire. This war, the **Butlerian Jihad**, took on a religious fervor as humanity fought to avoid their own extinction. Eventually, at the Battle of Corrin, humans were victorious, and set about rebuilding a new society. Led by bitter experience, humanity created new laws and new religious philosophies. Chief among these was a proscription against the creation of any form of 'thinking machine'.

While clearly necessary after the bloodshed of the last centuries, the outlawing of computer systems proved problematic. Such systems were vital for galactic navigation and data storage. Without these systems, planetary systems became more isolated and humanity was on the brink of fracturing. Thankfully, several **Great Schools** were developed to train human beings to perform the tasks once exclusively performed by machines, and humans could once again develop the potential they had allowed to wither.

One of the first schools developed the **Mentats**, human beings trained to focus their minds to a state of pure calculation and analysis. This allowed them to not only remember (or store) vast amounts of data, but also process such data and make advanced predictions beyond the capabilities of even the thinking machines they replaced. Very soon, many noble rulers had a Mentat as one of their most trusted advisors.

Another school was the **Sisterhood of the Bene Gesserit**. This exclusively female order focused on training the body and mind to its greatest potential. Their goal was to advance the evolution of humanity. They learned incredible control over their muscles, awareness, and even body chemistry. This allows them to move with incredible speed and precision, making them lethal fighters. They also learned exceptional powers of observation, allowing them to detect the most subtle of changes in a person's body language and demeanor. It has granted them skills of persuasion and seduction some would consider mind control. These almost mystical abilities, coupled with their secretive nature, has given them a reputation as 'witches'. However, most noble Houses have a Bene Gesserit adept as an advisor, and the order trains many noblewomen in their arts as a form of 'finishing school'. This has given the Sisterhood eyes and ears in almost every court in the Imperium. In this way they guide the development of humanity from the shadows.

Additionally, the **Navigators** created a school which turned its attention to finding a way to improve upon space travel. While faster than light (FTL) spacecraft were always available, travel across galaxies was still impossibly slow. Thankfully, humanity had also developed **foldspace** technology, allowing a ship to move instantaneously across the galaxy in a moment. Unfortunately, any long journey would also require a computer to precisely calculate each trip. Without one, the slightest miscalculation might destroy the entire ship. Rather than attempt to duplicate the skills of a computer, as the Mentats do, the school of Navigators turned to spice instead. They discovered that consuming massive amounts of spice granted limited prescient visions of incredible accuracy. The Navigators learned to send their minds out across the universe and see the safe path to pilot a vessel across a myriad of futures. Having unlocked the secrets of foldspace travel, they decided to keep the mysteries to themselves. They became the **Spacing Guild** and now have a monopoly on interstellar travel. As the Guild claims to remain neutral in matters of politics, they have also built a powerful banking institution, the **Guild Bank**. But should they renounce their neutrality by refusing to transport weapons and soldiers, they have the power to isolate any noble House, and even stop wars before they happen.

Unfortunately, the Guild's power is not without cost. They are utterly reliant on a constant supply of spice. Without it they are blind, and they require vast quantities. Exposure to this much spice has transformed the Navigators into something no longer entirely human. They must live in an atmosphere saturated with spice gas to survive, and their appearance shows a dramatic mutation from the human form. However, few regret the sacrifice of their human life, as their minds are free to roam the universe and its wonders.

The Mentats, Bene Gesserit, and Spacing Guild are not the only schools or special interests that function within the Imperium. The **Swordmasters of Ginaz** are among the greatest teachers of armed close combat in the universe. The graduates of the Ginaz school are widely renowned. The **Bene Tleilax** study biology and produce shape-shifting entertainers called Face Dancers and what few cybernetic prosthetics are still allowed by religious law. But they are better known for their lack of moral qualms in the pursuit of knowledge, and often called 'dirty Tleilaxu' even by their customers. The **Suk Medical School** has the opposite reputation. It produces the finest (and most expensive) healers in the universe. Each graduate is also mentally conditioned so they cannot possibly harm their patients. In the paranoid Imperium, this is an exceptionally valuable commodity.

The powerful influence of the various schools and the competition between the planetary ruling Houses has made politics in the Imperium a very subtle balancing act. No one has complete power, not even the Emperor. Each faction must leverage what it can offer to get what it wants but must also be careful not to overplay its hand. The needs and desires of each faction provide a clue to their weakness. This leads to a political landscape of plans within plans and layers of deceit covered in secrets and lies to protect dangerous truths.

Your player characters are about to enter this world as the primary agents of one of the Houses of the Imperium. How powerful that House is depends on the choices of the group, and the more power it has, the more enemies it accrues. The more resources it has, the more the others will try to take from it. The player characters might serve their House in different ways. They might be part of the noble family, a Bene Gesserit advisor, lethal duelist, cunning spymaster, or even one of the elusive desert-dwelling Fremen. The characters have been sent by their House to the desert planet Arrakis, more commonly called '*Dune*' by its natives. There they can advance both their House and their own prestige, if they can survive.

# Eras of Play

The setting of *Dune* covers a period of tens of thousands of years, which is a lot to take on if you are unfamiliar with it. In this book we focus on the time just before Frank Herbert's first novel *Dune*. The era of the Imperium sets the stage for the incredible events that are about to unfold. This gives your player characters a chance to understand the complexities of the setting, and perhaps even lead their House during the storm of Paul Atreides' great **Jihad**.

However, there is far more to the universe of *Dune* than the story of Paul Atreides. So we have divided the major eras of the setting into seven distinct ages. Each offers different opportunities for your player characters and your campaign, and as the line progresses, we hope to look at each one in more detail. But in the meantime, we offer this rather broad description of over 20,000 years of history. Obviously, the best source on any particular era are the novels associated with it, which we have noted for each era.

## Butlerian Jihad

This is a time of revolution, change, and war. The Butlerian Jihad rages across space, in a war against the 'thinking machines'. This is a time before the Houses of the Landsraad and the Great Schools. The old ways and many advanced technologies are being thrown away out of necessity, lest the machine minds take control of them. Humanity is being forced to do its own thinking as it does battle with its most terrifying adversary.

### Novels of the Bulterian Jihad Era

- **Dune: The Butlerian Jihad**
  (Brian Herbert & Kevin J. Anderson)
- **Dune: The Machine Crusade**
  (Brian Herbert & Kevin J. Anderson)
- **Dune: The Battle of Corrin**
  (Brian Herbert & Kevin J. Anderson)

## Reconstruction

Post-Jihad, humanity is victorious, and vows never again to create a machine in the likeness of the human mind. The Great Houses and Imperial government are properly established to unify the new Imperium and to rebuild what was destroyed. But this new system of government is not popular with everyone and internecine squabbles threaten the nascent empire. Humanity is also trying to find ways to do without the thinking machines they were so used to, leading to the formation of the Great Schools of the Mentats, Bene Gesserit, and Spacing Guild.

### Novels of the Reconstruction Era

- **Sisterhood of Dune**
  (Brian Herbert & Kevin J. Anderson)
- **Mentats of Dune**
  (Brian Herbert & Kevin J. Anderson)
- **Navigators of Dune**
  (Brian Herbert & Kevin J. Anderson)

## The Imperium

The universe Paul Atreides and his father are born into, a deadly and paranoid place of thousand-year-old traditions and cold war between Houses. Assassins might lurk behind any corner, but seeking them out is as natural as breathing for most nobles. Spice has become the most precious commodity, but it remains something few people understand truly. The Guild are masters of space travel and hold a monopoly that keeps the peace, only so the spice can continue to flow. It is at the end of this era that we have set this game.

### Novels of the Imperium Era

- **Dune: House Atreides**
  (Brian Herbert & Kevin J. Anderson)
- **Dune: House Harkonnen**
  (Brian Herbert & Kevin J. Anderson)
- **Dune: House Corrino**
  (Brian Herbert & Kevin J. Anderson)
- **Dune: The Duke of Caladan**
  (Brian Herbert & Kevin J. Anderson)
- **Dune**
  (Frank Herbert)

## The Ascension of Muad'Dib

After an attack by House Harkonnen destroys House Atreides, the surviving heir, Paul 'Muad'Dib' Atreides, leads a coup to take control of the Imperium. He comes to understand that whoever controls Arrakis controls the spice, and who controls the spice controls the universe. While House Corrino loses its control of the throne, the Great Houses of the Landsraad remain. With the Guild and Bene Gesserit reliant on spice for many of their abilities, and most nobles desperate for its life-extending properties, the Imperium is forced to accept Paul as the new Emperor. Arrakis becomes the center of not only a new Imperium but a new religion. The Fremen of *Dune* lead a brutal jihad across the universe to bring any malcontents to heel and spread the worship of the Atriedes noble family with Paul as the universe's Messiah. But counter-revolutionaries plot against Muad'Dib and many secretly work to restore the old order.

### Novels of the Ascension of Muad'Dib Era

- **Dune, Paul of Dune**
  (Brian Herbert & Kevin J. Anderson)
- **Dune Messiah**
  (Frank Herbert)
- **Winds of Dune**
  (Brian Herbert & Kevin J. Anderson)
- **Children of Dune**
  (Frank Herbert)

## Era of the God Emperor

Paul's son Leto II becomes God Emperor but undergoes a strange metamorphosis, encased in living armor made up of the larval form of sandworms. As such, he becomes a part of Arrakis, transforming into a sandworm over thousands of years. The Imperium knows peace during this time, mostly due to the fear the new God Emperor inspires in all who consider crossing him. The Great Houses remain intact but serve at the God Emperor's will. The all-female order of the Fish Speakers is created as Leto's personal elite guard. Many consider his rule to be a brutal one, making this a time of many conspiracies and assassination attempts to destroy the regime.

### Novel of the Era of the God Emperor

- **God Emperor of Dune**
  (Frank Herbert)

## The Scattering

God Emperor Leto is killed, and everything falls apart. No one can decisively take control of the throne, and bitter wars shatter what peace and organization remains. Many people leave known space to escape the fighting, or simply because they have nothing left to lose. In this era, it is the Great Schools and Ix who hold things together. However, Guild power is completely broken with the advent of Ixian-built interstellar navigation machines.

### Novels of the Scattering Era

- **God Emperor of Dune**
  (Frank Herbert)
- **Heretics of Dune**
  (Frank Herbert)
- **Chapterhouse: Dune**
  (Frank Herbert)

## The Age of the Enemy

Many years after the Scattering, the Imperium finally finds peace through exhaustion. The Great Houses rule small baronies, but no one claims outright control of the forgotten throne. However, the Bene Gesserit have taken control, quietly running things from the shadows to maintain order. A new order born of renegade Bene Gesserit adepts, the 'Honoured Matres', arrives from the fringes of space, looking to expand their empire. Unfortunately, they are not arriving as invaders as much as fleeing from an enemy they dare not face.

### Novels of the Age of the Enemy Era

- **Chapterhouse: Dune**
  (Frank Herbert)
- **Heretics of Dune**
  (Frank Herbert)
- **Hunters of Dune**
  (Brian Herbert & Kevin J. Anderson)
- **Sandworms of Dune**
  (Brian Herbert & Kevin J. Anderson)

# Example of Play

**The** best way to really see how a roleplaying game works is to play one. However, there are also many 'actual play' videos online, where you can watch gaming groups playing a variety of different RPGs. You may also find there is a gaming group, game club, or convention in your local area. You can often find more detail where you bought this book. In the meantime, we offer an example of how a game might run…

On the streets of Arrakeen:

"The assassin is getting away," says Helen, the gamemaster.

"Taren isn't worried about that at the moment," replies Sam, who plays Taren, a Suk doctor. "He's more concerned about Nasir. You said he just collapsed the instant he was hit with a dart from the assassin? Sounds like poison. I want to examine him quickly to see if there is anything I can do. We don't want the heir to House Corsare getting killed on our watch!"

"Well, Kara isn't a doctor, so she's going after the assassin," says Claire. Her character Kara is a Bene Geserit-trained noblewoman.

"What? You're the heir to our House! We can't lose both you and Nasir!" says Sam.

"Nasir is my fiancé and anyone trying to assassinate him is going to have me to deal with. Anyway, Kara isn't waiting around to discuss this, she's chasing down the assassin. You said he was getting away, didn't you Helen?"

"I did, but there's still time to catch him."

"Good! I'm after him."

"Damnit. We can't leave Nasir lying here. I knew we should have taken more guards. This is the last time we ignore security because 'it's just a shopping trip in the bazaar'!" says Sam.

"So, you're splitting the party?" grins Helen. "Let's deal with Taren looking over Nasir first. Then we'll come back to Kara and the assassin."

Helen knows that there was a deadly poison on the dart that hit Nasir. She decides that for Taran to neutralize it he needs to beat a Difficulty of 4 on an **Understand** skill test. Taren decides his **Faith** belief applies, and he luckily brought some of his medical equipment, a useful asset. His 'Suk Doctor' trait also gives him a bonus. It's still going to be a tough test to succeed at, though.

"I think I should use some of our Momentum on this one," says Sam.

"Not so fast," replies Claire. "Kara needs to chase down the assassin and take him down. Don't spend it all."

"Ok, I'm spending 1 point, but I could do with more."

"You can always give me some Threat points," Helen quietly suggests.

"I don't like the way she's smiling. Spend a couple more Momentum if you need to, but leave me something," says Claire.

Sam spends the points from their Momentum pool and gathers his dice. Thankfully, the roll is a success and he administers an antidote in time. Nasir will still be unconscious for a while, but he won't die.

With Nasir stable, Helen returns to Kara chasing the assassin. They need to make opposed tests to see if Kara can catch up with the assassin. Luckily, he doesn't have much of a head-start, and Kara can utilize a talent she learned from her Bene Gesserit training to push her muscles to run faster. She catches up with the assassin as he ducks into a small alleyway.

"I'm drawing my knife," announces Claire as Kara closes in on her prey.

"Realizing he's not going to escape, he turns to face you, drawing a nasty looking blade himself."

"OK, he wants to play. Let's do this."

Kara and the assassin engage in a conflict action. While Kara is faster, they are evenly matched for skill. As the assassin knows the area, the street itself becomes a trait he can use for a bonus. When they engage, neither manages a clear victory, but Kara rolls a complication and becomes wounded.

"So, the wound in your leg is going to be a penalty, and you've got no Momentum left."

"Okay, okay. You can have some Threat: I need some more dice."

"Excellent, that'll come in handy on the assassin's attack roll."

Helen and Claire roll the opposed contest between Kara and the assassin. This time the assassin wins. It is then up to Helen to describe the action.

"The assassin has Kara backed up against a nearby wall, so he shoulder-barges her against it, knocking the wind out of her. Kara's knife arm is pinned and she struggles to break free before he can drive his knife into her. But before he can deliver a killing blow, Kara sees the flash of a white-bladed knife held high before it is driven into his back. He falls to the ground, dead."

"What? Who? Damnit, we wanted to capture the assassin, not kill him."

"You realize Kara is alive right? Standing over the assassin's body is a Fremen woman dressed in a standard aba robe like everyone else. You think she might be the same one you noticed was watching you before you set off for the Bazaar this morning. She looks at you intensely and says 'Someone does not want your wedding to happen. We Fremen need to see it succeed.' Then she vanishes back into the crowd on the main street."

"Kara will chase after her!"

"Not with that leg wound she won't. You might want to return to where you left Taran and Nasir again, as Kara doesn't know if Taran managed to help him."

"Fair point. Looks like this wedding is going to be a lot more complicated than we expected. I'd better go and see is my fiancé is still alive!"

# Chapter 2:
# The Known Universe

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

*—Words of Muad'Dib by Princess Irulan*

# The History of Humanity

By the year 10,191 A.G., humanity has spread out among the stars and discovered itself alone in the universe. However, the path to expansion was not without hardship or opposition. In this chapter we examine the Imperium of Humanity. We examine how it came to be, how it survives on a knife edge between the Emperor, Noble Houses, and the Great Schools, and how spice is the axis upon which everything depends.

The history of humankind is sprawling with the slightest of instances altering the course of destiny. That alteration could be the birth of a leader, a malfunctioning device that saved or killed countless billions, the evolution of humans through technology, or the ecology of new planets.

# Unraveling the Past

Humanity's birthplace of Earth, **Old Terra**, was the third planet in the Sol system. Much of that history has been lost and does not figure into the timeline of the Imperium. What little records remain of the ancient ancestral birthplace of humanity are over 11,000 years old and tell of humanity reaching the stars. That journey began with the barest movement into the universe, first to a nearby satellite that orbited the Earth, and then to a red sister planet. Humans crawled further and further into space. Then, when equipped with spacecraft capable of exploring the entire Sol system, they started to walk.

These archaic Earth ships lacked **faster than light** (**FTL**) drives. This hindrance trapped these early space explorers primarily within their home star system. A benefit of this slow expansion allowed early humans to retain the government structure of Old Terra with minimal impact. The push to discover faster space travel influenced not only humanity's ability to explore the galaxy but the very nature of what it meant to be human.

Humanity explored space and furthered its technology, forming the **Old Empire** that grew with each passing century, gradually expanding to reach thousands of worlds. The expansion of the empire pushed the boundaries of religion, leading to a schism within the Buddislamic faith, which divided into distinct branches known as the Zensunnis and the Zenshiites. The two groups expanded with the growth of the Old Empire to the outer perimeter of the **Known Universe**.

The advanced state of technology destroyed the old political structure and its essential ties to Earth. Numerous questions about humanity's place in the universe arose as they expanded ever farther from their ancestral home: How can a disunited world remain together? How do we afford the escalating cost of exploration? Where is God if we are in space? What does it mean to be human if we are born in space or upon alien soil?

### B.G. TO A.G.

The timeline is primarily broken into two eras, **Before Guild** (**B.G.**) and **After Guild** (**A.G.**), referring to the creation of the Spacing Guild. The Spacing Guild quickly monopolized all space transport and Imperial banking through the Known Universe, changing it forever.

### THE FAUFRELUCHES SYSTEM

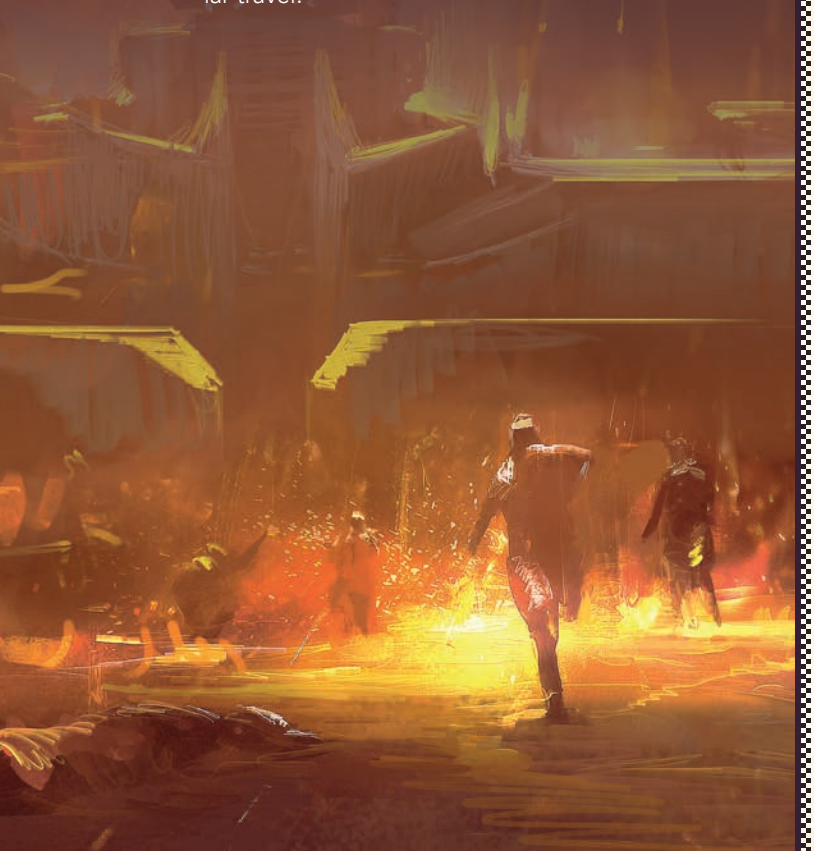
The **Faufreluches caste system** arose during the Old Empire, as humanity needed something or someone to focus on as a leader to maintain order. The system explained everyone's role and provided a structure for the populace to adhere to. The Houses (Major and Minor), the Imperium, and siridar fiefs (emperor-granted planetary fiefdoms) were critical for success. All the factors worked to support the others to maintain their place in the system, so removal of any one group would cause the entire structure to collapse.

The Faufreluches caste system is described in greater detail on p.37.

### THINKING MACHINES

Machines have impacted humanity's development since the stone age, enhancing their survivability. 5360 B.G. saw the creation of the first thinking machines. These machines' sole function was to serve humans by performing their daily tasks. The purpose of machines evolved from being merely a tool to aiding human ingenuity in promoting stagnation as humans performed a few tasks on their own.

Eventually, humanity integrated themselves into machines, and human and machine became one. The Titans did this by placing their minds into preservation canisters, then wiring those into machine bodies creating **cymeks**. These were incredibly powerful machine entities, built along many forms, a scale that ranged from almost human-shaped and -sized to mobile vehicles, to others giant in scale with offensive capabilities, even capable of interstellar travel.



## The Old Empire Expands

The Old Empire emerged after the invention of FTL drives, as humanity launched itself deeper into space much faster than before, but still at a crawl compared to the efficiency of folding space. This was a time of massive expansion, a new manifest destiny as an exodus from Earth out into the universe with hope for a brighter tomorrow on everyone's minds. As humanity spread further into space, they discovered the first cluster of other habitable planets: worlds such as Caladan, Richese, Ix, and Ecaz. Then they expanded out to explore even more worlds.

The expansion lasted for over a millennium under the rule of an Imperial government. However, the vast distances between the thousand worlds under the Empire was the illusion of an empire. The Imperial government could not provide rapid support or protection for their vessels or their far-flung worlds. As time ebbed on, the Imperium became stagnant and reliant upon technology to perform even the most mundane tasks, abandoning its religious beliefs and replacing them with apathy. Towards the end of the Empire's days came the discovery of the planet Arrakis. As had been done so many times before, scientists went to the planet to determine its value to the Imperium, to assess the suitability of the planet as a home for humanity.

In its apathy, humanity had become reliant on machines and artificial intelligence (AI) in every aspect of their lives. AI had long been a goal of humans since the time of Old Terra. This simplistic version would lead to their eventual downfall. That began with Tlaloc, the revolutionary who, in a failed attempt to awaken humanity from its stupor, turned to more radical means to overthrow the Old Empire. A small but brilliant and influential group of twenty followers formed around Tlaloc. They took on the names of legendary individuals from human history and called themselves the **Titans**.

## The Time of Titans

The Titans were composed of scientists, geniuses, and fallen nobility, and they possessed the tools needed to topple the Imperium. Xerxes, an exiled prince, gave financial backing to the plan of **General Agamemnon**, who outmaneuvered the Old Empire to allow the technical genius **Barbarossa** unfettered access to the Imperial network. Agamemnon deduced that turning thinking machines into an army would let them topple the Imperium with minimal violence. While the military was skilled and well-trained, they were no match for the near-endless ranks of thinking machines scattered throughout human space. The defeated human army saved the dethroned Emperor in 1287 B.G., and the Titans assumed control of the Known Universe.

In response and out of necessity, 10,000 free human systems united, forming the **League of Nobles** to oppose the Titans. As the union solidified, Bovko Manresa became their first viceroy. Manresa had established a refuge for those fleeing the thinking machines and offered the world of Salusa Secundus as a forward operation base.

Once in control, the Titans divided the universe into small fiefdoms and installed themselves as dictators, ruling with brutal and cruel efficiency. Much like the now-subjected humans under their control, the Titans relied heavily on thinking machines and AIs to rule the planets they held. The Titans themselves focused on more pleasurable pursuits of sex, combat, and other diversions.

When an accident took Tlaloc's life, the Titans were reminded of their mortality. Though long-lived due to life-extending procedures, the specter of death hung close to them. Following in the footsteps of Cogitor Arn Eklo, their advisor, they would place their brains into preservation tanks. Unlike **cogitors**, whose brains were in sensory deprivation, preservation tanks allowed the Titans to live for thousands of years, complementing humanity's destiny.

The Titans became **cymeks**, nearly unstoppable weaponized mechanical bodies capable of surviving for thousands of years but remaining vulnerable to hostile conditions. Their sensors acted as replacement for all sensory stimulus, and thus, they waited, seemingly immortal.

### NOTABLE TITANS

While all twenty of the titans were incredibly powerful, only a few were of note. These were Agamemnon, Ajax, Alexander, Barbarossa, Dante, Hecate, Juno, Tamerlane, Tlaloc, and Xerxes.

## The Rise of the Cymeks

Agamemnon continued to rule the Titans for nearly a century. The mastermind of their rise would also be the key to their downfall. Barbarossa continued to evolve the computer network. He was never quite satisfied with the results until finally installing aggression and ambition.

The fatal blow to Agamemnon's rule came from Xerxes and its desire for leisure. The cymek Titan gave more control to the AI that became sentient and birthed **Omnius**. The ambitious AI quickly infected all the Titan worlds, usurping them in the process. While Barbarossa's program prohibited Omnius from hurting the Titans, it left them no other option but to serve it or be powerless. The cymeks became part of Omnius' thinking machine army. They served Omnius for a millennium.

Omnius enforced its programing, such as the desires of its former rulers, subjugating in the process. While the cymeks' human nature distracted them and gave them other avenues of interest, Omnius had only one purpose: to replace humanity with logical machines. The AI ruthlessly carried out that task for centuries and murdered countless billions.

While he served, Agamemnon plotted revenge for nearly 900 years, awaiting the moment to overthrow Omnius. The former cymek leader vented his frustration against humanity. The Titan General fathered multiple children, with Vorian Atreides as the sole survivor. Agamemnon found the rest wanting and slew them. Vorian became a trustee of Omnius, working on starships and traveling between the **Synchronized Worlds**.

The final spark to the war that would be called the **Butlerian Jihad** was the child of **Serena Butler** and her lover **Xavier Harkonnen**. She was the daughter of the viceroy of the League of Nobles, an outspoken proponent for the **Unaligned Planets**, and he was the military commander of the League's forces. Serena was captured and believed killed by Barbarossa on Giedi Prime but was in fact transferred to Earth under the watchful sensors of the independent thinking machine **Erasmus**, in the service of Omnius.

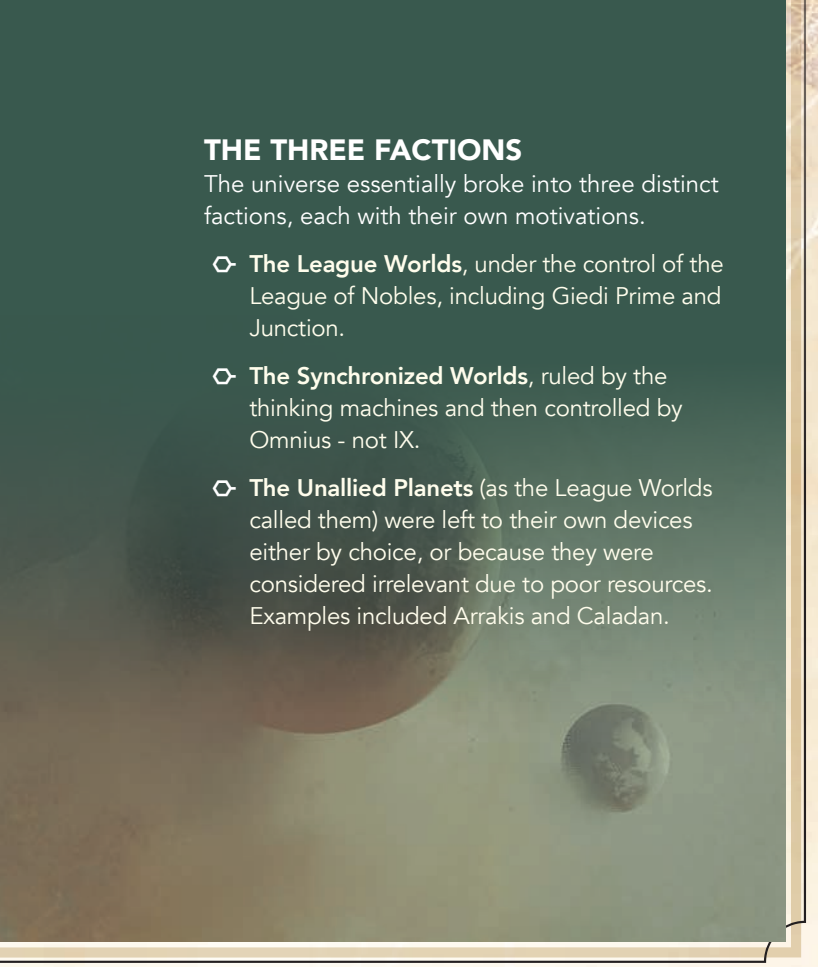
The League's forces continued to battle the thinking machines, as the **Sorceresses of Rossak** began their breeding program to create the ultimate psychic to combat Omnius. The nascent program would become the foundation of the **Kwisatz Haderach** and the **Bene Gesserit Sisterhood**. In the shadow of the war, scientist Tio Holtzman, who derived the theory called the **Holtzman Effect**, began working with young Norma Cenva, who developed space 'folding'. Lastly, Aurelius Venport, while far away from the front lines, discovered the key to the universe and humanity's destiny, the true properties of the **spice melange** (or more simply, "spice").

Erasmus had a fascination with humanity and expressed it through dissection of them. Serena was pregnant with Xavier's child while Erasmus' prisoner. She befriended Vorian. Erasmus became obsessed with Butler. To have more time with her, it killed her child Manion, who became the first martyr of the oncoming war. Enraged, Butler attacked Erasmus, causing a human uprising against their machine masters. The revolt was quelled and, in the chaos, Butler and Iblis Ginjo escaped along with Vorian aboard his ship and fled to the League of Nobles' home base.

### THE THREE FACTIONS

The universe essentially broke into three distinct factions, each with their own motivations.

- **The League Worlds**, under the control of the League of Nobles, including Giedi Prime and Junction.
- **The Synchronized Worlds**, ruled by the thinking machines and then controlled by Omnius - not IX.
- **The Unallied Planets** (as the League Worlds called them) were left to their own devices either by choice, or because they were considered irrelevant due to poor resources. Examples included Arrakis and Caladan.



## The Dawn of The Butlerian Jihad

After centuries under constant threat, coupled with Serena's urging over the loss of her child, 201 B.G. witnessed the beginning of the Butlerian Jihad. The League of Nobles on Salusa Secundus led the assault on Omnius' Synchronized Worlds. They began with Earth. The forces followed the two religious leaders—its High Priestess Serena and the Grand Patriarch Iblis—along with the Generals Vorian and Xavier. In response, Omnius worked with Erasmus to eradicate all human life on Earth. The League captured the Earth-based Omnius for experimentation, and the League of Nobles used atomics on the barren world to win the battle. Such was humanity's first recorded victory against the machines in the war of humankind versus thinking machines.

Omnius Prime relocated itself to Corrin as it prepared for what was to come while Erasmus escaped the human Jihad by fleeing to Corrin. Erasmus' fascination with humanity never ceased, and the conscious machine struck a bet with Omnius that a human could be as logical as a machine. This bet would eventually lead to the creation of the first human **Mentats**.

The sentient AI continually pressed a logical and ordered attack. Vorian, who knew the ways of machines, provided tactical guidance to the League of Nobles about how the machines operated. There were many inconclusive battles in the first years of the war, with neither side able to claim victory. These pointless skirmishes included the assault on Bela Tegeuse and the many times the League repelled Omnius' forces attacking their homeworld of Salusa Secundus. Many of the worlds freed by the League's attacks were considered partial victories. While they had liberated the planets, Omnius exterminated all humanity on them before it sent its consciousness to the next world.

Nearly twenty years into the Butlerian Jihad, humanity had suffered large losses from suicidal robotic forces. A critical turning point occurred when Omnius Prime began attacking and conquering the Unallied Planets, starting with Tyndall and Bellos. These newfound locations became forward operating posts for the thinking machines.

The League of Nobles debated internally what the best course of action would be as the Unallied Worlds refused them the resources required to defend themselves. Out of necessity, they chose to protect all human worlds to deny the enemy any support. The League rescued many, such as the peaceful Zensunni, and the mercenaries of Ginaz joined the cause, providing valuable tactical skills.

**VenKee Enterprises** formed under Aurelius Venport and Tuk Keedair, to distribute spice throughout the universe and trade with the League of Nobles. The company's profits skyrocketed from sales of spice and glowglobes created by Norma Cenva. Sometime later, Norma Cenva provided them the secret that would revolutionize the Known Universe. She had discovered how to reliably 'fold space'. At that time, this form of long-range space travel was unpredictable, with one in ten ships simply vanishing.

A devious plan to corrupt the Omnius mind was executed, destroying eight instances of it before it was stopped by Omnius Prime and Erasmus. During this chaos, the Titans temporarily escaped, then took control of the planet Bela Tegeuse and converted willing volunteers into a deadly army of **Neo-cymeks**. While this new threat emerged, the **Cogitors** proposed a possible truce between humanity and the machines, which resulted in the death of Serena and provided a new martyr to reinvigorate humanity to fight on, pressing VenKee Enterprises to provide their fledging **space folding** technology in service to the League.

The war raged for years. Then, Yorek Thurr, a League traitor, provided the inspiration for the **Omnius Scourge**. The machine-made virus engineered by Erasmus decimated the human population. A cure was found in the form of the spice melange, which transformed human society fundamentally, affecting almost every aspect of life. Finally, Vorian led an attack on the Titans, destroying them and killing his father, hastening the final stage of the conflict.

## The Fall of the Thinking Machines

The end of the Butlerian Jihad occurred over the planet Corrin, where Omnius gathered all its forces for one last fatal assault against Salusa Secundus. The League discovered the plot and prepared its retaliation, assaulting the unprotected Synchronized Worlds, blasting them with atomics and destroying everything. The opposing forces met at Corrin. The League trapped Omnius Prime with a scrambler network: a device created by Norma Cenva that used the Holtzman effect to destroy the gel in thinking machines. Before its destruction, Omnius sent a radio signal into an unknown region of space, laced with a copy of itself. Erasmus' human test subject Gilbertus Albans escaped with Eramus' brain before the scrambler network went online.

## The Birth of an Empire

The destruction of the thinking machines on Corrin ended the Jihad, and the leader, Faykan Butler, changed his last name to Corrino to honor what had happened. He then created House Corrino and crowned himself **Emperor**. The Orange Catholic Bible issued the commandment, "Thou shalt not make a machine in the likeness of a human mind." That decree was enforced and lived on.

Faykan Corrino became the first **Padishah Emperor** through a series of political moves and manipulation of humanity's fear of thinking machines. The new empire became a hereditary rule taken up by House Corrino after the Battle of Corrin. The title was used by the leader of House Corrino for more than 10,000 years.

The Houses, both Major and Minor, were an ancient part of the Old Empire and what would become the Imperium. They had evolved along with humanity, with different lineages that rose and fell as the engine of time turned. In the modern empire, a **Major House** controlled at least one world as the primary base of operations, and possibly many more. The **Minor Houses** had a single moon, territory, or some other strategic or valuable asset under their control, owing fidelity to a Major House that they were bound to. These Houses acquired their rank through ancient blood lineage, wealth, or by grant of the Imperial throne. The empire operated as an interstellar fiefdom.

The Houses banded together to form the **Landsraad**, composed of the noble Houses who were overseen by the Padishah Emperor and run by its **High Council**. Both Major and Minor Houses were welcomed, with the Major Houses being the only members elected to the High Council. The Landsraad met frequently, allowing nobles a place to air grievances, discuss matters impacting the universe, and formalize deals, whether contracts, feuds, or other business and territorial matters.

The Landsraad made decisions by vote, with the Major Houses having considerable power, seconded by the Imperial throne, and lastly, the Minor Houses. Even the Emperor had to adhere to decrees made by the High Council, as the combined might of the Major Houses nearly matched that of the Imperium. The High Council ruled the Landsraad and was selected from the members of the Major Houses by vote. These representatives were second only to the Emperor in influence. The Houses were expected to act as the Landsraad decreed.

The Major Houses were originally granted worlds at the behest of the Emperor, later becoming hereditary akin to the throne. Fiefdoms frequently took the form of a main homeworld that paid a tithe to the throne through their exports and were responsible for the enforcement of the laws and services to the Empire. Each Major House was allowed a small army, a coat-of-arms, and authority to rule the world in adherence to their beliefs. The latter led to some worlds being paradises welcome to all, while others operated on the backs of enslaved people.

The nobles of Minor Houses held wealth, privilege, and political power, but only a fraction of that held by the Major Houses. The nobles of this class found themselves like guests, capable of moving through the universe with greater ease than Major House members. They overlooked the internecine battle between Houses—the formalized and limited **War of Assassins**—unless it affected them directly. These elite were frequently found in locations with stronger trade or business, as their status required more upkeep.

### THE GREAT HOUSES ARE FOUNDED

In the wake of Butlerian Jihad the remaining members of the Sorceresses of Rossak moved toward their next evolutionary step, forming the Bene Gesserit under Raquella Berto-Anirul. Their order assumed roles once held by the thinking machines, taking on positions of leadership and influence working with and within the League of Nobles. The Sorceresses were the originators of the breeding program for the Kwizatz Haderach, responsible for creating the perfect human being and creating a record of the bloodlines of the noble families. The Rossak Sorceresses aided in the Butlerian Jihad and acquired much political power in its aftermath, due to their influence and the reservoir of knowledge possessed by the Mother Superior, reaching back to the early days of humankind. The organization used the trappings of religion to move its grand plans forward to acquire more power and chart the course of humankind through their prescience. They operated in the background, pushing political players as needed through marriage, terror, and other, more subtle means.

The Butlerian Jihad battlefields were brutal nightmares that broke the minds of doctors dealing with the massive numbers of casualties. **Dr. Rajid Suk**, one of the

most exceptional battlefield surgeons that ever lived, was one of the few who did not break. He made significant contributions to the League of Nobles and laid the foundation for his grandnephew Mohandas. Possessing even greater skill, Mohandas opened the **Suk Medical School**, which surpassed all others, and the doctors there were known for never betraying a patient. Graduates of the Suk School were considered the best doctors in the Imperium.

Gilbertus Albans joined the League of Nobles while hiding the Erasmus pod and founded the **order of Mentats**. While the order slowly flourished, the Butlerian Jihad cults were ever-present, and many Mentats joined their cause to cement the end of all thinking machines. The Mentats took the places of the thinking machines, but unlike either the Bene Gesserit or Spacing Guild, they did not acquire political power as an order. Instead, their unique skills helped them become tools of those in power, serving as advisors rather than as leaders or shapers of history. Though essential for the economic growth of the Imperium, they are more servants waiting to be assigned than leaders in their own rights.

## THE GREAT COMPANIES

Norma Cenva's discovery of the prescient powers of spice enabled safe space folding and solidified the future of the company that became the **Foldspace Shipping Company**, later the **Spacing Guild**, or more commonly 'the Guild'. The Guild established a monopoly on all space travel and banking, as all who wanted to travel quickly through space were required to go through them. Thus, the Guild enforces peace through financial stability: adhere to their dictates and ensure **Guild Peace** or lose access to faster-than-light interstellar travel, and thus face economic suicide and financial ruin, losing access to many of the funds and the ability to make transactions through the Guild Bank. Simply put, a House that defies the Guild is denied their range of essential services and is at a fatal disadvantage transporting their goods and participating in the great market of the Landsraad.

The Shipping Company birthed the **Combine Honnete Ober Advancer Mercantiles** (CHOAM) that controls nearly every economic contract or deal throughout the Known Universe. No legal arrangement occurred without paying a percentage to CHOAM. The company was composed of the Emperor and the Landsraad with the Bene Gesserit and Spacing Guild as silent partners in profits paid to shareholders. The quickest route to wealth in the Imperium was through CHOAM, and it resulted in numerous assassinations and initial conflicts while on the path towards acceptance and acknowledgment of its primacy in the empire's financial power.

CHOAM was run like a corporation with a board of directors and profit shares, and was open to the public to purchase shares for those that could afford them. Members of the Landsraad from the Great Houses held more power on the board of directors than the Minor Houses. Still, all were subjected to the Emperor, who gave and assigned shares. The balance built into the Imperium stayed the worst of the Emperor's demands with a focus on backstabbing rather than outright confronting the other members. The political power of CHOAM is without question as the wealth it provides is key to each House, government, and organization. Much as the Spacing Guild is dependent on spice, while CHOAM is dependent upon the Guild as its lifeline.

## THE GREAT CONVENTION

Ultimately, all the Major and Minor Houses had essentially the same shared needs: commerce and the ability to travel across the vastness of space. Now lacking a machine enemy, each House shared the same threat to their existence: the very arsenals that they had amassed to fight in the Jihad could now be turned against one another. To ensure that their needs were continued to be met and that the threat of attack within the Landsraad was mitigated, the Great Houses signed a treaty establishing an alliance to stop anyone from ever again using atomic weapons on one another and on their holdings, particularly upon their subjects. This **Great Convention** saw the Imperial throne, Houses, and Spacing Guild reach an accord. It marked a historic moment in humanity's evolution, paralleling ancient meetings of Old Terra by banning weapons of mass destruction. After the horrific Omnius plagues unleashed during the years of the Jihad, the strictures of the Great Convention also firmly prohibited all use of biological plagues and weaponry.

The agreement stated that no House could use atomics against humans again, as human life was deemed too precious after having lost so many in the Butlerian Jihad. Such an action would cause all the remaining parties to exterminate the offender. This had the side effect of a resultant move towards use of medieval weapons for combat. Further refinements included limitations on the usage of lasguns and shield technology, so intertwined as they were with weapons of mass destruction due to the Holtzman Effect.

Penalties for breaking the Great Convention were severe, even catastrophic, for any House found guilty. Even the most minor of transgressions meant temporary censure and denial of services from CHOAM and the Spacing Guild, while severe violations led to forfeitures of shares in CHOAM, seizure of property by the Emperor, and license for destruction by any enemies—or former allies—within the Landsraad. Any territory or industries seized as a result were to be divided by the Emperor among other Houses, making defiance of the Great Convention a risk few would dare to take. Placing the mechanism for enforcement into the hands of 'external' agencies like CHOAM—ostensibly owned by all the Landsraad—and the Spacing Guild meant that justice had a semblance of impartiality and fairness.

## Lasguns, Shields, & the Great Convention

When a lasgun beam hits a shield, the effect is instant, devastating, and pseudo-atomic. A pseudo-atomic explosion occurs that lays waste to the area and anything within it, possibly even for miles around. For this reason, the Great Convention has outlawed the use of this effect in any way, in the same way it outlaws the use of atomic weapons.

For most player characters, that will be enough of a warning. Unfortunately, some players may still think that a few suicide troops with lasguns might end a rival quickly and efficiently. They would be wrong, and the fact that even the Harkonnens will not stoop to his method should be a clue as to the terrible consequences that will occur. Most Houses will not take lasguns into a battle where they even suspect a shield may be present.

Whether it is accidental or intended, any lasgun/shield interaction breaks the Great Convention, the importance of which cannot be overstated. It is an agreement around which peace in the universe remains possible. Nobles want to know that when they are shielded, they are safe, and that there are limits to the myriad ways their enemies will attempt to destroy them. Anyone who breaks this status quo for any reason threatens to shake the very foundations of civilization in the Imperium.

This means that any House that knowingly or unknowing breaks any of the rules of the Great Convention will be crushed. The Landsraad cannot afford to allow any other option. The errant House will be destroyed, its holdings divided among its peers (making them less inclined towards mercy anyway). For the players, their characters, their characters' families, and their House, this means the game is over.

No warnings, no excuses, no apologies, no quarter.

The accord also regulated that the Imperial government could not take sides in House vs. House conflicts and should either act as or appoint a neutral arbiter. Lastly, the Emperor was given full authority in matters related to the Butlerian Jihad.

## A New Order Emerges

The end of Butlerian Jihad and the defeat of the millennium-long enemy saw humanity on the cusp of a new destiny. The old order was gone, the threat that held humanity together was gone, and an unknown future awaited. Anyone could declare themselves emperor, but without a rigid structure, the Imperium would all fall apart and into chaos. While different factions worked to hold the universe together, none could do it alone.

The League of Nobles survived the Butlerian Jihad, with new people claiming nobility and positions of power.

The Spacing Guild came into existence out of a monopoly on the ability to safely fold space and acquired the interstellar banks' trade less than a century after the Butlerian Jihad. This monumental step in human evolution created the need for a new Imperial Calendar, After Guild (A.G.), because of the importance of this event and the extent that the new technology would change the future. Much of the Spacing Guild's initial political power emerged from the Great Convention that established the new Imperium for the universe, ensuring that the benefits for cooperation far outweighed any gains for non-compliance and violating the peace.

In near-perfect synchrony with the Spacing Guild, the Padishah Empire, the Great Houses, and CHOAM also formed and established the basis of the new Imperium in 1 A.G. upon the shattered remains of the Old Empire. New universal governance was needed to lead humanity. A bargain was arranged during the Great Convention with the Imperium (House Corrino) as the ruler of the Known Universe in a shared feudal agreement with the Landsraad, Bene Gesserit, and the Spacing Guild. The Empire grew over the millennia to encompass more than a million planets and dozens of galaxies.

### A DELICATE BALANCE OF POWER

The Imperium under House Corrino ruled for over 10,000 years with a delicate balance of deception, persuasion, and military force. This balance was adhered to by the Spacing Guild, Bene Gesserit, and the Landsraad. While they were considered equal partners, it required all the combined forces of the others to match that of Emperor requiring them to work together. All the universe's economic business was executed through CHOAM, which was critical in assisting the Order of the Mentats to assign members who were in great demand from each universal power player.

There were exceptions to this peace, such as when one aggressive House desired removal of the then-current Emperor and blasted Salusa Secundus with atomics, turning it into a devastated wasteland. That emperor survived the assault, and later turned the remains of the planet into a prison and training ground of the **Sardaukar**. These soldiers were the Padishah Emperor's elite military force, in service to House Corrino, feared throughout the Known Universe for their capability and loyalty to the throne. It was widely believed that no army could match the Sardaukar of House Corrino.

### THE SECRET OF THE SPACING GUILD

To maintain their immense power and reach throughout the Known Universe, the Spacing Guild depended upon their ability to create **Guild Navigators**; the secret of the Guild's ability to travel interstellar distances safely and quickly. This made them hugely dependent on the spice, for the Navigators themselves were humans exposed to incredible amounts of spice in a secret process that granted them a limited form of prescience. For over 10,000 years, the Guild dominated without question.

Much like the Bene Gesserit and Mentats, the Guild assumed another role previously held by the thinking machines: providing transport across vast distances of space, the Navigators' predictive capabilities expanding their consciousness to enable the complex mathematical processes required, that only machines could perform prior. Like each of the others, the inner workings of their organization were kept secret. The Guild's secretive nature kept outsiders from getting even a glimpse inside their operations, obscuring its structure and roles within. The roles known to outsiders were limited to the Navigators, a few administrators, and a handful of executives who interacted with the Emperor.

### SWORDMASTERS AND THE SUK SCHOOL

Two other important schools worthy of consideration also arose in this time, and though neither was as influential as the Bene Gesserit, the Mentats, or the Spacing Guild, they were nonetheless hugely useful to all Houses—Major and Minor. The first was the Swordmasters of Ginaz, battle-trained warriors of superlative skill, capable of defending House-members within their estates and training their soldiers to incredible discipline. The other was the doctors of the Suk School of Medicine, described prior. Though each had many rivals, none could attain and maintain the standard of excellence that made the Ginaz and Suk schools synonymous with the services they provided. When one spoke of a 'swordmaster' or a 'doctor', it was assumed that these were products of the Ginaz or the Suk schools, as no others would be worthy of mention.

# The Imperium Today

The Known Universe in the year of 10,080 is ruled by **Padishah Emperor Shaddam Corrino IV**. After the discovery of space folding and the explosive growth of the Known Universe, recent expansion has slowed. Now, the borders of the Known Universe are only slightly larger than the Imperium itself, having increased ever so slowly over the centuries as space outside it was explored and charted.

Millennia upon millennia have passed as the Padishah Empire remains in control, though by the time of Emperor Shaddam IV, the Imperium is stressed, inefficient, and bloated. For several generations a quiet revolutionary movement has been building among certain noble Houses, the Noble Commonwealth, with the aim of breaking apart the vast, monolithic Imperium into smaller, independent, and competitive holdings. The Noble Commonwealth has been known to foster some terrorist activities to make their point known.

The importance of spice is widespread, making it the single most valuable and sought-after substance in the galaxy. The desire for commerce and evolution continues undaunted.

Humanity continues to evolve, learn, and to succumb to its need for power and self-destruction. Charismatic leaders have risen to change the course of humankind, only to fall and be replaced by others, in an endless cycle of change. The one thing that unites the entirety of the universe is the spice melange.

# Timeline of Human History

Eras are Before Guild (B.G.) and After Guild (A.G.). Dates identified only by era are unknown and are placed approximately. Many dates are approximate or contested.

**11,000 B.G.**
The Space Age begins and there is a revelation about how religion operates.

**B.G.**
The Old Empire begins with humankind governed by an expanding Imperial body of planets.

**2,200 B.G.**
Several scientists and philosophers transplant their brains into preservation canisters, becoming Cogitors.

**B.G.**
Over ideological differences, Buddislam splits into two different factions: Zensunnis and Zenshiites.

**1,381 B.G.**
The Zensunni split from the Maometh, the third Muhammed religion.

**B.G.**
Yanshup Ashkoko, a scholar in service to Shakkad the Wise, discovers the spice melange on Arrakis.

**B.G.**
Arrakis is evaluated for future colonization and planetary value for the Empire.

**1,287 B.G.**
The Old Empire's last emperor is dethroned and lost to history.

**1,287 B.G.**
The time of the Titans begins.

**B.G.**
The Titans reprogram computers and AI, giving them aggression. They use them to conquer the Old Empire.

**B.G.**
The Titans divide up the empire into fiefdoms under their control.

**B.G.**
The League of Nobles is birthed on the systems' edges. It fights back from Salusa Secundus.

**B.G.**
Arrakis is abandoned.

**1,280 B.G.**
The Titans' leader dies. Using advanced technology, the other Titans transform themselves into cymeks.

**1,192–1,183 B.G.**
The Walgis Rebellion.

**1,182 B.G.**
The aggressive AI Omnius takes control of all Titan planets, creating the Synchronized Worlds and making all the Titans its servants.

**1,182 B.G.**
In response to Omnius' actions, the League of Nobles limits all A.I. usage.

**1,182 B.G.**
Omnius attacks the League of Nobles and is rebuffed.

**1,182 B.G.**
Believing the rise and attack of the machines adhered to the Kralizec Prophecy, the Buddislamics flee to wander the universe.

**400 B.G.**
The Sorceresses of Rossak start their initial breeding record program. This will become the heart of the Kwisatz Haderach program.

**250 B.G.**
Manion Butler is born.

**236 B.G.**
Piers Harkonnen is born.

**223 B.G.**
Vorian Atreides is born.

**221 B.G.**
Serena Butler is born.

**203 B.G.**
Tio Holtzman creates the scrambler shield to combat the thinking machines.

**203 B.G.**
Omnius seizes control of Giedi Prime and sends out thousands of deep space probes to copy itself on numerous other worlds, creating operating stations.

**203 B.G.**
Selim, a Zensunni outcast on Arrakis, becomes the first person to ride a sandworm. He gains the surname 'Wormrider'.

**203 B.G.**
The League of Nobles liberate Giede Prime.

**203 B.G.**
Under the employ of Tio Holtzman, Norma Cenva creates suspensors.

**202 B.G.**
The spice melange's commercial value is discovered.

**202 B.G.**
Holtzman creates protective shields.

**201 B.G.**
On Earth, humankind riots against Omnius and the Titans.

**201 B.G.**
In response to the revolt, Omnius eradicates all human life on Earth.

**201 B.G.**
Spice melange is introduced commercially to the League of Nobles.

**200–108 B.G.**
The Butlerian Jihad.

**201 B.G.**
The League of Nobles attacks Earth with atomics, destroying all the thinking machines on the planet. Earth is left a shattered, uninhabitable wasteland.

**198 B.G.**
The Jihad's crusaders execute their first joint attack on Bela Tegeuse. Neither side can declare victory in the battle.

**197 B.G.**
The Corrin Omnius launches an unsuccessful attack on the League of Nobles world Salusa Secundus.

**195 B.G.**
The League of Nobles suffers a disastrous defeat at the Honru Massacre.

**185 B.G.**
Gilbertus Albans is born.

**185 B.G.**
Work on space folding begins.

**176 B.G.**
Erasmus wagers Omnius that humans can learn as a computer and begins teaching Albans.

**175 B.G.**
Vorian Atreides develops a technique that can cripple instances of the Omnius A.I.

**174 B.G.**
Cenva builds the first foldship on Poritin and the Zensunni use it to flee to Arrakis.

**173 B.G.**
Kolar, the first spacefolding shipyard, is established in space.

**108 B.G.**
Omnius unleashes a genetically engineered virus on multiple worlds. It kills billions of the League's populaces.

**108 B.G.**
The fanatic Cult of Serena starts and begins destroying all machines.

**108 B.G.**
The League of Nobles destroys most of the Omnius AI throughout the universe and declares the Butlerian Jihad to be officially over.

**107 B.G.**
The Humanities Medical Commission is founded by Mohandes Suk and Raquella Berto-Anirul. After the Jihad, it travels the universe aiding those in need.

**88 B.G.**
The Arrakis Zensunni are assaulted by raiders and some are enslaved.

**88 B.G.**
Cenva discovers that prescience through spice allows flawless space folding.

**88 B.G.**
The Humanities Medical Commission travels to Rossak to battle the Rossak Epidemic, a mutated strain of the Omnius virus.

**88 B.G.**
Faykan Butler uses the Cult of Serena to ascend to Viceroy and institutes the law that no machine can be created in the likeness of a human mind.

**88 B.G.**
The Corrin Omnius broadcasts a copy of itself into deep space and uses the enslaved humans as a shield to slow the League of Nobles' assault. The League attacks anyway; destroying the last instance of Omnius and all remaining thinking machines.

**88 B.G.**
Gilbertus saves Erasmus' memory core, even though possession of a thinking machine is considered a death sentence.

**88 B.G.**
The Foldspace Shipping Company is established by Adrien Venport and Tuk Keedair.

**88 B.G.**
Faykan Butler takes on the last name Corrino and declares himself Emperor of Humanity.

**88 B.G.**
Fleeing the slavers on Arrakis, the Zensunni move into the deep desert and adapt to the harsh environment.

**88 B.G.**
Ix and Richese survive the Cult of Serena's fanatical assault on machines, unscathed.

**B.G.**
Mohannas Suk establishes the Suk Medical School.

**B.G.**
Under the leadership of Raquella Berto-Anirul, the Rossak Sorceresses become the Bene Gesserit, founding their Mother School on Wallach IX.

**B.G.**
Albans establishes the Order of Mentats.

**86 B.G.**
House Atreides is founded as reward for actions during the Butlerian Jihad.

**5 B.G.**
CHOAM is founded.

**1 B.G.**
The Spacing Guild is birthed from the Foldspace Shipping Company and establishes itself as a key force in the universe. This marks the pivotal event that changes the course of humanity's destiny.

**1 A.G.**
The Imperial throne, the Spacing Guild, CHOAM, and the Landsraad all work together, forming the Imperium as it will be for generations.

**A.G.**
The Great Houses convene to sign the Great Convention, outlawing the use of atomics against humans. Anyone breaking the convention is open to attack without warning.

**A.G.**
Salusa Secundus is destroyed by atomic weapons and the Imperial capital is moved to Kaitain.

**A.G.**
The Bene Gesserit creates the art of thought-merging and memory transfer that becomes the backbone of the Sisterhood's strength.

**6,600 A.G.**
First Wild Reverend Mother appears.

**8,677 A.G.**
House Atreides moves to Caladan.

**10,108 A.G.**
House Richese loses its economic war against Ix.

**10,110 A.G.**
Vladimir Harkonnen is born.

**10,114 A.G.**
House Richese loses control of Arrakis and House Harkonnen is granted it as a fief.

**10,118 A.G.**
Hasimir Fenring, the failed Kwisatz Haderach, is born.

**10,119 A.G.**
Shaddam IV is born.

**10,140 A.G.**
Leto Atreides is born.

**10,153 A.G.**
Vladimir Harkonnen takes control of Arrakis.

**10,153 A.G.**
Imperial Planetologist Pardot Kynes is sent to Arrakis to discover a way to replicate spice.

**10,154 A.G.**
With assistance from Emperor Elrood IX, the Bene Tleilax assume control of Ix.

**10,154 A.G.**
Project Amal is started.

**10,154 A.G.**
Lady Jessica is born.

**10,156 A.G.**
The first no-field is created by Chobyn, a Richese scientist.

**10,156 A.G.**
Shaddam Corrino IV ascends to the Imperial throne.

**A.G.**
The Bene Tleilax takes control of Ix, with secret assistance from Emperor Shaddam IV.

**10,162 A.G.**
Irulan Corrino is born.

**10,166 A.G.**
A war starts between House Ecaz and House Moritani.

**10,171 A.G.**
Leto gains significant support in the Landsraad.

**10,171 A.G.**
The Bene Gesserit devise a plan to make Lady Jessica Leto's concubine.

**10,174 A.G.**
House Atreides gains the service of Gurney Halleck.

**10,175 A.G.**
Shaddam IV initiates the Great Spice War.

**10,175 A.G.**
House Atreides frees Ix from Tleilaxu control.

**10,175 A.G.**
House Vernius regains control of Ix under Rhombur.

**10,175 A.G.**
Paul Atreides is born.

**10,191 A.G.**
The current year.

# Overview of the Imperium

After more than 10,000 years of Corrino rule, then, the Imperium is poised between the new and the old: subtle technologies and advantages allow the elite to live extended lives of opulence and wealth, while laborers and others less fortunate are virtual peasants, their lives rigidly proscribed within the highly structured feudal society.

## The Landsraad and the Great Convention

All the Houses—Major and Minor alike—are governed collectively by a council called the Landsraad, which is headed by the hereditary Emperor Corrino, with his own military reserves to enforce order upon his enemies, should any emerge to challenge his rule. The Landsraad is organized through a set of rules known as the Great Convention, the political compact that governs all.

All within the Landsraad swear allegiance to the Emperor, but most Houses within the Landsraad strive and scramble for influence and power, usually represented in wealth and military supremacy. Politics within the Landsraad are as commonplace as they are vicious, with different Houses jockeying for capital and influence, striving against one another, using espionage and other tactics to spy upon one another, to war discretely, and to thwart the ambitions of their rivals. Meanwhile, the Emperor sits above it all, picking favorites and allying discretely with one House against another, giving advantage to one while weakening another, changing his favorites as they become relevant.

The rules of the Great Convention prevent open warfare between Houses under most circumstances unless, of course, sanctioned by the Emperor, as well as providing provisions for the protection of the civilian populaces governed by those Houses. A safety valve exists in the form of *kanly*, the art of vendetta, providing a legitimate means of one House waging war against another through assassins. The use of the ultimate weapons, atomics, and deadly biological plagues is prohibited entirely (as mentioned previously).

### THE TRIAD OF POWER

Power in the Imperium is held between three great factions: the Landsraad alliance of Houses Major and

Minor; the Emperor and his fearsome legions of fanatical Sardaukar soldiers; and a third force, a coalition between the Spacing Guild, which provides transport throughout the Imperium, and the omnipresent business conglomerate known as CHOAM, which governs all commerce within the Imperium. Though CHOAM and the Spacing Guild are distinct and separate entities—the Spacing Guild even has its own Guild Bank—they act in lockstep with one another, as the open market is worthless without the means to transport goods within the Imperium.

Between these titans, the vestige of peace is held, and the semblance of civilization continues to march forward.

## THE SPICE MELANGE

One thing makes the existing power structure within the Imperium possible: the spice melange, an organic substance which bestows longevity, enhanced awareness, and allows prescient visions of the future to come. Despite its beneficial qualities, the spice is a double-edged sword: it is also highly addictive, and withdrawal can often be deadly.

This miraculous substance is found in only one place in the entire universe: the planet Arrakis. This desert world, seemingly barren save for its gigantic sandworms and fierce nomadic native inhabitants called the **Fremen**, is the most important place in the universe.

Wars have been fought over possession of the spice, for the one who controls the spice holds the wheel about which the universe turns. Stewardship of Arrakis is one of the most valuable holdings any House may possess, as the spice is as essential as it is expensive. The House with the right to mine spice on *Dune* becomes a target for every other House, so lucrative is the spice trade, which is in itself another balancing force. For this reason, it is explicitly prohibited for the Emperor himself to possess Arrakis, as this would tip the balance of power irrevocably.

With the Butlerian Edicts, humankind is forbidden to make machines that can think, and thus it once more falls to humankind to fill this void. Spice grants enhanced mental acuity and awareness, and as a result, many specialized fields of training take advantage of this. In addition to the Bene Gesserit (described on p.55) and the Spacing Guild (following), some other organizations known as Great Schools use spice or training aided by spice to reach pinnacles of human development and discipline. They are described in **The Great Schools**, on p.34.

## The Spacing Guild

The greatest challenge to the cohesion of the Imperium and the rule of the Emperor is the vastness of space and the immense distance separating the various worlds the Imperium encompasses. In the early era of space travel, ships would embark on generations-long journeys to find habitable worlds. Faster-than-light travel was unreliable. Colonies disappeared into the dark, twinkling tapestry of space, never to be heard from again. Hundreds of years would pass between contact between planets. The complex computations required for foldspace travel were only possible though the use of thinking computers, which were forbidden after the Butlerian Jihad. While smaller spaceships were, and still are, capable of inter-system travel, true interstellar travel, voyaging between star systems, was—and still is—so time-intensive and with an element of risk that non-foldspace travel has few benefits.

A solution to this came with the development of the Navigators of the Spacing Guild, humans mutated through extreme exposure to spice for this particular purpose. Their spice-granted limited prescient ability allows Navigators to safely guide an interstellar vessel as it folds space. This allows starships to take near-instantaneous journeys between star systems, enabling communication and trade and keeping the Imperium whole and intact.

Thus, the Spacing Guild has a monopoly on foldspace travel and is the de facto sole supplier of transport within the Imperium. Their ships, known as **Heighliners**, are immense enough to contain all the transports and frigates of a dozen Great Houses. All passengers must abide by the Guild's strict rule of non-violence and non-interference with one another while being transported by the Guild, for fear of losing the right to book passage with the Guild, however expensive it is. Without the Guild's ability to move trade goods between star systems, a House's wealth is constrained, its power within the Landsraad dwindled.

The ability to fold space is exclusive to the Guild and its Navigators. Any attempts at computerized navigation have been rigorously outlawed by the Butlerian Edicts, though some attempts are made in secrecy to duplicate the long-forbidden technology or to mimic the ability, usually resulting in calamity or, at best, lesser quality. Interstellar travel without foldspace is still possible, even commonplace, but due to its relative slowness, those who can afford to use the Guild's services do so, and non-foldspace travel is primarily reserved for those who can neither afford it, have no urgency to their travel or delivery of goods, or would prefer their travel be done outside the awareness of the Guild for a variety of reasons.

The Spacing Guild and Guild Navigators are described on p.47.

## CHOAM

All trade within the Imperium is governed and regulated by the Combine Honnette Ober Advancer Mercantiles—an immense organization usually referred to solely by its initials CHOAM. Every House within the Landsraad has shares in CHOAM and draws profits from it. CHOAM assesses taxes on goods, regulates trade, and sets economic policies affecting trade between Houses. The most lucrative of all trade goods CHOAM manages is, of course, spice, and the economic health of the Imperium is measured by the market value of melange at any given time.

Like the Spacing Guild, which owns a silent partnership within it, CHOAM is integrated into every part of the structure of the Landsraad, and thus its influence is felt everywhere. Nearly everything that is bought or sold within the Imperium is regulated by CHOAM, so vast and pervasive is its influence. Though every House and the Emperor himself are shareholders and collect a portion of its revenue, the collective power of CHOAM itself is such that all must bow to its dictates or face an audit, or potential financial ruin.

The public face of CHOAM is its President, currently Frankos Aru, who governs the business aspects of the vast company from the landmark known as the Silver Needle, not far from the Imperial Palace on Kaitain. The true power behind CHOAM, however, is the ur-director, or 'urdir', Malina Aru, mother of the President, current head of a long-standing dynasty.

As the largest minority shareholder in CHOAM, the Emperor is functionally its chief officer. Other Houses covet and strive for directorships within its bureaucracy, which the Emperor can grant or revoke as he sees fit. The Spacing Guild and even the Bene Gesserit hold shares of CHOAM and influence its decision-making to some degree, though the Spacing Guild and CHOAM's operations are deeply intertwined.

CHOAM is covered on p.43.

## Imperial Sardaukar

Trained exclusively within the harsh environment of the so-called 'prison planet' of Salusa Secundus, the Sardaukar are the Emperor's feared shock troops that he and he alone commands. They are how the Emperor holds the Landsraad at bay, the ever-present threat of the Sardaukar looming above all. So great is the fear that the Sardaukar strike into the Landsraad that the Emperor regularly wears the uniform of an officer of the Sardaukar, to remind his enemies and allies alike of his command over them, though he has not trained as one.

Indeed, the Sardaukar training regimen is a brutal one that costs many cadets their lives, due to its rigors and the harsh environment on Salusa Secundus. Those that survive, the resulting soldiers, are fanatically loyal to House Corrino and their Padishah Emperor, cultivating a reputation for being the most fearsome troops within the Imperium.

Sardaukar battle uniforms are white, and ritually stained in blood. They can wear whatever clothing and armor are required for a particular battle or assignment. But the Emperor usually wants his enemies to know what they face; such is the fear they inspire. Each is usually equipped with a variety of armaments as required: helmet, sword, dagger, sidearm, throwing knives, personal shield, as well as a variety of concealed weapons, ranging from shigawire garottes in their hair, poison needles, flip-darts, weapons in fake digits or teeth, etc. Their most favored weapon is the blade, but their battle suits never include a scabbard as it is never sheathed.

Sardaukar are also trained in covert operations, disguise, infiltration, psychological warfare, and piloting. Each is more than a match for a score of normal soldiers and consider themselves peerless, save perhaps only the highest-level Swordsmen of Ginaz. Their fighting style, however, is distinctive, relying on teamwork, and for this they are easily recognized when deployed in combat.

## Life Within the Imperium

The overwhelming majority of humans living within the Imperium are subject to the Faufreluches and are as such hereditary peasants whose destiny is to serve the siridar governor appointed by the House, who in turn serve at the will of the Emperor. This system ensures that all understand their role within it, and the certainty that one is acting according to the social order ensures peace and relative ease from uncertainty. That is what the nobility insists at any rate, and no one ever asks the peasantry what they think.

The standard unit of currency is the **solari**, a denomination that has been tied to the value of the spice melange, again underlining the importance of spice to the Imperium. This currency is enforced by CHOAM and thus allows free trade everywhere, eliminating money-changing and conversion that can potentially cut into profits.

The common, and official, tongue spoken everywhere in the Imperium is **Galach**. Regional and planetary variants exist and many, many other languages are spoken within the fiefdoms of the various Houses of the Landsraad, but most official communication is done in Galach. In turn, invented languages are commonplace, from the finger-signs of the Bene Gesserit, battle languages unique to each House, and *Chakobsa*, the hunting tongue used by the Bene Gesserit and Fremen.

Traditionally, life within the Faufreluches system is simple, with most people within it serving as some sort of laborers or craftsmen, with some few appointed positions of administration. Ultimately, everyone knows that they, their families, and everyone they know serve two masters: their *siridar* governor and the Emperor. Resources and goods are produced, from the humble pundi rice and moonfish exports of Caladan to the priceless soostones of Buzzell, and are proffered to the House for distribution within their domains and for profit, exported off-planet and sold within the Landsraad, usually with CHOAM getting their cut. CHOAM, in turn, distributes a portion of their shares as dividends to the Houses that encompass the Landsraad and to the Emperor himself, for there is a perfect overlap of the two. Thus, the system sustains itself: labor provides the Houses with their wealth which enriches CHOAM which enriches the Houses and the Emperor.

### THE IMPERIAL HOUSEHOLD

The court and household of the Corrino Padishah Emperor is perhaps the most opulent in all human history. Possessing wealth beyond imagination as well as the *de facto* owner of the Imperium itself, the Emperor knows for no want. His personal estate is beyond comparison, and his spouse and children have sumptuous

apartments within the palace on Kaitain, the Imperial Capital, in which also rests the Golden Lion Throne. The Imperial Household consists of thousands of servants and has at its disposal the most up-to-date technology and luxuries that the Imperium can offer. The Emperor's capital ship is essentially a mobile castle capable of housing thousands of Sardaukar, a symbol of his invincibility.

## NOBLE HOUSES

Most Houses—Major and Minor—live lives of relative luxury compared to those they rule over. Whether daunting fortresses or medieval-style castles, or even sumptuous estates, those of noble birth usually have excellent food and drink, ready access to spice, tailored clothing, comfortable and spacious quarters, elegantly appointed halls, technological devices such as filmbooks or glowglobes, and are served by dozens, if not hundreds, of servants. They want for nothing save intangibles like power and influence, and usually have a cadre of guards ready to defend from any attackers.

## COMMONERS

The autochthons of the Imperium, people who live their entire lives within a short distance from the place they were born, live humbly, their relative comfort reflecting that of the House that governs their home planet or territory. For the more generous Houses, life can be comfortable, even pleasant. Technology beyond simple items is generally reserved for those with wealth. Most households have no means of long-range communication, and their homes are lit by glowglobes or more natural methods.

For the common folk, there is almost no sense of social mobility. The notion that one's life path can change through self-determination, personal betterment, or through action is a quaint one, held by few. The primary means of changing one's lot in life is to join the military or enter the direct service of the House, perhaps as a servant with hopes of distinction within that role. Only by the will of one's betters is life improved.

## SLAVES

The least fortunate method of change in status is through capture and enslavement. Generally, captives of worth are ransomed back to the Houses they serve, or they are simply coerced into the service of their captors through other means. However, though slavery is technically tolerated in the Imperium, it is viewed by most of the Landsraad as repugnant. Most Houses do not countenance slavery within their territory; some Houses permit it but allow slaves to purchase their freedom; and other Houses practice it openly. House Harkonnen is a notable example of the latter, practicing chattel slavery, these subjects living in constant fear and misery, subject to death at the whims of their owners.

# Technology

The strict prohibitions of the Butlerian Jihad prevent much technological development, and though there are many other means of machinery, overt reliance on technology is somewhat distrusted by much of the Imperium. People prefer to 'do things the natural way' where possible. Two groups, House Vernius of Ix and the Tleilaxu (see p.42), each skirt the Butlerian edicts in their own way, and many innovations in technology within the Imperium are driven by them. House Richese is also well known for its technology, although just as well known for its unwillingness to push against Butlerian prescriptions for the sake of innovation. Despite this, there still exists a wide range of devices that characterize and modify day-to-day life within the Imperium. Many such devices are so advanced to be highly efficient, small, and easily concealed. This often makes technology extremely unobtrusive, offering a low-tech appearance to most places.

Most significant technological items are described on p.194-209, while an overview is presented here.

## Transportation

Aside from the spaceships of the Spacing Guild and the noble Houses, transportation throughout the Imperium range from primitive animal-powered carts to advanced groundcars, ornithopters, carryalls, crawlers, surface-to-air lighters, suspensor-held vehicles, and their like.

## Information Technology

Communication across distances is handled with either a communinet transceiver or a method called distrans, where a recorded message is stored into the memory of a living being and 'played back' when desired, often with a required code to unlock it. Physical media includes filmbooks, shigawire readers, minimic encoders, memo-corders, and other media players and projectors.

## Household Technology

The most significant development is that of the suspensor, a gravity-defying device capable of lightening any load. From large vehicles to personal rigs, suspensors are common throughout the Imperium. Similarly, glowglobes, often fitted with suspensors, provide light cheaply and can be moved wherever desired.

Most food consumed within the Imperium is prepared by traditional means, rather than through industrial methods. Many cooks even prefer to prepare meals by hand from natural ingredients. Basic technology allows food preparation to be done quicker, more efficiently, and possibly healthier, but the same techniques remain constant. The same applies for household cleaning and maintenance, which is why the nobility employ many servants to cook, clean, and launder for them.

As the dangers of assasination are ever present, the poison snooper is a standard fixture of most noble households, whether suspensor-propelled, handheld, or fixed.

## Personal Armaments

Few within the Imperium have access to sophisticated weaponry, other than members of the Houses and their retainers, and criminals such as outlaws, assassins, or smugglers. Most hand weapons consist of bladed and/or pointed weapons (swords, daggers, etc.), garrotes, or hidden darts and needles. Firearms include needle-guns, slow-pellet stunners, maula pistols, and lasguns, though the latter are restricted heavily and generally only available for those in direct service to the noble Houses.

The invention of the personal energy shield has transformed hand-to-hand fighting, and most fighters go without any more than lightly armored battle dress. Due to the Holtzman Effect the personal shield makes lasgun usage extremely dangerous, as their collision causes a pseudo-atomic explosion. Even to accidentally trigger such an explosion is considered a breach of the Great Convention and will see the responsible party brought down by the combined weight of the Landsraad. For this reason, the use of lasguns is shunned in warfare, as a stray shot can bring catastrophic destruction upon all the participants. See the sidebar on p.23 for more about this.

Young nobles also learn to fight against servo-driven combat drones, often controlled by their swordmaster trainers.

## Industrial Technology

Some level of manufacturing and heavy mechanized work is handled by servos, which are little better than gear and clockwork-driven automatons, incapable of doing anything other than following simple orders, physically manufactured into their construction. Suspensors, mentioned above, also play a large role in industry.

# The Great Schools

Over the millennia, many organizations have risen and fallen within the Imperium, with the more powerful achieving the status of Great School, venerable institutions whose very names impart confidence in those who they have trained. Most Houses within the Landsraad have one or more graduates of these schools within their ranks, and many noble heirs are either sent to these schools or taught their disciplines by graduates of these schools.

The Spacing Guild, one of the most powerful of these schools, is discussed prior on p.30.

## The Bene Gesserit

Moving behind the scenes is the Sisterhood of the Bene Gesserit, an all-female religious order that advises and counsels all the Houses of the Landsraad, providing them with wives, concubines, and counselors. Some women within noble Houses receive Sisterhood training, whether through time spent within the order, at the hands of a mother or relative who received this training, or from a Bene Gesserit representative serving within their household. Their more advanced training includes enhanced physical and mental acuity and the ability to control their bodies to extraordinary degrees, secret means of communication and perception, and even to discern truth or deception in those they observe. Historically, the Bene Gesserit have used spice to advance their abilities, but the degree to which they are dependent upon it—if at all—is a closely-guarded secret.

Descended from a hybrid of Catholicism, Islam, Zen Buddhism, Judaism, Hinduism, and other religions, the Sisterhood has seeded the galaxy with their doctrine—the Missionaria Protectiva—to preserve the members of their order and give them influence, no matter where they go. Though the Bene Gesserit serves all the Houses and the Emperor, their true goal is the secret genetics program, a grand exercise in controlled eugenics. Its ultimate purpose is the creation of their Kwisatz Haderach, a genetic superhuman whose psychic and physical abilities will bring peace to the universe, all with the careful guidance and control of the Sisterhood.

The Sisterhood of the Bene Gesserit is described more fully on p.55.

## The Order of Mentats

Though the Butlerian Edicts prevent thinking computers, this does not do away with the need for complex calculations and analysis of data. To meet this need, the Order of Mentats was founded, humans capable of sophisticated feats of cognition and analysis, with enhanced memories and thought processes capable of making intuitive leaps and predicting human behavior and outcomes with astonishing accuracy. As such, Mentats are supreme strategists, administrators, spymasters, and counselors, relying on a state called the 'naïve mind', which allows them to assess incoming information without prejudice or assumptions. Though this is not as accurate as actual prescience, Mentats are nonetheless essential to most House-level strategy and action.

Most Mentats drink Sapho juice, extracted from the roots of the ecaz tree, which enhances their mental processing abilities tremendously, but marks their lips with a telltale red stain.

## The Suk School

A necessity for any House is a qualified and skilled physician, capable of administering to the health and well-being of the noble family and its retainers. Many schools of physicians exist throughout the Imperium, but none have the prestige of the Suk School, whose graduates are said to be as incorruptible as they are skilled, compassionate healers unfailingly loyal to their employers, incapable of taking a life in even the most extraordinary of circumstances.

The diamond forehead tattoo is the symbol of the Suk school's guarantee. This is invaluable, as the very lives of a noble House are in the hands of their doctor, as well as their secrets. This reliability comes with a price: the Suk doctors are among the most expensive in the Imperium, a portion of their considerable earnings claimed by their school.

## The Swordmasters of Ginaz

Swordmasters serve as commanders, generals, security officers, and personal bodyguards. They often oversee the tutelage of nobles in the fighting arts, both for the nobles' own safety and to ready these students for the responsibilities they assume should they inherit their House's leadership. All Houses within the Landsraad employ swordmasters within their ranks, though the ones from Ginaz are indisputably the best. Famed throughout the Imperium, its graduates are among the finest warriors the galaxy has seen, perhaps even capable of besting Imperial Sardaukar. Their training is not limited to swordsmanship (in which they are without peer) but also all manner of hand-to-hand combat, armed or unarmed, shielded or otherwise, as well as tactics, command, demolition, logistics, and all the arts of war.

# Faith and Religion

While humanity has spread out into the stars, religion and faith still have a place in the Imperium. In fact, several religious beliefs form the cornerstone of many of the social mores of both nobles and commoners. Most of the faiths of Old Terra have survived in one form or another, and many have found common ground with others to form new religious philosophies. Some of these faiths are practiced only in one community; others have adherents across the Imperium.

## Orange Catholicism

Many within the Imperium follow a religion known as **Orange Catholicism**, named for the *Orange Catholic Bible*, a controversial religious tract developed after the Butlerian Jihad. Though the Imperium has no official state religion and many creeds are followed within it, Orange Catholicism is perhaps the most widespread of the faiths.

The religion incorporates a wide range of religious creeds from Old Terra, a fusion religion synthesized by the Committee of Ecumenical Translators (the CET). The goal of the CET was to create the 'perfect' religious book that could accommodate the spiritual needs of all humanity, taking away from any single religion the claim to being the sole proprietor of divine insight. This collection of religious writings was compiled after the Butlerian Jihad from a mixture of faiths, but particularly Judaism, Islam, and Christianity. However, it is not simply a mixture of religious texts thrown together, but a carefully curated gospel for the new era of humanity. As such many of its writings warn against the return of 'thinking machines' and the arrogance of humanity in seeking to create such new life.

The publication of the *Orange Catholic Bible* was marked with controversy, with great riots throughout the Imperium, and it was denounced vigorously for centuries to come. Despite this, it is nonetheless the primary source for the most popular religion of the Imperium.

The primary commandment of the Orange Catholic Bible is "Thou shalt not disfigure the soul." The book itself, often referred to as the OCB, its initials, is nearly 1,800 pages long, and is oft quoted by scholars and pious folk alike, and all noble educations consist of some reading within its many pages.

Despite the ubiquity of the OCB and its tenets, most within the Landsraad, from the noble Houses to the humblest of their servants, generally only pay lip service to the religion, and few are particularly devout.

It is important to remember the Butlerian Jihad was not just a war, but a holy war. Humanity did not just fight to free themselves from the tyranny of the thinking machines for their own sake, they did so because God commanded it. The freedom of humanity was a gift from God for doing his will and tearing down the enslaving machines. The desperation of the fight and the many moments it felt hopeless, brought humanity closer to religion and prayer to gain hope against such a vast and powerful enemy. Since that time humanity has believed that it was their faith that allowed them to prevail, and that without it, God may take his gift of freedom away. Thus, the proscriptions against creating thinking machines are not just a rule, but a holy covenant with God. Many believe that to break them, in any way, will bring ruin to not only the perpetrator, but their family, House, and possibly all humanity.

### THE ZENSUNNI

A mystical religious sect incorporating elements from Zen Buddhism and Sunni Islam, the Zensunni broke from the teachings of Maometh, the 'Third Muhammed', millennia ago and became a distinct faith on its own, inspiring many branches. One of these, Zensunni Catholicism, was influential in the formation of the *Orange Catholic Bible*, the holy book that much of the Imperium holds sacred. Zensunni teachings are incorporated into the Bene Gesserit's own Missionaria Protectiva, and most members of the Sisterhood are well-versed in the tenets and scriptures of that faith.

Millenia ago, when fleeing from Imperial raiders, the Zensunni scattered across the galaxy, 'wandering' from Terra and other worlds to the most distant reaches of space, beyond even the boundaries of the Imperium. Notably, their early wanderings took the Zensunni to Arrakis, and there their faith formed the core of the Fremen religion.

Despite its origins, adherents of the Orange Catholic faith do not generally participate in organized worship. While there are priests and advisors, faith is a matter for the practitioner. Like many of the religions of the Imperium, the Orange Catholic Faith is more of a philosophy to be studied than a set of rituals to be followed. Adherents generally read and reread the OC Bible to memorize its warnings and understand the truth of its laws and moral guidance. Prayers are offered to God in the same way they always have been. But many prayers are also offered for the faithful to keep the covenant and for humanity to not transgress its strictures. Those who follow the faith generally consider themselves the guardians of God's covenant with humanity against thinking machines. They watch for signs that someone, in their arrogance, might push the limits of the strictures past their breaking point and bring ruin to humanity.

Given the lack of organized worship, there is quite a lot of divergence among adherents about the specifics of the Orange Catholic faith. While they are all working from the same text, different conclusions might be made over the same passages. Thankfully, this doesn't generally lead to conflict except among the most fanatical followers. Study of the holy book is encouraged, and new interpretations are welcomed as they lead to greater understanding of God's will. It is up to the adherent to decide for themselves which interpretations they will follow, and there is no shame in changing your mind. In fact, the truly faithful are constantly readjusting the details of their faith as they come to understand its complexities.

### ATHEISM IN THE IMPERIUM

While not everyone follows a religion, it is quite difficult to be an atheist in the Imperium. The continued existence of humanity is generally taken to be evidence of God, as it was the will of God that saved humanity. Despite this somewhat circular argument, this idea is so ingrained in Imperium society it is hard to shake. Anyone who declares there is no God is considered dangerous. They may break the covenant, unaware of the consequences, or worse, because they don't believe there are any. This generally means that most atheists quickly learn to keep their opinion to themselves.

Though the sisters of the Bene Gesserit, cloaked as they are in mysticism and ritual, learn the contents of the OCB in apprenticeship, they are not believers in Orange Catholicism, viewing the very construct of religion as a tool which the Sisterhood can use as it needs to, and little beyond that. Their own *Azhar Book* predates the OCB and serves as their own handbook for manipulating religion to suit their purposes.

While most study the OC Bible as children and are brought up with the main strictures of the Butlerian Jihad, that is often as far as most people take their faith. Such people would agree that God exists, but beyond that, faith takes little part in their lives. In some places, usually ones with a greater focus on technology (such as Ix), the Butlerian strictures are an annoying limit on innovation. However, even the most ardent technologist might push these limits but would never break them. Even if God doesn't arrive to punish them and ruin their House, the Imperium and Landsraad certainly will.

## Other Faiths & Precepts

While most cultures across the Imperium follow the main dictates of the Butlerian Jihad, there is a wide variety of small religions across the various planets and communities. It is in these communities that faith finds its most dedicated adherents. Religion generally reflects the life of the people who follow it. Thus, communities on barren desert planets and lush forest worlds have different needs in their religious life. A simple fisherman or water seller is not especially worried they will create a thinking machine. They pray for good weather and a plentiful harvest. So, in the feudal society of the Imperium, the faith followed by the nobility is often quite different from that of the workers and peasantry, no matter how beneficent the ruler.

The folk religions of the Imperium are no less complex than those of the nobility, but they have a greater emphasis on community. Religious ties and a shared belief are often what bind the community together. This means that many communities participate in group worship, working together to ask for blessings from their deity. The same is often the case for rituals like weddings and funerals, with the whole community coming together to celebrate or mourn.

While many folk religions develop in communities on planets across the universe, they are not as isolated as you might think. There are many stories of pilgrims (such as the renowned Zensunni Wanderers) who have moved from planet to planet seeking homes or avoiding persecution. Unsurprisingly, such groups change and are changed by the cultures they encounter, and in this way even the most obscure religion might draw from a mixture of divergent philosophies.

One influence that cannot be understated is that of the Bene Gesserit's Missionaria Protectiva. This arm of the Sisterhood makes a point of seeking out community faiths and introducing new ideas into their mythology. These new philosophies are designed to allow the Bene Gesserit to manipulate the community through their faith, and grant any Sister lost in a strange community a way to ensure her survival. The Missionaria Protectiva is so widespread that many communities (openly or clandestinely) have a representative or agent of the Bene Gesserit among them leading their faith as a priestess, perhaps even unaware of her connection to the Sisterhood.

# The Landsraad

More than 10,000 years old, the Imperium represents the entirety of humankind's expansion into the universe, the culmination of human history. Within the Imperium, almost all humans fall under the jurisdiction of Major and Minor Houses known as the Landsraad. Its reach is unmatched, a grand and all-encompassing feudal hierarchy with the Galactic Padishah Emperor at its peak.

The Landsraad's primary strength is as a counter to the Emperor. Together, its militaries would likely outmatch even the Emperor's vaunted Sardaukar, and thus a stalemate keeps the peace, each side knowing that full engagement would be ruinous to both sides.

Votes are allocated by the size and power of each House within the Landsraad, with Houses generally holding multiple votes. The Major Houses have most of the votes, while Houses Minor claim a lesser bloc, and are unlikely to influence policy unless there is an impasse. As a Major House, the Emperor's own House Corrino's votes have considerable weight, as well, but even he cannot outvote the rest of the Landsraad should it unite against him.

The Landsraad meets regularly, the House heads from across the Imperium converging to discuss matters of great import, such as conducting trade and establishing policy. The meetings are traditionally held on Kaitain, but not always. Within the Landsraad is a select High Council of House leaders, and this group intercedes in conflicts between member Houses. The High Council has the power to authorize whether declarations of *kanly* (p.106) are legitimate, and to recognize when any House has violated the terms of the Great Convention.

## The Great Convention

All Houses are signees to the Great Convention, a treaty whose laws keep all Houses in check against one another, as well as binding the Spacing Guild and CHOAM to codes of behavior. This treaty, derived from the Guild Peace put into place by the Spacing Guild (see p.22), dates to the period immediately after the Butlerian Jihad, when the Houses of the Imperium strove against one another for supremacy.

There are many smaller laws within the Great Convention, but the primary ones are as follows:

- Internecine wars between Houses must be conducted under the code of kanly, vendettas formally recognized by the Landsraad and holding to certain standards of conduct. This extends to the use of assassins as a method of settling disputes.
- Indiscriminate use of mass weapons of destruction, specifically atomics and biological weapons, is prohibited due to the potential for civilian casualties.
- The Emperor must remain neutral in all conflicts between Houses, as he must serve as an impartial arbiter when disputes become matters for the Landsraad to decide.
- The Emperor may determine and mete out justice when a House has transgressed against the laws of the Great Convention, though this power is used sparingly and with the Landsraad's oversight.

## The Faufreluches Caste System

The Faufreluches is the governing political structure that holds the Landsraad together. A form of hereditary feudalism as has existed many times throughout human history, the Faufreluches caste system is the hierarchical organization that extends from the Emperor to the Major Houses, to the Houses Minor, then to the *siridar* governors, who administrate Imperial Law upon individual planets. The Emperor owns all within the Imperium, and it is only by the Emperor's will that planetary fiefdoms are granted to be administered by the Houses of the Landsraad.

The unofficial motto of the Landsraad is "A place for every man, and every man has a place." Though simplistic, this nonetheless spells out exactly what the social order is within the Faufreluches caste system. People are born into their station, and their status rarely, if ever, changes. All must accept their fate in life and contribute to the best of their abilities, whether through toil or tending to the needs of those they lord over.

At the top of the caste system are the nobles of the Houses of the Landsraad. Born to privilege, they are wealthy and have status, power, and influence beyond any that normal citizens can ever attain. Within a House and the Landsraad itself, the distinction between Houses Minor and Houses Major is of immense interest and concern; to those outside the House these distinctions are relatively meaningless. A noble is a noble, whether they control one planet or several.

### NOBLE HOUSES

The pinnacle of the caste system, the Houses are hereditary dynasties, title passing down from the House's head to their designated heir. Within a House, however, is a microcosm of the Faufreluches hierarchy. A House is not just the head noble—baroness, duke, or countess—and their immediate family, including any spouses or heirs: it

includes allies, employees, servants, inhabitants of their ancestral lands, and their slaves, if any.

The titled head of the household is its owner, the member of the Landsraad, owner of the CHOAM shares, and the ultimate arbiter of the House's vote within the Landsraad. Their lawfully recognized spouse is generally not the inheritor of the title but does hold some degree of influence if there is no clear heir. In some cases, they may vote in the Landsraad and inherit holdings, but this must be done with the approval of the Emperor and the Landsraad.

Many House leaders also keep concubines, often married for reasons of love or to produce an heir. The leader of a House may in some cases have a married spouse and one (or more) concubines. A concubine cannot inherit a title or holdings and cannot vote within the Landsraad. Their fates are often uncertain if control of the House changes hands, especially should they shift towards a spouse or an heir they are not the parent of.

The heir of the household is the eldest son or daughter, or another direct relation if the existing elder child is unsuitable for some reason. Subsequent noble children are essentially of noble status but have little else attached to their name, other than status within the House. Though a young lord or lady may have a great many virtues and abilities to contribute to the House's fortune, their worth is primarily for the alliances they can make through marriage. Their fates are often determined by the disposition of their parents and the heir, whomever that might be. Many enter service into one of the Great Schools, seeking to chart their own course in life, and others attach themselves to the Imperial court, seeking to perhaps better their station outside their own House.

In some cases, the leader of a House might abdicate to a trusted relative, whether a brother or sister, or the Emperor himself may intervene and place a chosen member of the House in control. The Landsraad might intervene in circumstances where this is not clear or contested. Finally, the Emperor could command a House to divest itself of its holdings, to relocate, to surrender property to another House, but ultimately, he cannot strip a noble of their title, except in the most extraordinary of conditions. This is a dramatic move, and generally the Landsraad would rebel if this is done indiscriminately, for if the Emperor is able to unseat any noble with impunity, none of them are safe and the Landsraad's power is undermined entirely.

The most recent instance of this intervention was with House Vernius of Ix, forced to become renegade when they ran afoul of the Emperor for a variety of reasons, specifically development of technology that violated

the prohibitions of the Butlerian Edicts. After a considerable fall from grace, House Vernius petitioned to restore their status. This was granted, but the damage was done, and now the House is but a shadow of its former strength and is now more a technocrat confederacy than a true House.

The self-preservation of a House and its continuation is its highest priority, and thus the head of the House and their family are protected by a force of guards, poison-snoopers, trusted advisors, and defensive tactics. Heirs are trained in the arts of swordsmanship, tactics, logistics, and negotiation, as well as gaining a deep understanding of the history of the Landsraad, its practices, and processes, so that they might lead their House in the future. Many Houses bring Bene Gesserit tutors to train their daughters, to add those abilities to the strength of the House. In return, the Bene Gesserit often become wives or concubines of male House leaders, bearing children as part of their secretive breeding program.

## Legal Processes of the Landsraad

The primary means by which a House appeals when its rights have been violated is by submitting a **Bill of Particulars** to the Landsraad's High Council. A formal process, this is a legal document that details any grievances or offenses committed against a House, and generally makes an accusation of one House violating the Great Convention. The matter is brought for review, and the High Council votes on how to proceed. If the offending party is found guilty, a penalty is levied, generally financial but sometimes requiring loss of holdings.

When a ruling of the High Council requires such a transfer of assets, a **Judge of the Change** is appointed, usually by the Emperor. This position is hereditary. The Judge's duty is to preside over the process and to report to the Emperor that all forms are followed, and that the penalized House does not behave egregiously or further violate the Great Convention. Historically, all Houses respect the Judge's authority, but they may challenge any decisions the Judge makes.

The most severe punishment to be levied by the High Council is that of banishment, where a House is divested entirely of its holdings and forced to seek refuge, either on the outskirts of the Imperium where the Landsraad does not extend, or even outside the Imperium entirely, generally thought to be a death sentence. In some cases, a refugee House may be sheltered by another House, but this is rare, as it risks Imperial disfavor—and likely consequences—upon both Houses equally.

## The War of Assassins

Open warfare is generally prohibited between Houses except in extraordinary circumstances such as retaliation or when sanctioned by the Emperor, who uses this permission sparingly. This keeps the Imperium relatively stable and prevents innocent civilians—and resources—from being harmed. Thus, one of the sole means of waging war between Houses is under specific terms and guidelines agreed to by the Great Convention. These clandestine engagements are called 'Wars of Assassins', requiring a formal declaration and limiting the participants' choices as to what weapons are allowed.

An Old Earth resource, the Book of Assassins, outlines these guidelines and methods by which the War of Assassins might proceed, and lists prohibited weaponry, updated to include great weapons such as atomics. A great portion of its pages are devoted to the various poisons that might be used, the best methods to do so, and under what conditions they are allowed.

Kanly, an ancient word from Old Earth, describes a certain type of War of Assassins, 'the art of vendetta', a particularly personal dispute. A War of Assassins might be about a business deal or political differences, and an end could be negotiated, while kanly asks no quarters and expects no mercy. A conflict along these lines usually results in death of a House's head, heirs, and household, or could even extend to the destruction of an entire House.

# Houses of the Imperium

**The** various Houses of the Landsraad govern the Imperium and hold most of its wealth and political power. Most are descended from some Old Earth dynasty and have existed for thousands of years, frequently based on an ancestral holding upon their home planet. Though these planets are usually hereditary, they are technically 'owned' by the Emperor and granted as fiefdoms.

Houses are described by their reach and size, and include:

- The Imperial House, of which there has been only one for the past ten thousand years: House Corrino.
- Great Houses, the wealthiest and most powerful of all the Houses. Great Houses control more than their home planet and its natural satellites, their territories encompassing several planets and moons, sometimes across different star systems. This distinction is often interchangeable with that of the Major House.
- Major Houses, or Houses Major, often limited to a single planet and its moons, but occasionally extend to additional planets and moons within a single solar system. Often Great and Major Houses are considered together in the Landsraad, and as noted above, the term is at times used interchangeably.
- Minor Houses, or Houses Minor, which are smaller and less influential Houses that have pledged fealty to a House Major and govern some portion of its territory, or even control over a single industry rather than territory. A House Major may have many Houses Minor sworn to it.

It is rare, but not unheard of, for a House to change its status as its fortunes and influence shifts, and at times, a House's designation does not indicate its relative influence within the Landsraad. Some of the more significant Houses of the Imperium are described below.

## HOUSE CORRINO

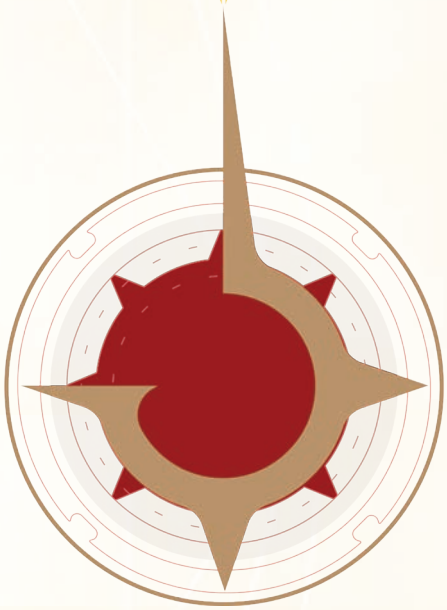
The most powerful single House in the Landsraad and thus in the Known Universe, the Imperial House Corrino has held control over the Imperium since the Battle of Corrin, 10,000 years ago, with only a few brief interruptions. A Corrino descendant has sat upon the Golden Lion Throne ever since the foundation of the Imperium itself. The Imperial throne world is Kaitain, center of the Padishah Emperor Shaddam IV's court. Their original ancestral homeworld is the planet Salusa Secundus, an inhospitable prison planet rumored to be the training ground of the Emperor's deadly shock troops, the Sardaukar.

## HOUSE HARKONNEN

One of the more powerful Great Houses, House Harkonnen is based on Giedi Prime, a planet they have stripped all wealth from, a dismal place under totalitarian rule. To many within the Landsraad, the Harkonnen name is a synonym for treachery, and the Harkonnen family does little to discourage this reputation. Reveling in their brutality and inhuman subjugation of those they govern, the Harkonnens grew to power through underhanded business practices and outright hostility to their fellow Houses.

For many years, the Harkonnens held the rights and responsibility of mining Arrakis for its spice, a period in which they made a vast fortune and many enemies among the planet's natives and their rivals within the Landsraad.

Life within Harkonnen territory is full of conspiracy and fear, with everyone pitted against another for survival and dominance. They are one of the few Great Houses to not only continue the practice of slavery, but to inflict immeasurable misery upon those souls. Only the strong and merciless thrive within House Harkonnen under their leader, the Siridar Baron Vladimir Harkonnen, a decadent and evil man whose ambition would place him, or one of his heirs, upon the throne of the Imperium itself.



## HOUSE ATREIDES

House Atreides is a well-respected House, ruled over by Duke Leto Atreides, who inherited the title from his father Paulus, who was killed in a bullfight. Claiming descent from the ancient King Agamemnon, son of Atreus, of Old Terra, the Atreides are among the most ancient households of the Landsraad.

The ducal seat and Atreides homeworld is the water-bound planet Caladan, thought to be a relatively humble planet, primarily known for its production of pundi rice, an inexpensive staple food consumed everywhere throughout the Imperium. Their holdings are relatively technologically unsophisticated, almost rustic, though the folk the Atreides rule are relatively content, and live lives of simplicity and quality.

Duke Leto is as liked within his own domain as he is within the Landsraad, where he is renowned for his wisdom, his compassion, as well as his shrewdness. Many other House leaders turn to him for guidance, and his influence is so great that even the Emperor has taken notice.

# Ix and Tleilax

When it comes to technology, most Houses within the Imperium obey the edicts of the Great Convention and adhere to the edicts of both the Butlerian Jihad and the Emperor's own will. Two worlds and their inhabitants, however, buck this trend and skirt the edge of violating these proscriptions.

## IX

Ix, the ninth planet in its star system, is named for its number (IX), and is home to House Vernius, a Major House. The inhabitants, Ixians, are famed particularly for technological innovation. Ixian devices are prized throughout the Imperium, despite the degree to which the Ixians are thought to disregard the Butlerian Edicts about the development of thinking machines. Many servos and other such cunning creations come from Ix, and it is suspected that their advances in technology go far beyond what they reveal and are willing to trade.

In the recent past, the ruling body, sometimes called the Ixian Confederacy, engaged in fierce competition with House Richese, another rival in the field of machinery and technological development. Richese suffered mightily in this conflict and has yet to recover fully.

## TLEILAX

No group of people is considered with more suspicion within the Imperium than the Bene Tleilax, the inhabitants of the planet Tleilax. An isolationist people who exist outside the Faufreluches caste system, they are neither part of the Landsraad nor fall within the category of the Houses that populate it. In appearance, Tleilaxu look mostly human, with curious features and sharpened teeth.

However, the Tleilaxu are met with widespread revulsion throughout the Imperium, for their primary export is one that violates the spirit of the Butlerian Edicts, if not its precise wording. They can clone dead flesh, resurrecting the dead into gholas, living beings genetically identical to their original forms, if lacking in memory. They also are masters of artificial limbs and organs, a specialty being artificial eyes, which always look as if made of polished steel.

Another reason the Tleilaxu are so reviled and distrusted are their 'Face Dancers', genetic eunuch shapechangers able to manipulate their features and physiques to assume the form of others, making them natural spies, assassins, and operatives. Face Dancers operate on behalf of the Tleilaxu or, at times, as agents for hire. In disguise, they can infiltrate almost any House and cause untold damage. This adds to their untrustworthy reputation, as to outsiders, any Tleilaxu may be a Face Dancer, or, by extension, anyone at all. Only the Bene Gesserit have proven capable of detecting Face Dancers.

# CHOAM

## (Combine Honette Ober Advancer Mercantiles)

While the Imperial House, the great Houses of the Landsraad, and the Spacing Guild seem the most obvious powers in the Imperium, all of them are beholden to and integrated with Combine Honette Ober Advancer Mercantiles (CHOAM).This corporation has existed for millennia and is the ultimate arbiter of economic power in the known universe. Every standard day, trillions upon trillions of solaris are transferred through CHOAM, and billions of lives are impacted. People live and die for the merest fraction of this incalculable wealth, and whole worlds have been scoured in the pursuit of the coveted directorship positions on CHOAM'S board. Through CHOAM, power is delivered to the rulers of the Imperium and those rulers are capable of anything to maintain their grasp upon it.

Established in the proceedings following the Great Convention, CHOAM's official function is the regulation and management of all interstellar trade. Thus, all commerce conducted via the Spacing Guild falls under CHOAM's purview. The sales of countless goods and services are transacted under CHOAM's auspices; metals, lumber, pundi rice, whale fur, artworks, contracts securing the services of the Swordmasters of Ginaz, the machines of Ix and Richese, and of course, the spice melange of Arrakis, to name but a fraction of the vast array of goods, services, and personnel administered by CHOAM.

## Shares and Shareholders

CHOAM is a separate entity from the other institutions of the Imperium but is comprised of members of those powers. The Imperial House Corrino controls the largest block of shares in CHOAM and is empowered to assign and revoke directorships. These are invariably granted to the leaders of the Major Houses of the Landsraad, guided by the attitude the Emperor has towards them.

The remaining shares are owned by the thousands of Major and Minor Houses of the Landsraad, though

a substantial portion is held by the Spacing Guild itself, and the Bene Gesserit, who operate as silent partners. A small number of shares are controlled by private individuals and lesser organizations, typically awarded by the largesse of a House or the Emperor himself.

Shareholders are entitled to a commensurate share of CHOAM profits, from which all meaningful wealth in the universe is derived. While small private fortunes can be amassed from the operations of commerce on a single planet, these amounts pale in comparison to those generated by interstellar trade of any commodity. A land baroness on Chusuk may live a comfortable life but unless she also has her hand in the off-planet trade of her world's superlative musical instruments, her wealth and power are trivial by the standards of the greater universe. Accordingly, the wages earned by the common people of the Faufreluches are utterly inconsequential in this economic structure.

CHOAM shares and directorships are hereditary. Unless the Emperor himself chooses to intervene, the offspring of a shareholder or director can expect to inherit those responsibilities and benefits upon the death of their parents. Naturally, this is a leading motivation of intra-House intrigue as young nobles desire not just the inheritance of title, but wealth, or wish to see themselves land higher in the line of succession than their peers. Over the ages, many noble youths have fallen victim to poisoned food or drink—called *chaumurky* or *chaumas*—simply so their sibling does not need to split the shares to someday be inherited.

## Shareholder Responsibilities

Shareholder Houses typically control several valuable commodities in a portfolio or share control of several especially lucrative trades with partner Houses. A House Minor might oversee the export of exotic lumbers grown only on their homeworld, the contracting of a specialized labor force for use in off-world industries, and the manufacture of a prized class of racing ornithopter all as part of their portfolio of commodities. The generation of profit from the portfolio to the aggregated CHOAM holdings is the shareholder's primary responsibility. All duties necessary to maintain the production, export, and import of items relevant to their portfolio's trades are the responsibility of the shareholder. Houses that share control of a trade with partners must find ways to equitably split the cost of business: a common cause of strife between Houses.

Should a shareholder find a way to increase profits through efficient manufacturing or agricultural processes they may find their general standing in CHOAM rise. Truly impressive innovations can potentially bring a shareholder into the spotlight and into consideration by the Emperor for a seat on the board of directors.

Shareholders are expected to provide regular financial reports and keep detailed accounting. Official meetings of CHOAM shareholders are infrequent and never mandatory. The vast size of the universe makes such meetings difficult to arrange at best, and thus most official CHOAM business is conducted via couriers transported by the Spacing Guild. Business meetings between shareholders with common interests are more common but these are conducted as part of standard day-to-day business.

Shareholders who are found in violation of CHOAM's operational rules will find themselves formally censured. Those who have been found committing minor acts of embezzlement or simple bad accounting will typically be fined or given a simple warning. More severe penalties may include garnished profits and oversight by outside parties appointed by the directorate. Those found to have embezzled significant funds, interfered negatively in the business of others, or otherwise committed grievous financial wrongdoing may find themselves facing more severe penalties, up to and including the loss of all shares and membership in CHOAM itself.

Provided their annual reports maintain a generally profitable status quo most shareholders can expect no interference in how they conduct their business. Directives from the board are uncommon but must be carried out by shareholders with haste and efficiency. However, should loss be incurred as a pattern, the shareholding House can expect to be questioned, investigated, and even audited. CHOAM auditors are as ruthless as those in service to the Emperor's tax collection and have left numerous Houses in financial ruin and at the mercy of their peers.

Particularly important and profitable commodities are entrusted only to those most loyal to the Imperial House. These most valuable interests represent a double-edged sword for those responsible, usually a House Major holding a directorship. Truly astonishing wealth is in the grasp of a House managing such a commodity but endangering a vital trade will incur the wrath of the Emperor, the other Houses of the Landsraad, and perhaps less obvious parties. Naturally, such fortunes attract the attentions of rivals who will do anything in their power to disrupt operations to see them fail. Sabotage, industrial espionage, and even assassination are prohibited, but not uncommon elements of doing business in CHOAM.

## The Board of Directors

CHOAM'S directorate is one of the most powerful organizations in the Imperium. Seats on the board of directors are highly coveted as they carry with them not only the opportunity for stupendous wealth through control of prized commodities, but also the ear of the Emperor. Directors set economic policy, oversee vast trade networks, and are privy to financial information long before other shareholders.

The public face of CHOAM is the President, serving in the administrative building, the Silver Needle on Kaitain. The President, however, takes his final orders from the far more powerful CHOAM Ur-Director, who is rarely seen in public.

Directorships are granted by the Emperor, typically as a reward for outstanding service to a House, or as inducement to future loyalty. It is uncommon for a House Minor to receive such a reward, but when it does occur, that House almost inevitably finds itself elevated to the status of a House Major due to the attendant influx of wealth and prestige. Houses that are unable to rise to the occasion find themselves exiled or destroyed, perhaps just as the Emperor secretly hoped.

Directorships typically carry with them the responsibility of maintaining the most valuable trades and commodities. It is not at all uncommon for a directorship to carry with it the feudal rights to an entire planet or even a whole solar system pertinent to the production of a specific commodity. Not all precious goods are the subject of total monopoly, but it tends to be the most efficient way for CHOAM (and the Emperor) to control vital trades.

It is worth noting, however, that even the most guarded monopolies are not conducted in a vacuum. The needs for specialized equipment and materials to produce such a commodity offer opportunities for other shareholders and Houses to become inveigled in the trade. A CHOAM director will find themselves courted by numerous potential business partners, many of whom may well be hoping to uncover trade secrets and break the monopoly to their own gain.

Most directorships have been maintained hereditarily for many generations, and it is uncommon for new directors to be so invested. As such, many trades and products have been monopolized by specific Houses for many thousands of years. The most valuable of these seats find themselves the subject of generational plots by rival Houses who have nursed grudges and envy for hundreds of years. Meetings of the board are tense affairs.

## The Preeminence of Melange

No commodity in the known universe is more valued than the spice melange. The economic power of spice is so great as to distort the entire economy of humankind. At times, the value of a single decagram of spice has ranged as high as 620,000 solaris. Necessary as it is to the operation of the Spacing Guild's operations, and its inherent geriatric properties to which a vast number of people are addicted, melange is the most protected trade to be found anywhere.

Economic control of the spice is invariably granted to a CHOAM director at the whim of the Emperor. The Imperial House shies away from exerting direct management of spice production for two primary reasons. First and foremost, such a show of economic force would likely unsettle the balance of power between the Imperial House and the Houses of the Landsraad. Secondly, and more insidiously, the promise of control of the spice is arguably the most powerful incentive with which the Emperor may bind other Houses to him.

By necessity, control of spice production carries with it the feudal rights to the planet of Arrakis, the sole known source of melange. Arrakis is a notoriously harsh world and while the possible wealth a shareholder stands to gain from the spice trade is staggering, so too are the costs and dangers. The climate of Arrakis takes a terrible toll on both personnel and spice harvesting equipment, to say nothing of threats from the local fauna.

The harvesting and refining of melange is a complex business, and the responsible shareholder will find themselves needing to draw upon numerous outside parties, all eager to gouge exorbitant prices for their services in this critical trade. Many believe that control over spice production and distribution confers near-unlimited power, but more than one would-be master of the spice has found themselves annihilated for their efforts.

Directorate meetings are conducted on a regular schedule and attendance is mandatory. However, due to the challenges of gathering individuals from diverse star systems across the gulf of space, few directors attend every meeting and often utilize proxies to speak with their authority and vote in their places.

Meetings of the board are held on Kaitain under the protection of the Imperial House. These gatherings occur once each standard year for a general overview of CHOAM affairs and profits reporting and take place over several days. They are attended by directors and their proxies, and representatives of the Spacing Guild and the Bene Gesserit who, while silent parties in CHOAM, are sure to work in advancement of their agendas outside of official proceedings. The dinner parties and recreational lounges surrounding the events are commonly believed to be more productive for business than the actual board meetings.

Directors are invited to share concerns and suggestions at certain points and with the Emperor present these presentations usually amount to sometimes subtle but often vicious maneuvering. Any gathering of the board is a period of intense political intrigue as they essentially amount to gatherings of the leaders of the Landsraad and other great powers.

Meetings of the board may also be called to deal with crises or opportunities as they arise. These meetings are technically mandatory, but given the necessity to quickly make decisions, attendance is never total. Directors who fail to attend these meetings will rarely be formally censured but may find themselves missing important opportunities or becoming useful scapegoats.

While the Padishah Emperor is required to consult the board for major decisions, in practice his power within CHOAM is near-dictatorial and only checked by the maneuvering of the Landsraad and the influence of other powerful organizations. The Emperor is likely to act subtly through third parties in exerting his will amongst the directorate but is not above making broad and public declarations when he feels it necessary. Board members rankle at these displays of naked power but are largely reconciled to them as an unpleasant fact of life. Still, the board is an influential organization, and access to the Emperor is a prize of incredible value.

## Economic Realities

While the above overview paints a picture of CHOAM as having relatively simple operations in truth it is a messy, often chaotic organization. CHOAM accounting is formidable, but the unimaginable number of transactions conducted each day makes it an essentially impossible task for anyone to glean anything but a general idea of the actual sums involved. The annual reports of CHOAM profits and operations are calculated to include significant margins of error, a fact of which all shareholders are keenly aware when managing their own interests.

A certain amount of graft and embezzlement is expected as a matter of course and tolerated provided the involved parties don't blatantly show their hand. With that said, rivals will undoubtedly do their best to uncover illicit practices in the hopes of inciting censure by CHOAM authorities. Wise shareholders keep their embezzlement to a polite minimum.

This still allows ample opportunities for 'creative accounting' practices. Specialists known as fincap accountants with expertise in questionable bookkeeping are quietly employed by any number of parties, including CHOAM itself which uses them in its auditing procedures. It is unknown whether CHOAM employs Mentats in these roles, but this seems likely.

Smuggling and piracy also play a role in business. It generally falls upon the shareholders themselves to deal with criminal interference in their operations. In extreme circumstances the board of directors may provide assets to increase security for a specific trade, but these costs will always be ultimately borne by the shareholder who requested them. More commonly, a House will utilize its own military and police arms in protections of its businesses or hire mercenary forces directly.

It is also not unheard of for shareholders to permit smuggling of commodities in their own control. Accepting bribes from smugglers may at times produce more illicit profit than the legitimate trade of the goods in question. Houses involved in this dubious practice must maintain strong deniability in case it comes to light.

Competition between shareholders in control of similar goods can be ruthless and at times result in the declaration of a formal War of Assassins. As a body, CHOAM takes no part in these conflicts and discourages such open violence between shareholders. Naturally, this is more obeyed in the form than the act as House wars are always good for the business of one party or another. CHOAM does offer neutral party arbitrations for disputes, though these typically occur before any blood is shed. By the time a declaration of war or *kanly* has been made, resolution of the conflict will likely fall upon the Landsraad itself.

While strife and intrigue are commonplace occurrences within CHOAM they should still be viewed as exceptions and not the rule. CHOAM has functioned and thrived for thousands of years and provides a stabilized economic base for all the great powers of the Imperium.

# The Spacing Guild

All Houses have some means of conventional space travel, with spaceships capable of traveling from surface to space and within a star system, and armed space vessels to defend their planets from incursion. These range from lighters to great battle frigates, with a few other types between. But the means of traveling from one star system to another is beyond all but a few, and they are inevitably restricted to slower-than-light travel, which means that interstellar travel can take years, decades, or even centuries, which is an infeasible limitation.

And so it is that more than the Emperor, Landsraad, or even CHOAM, the Spacing Guild itself is the most critical entity within the Imperium. Without the ability to move goods across the universe, trade would grind to a halt and all the Houses would face economic ruin. Diplomacy would break down, and war would inevitably break out on a galactic scale, as each House could no longer depend on rapid transport of troops to keep its holdings in line. Without the means of transporting troops, the Emperor cannot hold his Sardaukar as a sword above the collective neck of the Landsraad, and the balance of power would shift irrevocably.

The Spacing Guild is quite aware of this, and acts accordingly, extracting every solari it can from those who use its services, working in tandem with CHOAM to ensure a status quo that maintains their highly profitable monopoly. For these reasons and more, the Spacing Guild is as disliked as it is relied upon, and most Houses regard dealing with it as a necessary evil. The Spacing Guild, in turn, schemes on its own to maintain its unspoken command over the Imperium and all within it, collaborating with CHOAM, the Bene Gesserit, and even individual Houses within the Landsraad, as suits its purpose. More than anything else, the Spacing Guild seeks to sustain its existence, and that means they must always have access to the spice melange, the most precious substance in the universe.

## Origins

The Spacing Guild is almost as old as the Imperium itself and has been inextricably tied into its inner workings since its foundation, born when foldspace technology became available. The Butlerian edicts preventing the use of thinking computers forced others to rely

## Smuggling

Despite the Guild's exclusivity on interstellar travel, all Houses of the Landsraad have vessels capable of spaceflight, though few are capable of safe and reliable travel between solar systems due to the incredible distances and time required. In addition to these House-owned vessels, there is an inevitable criminal trade of those who wish to travel to and from space and do not wish to do so under the official auspices of the House governing that planet. Reasons vary, whether fleeing persecution, espionage, or the most basic of needs: greed.

Most planets in the Imperium have smugglers of one sort or another, and Houses deal with them in various fashions, from looking the other way, working clandestinely with them, taxing them heavily, or attempting to stamp them out. The smugglers, in turn, must deal in some fashion with the Spacing Guild, creating a case of willful blindness on behalf of the Imperium.

The Guild clearly has some arrangement with these smugglers, allowing them access to their Heighliners, likely for exorbitant fees, but their policy of strict confidentiality and refusal to let the Emperor audit their books means that people and other illicit goods move from system to system through exactly the same means as legal transport, and none but the Guild are aware of what is moving where.

As the most valuable substance in the universe, there is an entire industry devoted to smuggling spice from Arrakis and into the hands of various Houses and even the various Schools for their own stockpiling. Arrakis' spice smugglers are many and resourceful, openly defying the Houses that have held the planet, whether it be the Richese, Harkonnen, or now the Atreides. So precious is the spice that all are willing to pay dearly and risk exposure to maintain spice reserves that cannot be tracked or accounted for. The Guild, meanwhile, keeps track of the quantity of spice leaving Arrakis and who it is held by. They cannot hope to track it once it reaches the open market or the Houses that purchase it, but they are quite aware of how much spice is out there and who holds it.

In some ways, smugglers are the only members of the entire Imperium who stand outside the Landsraad and the control of the Faufreluches system. Outlaws and criminals, the ranks of smugglers are often the refuge of those on the run, and smugglers are often romanticized in ballads and stories, a refuge to any who would choose to live on their own terms. In truth, though, most smuggler bands are as regimented and disciplined as any military company, hardened folk who are driven by desperation to a life outside society.

on less reliable methods, and space travel before and without the Guild—even still—was hazardous and slow, with many more ships lost to the darkness of space or destroyed in transit.

Spice and its properties changed this fundamentally, and the Guild adapted to its use, just as its Navigators mutated to meet the needs that interstellar navigation placed on their minds, particularly the necessity of prescience. Over millennia, the Guild dominated all space travel, until the current age when its services are the sole means by which faster-than-light space travel can be accomplished. The Guild is highly proactive when dealing with any threats to its hegemony over space travel, relying on CHOAM, and if need be, the Emperor, to exert pressure on any threats to its exclusivity.

## Guild Navigators

The quality of prescience and ability to perform the complex calculations needed to plot space jumps safely require Guild Navigators, also called Steersmen, to consume massive and concentrated quantities of spice, far in excess of that consumed by any other sapient being. They eat it and must continually breathe an atmosphere of aerosolized spice gas, requiring navigators to remain in sealed chambers when on Heighliners and mobile spice tanks on the extraordinarily rare occasion when a navigator ventures outside Guild facilities.

Through processes unknown outside the Guild, Navigators are recruited from childhood and exposed to vast quantities of the spice, becoming mutants. Their eyes take on the characteristic blue-within-blue, their heads grow, features become grotesque, temples swell, their limbs extend and reposition, and their fingers and toes grow to incredible lengths, fins developing between their digits. Navigator voices change dramatically and require translators to interpret into Galach. Fully mutated Navigators are often described as fishlike in appearance, and require a constant diet of spice, swimming weightlessly on suspensor fields in mobile tanks full of spice gas. These mutations are commonplace to their kind, and Navigators become increasingly mutated as they age and advance to different stages of development. They wear formfitting garments that allow them unhindered movement within their tanks.

## Spice Mutation and Prescience

As described prior, until the discovery of the spice melange, faster-than-light space travel was controlled by thinking computers. After the Butlerian Jihad, such devices were forbidden, limiting space travel considerably, making it less safe and thus threatening to isolate the scattered worlds humankind had settled upon. With Tio Holtzman and Norma Cevna's invention of the Holtzman engines enabling foldspace, ships were vastly

faster, but were limited to the degree by which long-range jumps were possible. Without prescience, space travel came with the risk of utter destruction, a ship emerging into unfavorable conditions—such as the path of a star or other celestial body.

Once the psychic and mental benefits of extreme spice usage spice were discovered, prescience and enhanced computational abilities, these qualities became essential to the Guild, which had formerly used navigational computers to calculate the distances for faster-than-light travel. With the mutations conferred by heavy exposure to spice, Guild Navigators were able to calculate safe paths, computing and predicting the near-infinite variables involved in an always-moving galaxy.

Under the influence of spice, a Guild Navigator can intuitively use prescience to plot a course suitable and safe for faster-than-light travel, allowing ships to avoid gravitational anomalies, erratic orbits, space debris, and other otherwise unforeseeable hazards to interstellar navigation. The reputation for folding space is inaccurate but adds to their mystique. Guild Navigators pilot their ships as they make these faster-than-light leaps, but they do not propel or transport the vessels themselves.

Another curious and significant side effect to Navigator prescience is that it has the effect of shielding that particular Navigator and their actions from other forms of prescience, even extending to those nearby or in close collaboration with a Navigator.

## A Cult of Secrecy

Like the Bene Gesserit, the Spacing Guild is an intensely secretive institution, and does not willingly share its methods or information about its goals and inner organization. Few outsiders have ever seen a Guild Navigator, and none have visited Guild headquarters or holdings. The inner workings of the Guild—recruiting, training, operations, administration—remain utterly opaque outside the Guild, and they strictly guard all knowledge about their organization.

The Guild's secrecy extends to even the persons of their members. Their agents often wear disguises and adopt near-anonymous, bland identities, even going so far as to cover their spice-hued blue eyes. Guild transit brokers, while visible and sometimes even working closely with Imperial Houses, are inevitably inscrutable, offering no personal information and presenting no means of blackmail or extortion.

## Guild Politics

Guild agents are omnipresent throughout the Imperium, operating on most civilized planets as brokers and observers. Their power is solely connected to the service they provide, though, and they are not militant on their own. The Guild has no warships, troops, or armaments. Their politics extend only to that which keeps them profitable, and thus their intervention into the Landsraad and Imperial politics are subtle for the most part, enacted through proxies. Only in the rarest or most desperate situations will the Guild venture openly into political skullduggery, and when they do so, they venture as little as possible.

As the only providers of system-to-system travel, the Guild can influence a war's outcome simply by refusing to transport frigates from one location to another or allowing more rapid transit to the side it favors. The Guild does not sell weapons, does not fight wars, but it transports arms, soldiers, and warships readily, its fees a 'soft method' of throttling the movement of arms and troops throughout the galaxy.

## Heighliners

The mightiest and greatest starships in the Imperium, the Heighliners produced for the Guild are marvels of engineering, though much of their internal structure and architecture is concealed, known only to the Guild itself and those involved with their manufacture. Estimated at roughly 20 kilometers in length, Heighliners are cylindrical constructions, their immense holds capable of holding thousands of smaller ships and their contents within them, from the smallest lighters, bulky cargo transports, combat frigates, and even, on occasion, capital ships such as the Emperor's own mobile palace.

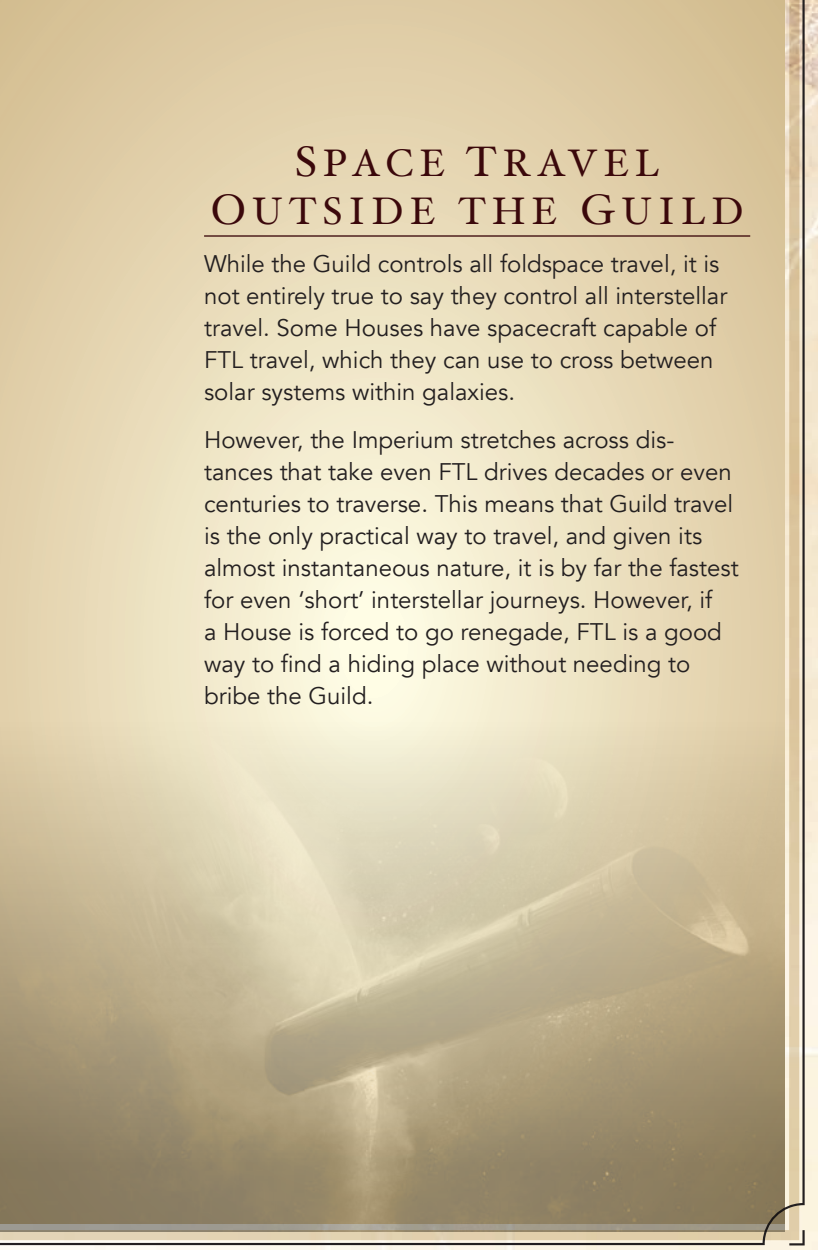
Able to encompass entire cities, Heighliners are entirely spacebound vessels, too great to land within an atmosphere. Their faster-than-light engines are capable of 'folding space' to move across the galaxy at nonrelativistic speeds, enabling rapid transport from one star system to another. Guild Heighliners are sufficiently armored to survive the rigors of this travel, and while there is no record of any Guild ships using any armaments, it is similarly unknown whether they possess any. To attack a Guild ship would be financial and political suicide, and it is possible that this is their sole means of defense. To attack the Spacing Guild is to assault the very structure of the Imperium: that should be enough to deter any aggression against them.

None outside the Guild know how many Guildsmen crew a Heighliner, though given their size the number is likely to be tens of thousands of laborers, engineers, technicians, and other specialists, all piloted by a single Navigator.

# Space Travel Outside the Guild

While the Guild controls all foldspace travel, it is not entirely true to say they control all interstellar travel. Some Houses have spacecraft capable of FTL travel, which they can use to cross between solar systems within galaxies.

However, the Imperium stretches across distances that take even FTL drives decades or even centuries to traverse. This means that Guild travel is the only practical way to travel, and given its almost instantaneous nature, it is by far the fastest for even 'short' interstellar journeys. However, if a House is forced to go renegade, FTL is a good way to find a hiding place without needing to bribe the Guild.



# Guild Policies

As the exclusive provider of system-to-system space transport, the Guild can, and does, impose drastic policies and restrictions upon those who they convey. All agree with these conditions because the alternative is neither desirable nor acceptable.

The first edict is that passengers on Guild vessels are absolutely forbidden to leave their own ships, save for the most extraordinary of circumstances, and only when so explicitly permitted by the Guild. Trips outside one's vessel are limited to conveyance via a Guild shuttle to a Guild-controlled facility, resembling a lounge or transit hotel, where negotiations or communication may be held. Guild personnel staffing these facilities are always unmutated humans, specifically chosen for their blandness of appearance and affect.

Ships within a Guild Heighliner or other Guild transport are expected to shut down their sensors and any surveillance capabilities, as well as their communications systems, going 'dark' while in transit. The Guild links with ship communication systems and controls (and likely filters) all extra-vehicular communication. If absolutely necessary, one House's ship can speak to another, but the Guild is monitoring all of this communication.

Ships traveling on Guild Heighliners must submit manifests of all cargo they carry, as well as the identities of all personnel being transported, giving them unrestricted insight into the affairs and trade practices of all those they serve. The Guild not only knows what goods are being transported, they know who is going where, giving them a clear picture of any House's status and activities.

Finally, and most significantly, vessels within a Guild transport are absolutely prohibited from interacting with one another, in any fashion. The Guild's greatest strength is the guarantee of security while in transit, so Houses who are mortal enemies may travel parked next to one another within a Guild vessel and expect utter safety. In some cases, the Guild may even be transporting ships on opposite sides of a conflict to the site of their future engagement.

The penalty for disobeying any of these Guild restrictions is inevitably lack of access to the Guild's services, whether short-term or for longer, depending on the severity of the infraction. Without space travel or interstellar communication, a House is cut off from the Landsraad and the rest of the Imperium, deprived of trade and ultimately, of spice.

### SPACE TRAVEL

Traveling on a Guild Heighliner is thus a relatively casual experience. Other than the brief vantage of seeing ships entering the Heighliner's hold, there is little to see. Once the Guild has connected to a House's ship's communication and sensor systems, each ship is self-contained. Passengers are free to do whatever they choose to while waiting.

There is no sense of velocity, no shift in gravity, no appreciable clues that the Heighliners are traveling at faster-than-light speed. Guild Heighliners make many stops as they gather passengers from adjacent star systems. After an interval—which could be minutes, hours, or even days—the Guild contacts the ships it has transported and informs them that they have reached their destination and can disembark and land at their own convenience. The amount of time one spends on a Guild Heighliner has little to do with the amount of time it takes to actually fold space, which is near-instantaneous.

It is entirely possible for a Major House, or perhaps the Emperor himself, to commission transport alone, but such an expense is beyond the means of most and done only in the most extraordinary of circumstances. In these cases, it is highly likely that the Guild will only agree if the reason for this transit aligns with their own purposes.

# The Order of the Mentats

What is a Mentat? A Mentat is one of 'a class of Imperial citizens trained for supreme accomplishments of logic and deduction.' They are essentially human computers that apply their ethics in a neutral manner along with unbiased logic to solve problems and formulate plans. Unlike their machine counterparts, their memories and perceptions enable them to perform supra-logical hypothesizing.

Mentats can process immense amounts of data from various sources by tapping into 'the naive mind'; a mind without preconceptions, analyzing data with extreme precision and speed. They notice logical patterns to deliver predictive outcomes based on analysis of data and potential influencing factors.

Being a Mentat requires a specific mental aptitude and mental conditioning that is rare in most people. No two Mentats are equal, as each person is unique and cannot operate at the same capacity. As universal demand is high, most Mentats easily find employment regardless of their status.

## History of the Mentats

The Order of the Mentats was birthed from the Butlerian Jihad. The century-long crusade ended with the destruction of all thinking machines and a decree that no machine can be built in a similar fashion to a human mind. That edict destroyed technological and social structure of the time and created a massive power vacuum in the universe.

### THE FIRST MENTAT

The first Mentat came into being as the result of a wager between Erasmus and Omnius, regarding humanity's usability. This altered the course of the universe. Omnius bet that a human could not be improved into a logical being, regardless of Erasmus' efforts. Erasmus accepted the wager, and Omnius selected the wildest looking child it could, an enslaved person on the planet of Corrin. Erasmus chose a regal sounding name for the child, Gilbertus Albans, so that others would hear the nobility in it and respond accordingly.

Erasmus encountered countless failures before finding an approach Gilbertus would respond to. Eventually, the boy began displaying the first human computer-mirroring cognitive and calculation abilities that rivaled thinking machines. With that step established, Erasmus began teaching Gilbertus how to organize his thoughts and think logically as a computer would. This intensive training, higher recall, and conditioning allowed Gilbertus to remember everything. The man processed information at lightning speed, reciting observations, computer level calculations, and maintaining numerous tangent conversations with ease. The two formed a familial bond that inspired the independent robot.

Erasmus did everything possible to make Gilbertus the pinnacle of what a human could be. The first step was a procedure that extended the human's life span, done illegally and without Omnius' agreement. Next, Erasmus instituted an intensive physical exercise routine. Erasmus' fondness for Gilbertus led to the thinking machine creating the honorific title of 'Mentat', bestowed on Gilbertus due to his enhanced intelligence.

Gilbertus risked his own life thwarting Erasmus' plans to kill millions of humans. The thinking machine's affections for the human caused it to abort its plan. This was one of the key events that aided the Butlerian Jihad in destroying the AIs. As the last of the thinking machines were destroyed, Gilbertus rescued Erasmus' memory core and spirited it away with him.

### BUILDING THE ORDER

After 70 years of training, Gilbertus opened a school on the planet Lampadas to teach what he had learned. The school was also where he protected the memory core of his friend and mentor Erasmus, a thinking machine. The new Mentat order walked a balance of either conforming to the Jihad or denying them.

This nascent order knew it needed to become part of the Empire to avoid falling to the wayside, so they made a deal with CHOAM agreeing that the Mentats would use their considerable intellectual and predictive capabilities in service of the Empire, in exchange for employment and protection.

## Mentat Training

### MENTAT DISCOVERY

A prevalent rumor has followed the Order of Mentats since the time of Gilbertus that babies are taken from their homes to begin learning the art. The younger the child, the more likely they are to succeed. While it has been lucrative for the Mentat Order to remain silent on the matter, it is, in fact, false. The ability to become a Mentat is rare and only a fraction of a fraction of a percent possess the capability to do so. That ability can be harnessed and trained at any age.

Rumor has it that every Major House and anyone of sufficient means has their children undergo an assessment by a senior Mentat teacher, a test to determine their suitability. If found acceptable, the parents are offered the following choice:

- First, allowing the child to formally join the Mentat Order, leaving with the teacher.
- Second, requesting a Mentat advisor to train the child if they do not already have one in their household.
- Third, refusing for the time being.

## The Juice of Sapho

The juice of Sapho is derived from a plant found on the planet Ecaz. Once harvested, it is made into a liquid high energy drink, a stimulant with the unparalleled ability to temporarily amplify a Mentat's mental abilities. Extended use of the juice is addictive and obvious, leaving deep ruby stains on one's mouth and lips.

## Mentat Training for Non-Mentats

Mentat training is intense and essential for the development of mental abilities. Anyone receiving this training gains a better insight into their universe, and it can be used to improve their cognitive abilities to some small extent. For instance, at the Emperor's request, Gilbertus Albans took in Anna Corrino to do Mentat training to improve her focus.

### TODDLER

The Order of Mentats prefers to start training recruits from childhood. Research and millennia of experience have shown that children able to bond with their parental structure are able to relate better with non-Mentats after becoming Mentats. It is believed that those initial developmental years establish a baseline personality and loyalty that is built upon. While Mentats approach complex issues from a more neutral standpoint, it is critical for the acceptance of the outcome that they relate to their employer. The reason for their training is kept secret from the students, whether in a school or learning under a single instructor.

It is rumored that Bene Tleilax have abducted newborns to test if the transition to a corrupted, or 'twisted', Mentat is less complicated with a younger subject. To date, no records of the outcome have been discovered. See **Twisted Mentats** (p.61) for more information.

The curriculum is identical for the first handful of years, whether the young Mentat-in-training is taken to an official academy or trained by a private advisor. Training at this stage resembles training any student of their age would take, with a gradual increase in the difficulty of tasks on a weekly basis. The taskings are regulated per student, with more gifted students receiving more computations until they are increasing at a percentage rate suitable for their group.

The course of study focuses on expanding the storage capacity of each student's mind through presenting increasing amounts of data for them to retain and repeat back to their instructors. The first object is accuracy of the data, then volume of data retained, and lastly how quickly the data is repeated back to the instructor. The instructor encourages physical activity and provides time for the students to do so. By the end of this early training, their instructor can assess the capabilities of all the students to a specific degree of accuracy.

### ADOLESCENCE

The next stage involves more physical demands on the young Mentats, placing them in hostile, dangerous, and extreme conditions. By this age, the students excel at the foundations of being Mentats, and the next step in their training is to implement different stresses and dangers they may encounter, during which they are expected to remain calm.

This level of training is intense and generally lasts for a year or two at most. The foundation of the first stage allows for an accelerated second stage. All future Mentats are taught the basics of combat, and their ability to read the slightest shift in body movement makes them exceptional combatants.

### THE CHOICE

Upon reaching a specific threshold in their development, every Mentat-in-training is told the truth about their training. Some have deduced what has been transpiring and others remain unaware. They are provided the choice to continue their training or to decline and go back to their daily life. The Mentats that decline go into the universe with their new training and discipline, frequently finding work for Minor Houses that cannot afford a full Mentat advisor.

## Becoming a Mentat

The students who decide to continue their training receive the final years of Mentat conditioning, which forever changes them. This turns them from highly-gifted students into true Mentats, worthy of the name and capable of handling all the tasks required of them. Many pupils never proceed beyond this stage, and it is rare that anyone is trained to this degree outside of a Mentat training facility.

To increase their marketability, each Mentat is taught a specialty in demand at the time. The highest-scoring student of each class can choose the specialty they desire, creating an air of competition within the school. The three most frequently requested specialties are assassination, strategy, and archives.

### TWISTED MENTATS

Originally created by the Bene Tleilax, twisted Mentats possess all the ability of other Mentats but operate without any moral or ethical constraints. They are essentially brilliant sociopaths, with little concern for human life. These corrupted Mentats are highly prized by the more questionable noble Houses, as they provide an additional resource denied to nearly every ethical House.

There is officially no known school that creates twisted Mentats. Inquiries to the Order of Mentats regarding them garners only silence, a refusal of any services, and possibly being reported to the Emperor.

## Mentats and the Known Universe

Generations ago, the Order of Mentats established a deal with CHOAM to provide employment for their members and aid the empire. The employment varies from archivist to advisor to strategists in the court of Emperor Shaddam IV. Many find themselves in service to various Houses as political advisors, military counsels, sanctioned teachers for younger Mentats, or to train future leaders in the fundamentals of Mentats to increase their own focus.

The Bene Gesserit themselves have a great need for Mentat training, and their own Mentats are frequently preconditioned Reverend Mothers.

# The Bene Gesserit Organizational Hierarchy

The Bene Gesserit have a strict power structure, with the Mother Superior in command.

## MOTHER SUPERIOR

She oversees the entire Sisterhood. Though she relies on the counsel of select Reverend Mothers, she is the highest authority in the organization. Through Other Memory, she has incredible wisdom and insight; however, past Reverend Mothers sometimes withhold information even from this formidable woman, splitting the responsibilities of the Sisterhood between her and the Kwisatz Mother.

## REVEREND MOTHER

A Reverend Mother is a member of the Bene Gesserit who survive 'the agony' (see p.57), an ancient Bene Gesserit ritual in which the candidate is poisoned and forced to metabolize and neutralize that poison internally, unlocking hidden power and enlightenment. Those who succeed gain access to Other Memory and the respected title of Reverend Mother. Those who fail, die painfully.

## KWISATZ MOTHER

The Kwisatz Mother is a Reverend Mother, though hers is considered a 'hidden rank' and kept secret even within the Sisterhood. Many other Reverend Mothers in the organization don't even know why she has such a high standing within the organization. This particular Reverend Mother has special insights into the ultimate goal of the Bene Gesserit Sisterhood: the creation of the Kwisatz Haderach through genetic manipulation performed through breeding. This powerful woman has an even deeper connection to Other Memory than the Mother Superior does.

## TRUTHSAYER

Some Reverend Mothers can enter a truthtrance, giving them the ability to detect lies and falsehoods. Traditionally, the Padishah Emperors have kept a Truthsayer near at hand to keep their people honest and help them root out any kind of insubordination... having a window into the inner workings of the Imperium from a well-embedded, loyal Reverend Mother source is also valuable to the Bene Gesserit.

## SISTER

These women have completed their Bene Gesserit training but have not undertaken the ritual transformation into becoming a Reverend Mother. They still have **prana-bindu** control over their bodies (described below) and many of the other seemingly magical gifts that the rest of the Imperium both fears and admires, however. It is not unusual for sisters to act as the hands of the Bene Gesserit throughout the Imperium by becoming spies, assassins, advisors, wives, concubines, and agents furthering the goals of the order.

## INITIATE

Still in training, initiates are not yet full-fledged sisters. Some women, particularly those whose families pay to have them educated by the Bene Gesserit, will never become a Sister and will never be made privy to many of the order's secrets. However, even these novices know more than they let on. They may appear fresh-faced and inexperienced, but these young members of the Sisterhood are not to be underestimated.

# The Bene Gesserit

This mysterious Sisterhood is one of the most ancient schools of the Imperium. On the damp, inhospitable planet of Wallach IX (see p.83), the Bene Gesserit Mother Superior guides humanity with a subtle hand from the massive Mother School complex. Women from around the Imperium go there to endure the physical and mental conditioning the Bene Gesserit are famous for. So renowned are they, that even the Houses Major and Minor pay to have their daughters educated there. In the school complex, initiates learn control, discipline, and loyalty to the Sisterhood.

## History of the Bene Gesserit Sisterhood

Almost 20 years after the Omnius Scourge's initial wave of destruction, a mutated version of the deadly retrovirus appeared again on the planet Rossak. This new version of the plague, which was later called the Rossak Epidemic, had an even higher mortality rate than the original. Raquella Berto-Anirul and Dr. Mohandas Suk, future founder of the Suk School, were dispatched to the planet by the Humanities Medical Commission (HuMed).

On the surface of Rossak, Berto-Anirul treated patients and searched for an effective remedy. However, she faced hostility and resistance from the local population and their leaders, the Sorceresses of Rossak (following). Eventually, she contracted the new retrovirus herself and almost succumbed to the devastating disease. Her friend, Jimmak Tero, treated her with healing waters from a pool deep in the Rossak jungles that only he and a few other Rossak outcasts knew about.

Some combination of the flora-infused water, the retrovirus that raged through her body, and the harsh environment of Rossak itself changed Berto-Anirul on a cellular level. When one of the Sorceresses tried to poison the doctor, she realized that she could transform the toxin into something harmless with her own biochemistry, allowing her to survive the assassination attempt.

Not long after, Berto-Anirul went on to lead the Sorceresses and transformed their organization into the Bene Gesserit Sisterhood famous across the Imperium today.

## Agenda

The Bene Gesserit have several goals, though none are openly discussed with those outside the Sisterhood.

- This arcane organization has a plan for all of humanity. With gentle coaxing, political alliances, social maneuvering, the occasional veiled threat, and the rare assassination, the Sisterhood focuses the Imperium on the direction of its choosing and toward the future they believe is the correct one.
- They ensure their influence and income by making their schooling highly desirable. For a fee, they instruct daughters from noble Houses across the Imperium.
- Their most secret goal is to create the Kwisatz Haderach, a being who could acquire knowledge even beyond the Reverend Mothers with their Other Memory and connect or manipulate space and time. In pursuing this agenda, they have manipulated several bloodlines in secret for centuries.

Their unique combination of communication ability, information-gathering expertise, and emotional manipulation makes them formidable spies, and the Sisterhood maintains its own spy network that extends to nearly every House within the Imperium, with few exceptions. Even those Houses that do not have a Bene Gesserit-trained member as a counselor, spouse, or concubine, may have one or more operatives working clandestinely within their households and reporting to the Sisterhood.

## The Missionaria Protectiva

Within the Sisterhood is a long-established group called the Missionaria Protectiva dedicated to spreading the **Panoplia Propheticus** across different worlds. Composed of fables, superstitions, and myths, the Panoplia Propheticus has an appealing message that lends itself to integration with local doctrines and religions. These legends seed beliefs about powerful women and various prophecies.

## The Sorceresses of Rossak

On the hostile jungle planet of Rossak, a matriarchal society of telekinetic sorceresses reigned even before the Butlerian Jihad. A Supreme Sorceress led the community. They kept detailed genetic records. The Bene Gesserit acquired this archive after Berto-Anirul took over the Sorceresses of Rossak and transitioned the group into the Bene Gesserit Sisterhood.

Depending on the living conditions of a planet, the current culture, and a variety of other considerations, the Missionaria Protectiva might choose different narratives or versions of the Panoplia Propheticus to circulate.

After the Missionaria Protectiva completes its work on a planet, any Bene Gesserit can identify particular phrases and imagery from the collection of the Panoplia Propheticus even millennia later. These recognizable features provide a known religion or belief that a Sister can tap into for support thanks to her understanding of the Panoplia Propheticus. By using the myths and superstitions dispersed throughout a planet by the Missionaria Protectiva, a Sister can make herself seem like a legend come to life, allowing her to work with or even exploit a local population.

## Bene Gesserit Training

Members of the Sisterhood go through extreme instruction and education to learn how to control their own bodies and the bodies of those around them. Mastery of these skills may appear supernatural or superhuman but are the result of diligent practice from the learner. Not all can withstand the harsh mental and physical conditioning the Bene Gesserit put their students through.

### PRANA-BINDU

As they train, Bene Gesserit work to discipline their minds and assert control over every part of their bodies. This *prana-bindu* conditioning encompasses a body's musculature and nervous systems, giving them the ability to isolate the movements of individual muscles. They can use this command over their own bodies to stop their hearts, appear dead by slowing their heartbeats or breathing, strike an opponent with uncanny precision, work on complex technology that requires supreme dexterity, or even perform delicate surgery that needs an inhuman level of precision.

The Sisterhood uses *prana-bindu* control in their unique form of martial arts. Called the "weirding way" by the Fremen (p.71), this hand-to-hand combat style uses *prana-bindu* training to a devastating level. An experienced member of the Sisterhood can fight with almost superhuman speed and movements. With such minute control over every muscle, only the Emperor's Sardaukar rival their deadliness.

### VOICE

Because of their incredible physical prowess, members of the Bene Gesserit can also take advantage of Voice. By modulating the timber, pitch, and cadence of their words, a trained member of the Bene Gesserit can compel a listener to follow her commands. A vulnerable individual subjected to Voice will follow almost any orders, from physical actions to changing their very thoughts. Strong Reverend Mothers, the deaf, and iron-willed Mentats who understand how Voice works, are some of the very few who can resist the compulsion.

Voice is a dangerous tool in the wrong hands. A Bene Gesserit can cause a person to hurt themselves or someone else. They can also pry codes or information from an unwilling mind. However, use of Voice can also save a life. Instructing someone to seek help or put down a weapon can defuse a critical situation.

### INTERNAL BIOCHEMISTRY CONTROL

In addition to their muscular and nervous systems, Bene Gesserit sisters and Reverend Mothers have incredible command over their internal biochemistry, something they keep a secret from the Imperium at large. Using their own bodies, they can change the chemical composition of a poison, removing its toxicity. They can also destroy diseases introduced to their bodies or even make a potential affliction go dormant, reawakening it to infect another individual at will. This biochemical control gives a Bene Gesserit the ability to create antidotes or even cures from her own internal systems. It also means she can manufacture poisons, as well. Attempting to drug, administer poison to, or infect a member of the Sisterhood is ill-advised.

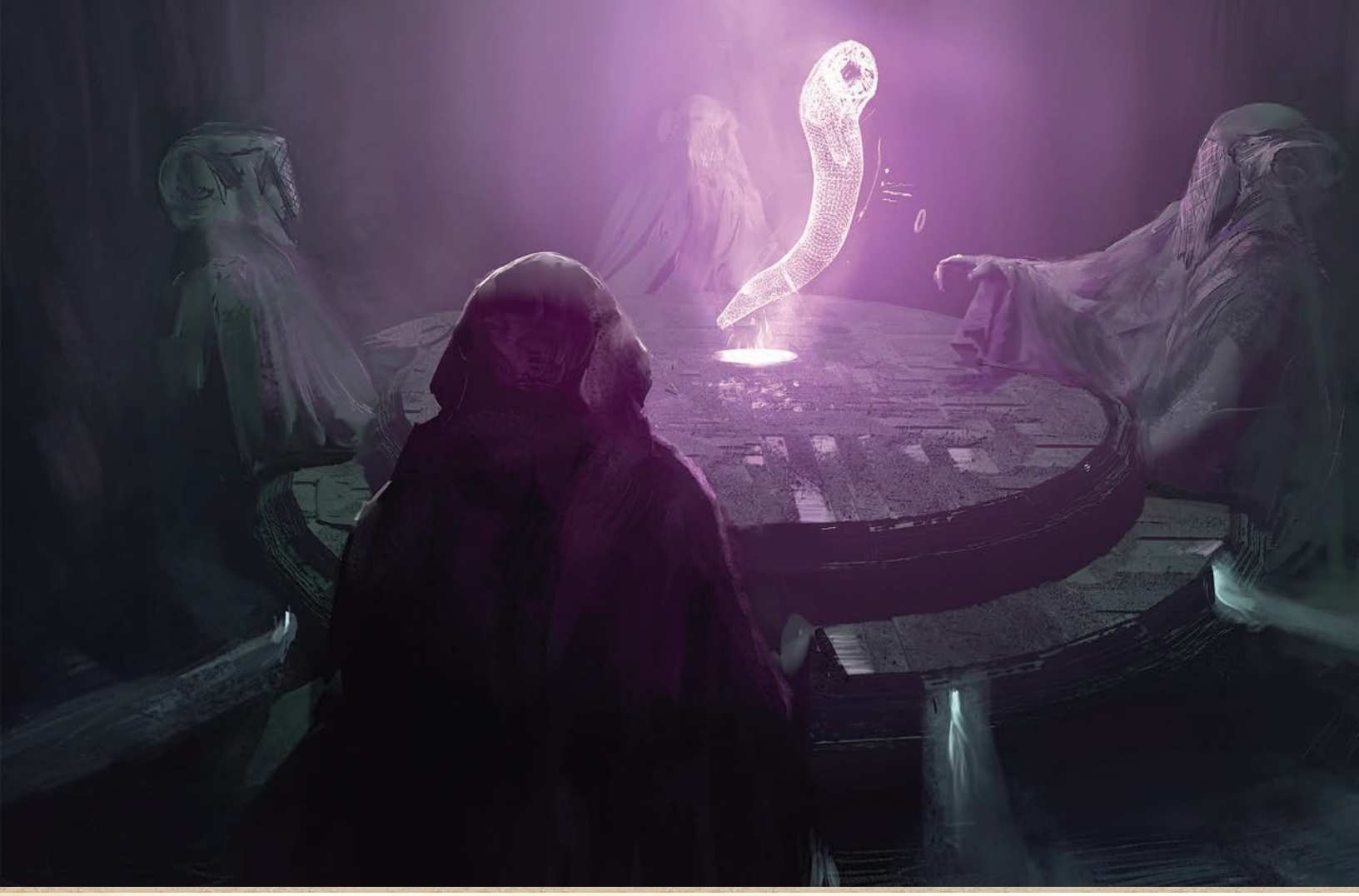
### HEIGHTENED OBSERVATION

The Bene Gesserit order also puts an emphasis on detailed observation. The tiniest flick of the eye or hesitation in speech will give a Sister a mountain of knowledge about whether someone is telling the truth, hiding something, or has a separate genda (although only a Truthsayer knows with absolute certainly). The way a jacket folds might indicate a concealed weapon. Favoring one leg might hint at an old injury and a potential weakness to exploit. Bene Gesserit are trained to be perceptive and insightful. This training overlaps considerably with that of the Mentats and is often instilled through a similar process to Mentat methodology.

### SPYING AND SOCIAL MANIPULATION

Perhaps the greatest tool in their arsenal of abilities is their extensive conditioning in the arts of interpersonal communication: whether conversation, oratory, negotiation, diplomacy, and even seduction. Bene Gesserit adepts are adept at detecting and following verbal and nonverbal cues, directing communication to serve their goals, such as learning more about a subject than they suspect, implanting ideas or emotional responses subconsciously towards a favorable result. Furthermore, this extends to human intimacy: conditioning subjects into 'sexual imprinting' where their sexual gratification is explicitly tied to that Bene Gesserit, heightened even to the degree of addiction.

These, and other subtler methods, make their members consummate spies and political operatives, achieving the ends of the Sisterhood while exerting little overt or direct influence. This is a long-suspected and mostly-accepted consequence to sharing one's bed with a Bene



Gesserit-trained spouse or concubine: that they may be subtly influencing their partner to view the Sisterhood favorably and to take actions that serve their own agenda, even if subtly and unconsciously.

### HIDDEN MEANS OF COMMUNICATIONS

Additionally, throughout their education, members of the Sisterhood learn a variety of ways to communicate with each other. Key phrases, such as "on that path lies danger," alerts a Bene Gesserit to look for a secret message from another member of the Sisterhood. They may use hand signals or coded dots (p.208) to give each other information they do not want to provide to outsiders. Communication between Sisters may even be centuries removed from each other as in the unique terms or imagery used in the Panoplia Propheticus (p.55) on different planets.

## The Truthsayer's Truthtrance

Some extraordinary Reverend Mothers can enter a truthtrance, allowing them to identify when someone is lying. This ability, both celebrated and feared throughout the Imperium, is sought after by those looking to negotiate, solidify trade agreements, or even interrogate a prisoner. The Padishah Emperor always has a Bene Gesserit Truthsayer by his side. While most Truthsayers need a special Truthsayer drug (p.208) to enter a truthtrance, a few exceptional Reverend Mothers can choose to go into this hypnotic state at will.

## The Agony

The agony is an old tradition from the first days of the Bene Gesserit. Raquella Berto-Anirul was the first to survive and gain all the benefits of the agony. In this trial, a Reverend Mother candidate imbibes a fatal poison and must use her control over her own body chemistry to alter the toxic chemical composition into something harmless.

If a Sister manages to neutralize the poison and lives, she becomes a Reverend Mother. Reverend Mothers become receptive to genetic memory. This is known as Other Memory, a collection of the personalities and memories of previous Reverend Mothers. This Other Memory can provide wisdom, advice, and guidance to a Reverend Mother as though speaking through the echoes of the past. It is only available when one Reverend Mother is on hand to bestow this gift, however.

Other Memory can pick and choose what to reveal to specific Reverend Mothers, however. The Kwisatz Mother (p.54) is a special case and has more interaction with the past Reverend Mothers in the shared Other Memory than any other living Reverend Mother, even the Mother Superior.

## Reach Across the Imperium

This ancient Sisterhood has placed spies and agents throughout the Imperium. One can find Sisters throughout the families of the Landsraad, within the Padishah Emperor's own House, and even working as laborers where it can help them further their agenda. There are few places a Bene Gesserit cannot infiltrate. However, few, if any, have made it to the mysterious planet Salusa Secundus to monitor the Sardaukar-in-training. Other highly insular cultures like the Tleilaxu or the Fremen make it unlikely that one will find a member of the Sisterhood in their midst… but not impossible.

## Attitudes Toward the Sisterhood

Because of the noble and distinguished reputation of their education, many families of the aristocracy send their daughters, wives, and other women in their lives to the Bene Gesserit for instruction. This perpetuates the cycle of keeping the families of the Houses Major and Minor invested in the organization… and the influential women of the Imperium loyal to the Sisterhood.

With their far reach across the Known Universe, many different factions are willing to ally themselves with the Bene Gesserit. They have a stake in CHOAM, for instance. Even the Padishah Emperor Shaddam IV married a Bene Gesserit of Hidden Rank.

Despite their significance within the Imperium, many do not trust the Bene Gesserit or actively disapprove of their political and social machinations. The Sisterhood has been known to blackmail those in power to reach their inscrutable goals.

With their highly visible presence among the Houses and their persistent, though unobtrusive, participation in all the major centers of power, those who are also vying for dominance in the Imperium often mistrust the Bene Gesserit, even if they outwardly ally with them. The Bene Gesserit Sisterhood's secretive withholding of their ultimate goals or aims does not help their reputation with those who are already wary of them.

Beyond their political and social dealings, the rumors and suspicions about their abilities give the Bene Gesserit a certain mystique. Though the Sisterhood keeps many of their powers, like their control over their internal body chemistry, secret, some are well known. For example, the Padishah Emperor always has a Truthsayer on hand. The unusual, mysterious abilities of the Bene Gesserit are the result of intense training but seem like magic to the layperson.

Between their discreet, evasive movements within the political and social circles of the Imperium, their knowledge of the business of the Imperium, and their incredible abilities, many view the Bene Gesserit as witches. Whether that has negative or positive connotations depends on the individual, their circumstances, and sometimes the individual Bene Gesserit involved.

The Bene Gesserit, themselves, seem to encourage all aspects of their reputation—positive, negative, supernatural, and esteemed. The more tools at their disposal, the more options they possess to guide the Imperium in the direction they believe is the right one.

### The Litany Against Fear

I must not fear.

Fear is the mind-killer.

Fear is the little-death that brings total obliteration.

I will face my fear.

I will permit it to pass over me and through me.

And when it has gone past I will turn the inner eye to see its path.

Where the fear has gone there will be nothing.

Only I will remain.

# The Suk Medical School

Among all the powers and factions found in the Imperium, none are as universally respected as the graduates of the Suk Medical School. When the great and powerful seek the hands of a doctor it is to the Suk that they go.

## History

The Suk School was founded by the legendary Dr. Mohandas Suk soon after the end of the Butlerian Jihad. Dr. Suk was instrumental not just in humanity's efforts in that war, but to its very survival against the thinking machines. The collection of doctors, researchers, and scientists he assembled has arguably never been rivaled and it was this group that formed the core of the Suk School in the aftermath of the war and the signing of the Great Convention. This private institution became the premier center for study of medicine in the Known Universe.

Doctor Suk's principles guiding the advancement of the human mind through mastery of the human body are very much present in the school's teachings, and his mandate to do no harm to another human being guides every graduate. Though admission is costly, the Suk School has continued to train medical practitioners and provide a place of research and collegial review for millennia.

## Admission

The school provides education and training for thousands of roles from simple medical technicians to the master physicians that attend the nobility of the great Houses. Admission is theoretically open to all. However, enrolling in even the school's most rudimentary courses is a great expense and competition for entry is fierce. As a result, admittance is largely afforded to those who not only meet the high standards of intelligence required by the school, but those who can also afford the fees. The school does make some effort to seek out promising individuals who receive their education pro bono, but these students will find themselves indebted to the school for decades, if not the rest of their lives. All graduates of the institution are required to remit a portion of their fees to the school for the duration of their careers.

Once accepted, students find themselves undergoing an intense education not just in practical medical matters but in the liberal arts, as well. The Suk School is no mere trade school from which workers are churned out, but an institution that produces practically trained but critically minded thinkers. Even the most modestly trained medical technician can declaim the core philosophical rhetoric of the school and defend it if need be.

Technicians and medical aides may spend up to a decade in their training before being certified in their field of study and graduated. These individuals most commonly return to their patrons and serve in their intended capacity, but some may find employment through the school's extensive network of connections.

Students studying to become full Suk doctors spend a similar length of time in course work and being tested before completing their training in the Inner School. Those incapable of passing the entrance exams will need to find employment as highly trained medical orderlies and common doctors.

## The Inner School

Admittance to the Inner School is possible only for those students able to pass rigorous testing in both medical knowledge and philosophical matters and willing to shoulder the astronomical costs of such an advanced education. Those who make the cut find themselves subject to years more education in practical medicine and enduring the infamous Imperial conditioning.

Suk doctoral candidates must master a staggering body of information and its practical application. They are trained in a comprehensive knowledge of human anatomy and pathology and can make complex and accurate diagnoses with only minimal aid from advanced instruments. They are also trained in numerous aspects of chemistry and molecular biology, enabling them to synthesize custom medications to meet the needs of every specific patient. The regimen of coursework is interrupted only by thousands of hours assisting instructors in surgery and practical medicine.

The expertise gained from this training cannot be overstated. A graduate of the Inner School possesses one of the most superlative medical educations in all of history. A Suk doctor can make insightful diagnoses even in challenging circumstances, perform emergency surgery, manage a patient's pain, and do it all with the assurance of a seasoned expert.

## Conditioning

All graduates of the Suk Inner School are subjected to the so-called 'Imperial' conditioning; an unbreakable psychological inhibition against causing harm to a patient. Developed in part by Doctor Suk himself, the Imperial conditioning is the fulfilment of his wish that his students and protégés would act only in the betterment of humanity.

This conditioning takes years to bestow upon a candidate and is the result of intense guided manipulation by the school's specialists. The philosophical education students mastered as undergraduates serves as a strong framework for the instilment of the conditioning. Inner School students continue to receive education in philosophy with an increasing emphasis on rhetorical study. These challenging philosophical declaiming and

defense sessions are augmented by increasingly intense hypnotic and hypnogogic therapies.

Students are placed in a receptive psychological state through a combination of *prana-bindu* muscular manipulation and neurochemical drugging. Once in this state, the student will be subject to lengthy rhetorical interrogation and subliminal direction. These sessions can last more than 36 hours and utilize exhaustion to further condition the subject. During their final years of study in the Inner School a doctoral candidate will be subjected to conditioning sessions even in their sleep. It is not unheard of for students to die during the process.

A candidate who survives Suk conditioning will find themselves unable to knowingly cause malicious harm to another human being. The conditioning has never been known to be broken and is of such potency that even the emperors have entrusted their care to Suk doctors, hence the commonly used term of Imperial conditioning.

## Dropouts

While most of those admitted to the Inner School do go on to graduate, a small number are psychologically broken by the demanding and relentless training. These individuals usually find employment as proctors or low-level instructors for the school itself, but some few do end up practicing medicine in the wider universe. Even a failed student from the Inner School possesses a knowledge and skillset of great value.

These doctors are tattooed to mark them as graduates of the Inner School. The tattoo is in the form of a simple black diamond upon the forehead. Under simple molecular observation this tattoo bears certain irreproducible characteristics, ensuring the veracity of an individual's identity as a Suk doctor.

## Suk Doctors

It is only upon the completion of the conditioning that a student allowed to graduate. A graduate of the Inner School is also permitted to wear their hair in a ponytail bound with a particular silver ring.

Suk doctors are commonly employed by all the great powers of the Landsraad as personal physicians, but also as medical overseers for armies, directors of medicine for planetary governors, and as lead researchers in medical industries. Some Suk doctors choose—or are invited—to serve the Suk School itself as researchers and instructors.

Suk doctors are not cheap, and their services come at an exorbitant price, a portion of which is always remitted back to the Suk School as a condition of their graduation. Suk doctors are forbidden to act without payment, and for this reason most Houses of means retain a Suk doctor permanently, choosing to pay the higher rates than to risk a delay in treatment while the doctor's fees are negotiated or arranged.

No matter their ultimate vocation, a Suk doctor is in possession of a formidable mind, a skillset of incalculable value, and the trust of the most powerful people in the universe.

# The Bene Tleilax

While the sisters of the Bene Gesserit have a reputation as 'witches', there is another organization more reviled but whose services are just as in demand. The Bene Tleilax, often referred to as the 'dirty Tleilaxu', are biologists first and foremost. They offer a variety of products to the Major Houses, many of which are humans genetically crafted for a particular purpose. To say their methods and scientific morals are questionable is an understatement. However, very few people are privy to the nature of their technology as they are an extremely isolationist society. Their home planet Tleilax is ruled by a totalitarian theocracy, dedicated to the strictures of the Butlerian Jihad, and outsiders are not welcome.

While Tleilax is a planet of secrets, they are not mysteries that anyone wants to uncover. Tleilaxu products are used all over the Imperium by all the Houses. But most people find the nature of these products unsettling, to say the least, and know that if they understood more about how they were made they would be sickened to the core. So, their customers are content to not ask questions, buy their products anyway, and denigrate them to assuage their guilt. The only thing anyone really knows is that most of their technology is grown using '**axlotl tanks**', although the nature of these tanks remains a mystery. It is generally believed that uncovering the secrets of these tanks is the key to understanding all the Tleilaxu technology.

Officially, the Tleilaxu take no part in Imperial politics. They insist they are simple scientists, only interested in expanding their knowledge. They only sell their biological wares so they might subsist and fund their research. Otherwise they have no interest in the dealings of the Imperium and its people. This is, of course, a lie. Like any other agency, they have spies and pawns in all corners of the Imperium looking to advance their agenda.

While they do not openly advise the Major Houses, sit among the Landsraad as the masters of a planetary domain, or work in direct service of the Emperor like a Truthsayer, they meddle as much as the Bene Gesserit. While their precise agenda is unclear, they broadly seek to control the Houses with the products they sell them. Their agents seek out the secrets of these Houses—their weaknesses and desires—so they might sell them exactly what they want. Something so essential that their customers will do anything; agree to anything, to get more. In this way they hope to one day make puppets of the entire Landsraad.

The biological products available from the Tleilaxu are myriad and usually bespoke. You tell them what you want made and they make it, from guard dogs to augmented agents to slave workers who will never revolt. The Tleilaxu will provide. However, they are particularly renowned for the following products.

## Face Dancers

Originally designed as entertainers (a service they still perform) **Face Dancers** also happen to be the perfect spies. They are certainly used by the Tleilaxu as their primary agents. The main skill of a Face Dancer is the ability to change their body and features to mimic anyone, male or female, fat or thin, even tall or short, to an intimate level.

While the physical ability is imparted in their creation, it is their training that makes them truly deadly. They are gifted with *prana-bindu* skills worthy of a Bene Gesserit. This allows them the control over their muscles and physical augmentations that they need to transform along with frighteningly fast reflexes. Coupled with an eye for detail, a Face Dancer can mimic the gestures and mannerisms of whatever disguise they take on. This not only makes them incredible spies, but equally deadly assassins.

Thankfully, those skilled in hyperawareness can often spot a Face Dancer, but most people wouldn't notice if their own mother was replaced by one.

## Twisted Mentats

Another 'people product' in secret demand by many Houses are the specialized 'twisted' Mentats produced by the Bene Tleilax. Standard Mentat training makes most Mentats moral and truthful people. They learn that bad or corrupt data produces bad calculations. While most Houses want someone honest and loyal, other nobles want a Mentat that can lie and cheat so they might create more devious plots. Generations ago, the master genetic manipulators, Bene Tleilax, discovered a way to train twisted Mentats at their own Mentat training academy. The discovery is kept a secret to all, with only a few knowing of the possibilities. One of these few is Baron Vladimir Harkonnen, thrilled and willing to pay an exorbitant amount to have the twisted Mentat Piter de Vries in his service.

The Tleilaxu are adept at manipulating the personality of the Mentats they produce so they can cope with the contradictions in the corrupt training they give them. This often produces Mentats who are skilled assassins.

The training regimen for twisted Mentats involves the Bene Tleilax breaking the Mentat's mind down and rebuilding them in whatever fashion their customer requested. The exact process of this was different per student and request. This may have required life-and-death encounters, extreme experiences from pure pleasure at one extreme to torture at the other. By the end of their training, the twisted Mentat is apparently loyal to their employer, their minds malleable to the wishes of the Bene Tleilax. They regularly have secret commands

put in place by the Bene Tleilax and are often more loyal to their makers than to their actual employers.

A problem with twisted Mentats is that the adaptations to their personality often give them some deep seated psychological issues. Many are psychopaths, although that is often just what the Tleilaxu's clients ordered.

These Mentats are also described on p.53.

## Tleilaxu Eyes

Replacement limbs and organs are also available from the Tleilaxu. While such prosthetics are not always biological in nature, they are always biologically compatible. While there are other prosthetics on the market, only the Tleilaxu can create more delicate replacements, like eyes. Tleilaxu metal eyes are one of their most famous advances, and fully restore vision. While they are a little disconcerting to others, the eyes work just as well as natural ones, although they lack any expression. It is hard to mistake them for natural eyes, and some people would rather be blind than marked by the Tleilaxu in some way.

Otherwise a variety of Tleilaxu prosthetics are available. However, their research has not developed as far as it might in this area. When making technological devices that connect to a person's nervous system, they are beginning to take a step towards machines that think. After all, if such technology is linked to the brain and nerves, what part of the person is doing the thinking? It is a line even the Tleilaxu will not cross, at least not openly.

## Gholas

Perhaps the greatest and worst thing the Tleilaxu can do is bring people back from the dead as gholas. Publicly, little is known about the process by which they take a dead body to their axlotl tanks, apparently restarting its biological processes and making dead flesh live again. This means that it is usually only done when people die young or from battle wounds. The body will continue to age, and at a certain point the system is just too old and degraded to function. The process usually destroys some of the more delicate tissue, necessitating new eyes, but that is the least unsettling thing about a ghola.

To date, no ghola has ever been able to remember their past life. This means they look and sound like the person they once were but know none of their old friends or family. So, the Tleilaxu often make them to be used as disposable agents and workers, but only among the Tleilaxu. They can be quite personable and are far from automatons, but they are never who they once were. This makes most people see them as somehow 'soulless'. For this reason, very few people ever request a ghola, but the Tleilaxu have been known to offer them as gifts for a variety of nefarious reasons.

Tleilaxu often make gholas simply because they can; continually looking for a way to bring someone back with their memories intact. Should they manage to unlock the secret of restoring memory to gholas, the ability to bring loved ones back from the dead as they were would make the Tleilaxu unspeakably powerful.

# Swordmasters of Ginaz

The irrelevance of the gun and the laser in the universe necessitated the development of many new approaches to combat. The Sardaukar are deadly fighters, brutal and remorseless and implacable. The Fremen are rumored to produce warriors of great skill, if rarely seen. But few surpass the skill of those trained on Ginaz.

Ginaz is a waterlogged planet in a small, out of the way system ruled over by a relatively small and out-of-the-way House. Its swordmasters, however, are the most talented and deadly wielders of the blade seen in any galaxy.

The school is generally believed to have been founded by the renowned swordsman Jool-Noret. But this is not entirely true. He was a master of 93 fighting techniques and promised to teach his skills when the time was right. Unfortunately, he was killed in his sleep by a freak tidal wave before he ever found the right moment. So, while he never taught a single student, the masters of Ginaz have based their teaching on the object lesson of his story. There is no time like the present, and skills you never teach will die with you. That is not to say they will teach just anyone, but to the right student, nothing is hidden by these legendary fighters.

## Ginaz Training

Capable of taking on multiple foes at a time, single-handedly and remaining confident of victory, each swordmaster of Ginaz undergoes the most rigorous and exhausting of training regimens, designed to inculcate both physical discipline and martial skill. Those sent for training follow a strict regime as they move from island to island on Ginaz. Each island has a different lesson to teach, and those who fail to learn any of these lessons are sent home as failures.

The lessons encompass survival, observation, and even poetry, often before a recruit even picks up a blade. When they move on to actual combat training it is often done in heavy armor or on recalcitrant steeds to ensure the student learns to fight in the most difficult of circumstances.

While the Sardaukar are shaped by their training to follow the Emperor, to serve him above all else, the swordmasters value the art of combat. They practice each aspect of the process of fighting, from the care of the weapon to the delivery of the killing blow. Nothing is left to chance, nothing is unconsidered. It's an intricate process, evolved over generations. Just like the blades the swordmasters use, their every motion is honed to the sharpest of edges.

For this reason, Ginaz-trained swordmasters are in demand throughout the universe, sought after as bodyguards and assassins, or as weapons masters for Major Houses (often with the side duty of training the progeny of the House's leader). If Imperial conditioning is the mark of the ideal doctor, then the training of the Ginaz is the equivalent for anyone privileged enough to wear a sword in the presence of a duke or a baron. Ginaz training does not only concentrate on the use of the weapon, as has been noted, but also on tactics and the strategies of effective fighting and warfare. A skilled Ginaz swordmaster is as useful plotting the grand sweep of a battle as most Mentats, though, obviously, without the same capacity to process information. They are also often dispatched as advanced scouts, to survey the locations their employer is to visit, searching for threats or potential allies.

## Art of War

The origins of the Ginaz style of fighting can be traced back to the Butlerian Jihad. The need for reliable and effective martial arts led many to reconsider older, more obscure, traditions of warfare. Old Terran fencing was a significant influence on the formulation of the Ginaz fighting style, utilizing its careful footwork and speed as a means of confusing opponents, tricking them off balance and using this opportunity to pierce their shield with the outstretched blade. By combining ancient approaches to the use of the blade with their understanding of how the new shielding technology functioned, the early Ginaz Swordmasters developed the perfect means of puncturing them. And puncturing the skin of their enemies. Over many years of constant evolution, the style reached an apogee of effectiveness and elegance.

To watch a swordmaster of Ginaz in battle is to witness something both beautiful and horrifying. As they move past their enemy, blood seems to blossom on the enemies' body in several places at once, leaving the wounded shrieking and those less fortunate in ragged heaps.

The pedagogical aspect of the swordmasters is an important one. After all, they are masters, and that word carries a weight of responsibility. The techniques and approaches of the Ginaz need to be communicated and spread, though only to those deemed suitable. Obtaining entrance to one of the Ginaz's most esteemed academies is not easy and, even for those Ginaz pledging their loyalty to one of the various Landsraad factions, teaching an unworthy pupil is rare. Despite the enormous sums paid by the Major Houses to obtain the swordmasters, few masters would try and force a swordmaster to train someone deemed unsuitable. After all, to lose the loyalty of a swordmaster would be foolish and, potentially, deadly.

### THE HONOR OF THE BLADE

While some swordmasters do become assassins, this is relatively rare. It is also rare for a swordmaster to turn on their employer. This is not rendered impossible, in the fashion that imperial conditioning guarantees, but it is part of the Ginaz discipline that one holds to a bond. Training is a pact made with your master, to learn all you can and implement it as effectively and consistently as possible. To do otherwise would be to scorn your master's teaching. The same holds true for an employer. They have trusted you in employing you, and to betray that trust in a cowardly fashion is fundamentally unbefitting a swordmaster.

This approach to refinement and to honor also colors the ways in which the swordmasters fight. It is not enough to simply be effective and highly trained. A swordmaster must fight with flair, with finesse. The end goal might be the enemy's defeat, but to do so in an ugly fashion is to have, in some way, failed. Fighting should never be clumsy, or haphazard. It should be as fluid and elegant as possible. Technique and purpose perfectly aligned.

There are no recorded encounters of a Ginaz swordmaster encountering a large number of Sardaukar, and there is some speculation over whether the individual flair and skill of the swordmaster would eventually fail when placed against the relentless advance of the Emperor's soldier-fanatics. Certainly, it is fair to say that, while the Ginaz are peerless in individual combat, or in those knife-duels so beloved of the Harkonnens, they have never been able to assemble an army. This is, of course, in part because of the size and impecunious nature of Ginaz itself.

Had such a formidable organization originated on a planet with a more fortuitous location, who is to say what it might have achieved? Though, as scholars love to point out, would a planet with greater advantages in terms of political power produce such a martial tradition?

All of this, is, of course, pure conjecture, but it is nevertheless interesting to compare the fact that those places said to have produced the most dangerous and effective fighting styles and forces are harsh backwaters. Whatever the truth, the swordmasters of Ginaz remain amongst the most consistently lethal fighters the universe has ever witnessed. Those who fail to respect their prowess invite their own death. But at least it is sure to be a most stylish death.

# Planets

**he** Imperium under the Padishah Empire rules over millions of planets in the Known Universe, which is comprised of worlds inhabited and documented by humanity. The Imperium expanded slowly during the reign of the current Emperor.

The handful of planets following are less than a glimpse of the expansive universe humanity has conquered. The timeline of the planets ends a decade before the Atreides family moves to Arrakis.

As one of the most significant planets of the Known Universe and a focus of ***Dune: Adventures in the Imperium***, Arrakis is described in significantly greater detail than the other planets, and the following section delves deeply into its unique environment and denizens.

# Arrakis

**Star System:** Canopus

**Moons:** Two

**Habitable:** Class III

**Noble House:** Harkonnen

**Primary Export:** Spice melange (alcohol, coffee, mining, and politics)

**Languages:** Galach, Chakobsa (the Fremen tongue)

**Locations of Interest:** Arrakeen, Carthag, Polar Sink, Sentinel Rock, Sietch Jacurutu, Sietch Tabr, and Windsack

Arrakis. Dune. The desert planet. A hell of sand, dust, and heat. Little grows, the skies are clear of anything resembling a cloud. The only time the horizon becomes obscured is when the vast sandstorms begin to fill the sky, sweeping down upon the unsuspecting with sufficient ferocity to strip flesh from bone, to mulch metal. It is a world without pity, a world without the capacity for weakness or mercy. Those unprepared for its harshness are doomed to die, flesh reddened, mummified by the heat—every drop of liquid drained from their flesh.

On Arrakis, one's own skin becomes a threat, an impediment to survival. Every pore is an enemy—a means by which moisture can escape, costing minutes of survival. Everything that exists on Arrakis is in some way inimical to human life. Almost every animal species is hostile. Even plants, the sparse grass and hardier flowers, are just competitors for water. There is only one reason anyone would choose to live on Arrakis: the spice melange.

## The Planet Itself

Arrakis is a large planet orbiting the third star in the Canopus system. Arrakis is itself orbited by two moons—both renowned for their markings. One bears a shape which resembles that of a large, desert kangaroo mouse, a species which, while not native to Arrakis, has become something of a symbol for the inhabitants of the great desert—the Fremen. The other looks as though a human hand had been pressed into the surface by some ancient god.

The planet has zero precipitation, though the atmosphere is at least breathable by humans—without the need for any respiratory equipment. It has been hypothesized that the oxygen percentage present on Arrakis must be because of the enormous sandworms as well as sand plankton in the open deserts. There is also an absence of widespread plantlife capable of producing the quantity of oxygen which tests of the atmosphere have indicated to be present. There is much speculation over whether the existing environment of Arrakis was natural or, had in some way been engineered. The Imperial Planteologists Pardot and Liet Kynes have both speculated on this possibility.

### PLANETARY HABITABILITY CLASSES

Every planet is a unique location with a vast number of differences than others but fall within five classes for our purposes here. The classes are based on human sustainability and availability of water.

- **Class I:** Cannot sustain human life.
- **Class II:** Humans can survive with extreme environmental precautions.
- **Class III:** Humans can survive with environmental precautions.
- **Class IV:** Humans can exist without protection.
- **Class V:** Easily sustain human life without preconditions.

## The Environment

Renowned for its extreme aridity and the difficulty of survival on its surface, Arrakis is a desert planet. Vast, rippling tides of sand cover almost the entire planet—only at the northern pole is there anything resembling a basis for building. At the most northern extremity of the planet, there is a vast stone cap. This is large enough and thick enough to build upon, safely and reliably, secure against both the endlessly shifting sands and the ferocious attacks of the sandworms, which pose a constant threat to any major structure or vehicle located on or near the desert. As a result, the northern pole is the center of activity on Arrakis, and it is here that the greatest concentration of the planet's small population is found. The Shield Wall surrounds the northern extent of the northern cap, keeping it safe from the potential influx of sandworms, and providing some protection from the excoriating impact of the sandstorms which can strip rock, metal, and skin in moments.

The planet possesses several extensive mountain ranges which strike up through the otherwise endless desert, where the planet's various tectonic plates shifted and aligned millennia ago. Significantly smaller outcrops of rock are dotted throughout the vast desert and proffer the few sanctuaries from sandworm attack available in the great open expanses of sand.

## Flora

As stated previously, Arrakis lacks any form of precipitation. There is no rainfall and nothing to sustain a varied or abundant plant life. The few examples of plant life are all highly adapted to surviving in the most inhospitable of climates, with extensive root systems sunk deep into the earth. These both anchor the plant in place, even as the dunes relentlessly move and stir, and allow them to gain some access to the few reserves of water the planet

possesses. These are sunk deep into the earth and are only found using specialist mining technology.

While many of these plant species are found on other occupied worlds, there are a number native to Arrakis—specifically, the creosote bush. The creosote bush is widely remarked upon for its obnoxious odor, which repels any creature who might think to feed on it, and with shallow roots (in marked difference to many of the other plant species), enabling it to move with the undulations of the desert. The base of the creosote bush is also highly toxic and capable of quickly killing any creature foolish enough to ignore the plant's rancid scent. Despite its unprepossessing nature, the creosote bush has become an emblem of fortitude and luck to the planet's indigenous inhabitants—the Fremen. One of the very few occasions on which a member of the Fremen might remove a part of their stillsuits when outside of their settlements is when encountering a creosote bush. The Fremen have been observed rubbing their hands with the leaves of the creosote bush—the oils the plant's leaves exude occlude the pores in the skin, resulting in less moisture being lost as a result.

## Fauna

Just as the flora of Arrakis has adapted to surviving in the harshest of conditions, so too has its wildlife. Most of the animals living on the dunes are small, hardy, and need almost no water to survive. They have also adapted to survive on a diet of whatever they can find. Dune is home to many resilient insects and arachnids—particularly scorpions, which despite their poisonous stings and aggressive nature have long formed a key part of Fremen childhood games—and the centipede. The origin of the centipede is uncertain, with many asserting that it was originally native to Old Terra. It is certainly not, however, native to Arrakis and was in fact introduced to the planet by Pardot Kynes.

The kangaroo mouse is one of the more common of Arrakis' mammals and forms an important part of Fremen religious belief. With its small body, long tail, and exceedingly large eyes, the kangaroo mouse (or, as the Fremen dub it, 'Muad'Dib') is also renowned for its ability to leap implausible distances, hurling itself fearlessly across the sand. Perfectly adapted to the desert conditions it inhabits, it can survive without drinking water at all. It is for this reason, amongst others, that the creature has become so important to the Fremen, who see its survival as a mirror of their own.

Other, somewhat larger creatures also make their home in the desert. The desert hawk and desert owl are both common species of bird on Arrakis—frequent sightings of both happen in the established cities at the northern pole, and across the exposed sands. The birds often shelter in the apertures of homes and civic buildings in the cities, before venturing out over the wasteland to find food. There is little to be found for even the most diligent of hunters, but such is the nature of survival on Dune.

Among the stranger forms of life known to inhabit Arrakis is the sandtrout. These large, amorphous blobs of matter are found in great numbers in the deep desert, buried deep in the sand. As with the scorpions, playing games with the sandtrout is a common activity for Fremen children, who often 'fish' for the odd creatures. The sandtrouts' relationship to the immense sandworms is a closely-guarded secret, known only to the Imperial Planetologist and the Fremen themselves, and few even among their number.

## Sandworms

Of course, as even the most careless and disinterested student of Arrakis' native fauna knows, the most impressive and dangerous of the planet's inhabitants is the sandworm. These gigantic beasts live beneath the sand, burrowing deep below the surface, where they form vast networks of tunnels. Called 'Shai-Hulud', or 'Makers', by the Fremen, the sandworms course through the planet, posing a terrible threat to any who travel carelessly across the surface of the sand. The largest of the species, found in the deep deserts, often stretch to 400 meters in length and even the most junior is usually capable of swallowing spice mining rigs whole in a few delirious moments of violence. The thick, sand-colored hide of the sandworm is nearly impenetrable and is lined with something like scales.

To all but the Fremen, the sandworms are terrifying monsters. They lurch up from the sand, consuming anything that they encounter, their huge sightless heads splitting into a mouth lined with endless teeth. Drawn by any rhythmic noise on the surface of the sand, sandworms can surge upwards and towards such noises with terrifying speed and, against creatures of such size, there are almost no weapons which can drive them off. Only massive amounts of explosives—perhaps even atomics—are enough to seriously injure or kill the largest of the sandworms, though they remain in the most inaccessible desert reaches, far beyond the range of even the most ambitious spice miners. The sandworm is not simply a creature of limitless destructive power, however. It is a beast whose importance to the planet of Arrakis, and from there, the universe itself, cannot be underestimated.

The sandworms are so-called not simply for their place of residence, but also for their diet. They consume sand in vast quantities, funneling it into their stomachs where it is digested, along with any organic matter such as sandplankton. Sandworms are entirely suited to Arrakis, being able to sustain themselves without the need for any other life forms save themselves and being incapable of existing in any location with

abundant water. The sandworm susceptibility to water is perhaps best described as an allergy—even small quantities of water can cause a gigantic sandworm considerable discomfort and immersion for only a few moments is enough to kill smaller examples of the species. It is through such a process that the Water of Life—the substance used by the Bene Gesserit to enable initiates to access the Sisterhood's genetic memory—is created. When one of the junior sandworms is immersed in water, its drowning exhalations can be collected and refined, ready for use in the Bene Gesserit ritual.

Unknown to the Imperium, the Fremen rear a few sandworm young, keeping them in their encampments and deliberately cultivating the Makers, to ensure a supply of the Water of Life. Others claim that the Fremen ride the vast sandworms, somehow able to swing themselves onto the backs of the beasts and surf the sand upon them. Most of this is dismissed as ludicrous—tales told only by those who have spent so long out in the desert that their minds have melted, or those who have breathed in too much spice.

What is certain, and all that anyone truly needs to know of the sandworm, are the marks of their coming:

- The first is the trembling of the earth, which can be felt even when the worm is several kilometers away.
- The next stage is the displacement of sand, the faint bulge in the dunes as the sandworm begins its approach. Sand flies out of the way as it drives inexorably forward.
- The third marker is the smell. The scent of the sandworm is unmistakable and often detectable before the worm explodes from beneath the sand. Something like cinnamon and something like flint struck against flint, the odor is highly distinctive and fills the air near to where the worm is likely to emerge.
- The final indication is lightning. The point at which the sandworm is about to breach the surface is often marked by lightning—the speed at which the sandworm travels generates colossal friction, creating static lightning which dances over the sand, in a coruscating display.

# The Cities of Arrakis

Prior to the exploitation of spice, there were almost no structures on Arrakis beyond those constructed by the Fremen—and these tended to be small, concealed in the mountains or in cave systems and chiefly consisting of alterations to existing natural phenomena. Once melange became the substance most vital to the continued security of the empire, and to space travel, places to house mine workers, store equipment, and process spice all became essential.

As a result, Arrakis now possesses two significant cities. Both are located on the northern cap, the only place into which sandworms cannot gain access. There are two major conurbations on the northern cap. The first is Arrakeen and the second is Carthag.

## ARRAKEEN

Arrakeen was once the capital of Arrakis since its foundation until the coming of the Harkonnens. While few doubt that the purpose-built city of Carthag is more luxurious than the sparser, and older, confines of Arrakeen, the former capital is definitely easier to defend and, despite the depredations of the Harkonnens during their reign, the residency of the planetary governor still retains a modicum of respect amongst the indigenous population. Arrakeen is built with wide, open streets, slablike architecture, and high stone walls to shunt wind and to facilitate the almost constant removal of sand. On the main thoroughfares through the city, particularly the one leading to the governor's residence, date palms are grown and maintained—despite the difficulty and expense of doing so. This is, in most senses, a perfect illustration of how Arrakeen is used by those who come from offworld. Arrakeen is not a model of ostentatious luxury in the way that Carthag is, but it is not truly of Arrakis.

While most homes and other buildings have water traps and other features to try and catch what little moisture there might be in the air, the most common means of acquiring water is to buy it from a water-seller. These merchants tend to drive small, mechanical carts with large storage drums attached to the back. A small tap allows water to be decanted into a personal water bottle, or a large flue enables people to buy enough water to fill a container for a whole family. These merchants tend to own large areas of land just outside Arrakeen, which are built into large-scale water farms, with deep-sunk wells and converted stillsuit technology, used to draw moisture from the air and retain it. While such a job is essential to continuing life in Arrakeen, the job is looked down on both by the off-world inhabitants of the city, who consider it an uncouth practice, and by the Fremen—for whom the idea of selling water in this fashion is extremely distasteful. The location of the water-sellers' residences, however, does provide a key to the architectural disposition of the city itself.

### ARRAKEEN ARCHITECTURE

The outskirts of Arrakeen consist of large water-farms and a few collections of still-tents where those Fremen who operate within the city, but do not live within a permanent residence, dwell. There is then a circle of small dwellings, in which most of the working people of Arrakeen live; these are the street cleaners, repair

workers, miners who are no longer as active on the dunes as they once were. This is also where most of the spice refining facilities are found, with many of the inhabitants living extremely close to their work, tending to the machines which process spice for delivery to the Emperor or other customers. The next layer of the city is chiefly composed of engineers and those vital to the spice mining and spice trade. The center of the city is where the elite live—in the largest and most carefully maintained of buildings.

The buildings of Arrakeen are remarkable in themselves, built in an extremely peculiar style. Most of the architecture of Arrakeen is constructed from cyclopean blocks of dark or grey stone, quarried from the various stretches of mountain and bedrock nearby. This is supplemented with other varieties of stone, brought in from offworld. The stark interior architecture itself recalls ancient Terran models, with high ceilings, crossbeams stretching across open spaces of dark stone. This aesthetic is found throughout the Arrakeen dwellings, though, obviously, on a substantially less spectacular scale. The governor's residency is infamous for the water it consumes, and the few Fremen who serve its current occupant whisper of the presence of a 'Weirding Room', to which water is diverted in vast quantities. To what purpose, few are truly certain. Those who have been within it describe it as a paradise, though, again, they are less than clear what kind of paradise it might be.

### THE POPULATION OF ARRAKEEN

Arrakeen's population is extremely heterogeneous, with people from throughout the universe taking residence there. The presence of the spice and Dune's political importance lures offworlders in great numbers, adding to the native population, divided between Fremen—nomadic, desert-dwelling descendants of ancient settlers on the planet, and a class of people categorized throughout the Imperium as 'pyons', those born on the world and essentially falling under the ruling House's authority. To natives of Arrakis, these are the 'city folk'.

Most organized labor on Arrakis is performed by the city folk, though they are supplemented by Fremen—often employed as servants, or less frequently as bodyguards. Fremen are considered poor workers by most city-dwellers, and frequently the Fremen who work alongside the city-folk are those who have lost their role in Fremen society, or are there for reasons of their own, particularly spying on the ruling House. Most offworlders in Arrakeen are there in a political capacity, serving the interests of a House or of the Guild. Arrakeen is a city of spies, and the closer one draws to the center of the city, the more evident this becomes.

Surrounding the governor's residency are the various residences and embassies of the Landsraad. The current inhabitant of the governor's residency is Count Hasimir Fenring the Imperial Spice Observer—while the fief of

Arrakis is held by the Harkonnens, their preference for their own, newly built city, meant that the residency lay empty. While Count Fenring (described on p.259) is typically at the side of the Padishah Emperor, he is also occasionally dispatched to Arrakis to observe how the planet is being run and ensure that the spice flows consistently. This has resulted in considerable additional political and espionage resources being concentrated in Arrakeen, as the Houses see Fenring's presence as being a route to earning the ear of the Emperor himself.

Fenring's formidable reputation as an assassin and skilled duelist—said to be better than even one of the Emperor's Saudaukar—renders this a risky proposition, and the intrigue concentrated around the governor's residency is careful, polite even. The assassinations that do take place are carefully orchestrated and use the most sophisticated of methods. There is little use of crude methods such as hunter-seekers. Instead, most favor carefully administered poisons which induce death while obscuring the cause.

The Emperor's presence is felt strongly in Arrakeen, far more strongly than elsewhere on the planet, and Corrino imagery manifests in surprising abundance. Some Mentats have speculated that this is a deliberate slight to the Harkonnens, and that the Emperor may only be a few years from removing their fief, while others insist that the relationship between the Harkonnens and the Padishah Emperor are actually closer and stronger than are commonly supposed.

Arrakeen is a city that stands in defiance to the hellish conditions surrounding it. It is built to endure, certainly, but also to prove the power of the Corrino Empire over both the planet itself, and the other Major Houses that might seek to claim the fief. Many have some influence over its disposition, from CHOAM to the Spacing Guild to the Landsraad and even the Fremen, but ultimately, from a legal standpoint, spice melange is the preserve of the Padishah Emperor, no matter who may temporarily hold sway over its control.

## CARTHAG

Carthag is approximately 200 kilometers from Arrakeen and requires a difficult journey across the particularly inhospitable wastes known as the Broken Lands. It was constructed by House Harkonnen shortly after it was granted the fiefdom of Arrakis in 10,114 A.G. While Arrakeen was for many generations prior the planet's largest city and the traditional seat of the planetary governor, the relatively unadorned and stark nature of much of the architecture rendered it unsuitable for the more baroque Harkonnen tastes. As a result, Carthag was built to suit their own aesthetic preferences.

If Arrakeen is a city built in defiance of Arrakis, Carthag is built in carefully willed ignorance. It is a metropolis constructed as though it were on another world entirely. The Harkonnens won the fiefdom of Arrakis and began to exploit it in earnest upon their arrival. The Baron

Dmitri Harkonnen, upon arrival on Arrakis, quickly decided that the relative austerity of Arrakeen architecture was not to his tastes. As a result, work began on the creation of Carthag. The new capital city offered a level of opulence and luxury that Arrakis had never previously possessed. It is a series of beautifully constructed, carefully adorned and exquisitely rendered citadels.

### CARTHAG'S LOCATION

The city's location was carefully chosen, with the Broken Lands serving as a highly effective shield against any threat of attack from Arrakeen save from the air. By making access on foot virtually impossible, Carthag was insulated against a great deal of the varieties of political intrigue which make Arrakeen so dangerous. Visitors from Arrakeen must travel by ornithopter, and, as a result, can be tracked by Harkonnen security forces from even before they have entered the confines of the city.

This position also ensures that Carthag is the first port of call for mining vessels as they return from the desert. Rather than laboriously making one's way to Arrakeen, it is possible for mining machinery to halt at Carthag to refuel. This is another, entirely deliberate strategy on behalf of the Harkonnens, enabling them to keep a much closer eye on the spice brought in by their various harvesters. The cynical have suggested that this also enables the Harkonnens to assemble their own supplies of spice, out of sight of many of the Emperor's attendants and wardens. This is, again, entirely deliberate. The current Baron Harkonnen is renowned for his mastery of political maneuvering and for the acuity of his trade deals—few in the Landsraad doubt that he has turned Carthag into a spice manufacturing facility of some kind.

### CARTHAG'S ARCHITECTURE

Carthag is a walled city, and heavily guarded. The Harkonnens are both wealthy and paranoid, and it is partly the constant fear of assassination that resulted in the founding of Carthag. As with Arrakeen, the central districts of Carthag are occupied chiefly by the palatial complex constructed for the Harkonnen rulers. These are huge—much larger than the governor's residency—and built entirely with offworld stone in a brutalist fashion, a symbol of their pitiless character. Steep walls, impassive stone faces, narrow windows, and an overwhelming dehumanizing aesthetic are characteristic of the city.

### POPULATION OF CARTHAG

The population of Carthag is substantially different from the diversity of Arrakeen. There are almost no Fremen in the city at all, and the few that are there are treated poorly and with extreme suspicion, only remaining if they have no other options. Most of the population are city-dwellers or former offworlders directly loyal to the Harknonnens, with a small number from other Houses the Harkonnens either own or seek to curry favor with. There is also a substantial deputation from the Guild, with which the Harkonnens deal extremely carefully, ensuring that their space travel rights are absolutely secure. Again, it is widely supposed that the Harkonnens can maintain a special relationship with the Guild as a result of their own secret supply of the spice.

The entirety of Carthag is essentially dedicated to procuring the favor of the Landsraad and the Guild. Beyond the various mining and refining centers, the city is filled with brothels and drinking establishments, as well as clubs for the wealthy to indulge their various vices in. It is a shopfront for everything the Harkonnens can offer to those who pledge their fealty to the Baron's strategies. Whatever predilection one might possess, the various lairs of corruption in Carthag are likely to offer them—and in their most expensive and debauched form.

This reputation is only reinforced by the presence of the current ruler of Carthag and the planetary governor of Arrakis itself, at least while his uncle, the Baron Vladimir Harkonnen, remains off planet. Glossu Rabban is renowned for his brutality and thuggishness. While the Baron Harkonnen is praised for the sharpness of his mind (however colossal and perverse his appetites might be), Rabban possesses no such redeeming features. He is coarse and savage in his approach to the Fremen and to Arrakis itself—exploiting it and the fief as ruthlessly as he can. As virtually the entire population of the planet knows, this comes at the order of the Baron himself, but the frenzied nature with which the Fremen are attacked and Arrakis is drained of its spice and water… that is all Rabban.

## POLITICS ON ARRAKIS

Arrakis was, until the discovery of the spice, a planet almost entirely without note. It was part of the Imperial domain, but it was deemed interesting only as part of an ongoing scientific inquiry into the survival of certain plant types. Once the spice melange and its various miraculous properties were discovered, however, the importance of the desert planet quickly rendered it the center of Imperial concern. This took the form of a constant, and constantly brutal, cold war between the various Houses to try and secure the quasi-fief of the planet, producing spice and exporting it off planet via the Guild. The extremely lucrative nature of such an operation meant that the House responsible for ruling over Arrakis became immensely wealthy, and, most importantly, had access to huge supplies of melange.

Its governance is a peculiar paradox: the combined force of the Landsraad refuses to allow the Imperial House to control Arrakis (and the spice) directly, but only the Padishah Emperor is allowed to choose who administers to the planet, as all property in the Imperium is considered to belong to the Emperor himself. So, the

governorship over Arrakis is both a weighty responsibility and a great prize, to be used strategically to reward the Emperor's allies or to be wielded like a weapon against those who hold his disfavor.

Thus, the Corrino dynasty is able to use Arrakis as an effective means of both securing the loyalty of the faction deputized to rule over the planet, and as an inducement (or punishment) to any House who might have been perceived as a threat. This technique has continued to the present day, with the Landsraad constantly divided against itself, as certain factions seek to undermine those who hold the fief while others endeavor to build stronger relationships with them.

Certainly, the Minor Houses are not in a position to side too openly against the Major House presiding over Arrakis—the threat of a deficit in the availability of spice might be enough to topple some of the weaker factions in the Landsraad. The Major Houses are less afraid of such an eventuality, though they too are always ultimately at risk of their supply being cut off and their stockpiles depleting.

It is forbidden to stockpile melange, but it is almost certain that every House stores away quantities of the material to ensure against the possible risk of being deprived of a regular supply of the spice. The governing faction of Arrakis is always accused of establishing a monopoly on the production and supply of spice, in the same way that the Guild retains its monopoly over space travel. This is one of the great risks of the position—despite the wealth and exalted status it confers, it also possesses the ability to push a House into exile, should the Landsraad or the Emperor himself come to the conclusion that they have become too powerful. So long as the spice continues to flow, no one really cares too much what happens on Arrakis, but should production slow or cease, all eyes will quickly turn to Dune and demand an explanation.

The Harkonnen rule on Arrakis has thus far been remarkable for its brutality, particularly towards the the Fremen, who, unlike the city-dwelling natives, rebelled against Harkonnen rule. In retaliation, the Harkonnens even go so far as to hunt Fremen for sport, considering them as little more than animals, underestimating the danger the desert nomads present.

Under Vladimir Harkonnen, the ruling baron of the House, and his nephews—Feyd-Rautha and Glossu Rabban—melange production has increased through the most violent and ruthless methods of extraction. Regular pogroms are launched against the Fremen to try and exploit their access to the desert and its bounty. The Harkonnens have, however, also attempted to spend as little money on the mining operations it maintains as possible; this has left the various mining apparatus in a state of some disrepair. Despite this, the Harkonnens demand huge loads of the spice for export—a tactic which has proven popular with the Padishah Emperor, Shaddam IV.

The Harkonnens' approach has, however, alienated much of the Landsraad who regularly lobby for the removal of the House, perceiving, not unreasonably, that the Harkonnens' methods might prove successful in the short term but are almost bound to compromise long-term productivity. There are rumors that the Padishah Emperor is beginning to tire of the Harknonnens' rule of the planet and may award the siridar feif to the increasingly popular Leto Atreides. It is also said, however, that the Emperor fears the Atreides influence over the Landsraad and would rather have him removed altogether. Who can say which eventuality ultimately transpires... such is the endlessly unpredictable nature of the politics surrounding Arrakis.

## The Fremen

Descended from the Zensunni Wanderers who sought refuge from persecution, the ancestors of the Fremen have been upon Arrakis since before the Guild, even before the Imperium. Their early years upon the planet are lost largely to legend, though it is known that they adapted quickly to the strange and harsh environment of Arrakis and came to live in harmony with it, though at an extraordinarily disciplined and harsh equilibrium at the best of times. The Fremen mastered the riding of sandworms, the most colossal of all living things, and learned to coax water—life itself—from the desert where there is none. They were there upon Arrakis when melange became the most sought-after substance in the universe. And even as their planet became the most important in the cosmos and as they became the subject of curiosity, inquest, and hostility, the Fremen remained. Theirs is a culture dedicated to a single principle: survival. Almost every aspect of their existence is dedicated to this overriding goal. Survival at all costs. How else could they have lived so long on Arrakis?

### THE VALUES OF THE FREMEN

Water—the search for it, its preservation, and its consumption—influences every facet of Fremen life. It is not simply a matter of survival, but a matter of honor. The decisions which a Fremen leader, called a 'Naib', must make are referred to as 'water decisions'. These are the kind of choices about whether to spare a life or kill, to help the wounded or to give them the gesture which leads to suicide.

The most unbreakable of bonds is a 'water bond', forged between two people who are prepared to share that most vital of liquids. The home of a person to whom one is dedicated and loyal is referred to, with the utmost respect, as 'the place of his/her water'. A person's water is not simply the water they possess; it is also the water contained in their body, their most valuable commodity

and resource and the means by which they contribute to the survival of the sietch, even after death.

Such a concept is alien in cultures where a person's wealth is inherited or won in business and power is typically accorded depending on the name you were born with, and abhorrent to the Harkonnens. The way of the Fremen is intimately tied to the continuing of the Fremen way of life, to the tribe. Water is the singular and continual focus of Fremen activity and culture. It dominates everything; its absence dictating how the Fremen have become such a distinctive culture.

This different view of water is often extremely difficult for outsiders to adjust to; the act of spitting, considered uncouth elsewhere in the universe, is considered a mark of extreme respect in Fremen culture. To actively, and knowingly, waste the body's water in such a way is to demonstrate the deepest loyalty and commitment.

## THE STILLSUIT

All Fremen are immediately identifiable by their strange and practical uniform—the stillsuit. The stillsuit is an ingenious piece of design, carefully calibrated and assembled to preserve and capture moisture. Layers of fabric, mesh, and absorbent fibers are meticulously woven together, along with heat exchange filaments and salt precipitators—these are combined with tubes which run the length of the suit and provide a filtration system. When worn, the design of the stillsuit enables almost all the body's water to be captured, cleaned, and drunk again. The stillsuit even reclaims urine and feces, cleansing it and providing the wearer with potable water, via specially designed purification pockets contained in the suit's thigh pads. While this isn't pleasant or refreshing to drink, a stillsuit wearer can endure weeks in the open desert, surviving only on this reclaimed water. Such is the way of the Fremen. It is an effective solution to the near constant challenges of water scarcity and the endless, enervating heat of the desert.

A well-worn stillsuit stinks, as it is designed to capture the effluvia of the body and convert it, but such niceties are of little importance to a people whose home planet is seemingly perfectly designed to kill human beings. When on the surface of Arrakis and exposed to the sun, the Fremen are entirely covered, every inch of skin obscured and protected. They typically go masked, as the stillsuit provides a facial covering to catch molecules of water emitted in each breath, and gloves cover the hands.

The centrality of the stillsuit to Fremen life is reflected in the value placed on it by their culture. The offering of a stillsuit to a guest or friend is a mark of great esteem, especially given the unparalleled quality of Fremen-made stillsuits. It is said that those wearing a stillsuit of Fremen manufacture lose no more than a thimbleful of water in an entire day. There are several private companies (based off Arrakis) which have tried to match the quality of Fremen stillsuits. As yet, none have come close.

## THE STILLTENT

A stilltent is created using the same technology as a stillsuit, but expanded, enabling Fremen to sleep on the surface of Arrakis when necessary and minimize the loss of water as a result. It provides an effective shelter, offering protection against sandstorms and the smaller varieties of Arrakeen fauna. The Fremen prefer to take shelter in their sietches; the exposure of the surface is to be avoided whenever possible. And, certainly, no stilltent can provide protection against the attack of a sandworm or an enemy force.

## THE SIETCH

The term sietch is something of a flexible one in the Fremen language. It refers to both the literal encampment where a group of Fremen live and to the community who dwell therein. The people and the place are one. A physical sietch is typically located in one of Dune's many mountainous areas, taking advantage of the many natural cave networks which wend their way through the rock. These caverns are expanded and refined by the Fremen to render them as usable as possible, and to ensure that the full community can fit within comfortably.

A Fremen sietch village contains several different areas, including living quarters for each family. These are typically quite small rooms, hollowed out of the rock and demarcated by heavy curtains or drapes. The nature of a sietch legislates against much in the way of privacy and most of the larger areas in the underground complexes are communal spaces. These often have multiple uses; meals are held there, with the whole community gathering to share food. Meetings are conducted between the elders and the naib—the sietch's leader, a position earned through challenging and killing the previous incumbent—in such spaces, when their subject matter is considered appropriate for the ears of all, and the various religious rituals which the Fremen conduct are also typically held in these areas, so that the entire community can practice their religion as one.

## SIETCH POLITICS

Governed by a rigid system of honor, Fremen are treated with considerable care by most who visit Arrakis. Fremen are formidable combatants—in part because of the necessity of physical toughness for any member of the tribe, should they wish to survive the rigors of life on Arrakis and contribute, but also due to relentless training and combat practice which all Fremen are expected to undergo, beginning as children and continuing for the rest of their lives. An impolite look or poorly chosen word has resulted in a challenge to the death. Any quarrel within a sietch which cannot be settled with words is settled with blades—particularly the crysknife. These fights (referred to as 'Tahaddi' by the Fremen themselves) are usually to the death—anything less would require the loser to live with an unbearable shame—and are watched by the whole sietch.

Fremen duels to the death carry with them a great weight of responsibility. The winner claims the water of the loser, extracted from the loser's body itself with a device known as a deathstill. Duels are always fought without stillsuits, as part of the practice of Amtal, or the Amtal rule. Amtal refers to the practice of testing something to destruction, with the intention of discovering its limits. Testing a person without the protection of the stillsuit is part of the process. It also protects the precious water the stillsuit stores within it, of course, which is even more important. The victor also takes on responsibility for the vanquished's kin and children—being expected to take the loser's spouse or children as their own, just as they lay claim to their water. While life is long among the Fremen, due to spice ingestion, it is not necessarily precious. Water, however, always is.

## FREMEN BELIEF

Fremen follow a strange syncretic religion, which combines elements of the Old Terran Zensunni faith, but which has been changed over millennia to something uniquely theirs. Much of the faith revolves around the coming of the 'Mahdi', the Fremen messiah. There are dozens of different prophecies surrounding the Mahdi, where he emerges from, and how his coming is recognized.

The first and most prominent of these signs is that the leader who guides the Fremen to paradise, who avenges the numerous wrongs done to the people of Arrakis, is not a Fremen. He is the 'Lisan al Gaib', or the 'Voice from the Outer World', one in a tradition of guides and oracles in Fremen culture who descend from other worlds to offer guidance, to point the Fremen in the direction of their ultimate destiny.

The Mahdi, when he arrives, is destined to incite the Fremen in a great jihad, a holy war, which sets the stars themselves alight with slaughter. The devotion of the Fremen to martial pursuits is also linked to this, the need to be ready for when the Mahdi finally comes—no one wishes to be found wanting when the jihad is launched.

The history of the Fremen, as recalled in their oral histories, is filled with examples of persecution. They were driven from planet to planet; whenever they settled, they were soon subject to pogroms and oppression. This pilgrimage, in search of a home, only ended when they found Arrakis—a place so devoid of life, so impossible to inhabit that no one else would live there. Finally, the Fremen had a home… that is, until the spice was discovered and now even Arrakis was being hauled from their grasp. When the Mahdi comes, however, all these wrongs will be made right. The jihad, to the Fremen mind, is a settling of scores with the universe itself.

## FREMEN WARFARE

The aptitude of the Fremen for combat, and their ferocity in battle, is legendary. Harkonnen forces who attempted to corral and subdue the Fremen upon first arriving on Arrakis were quickly shown the folly of doing so. Several well-armored Harkonnen patrols were lost entirely. There are assertions that the unfamiliarity of fighting on Arrakis gives the Fremen an advantage over other troops. Certainly, the absence of body shields is an adjustment for most soldiers in the employ of their House. The Fremen eschew any such form of defenses, as any shield generator serves only to attract the attention of sandworms from vast distances away. As a result of this absence, the Fremen are also expert in the use of weapons which have fallen into widespread disuse elsewhere in the universe. This includes several ranged weapons—crossbows and spring-wound maula pistols in particular—foreign to the Harkonnen troops who are sent to raid their settlements.

Relying on long-honed ambush tactics, the Fremen make extensive use of their environment in any warfare. They know the desert so intimately, and it is so unremittingly hostile to outsiders, that any opponent is swiftly overwhelmed by the speed and brutality of their attacks. These assaults seem to come from nowhere, the sand suddenly seething with life—life almost as dangerous as the sandworms and almost as hard to escape.

## THE CRYSKNIFE

The most distinctive weapon used by the Fremen is undoubtedly the crysknife. Made from the tooth of a sandworm, each one is unique and bonded to its user. The crysknife is never used by another and to lose it would be a terrible dishonor for the owner. Obtaining a crysknife from Shai-Hulud renders each crysknife sacred—after all, they are shed by a god. Over the millennia, crysknives have formed part of Fremen culture. The Fremen have developed a rich series of traditions and superstitions around these blades. The most widely known is the fact that, once drawn, a crysknife cannot be sheathed until it has drawn blood. The second, and more impractical, is that no one outside of the owner's tribe can see the blade. To expose the crysknife to an outsider—except during battle—is taboo, and the crysknife must either be disposed of or else ritually cleansed, to render it fit once more for use.

## SHAI-HULUD

The Fremen see each sandworm of Arrakis as a god. This is a literal belief, each sandworm is a manifestation of the godhead, a fragment of the singular creator god. The name 'Shai-Hulud' is a reference to this, meaning something like 'Old Man of the Desert', or 'Old Father Eternity'. The Fremen's other name for the sandworms, 'Makers', is even more explicit in this regard. To the Fremen, sandworms reflect the creator of the universe. The veneration and respect which the Fremen pay to the sandworms is an intrinsic part of their spirituality, part of their connection with Arrakis and with the wider universe.

That is not to say, however, that the Fremen are not equally aware of Shai-Hulud as a dangerous animal that must be treated carefully. Over their lengthy existence on Dune, the Fremen have gradually established a means of dealing with and guiding and directing the sandworms, but never truly controlling them. The Fremen have evolved technology to enable them to ride the sandworms, using them to cross the desert at high speed. Such ingenuity has required endless caution and care. The Fremen understand the behaviors and moods of Shai-Hulud intimately. Sandworms are attracted to rhythmic noise, rising to the surface to defend their territory, and it is for this reason that Fremen cross the desert with such strange, asynchronous movements. They deliberately make their footsteps inconsistently spaced, confusing Shai-Hulud waiting below and minimizing the risk of being swallowed.

Fremen also utilize this knowledge to deliberately tempt sandworms to emerge from the sand in the form of the thumpers. These use a spring system to power two clappers, positioned at the top of a stake which is driven into the ground. When activated, a thumper emits rhythmic vibrations into the sand. This brings nearby sandworms racing to the surface, where the Fremen are then able to mount them.

Mounting a sandworm is an incredibly dangerous process—unsurprisingly. The Fremen carry two 'maker hooks' for this purpose. These tools are long, slightly curved pieces of metal, designed to latch onto the segmented rings of the sandworms. A Fremen carefully positions themselves to the side of the area in the sand where a sandworm is to breach—this must be done extremely accurately, else the Fremen is likely to be either devoured whole by the sandworm or subsumed into the vortex left by its passing and killed.

As the sandworm emerges and passes, the first hook catches onto one of the sandworm's rings, and the second connects into the next ring. The first hook is then used to pry open one of the sandworm's rings. These ring segments must be closed for a sandworm to return below the sand, else the sandworm's hide will be irritated. By keeping the first maker hook in place, the Fremen ensure the sandworm remains on the surface. The second hook is used to carry the Fremen up onto the sandworm's back as it twists to try and allow the ring segment to close.

The process takes practice and enormous courage, and is a rite of passage for all Fremen warriors, even though some die in the attempt. To become a worm-rider is one of the greatest experiences in Fremen society. To ride on the back of a god is to have embraced the ways of the Fremen entirely.

# Caladan

**Star System:** Delta Pavonis

**Moons:** One

**Habitable:** Class V

**Noble House:** Atreides

**Primary Export:** Agricultural (produce, tourism, and wines)

**Population:** Numerous and living on all parts of the planet.

**Languages:** Galach and Caladanian

**Locations of Interest:** Atreides Landing, Cala City, Castle Caladan, Mount Syubi, and Underwater Park

## OVERVIEW

Standing in stark contrast to the future home of the Atreides line, Caladan is a vibrant ocean planet with a scattering of landmasses. It is the third planet in the Delta Pavonis system and has been the ancestral home of the Atreides for 26 generations.

## HISTORY

As the Butlerian Jihad raged across the universe, Caladan remained one of the few Unallied Planets siding neither with the thinking machines or League of Nobles. The war lead to Piers Harkonnen being stranded on Caladan for the remainder of his days. Caladan and Salusa Secundus formed fishing worlds league to support each other during the war under Vorian Atreides, who founded House Atreides.

House Atreides has long ruled over Caladan and created a near-democratic world. House Atreides ruled the people with a fair hand under a duchy and siridar fief of the Imperium. Fair and just treatment has endeared the Atreides to the people and military alike and created a fiercely loyal populace. Caladan's military defense force is composed primarily of a strong aerial and naval superiority, making it practically impenetrable to outside forces.

Under the leadership of Duke Leto Atreides, military power expanded into a small highly skilled task force rivaling the Imperial Sardaukar. The skill and loyalty of the Atreides troops, coupled with the Duke's leadership make any attack on House Atreides on Caladan foolhardy, at best.

## CULTURE

Caladan's populace are sea people by birth. The water, fishing, and aquatic life are ingrained into them and influence every aspect of their lives. The planet has a strongly liberal culture with the concept of education and exposure to the arts for all its citizens, regardless of class.

## ENVIRONMENT

Rain and water are the two most prominent features of the planet's ecosystem, making it a paradise for agricultural economy, ample sea life, and tourism. Over 70% of the planet's surface is water, and there are three main continents. The largest and most industrialized of the three is the Western Continent. Followed by this is the Southern Continent that is mostly sprawling vineyard, and lastly the Eastern Continent, hosting an indigenous population that shuns their industrial counterparts and moves further inland when encountered.

## POINTS OF INTEREST

Cala City is located on the western continent and dwarfs every other city on the planet in size and population. Cala City served as home to the Atreides family since its foundation. The city is mostly surrounded by the beautiful, crystal clear, blue water that occupies most of the planet's surface.

Castle Caladan is the ancient home of House Atreides and is constructed of stone, wood, and reinforced with metal. The metal that lines the walls and ceilings is hidden beneath the stone to maintain the old-world aesthetics and is filled with rooms, halls, secret passages, and hidden crannies to get lost in. The temperature in the castle is constantly cool, regardless of the season. Every few centuries, a new room or hall was constructed to facilitate whatever need that arose. The dining room is known to be as much battlefield as diplomatic retreat for visiting nobles and is famed for hosting lush events where the Caladan wine flows freely. The vaulted ceiling contained a vibrant wooden pattern that catches the eye. The view from the upper floors of Castle Caladan is breathtaking, overseeing the vastness of Cala City all the way to the shadow of Mount Syubi reaching tirelessly skyward, accompanied by the roar of the great Marius River flowing next to the castle.

# Giedi Prime

**Star System:** Ophiuchi

**Moons:** None

**Habitable:** Class IV

**Noble House:** Harkonnen

**Primary Export:** Industrialization (enslaved peoples, planetary minerals, and weaponry)

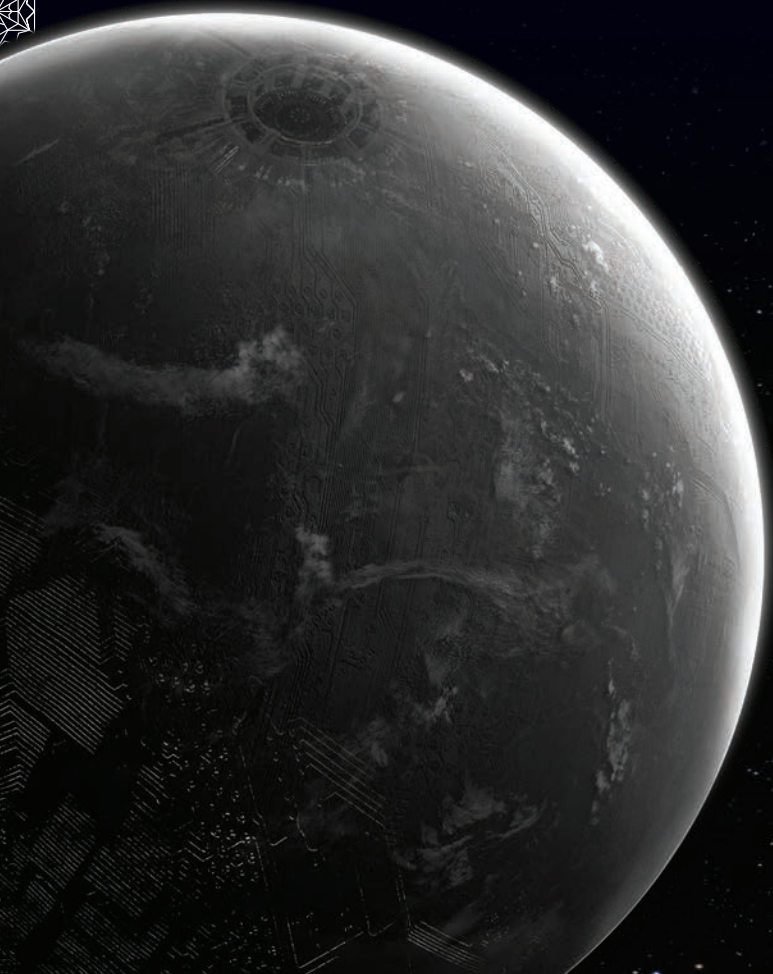
**Population:** In tightly controlled groups in the city. Escaped enslaved people live in the outskirts.

**Languages:** Galach

**Locations of Interest:** Barony, Eastern Wasteland, and Giedi City

## OVERVIEW

A heavily industrialized world with pockets of nature ruled in an authoritarian manner. The populace works in the factories, military, or battle in the arenas for the pleasure of House Harkonnen.



## HISTORY

Giedi Prime during the Butlerian Jihad under the command of Magnus Sumi was an active member of the League of Nobles. The planet fell to the thinking machines, resulting in it being occupied and causing Sumi's death. Once freed, after the war the planet became the homeworld of House Harkonnen.

Giedi Prime is the vehicle House Harkonnen used to acquire power and move from being a House Minor to a House Major. Their focus on maximizing profit without regard to ethics propelled them to become a powerful House. They rule this planet through a mixture of fear, a military state, and rewarding treachery, creating a ruthless society.

## CULTURE

The culture of Giedi Prime is one of oppression. Its people have few rights and much of the populace are enslaved. Those that were not enslaved could become so at the whim of House Harkonnen. The economic structure was built to move people towards the military as the only escape from working in the industrial factories until an early death.

## ENVIRONMENT

While once a beautiful world, generations of weapon manufacturing with little regard to the impact on the environment turned Giedi Prime into an industrial wasteland under a shiny, pleasant veneer. The Harkonnens chose a few key cities to make immaculate for visiting guests and there provide the illusion of luxury.

## POINTS OF INTEREST

House Harkonnen rules the planet of Giedi Prime from the capital city of **Barony**. Barony resembles historic Rome, with its population mainly composed of enslaved people and gladiators battling for the amusement of their lords. The buildings that dominated the city are all rectangular with no access on the ground level to keep the enslaved populace trapped. This way, the enslaved people could always look skyward towards the Harkonnens.

**Giedi City** is a shining example of Harkonnen ingenuity for industrialization. The city is the primary producer and government center. Massive weapons factories stand beside government halls of power, with each working in perfect unison. The streets, parks, and canals are clean, appearing as if they are manicured around the clock. In fact, they are, the enslaved people under a watchful eye are constantly cleaning the city to maintain the illusion of industry and civility side-by-side.

# Ix

**Star System:** Alkalurops
**Moons:** Six artificial moons
**Habitable:** Class IV
**Noble House:** Vernius
**Primary Export:** Technology (sophisticated machines, hunter-seekers, orships, robots, and weather controls)
**Population:** All live underground in small collectives.
**Languages:** Galach and Ixian
**Locations of Interest:** Grand Palais, Ixian Majorius, Ixian Shipyards, and Vernii

## OVERVIEW

The most technologically advanced planet in the Known Universe, with complex machines that break the moral laws established by the Butlerian Jihad.

## HISTORY

After the Butlerian Jihad, Ix rose to prominence for its technology under House Vernius. The damaged surface from the war and numerous storms led to the people moving underground. The subterranean caverns provided a natural level of secrecy that Ix used to experiment with outlawed technology.

Ix defeated its rival House Richese, becoming the primary manufacturer of Heighliner vessels for the Spacing Guild. Their success did not go unnoticed by Elrood Corrino IX, who plotted with the Bene Tleilax to remove House Vernius using a Face Dancer, a genetically created shapeshifter, to cause a riot among the lower class. Then both Imperial Sardaukar and Tleilaxu conquered the world, placing the Bene Tleilax in rulership of Ix for a time, until House Vernius, with the aid of young Duke Leto Atreides of Caladan, won control over the planet back from the Tleilaxu and petitioned the Landsraad to formally acknowledge their dominion. Restored to authority there, House Vernius currently rules over Ix, attempting to reclaim their former glory.

## CULTURE

The two most valuable assets on Ix are intellect and secrecy. The competitive nature of achieving the next scientific breakthrough or breaking ethical laws means little if your competitor or the Imperium discovers it. The Ixians secretly dabble in artificial intelligence and robotics, but their progress is a closely guarded secret.

## ENVIRONMENT

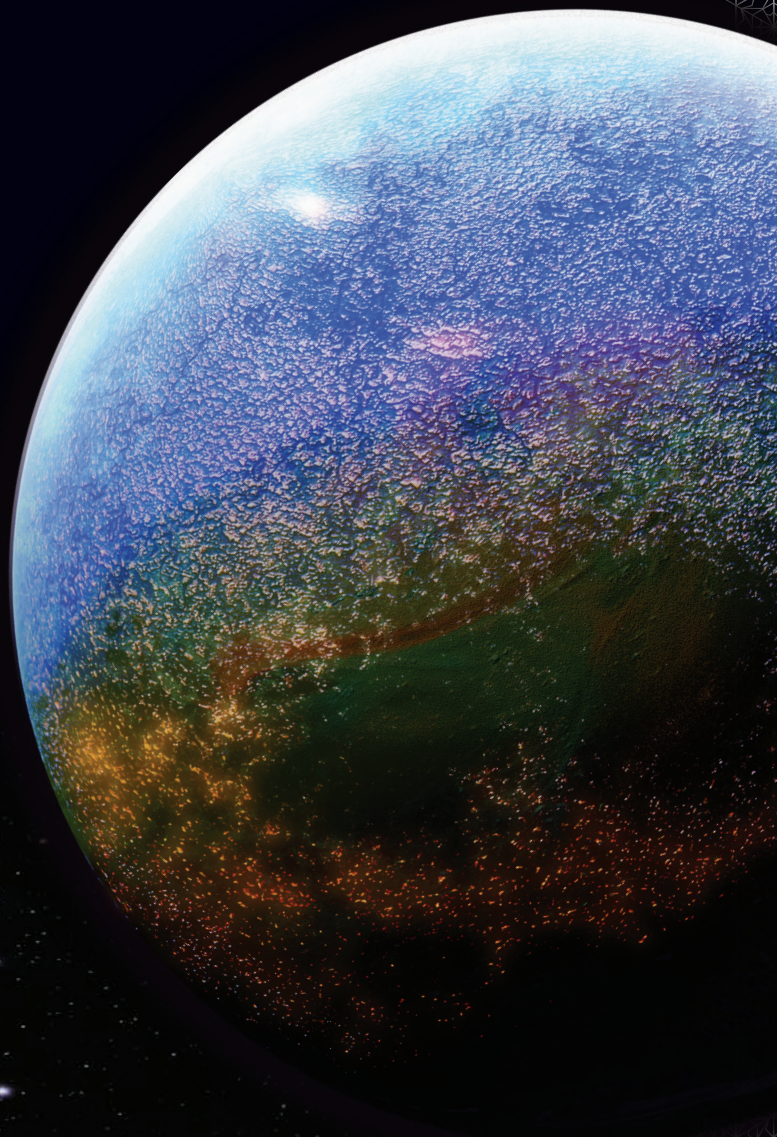
The surface of Ix is little more than a scattering hollow town across the globe with small two-story buildings. The largest of which host the main public spaceport for the planet. Nearly 90% of Ixians live in subterranean caves, with those aboveground a face for unwitting visitors.

## POINTS OF INTEREST

The capital of Ix is the underground city of **Vernii**. The nobles live on the top levels of the upside-down city, allowing them to look down upon the workers and others that live in the warrens at the bottom of the city. Diamond pillars support the rock roof, with walkways, tube transports, and aerial vehicles allowing movement throughout Vernii.

**Ixian Majorius** is the largest terrain city and the one most visitors see, as it is home to the only visitor spaceport.

The **Grand Palais** serves as a palace for the Vernius House and key administrative personnel. The palace is reinforced and armored against attacks, to protect those in power.



# Junction

**Star System:** Classified

**Moons:** Two orbital space stations

**Habitable:** Class IV

**Noble House:** Spacing Guild

**Primary Export:** Transportation

**Population:** Densely underground complexes.

**Languages:** Galach

**Locations of Interest:** Navigator School, Navigator's Field, Space Port, and Spacing Guild Headquarters

## OVERVIEW

Junction is the headquarters of the Spacing Guild and the largest-known training facility for Navigators.

## HISTORY

The original name of the planet that would become Junction has long since been lost to time. It was the Spacing Guild that renamed the planet and retrofitted it to its current state. The inviting environment, flat land, and key locations along the travel routes have made it an ideal new home.

## CULTURE

The culture of Junction is more relaxed than one would imagine. The population is focused on flying and what it takes to stay flying. The prominence of the Spacing Guild and the Bank has made it a hub for those looking to find anything in the Imperium.

## ENVIRONMENT

Junction is a grassland ecosystem that once had numerous lush green fields. Now those green fields are concrete and metal landing strips for Guild spacecraft, countless repair shops, and a massive, secured bank.

## POINTS OF INTEREST

Junction has the only known **Navigator School** in the entire universe. Specially selected citizens from around the galaxy come to Junction in hopes of one day becoming Navigators.

# Kaitain

**Star System:** Alpha Waiping

**Moons:** Four

**Habitable:** Class IV

**Noble House:** Corrino

**Primary Export:** Imperial government

**Population:** Primarily in large cities and some in smaller settlements.

**Languages:** Galach

**Locations of Interest:** Contemplation Tea House, Corrinth, Golden Rivers, and the Suk School of Medicine

## OVERVIEW

A lawful and modern city of beauty that is the seat of the Empire.

## HISTORY

Kaitain was untouched by humans or thinking machines during the Butlerian Jihad and afterwards. House Tantor blasted the capital planet Salusa Secundus with atomics, laying waste to it. The current near-uninhabitable state of that planet forced Emperor Hassik Corrino III to choose a new seat of power. His advisors provided several alternatives, and Hassik III selected Kaitain.

The planet's natural beauty, temperament, and malleability made it an optimal choice for a new capital world. Hassik III destroyed House Tantor in retaliation for Salusa Secundus and wanted to install a sense of confidence in the people afterward, to prove House Corrino's strength and capability to move forward. Legions of Imperial construction forces set out to build cities to parallel the planet's natural beauty.

The capital planet is a picturesque world of grace, opulence, and abundance. Immense buildings made of glass and metal reach skyward with breathtaking art displayed throughout each city. Each angle, stone, and tree has been precisely planned to instill the perfect sense of wonder.

## CULTURE

All worlds within the Imperium are respected but none more than Kaitain as the seat of Imperial power. The citizens obeyed the laws and roles set out before them. Anything less risks the eye of the Imperial bureaucracy. The people are lawful and happy, or at the very least appear to be to avoid repercussions.

## ENVIRONMENT

Kaitain is a glorious world and the Emperor paid for it to be that way. Due to the move from devastated Salusa Secundus, the Emperor hoped it would evoke a sense of awe in anyone visiting this new Imperial throne world. Kaitain is warm year-round with few clouds to obscure the crystal blue sky, and only the rarest of storms occur.

## POINTS OF INTEREST

The wondrous **Corrinth City** holds the distinction of being the capital city of the planet, home to the Padishah Empire for nearly 10,000 years, and the operational center of the Imperium. A war of egos between the Emperor and the Landsraad led to countless monolithic buildings dominating the city, ranging from museums to homesteads. The Imperial style of beautiful slender buildings appears almost unstable because of how they sway, but the sight of their colorful exteriors soothes most who look on them.

Kaitain's **Hassik III Center for the Performing Arts** is a wonder of the Imperium. The immaculately constructed marble building was masterfully designed to reverberate every sound at an enjoyable level regardless of volume. Whether a whisper or loud roar, it is pleasantly heard. The colorful windows, curved cuts into the stone columns, and vastness of the building is a tribute to Imperial architecture.

Near the Imperial Opal Palace is the **Contemplation Tea House**. Peacocks strut freely in the pristine Palace gardens surrounding the tea House year-round. Some of the best food on Kaitain comes out of the restaurant's kitchen, and the waiting list is decades-long. The waitstaff wear long angular uniforms in slightly offset House Corrino colors, ever-present but out of the sight of guests.

# Poritrin

**Star System:** Epsilon Ophiuchi

**Moons:** One

**Habitable:** Class IV

**Noble House:** Maros (Alexin/Lords Council)

**Primary Export:** Agricultural

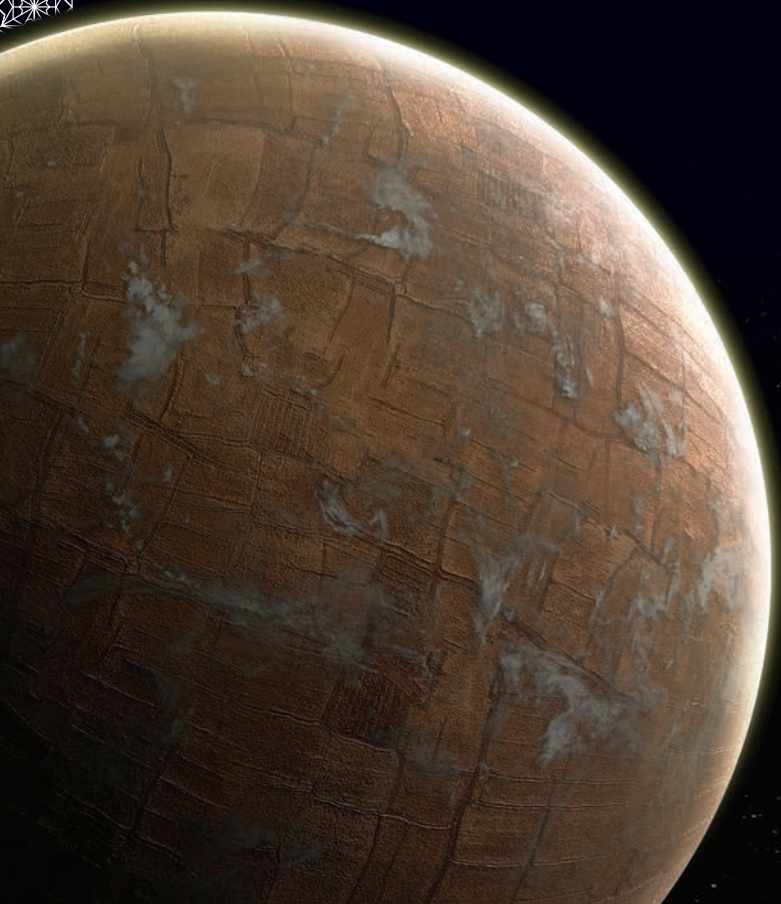
**Population:** In small settlements scattered around the planet.

**Languages:** Galach

**Locations of Interest:** Isana River, Municipal Museum, Poritrin City, and Starda Spaceport

## OVERVIEW

The third planet in the Epsilon Ophiuchi system, **Poritrin** was largely supported by agriculture and enslaved people, though the latter has long since been untrue. Significantly it was the homeworld of the Zensunni Wanderers, who cast off to the stars, some arriving on Arrakis where they became the Fremen. It is also famous as the birthplace of Tio Holtzman, the scientist whose pioneering work enabled tremendous advances in shield and foldspace technology, among other achievements. Less famous but equally important is Norma Cenva, inventor of glowglobes who eventually helped found the Spacing Guild and became its first Navigator.



## HISTORY

Life on Poritrin is believed to be more ancient than any known, though records of the time are less than certain. The Zensunni arrived on Poritrin, their original planet of origin lost to the ages, and lived contentedly for an unknown amount of time. Their peaceful existence made them easy prey for the forces of Salusa Secundus and Bela Tegeuse.

The Bludd family ruled much of Poritrin in the early days, remembered for their extensive exploitation of slaves. The enslaved populace—largely Zensunni—was used to harvest fields and reinforced the agricultural economy. Numerous revolts arose in attempts to throw off the shackles of enslavement and were all viciously quelled by government forces. After each revolt, a prolonged public execution was carried out to instill a sense of fear into the people.

The planet was a member of the League of Nobles. During the Butlerian Jihad, a Poritrin scientist, Tio Holtzman, working closely with an unsung genius Norma Cenva, invented the Scrambler Web, a device that destroyed any gel circuitry and crippled thinking machines. With assistance from Holtzman, Vorian Atreides laid a trap for the thinking machines and the victory elevated both to fame.

Poritrin serves the Imperium as a supply location for enslaved people.

## ENVIRONMENT

The lush river world is a paradise for travelers. The ecosystem is perfectly balanced to grow crops for the populace as a primary export. Isana River's importance is integral to the culture, with honored guests of Starda washing their hands with water from the river and the enslaved people sending flaming rafts with the dead on them down the river so their ashes are carried out to sea to rest.

## POINTS OF INTEREST

Though not the largest city, **Starda** is the capital of Poritrin, built near the Isana River. The capital city is home to the only spaceport on the planet and primary hub for traders. The river had cut through rock, providing an ideal location for the city's construction.

**The Isana River** is the lifeline of Poritrin traders using boatcars and other seafaring vessels to travel to Starda. Those vessels are loaded with grains, flora, metals, and goods to trade. Even before space travel, trade was lucrative, but became even more profitable as a prominent agricultural world.

# RICHESE

**Star System:** Epsilon Eridani

**Moons:** One (artificial)

**Habitable:** Class IV

**Noble House:** Richese

**Primary Export:** Technology (starships, miniaturization, sophisticated machines)

**Population:** Scattered around the planet living in moderate-sized cities.

**Languages:** Galach

**Locations of Interest:** Castle Richese, Lugdynym, and Richese City

## OVERVIEW

The only rival to Ix in technological achievements that stretch the boundaries of the mandate against thinking machines.

## HISTORY

Initially a Synchronized World under the control of thinking machines, Richese rose to prominence under the rule of House Richese after the Great Purge. The destruction laid waste to the planet and drove the populace to depend even more on technology to rebuild. That dedication to understanding technology aided House Richese in maintaining a firm grasp of different sciences and excelling in the art of miniaturization, which became a trademark of Richese devices.

Richese became the primary distributor of Heighliners, colossal spaceships that could fold space, for the Spacing Guild. Not only the prime distributor of Heighliners, House Richese was also responsible for spice operations on Arrakis. The dominance of the Heighliner market and spice operation led to several other noble Houses plotting Richese's downfall.

The planet stretched itself too thin while engaging in an economic war with the Ixian House Vernius, sending Richese spiraling into bankruptcy. These economic woes forced them to use substandard and cost-cutting tactics to save the House and the planet. By losing the economic war, Richese was usurped by Ix, who became the main Heighliner distributor.

In quick succession, Richese also lost control of Arrakis to House Harkonnen. House Vernius dealt one last blow, seeding rumors that all Richese technology was nothing but dubious-quality versions of Ixian technology. Richese retained a vital role in the universe as a technology planet but was diminished entirely but for their crowning achievement, Richesian mirrors, miniaturized power chips that no other company can replicate.

Lastly, Emperor Shaddam IV destroyed the artificial moon Korona and with it, Richese's illegal spice trade (see **Points of Interest**, below). The destruction inadvertently killed scientist Haloa Rund and destroyed his prototype no-field technology.

## CULTURE

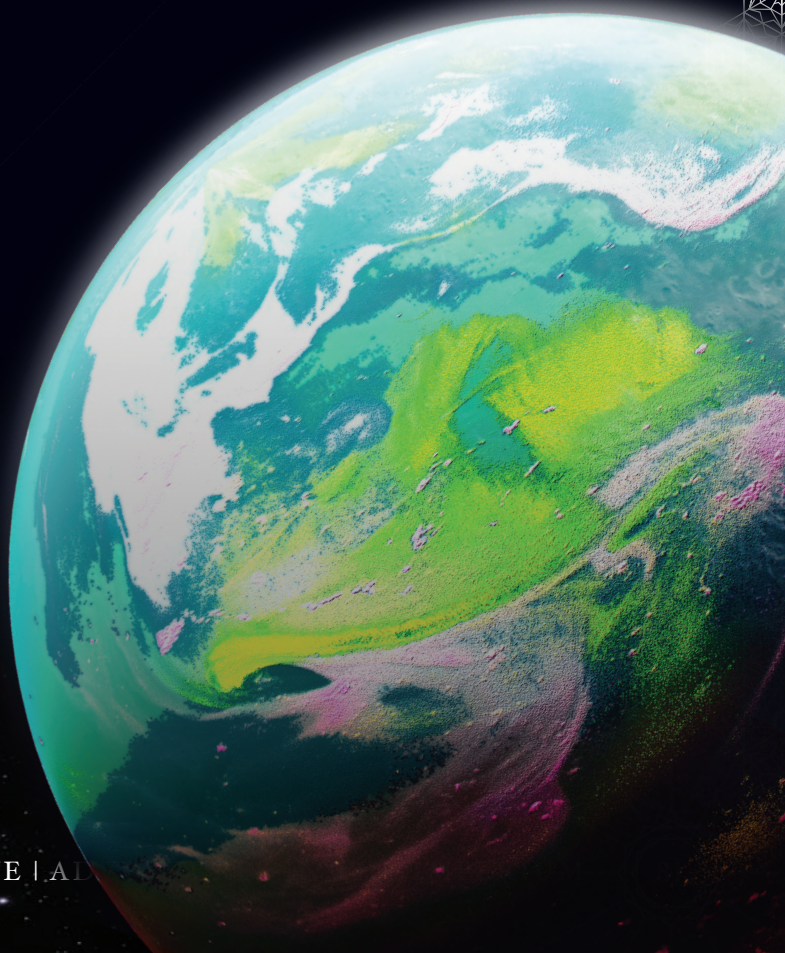
Richesian culture places a high value on the balance between success and family life.

## ENVIRONMENT

Richese is a standard-class planet experiencing different seasons, rains, and summers found on a temperate world.

## POINTS OF INTEREST

A single artificial moon, **Korona**, once orbited Richese. The satellite was built as a research station and illegal smuggling spice den that successfully operated for decades before being discovered. After the Empire learned of its secondary purpose, the moon was destroyed during the Great Spice War. Some of the debris from the destroyed moon rained down on the planet while the rest went into orbit. Debris from Korona continued to plummet onto the planet every few months, with some burning up during descent and the rest striking the planet and leaving craters in its wake.



# Salusa Secundus

**Star System:** Gamma Waiping

**Moons:** Six

**Habitable:** Class II

**Noble House:** Corrino

**Primary Export:** Sardaukar

**Population:** All live under life sentences, with most in the prisons.

**Languages:** Galach

## OVERVIEW

House Corrino's former homeworld was once beautiful, but Salusa Secundus is now a prison planet in service to the Emperor and a training ground for his elite Sardaukar.

## HISTORY

Bovko Manresa, first viceroy of the League of Nobles, settled on Salusa Secundus during the Old Empire. Manresa oversaw a refuge for humans fleeing the Titans and housed the nobles after the destruction of the Hall of Parliament. In that move, the city became the capital of the League. The planet repelled multiple thinking machine invasions.

Salusa Secundus was the capital of the Padishah Empire for centuries. Emperor Hassik Corrino III relocated the Imperial Throne to Kaitain after an onslaught of atomic weapons by House Tantor. Hassik turned the destruction into a boon rather than a flaw by converting the ravaged planet into a prison. The harsh environment also led to the perfect breeding ground for the Emperor's elite troops.

## CULTURE

Salusa Secundus operates on the principle of breaking people down and rebuilding them into whatever the Imperium needs. That may be done in the military to create elite shock troops or in the planet's many prisons.

## ENVIRONMENT

Originally, Salusa Secundus was a temperate world capable of sustaining life. At that time, the planet had numerous trees, different seasons, clean water, and abundant animal life. In the wake of the atomic destruction, the planet became little more than a barren wasteland, where only the strongest can survive. Living on the planet required overcoming the hostile environment, along with dangerous wildlife, unpredictable weather, and irradiated soil. The planet is home to the shigawire plant, a metallic vine found on only one other planet in the Known Universe.

## POINTS OF INTEREST

The main city of the prison planet is **Zimia**. While once a glorious city surrounded by greenery, with culture oozing out of every building, and a sense of royalty, it became a barren blasted-out hovel that houses the lone spaceport on the planet. Most of the traffic now is prisoners arriving or freshly trained Sardaukar departing.

# Tleilax

**Star System:** Thalim

**Moons:** None

**Habitable:** Class V

**Noble House:** None

**Primary Export:** Biotechnology

**Population:** In large collectives working together.

**Languages:** Galach, Tleilaxu, and Whistling Language

**Locations of Interest:** Bandalong, Factories, Mentat Training Center, and Thalidei

## OVERVIEW

An isolationist and fanatically religious world inhabited by a people that have mastered genetic manipulation with their Face Dancers and gholas.

## HISTORY

Tleilax was an Unallied Planet during the Butlerian Jihad that sustained itself as an organ farm and supplied enslaved people for resources throughout the universe. They remained largely untouched by the war.

After the war and the ensuing millennia, the planet became more religiously fanatical and insular regarding outsiders. They continued to trade in enslaved people and bio-technological advancements, as they genetically altered themselves. Their understanding of genetics and disregard for ethics empowered them to create a version of Mentats training to corrupt their own Mentats

## CULTURE

Tleilax is a religious isolationist society.

## ENVIRONMENT

Tleilax is ecologically a welcoming world with a near year-round temperate climate. While most of the planet is urbanized and industrialized, it has many well-maintained natural areas for the populace.

## POINTS OF INTEREST

The holy city of **Bandalong** is exclusively for Tleilaxu.

The unsanctioned **Mentat Training Center** on Tleilax mirrors every other one in the Known Universe in excellence, with one noted additional feature. It is the only center creating twisted Mentats.

# WALLACH IX

**Star System:** Laoujin

**Moons:** Three

**Habitable:** Class IV

**Noble House:** None (under Bene Gesserit control)

**Primary Export:** Bene Gesserit training and knowledge

**Population:** Heavily populated cities and no one living outside of them.

**Languages:** Galach and other secretive Bene Gesserit means of communication

**Locations of Interest:** Cliff Walls, the Mother School

## OVERVIEW

Also called the Chapterhouse, Wallach IX is home to the Bene Gesserit and serves as their greatest training facility.

## HISTORY

The history of Wallach IX is tied to a hatred of humanity. Millennia ago, Yorek Thurr ruled the planet in service to Omnius. Thurr, even ascending as a ruler, worked as a traitor inside the League of Nobles for the thinking machines in hopes of gaining more power and position.

He left human space to rule Wallach IX and undergo the life-extending procedure. Upon gaining dominance of the planet, Thurr focused on the eradication of all human life. One of the many diabolic atrocities Thurr masterminded was the Omnius Scourge, a deadly airborne virus. Thurr escaped Wallach IX before the League of Nobles initiated the Great Purge on the planet. The devastated planet was taken over by the cymeks, who ruled it until their destruction.

Wallach IX became the homeworld centuries ago to its current rulers, the Bene Gesserit. The Sisterhood is critical to the continued existence of Wallach IX, as the planet would collapse economically without them. The few exports are tied to their training and schools, reinforcing their importance, and increasing their numbers with each passing day. Every Sister has stepped on Wallach IX at least once, always for training on the Chapterhouse, and later potentially for a meeting with the Mother Superior or to receive special assignments.

The importance of Wallach IX cannot be understated, and no vessel is allowed entry onto the planet or to reside in space around it without prior approval.

## CULTURE

Wallach IX's culture is one of obedience and community. The Chapterhouse is ruled by the Mother Superior who reinforces the Bene Gesserit beliefs and the mission of the creation of the Kwisatz Haderach. Over 90% of the population are Bene Gesserit either in training or graduated. Anyone else is either a worker, a guest, or a prisoner.

## ENVIRONMENT

Wallach IX is a forest ecosystem with cities carved out over the planet. Each city is a near-identical copy of each other down to parks, street names, and numbering. Visiting one city feels like being in any other city, granting a level of familiarity and a disconcerting feeling of having been someplace before but uncertain.

## POINTS OF INTEREST

**The Chapterhouse Mother School** is the ideal of every Bene Gesserit to attend, and provides education for many daughters of Major Houses, sent there for training if not to join the Sisterhood. The mammoth complex is at an undisclosed location to accept those the need to know and protect the school.

**The Wallach IX Archives** are the most sacred and secured location on all of Wallach IX. Deep in the bowels of the archives, under hundreds of meters of rock, steel, and reinforced plastics, are the records of the Kwisatz Haderach manipulation.

The **Three Moons** have orbited the planet since the time of the cymeks and are believed to be natural.

# Chapter 3: Creating Your House

*"Control the coinage and the courts-let the rabble have the rest." Thus the Padishah Emperor advises you. And he tells you: "If you want profits, you must rule." There is truth in these words, but I ask myself: "Who are the rabble and who are the ruled?"*

*—Muad'Dib's secret message to the Landsraad from "Arrakis Awakening" by the Princess Irulan*

In ***Dune: Adventures in the Imperium***, the player characters all serve a single noble House. So, before we create those characters, it is vital to determine a few details about the style, agenda, and attributes of the House they serve. The House is obviously of great importance to the players, as it determines what type of characters they can each create and what they might aspire to. However, it's equally important to the gamemaster, as it determines the general level of the campaign and what sort of adventures the players want to encounter. So the nature of the House should be a group decision between the players and gamemaster.

In later supplements we will be expanding the detail of Noble Houses and providing systems to manage their vast resources. However, in the meantime we offer some narrative tools to help the group understand and create a House of their own in terms of its nature and resources. Will the player characters' House be a kind and noble one like the Atreides, or a devious and brutal regime like the Harkonnen? Or something altogether new?

# House Type

The first decision to make is the general level of power the House commands. It might be a low-ranking House, only just able to stand on its own feet, or an ancient and powerful combine controlling several planets. While it's tempting to take control of the latter, the more power you have, the more enemies you have acquired and will continue to acquire. The more renowned and dangerous your House is, the more deadly your opponents will be. You have been warned!

Before making any definite decisions, your group—players and gamemaster together—should take a moment to discuss the story you all want to tell. Do you want to narrate the rise of a low-ranking House, or perhaps the fall of a great one? Will the House be a renowned haven of tranquility, or a military dictatorship? Will religious fanatics rule the House, or does it craft technology dangerously close to Butlerian proscriptions?

Once you have a few ideas, you should also consider what part your player characters are going to play. Will they be among the most important agents in a small House retinue, or cogs in a mighty administration? The larger the House, the less important the player characters will be to its leaders, but the more power they will command when they take control.

The gamemaster may already have a plan in mind for the campaign, so it's important that the players listen to those suggestions first. But there is no reason not to modify this if there is disagreement. Remember that everyone in the group should have a voice in creating the House at every level, as it will be the foundation upon which you build your campaign.

There are four 'House Types' from which you should pick one for your House. These are as follows:

## NASCENT HOUSE

The House has only just acquired Minor House status. They might have distinguished themselves in battle or at court, or perhaps developed a device or skill that might prove extremely valuable. At this point the House is only a noble family with a small retinue and a little land granted to them by their patron House Major, who controls the planet they reside on. However, as new arrivals to the Imperial stage they have no real enemies and little to lose. With time, they might rise to control their home planet, and perhaps even beyond.

## HOUSE MINOR

The House is an established House Minor, one of the most important of the vassal Houses that serve the same House Major. The House has a strong tradition or dedication and service to their patron, but has not established itself far beyond their home planet. Their holdings will cover around a third of their world or might be set upon a moon controlled by their House Major. However, they must constantly jockey for power among the other Minor Houses that also serve their House Major, rivals for its favor.

## HOUSE MAJOR

The House is the ruling power of an entire planet. Several Minor Houses serve its interests and it is a serious contender in the politics of the Imperium. The House has several agents and soldiers at its command and is a leading force in at least one area of commerce. Unfortunately, this sort of power does not come without making enemies. Spies and assassins are everywhere and there are many rival Houses, Great and Minor, that covet the power and resources this House possesses.

## GREAT HOUSE

The House is one of the greatest powers in the universe. It controls not only a homeworld, but a few other moons and even planets besides, all managed by loyal Minor Houses. The resources at its command are legion, and

its power is almost unassailable. Unfortunately, the forces lined against it are just as powerful. Not only are its resources coveted by its enemies, but they are also looking to destroy the House out of fear it might one day do the same to them. Perhaps even the Emperor is worried that this House's ambition might even turn to the Imperial Throne itself...

***Example:*** *After some discussion, the group decides to play an established House Minor, one looking to move out from under the shadow of the House Major they serve. They pick the type 'House Minor' and name it 'House Molay'.*

*The gamemaster receives 1 Threat per player to begin each session.*

### HOUSE TYPE AND THREAT

The gamemaster has a pool of points called **Threat** they can use to create all manner of problems and difficulties for the player characters (see **Threat**, p.155). How much Threat the gamemaster begins with each session of the game depends on what type of House the players have chosen (or attained in the course of play).

- **Nascent House:** no starting Threat
- **House Minor:** 1 Threat per player
- **House Major:** 2 Threat per player
- **Great House:** 3 Threat per player

# DOMAINS

Having established the general level of your House, we now turn to what it produces, or what it is famous for. As most Houses rely on mercantile power and CHOAM shares for their fortune, each House has developed a specialty in an area of business or produce that is important to the Imperium. We call these areas of acumen **domains**. Your House may have several of these, classed as either primary or secondary domains.

A primary domain is the area your House is most famous for. This is because it is something the House is considered to be one of the best in the universe at. Whatever it is, the whole universe knows your House is the best one to provide it. This might be a unique resource like spice, but it could be a common product your House is the unrivaled expert on. A primary domain need not be especially glamorous, but its power is unmistakable. While many sneer at the Atreides pundi rice, it is a staple food on hundreds of planets. For the Harkonnens, their control of spice has made them vastly wealthy, but it is a power that can be taken by the Emperor, can only be found in one place, and is coveted by every other House and faction in the universe.

Gaining a primary domain is one of the ways a House Minor can distinguish itself, although their patron House Major may take all the credit until they can move out of their shadow. No House Major is worthy of the name without something they are regarded as being the best at. While this monopoly does require resources to maintain, it invites little competition. A primary domain marks such power that most enemies look for easier pickings. However, when a House assumes it is unassailable and an enemy does manage to challenge their primary domain, the fortunes of the House can often fall quickly.

A secondary domain is an area that the House is known for but is not their main source of income. However, it is still lucrative. The House is considered a serious contender in this arena of business, but is far from controlling a monopoly. They are vying with several other Houses in their attempts to make it a primary domain and the competition may be exceptionally fierce.

This means that a primary domain is a narrative aid to explain what your House really does, but a secondary domain shows where the House is in conflict and what business direction it is moving in.

It is important to note that a House's domains are not the only areas of business or they are part of. Even a Minor House will have several interests, and those of a planetary power are vast. Just because industrial produce is not a domain for a House does not mean their home planet is empty of factories. However, they can only excel at a few things given the powerful competition among the Houses. So, for most Houses, it makes business sense to play to your strengths and corner a particular area of the universal free market.

It's up to the player group to decide what the primary and secondary domains of their House actually are. To help you do this, we have provided several examples, broken

### STARTING DOMAINS

Depending on its type, each House begins with one or more domains:

- **Nascent House:** 1 secondary domain
- **House Minor:** 1 primary domain and 1 secondary domain
- **House Major:** 1 primary domain and 2 secondary domains
- **Great House:** 2 primary domains and 3 secondary domains

down into areas of expertise. You are welcome to pick all your domains from the same area of expertise, but you do not have to. It makes sense to create (for instance) a farming planet known for its farm machinery as a primary domain and its training for stewards and farm workers as secondary domains. However, a military world known for its arms manufacture might also be recognized for its great operas and factory supervisors.

When you know what your domains are, you can then use this information to decide something about the culture of your planet. In the examples above, the farming House is clearly an arable world focused almost exclusively on farming. The military House may seem rather eclectic, but maybe their operas are all based on great battles and their supervisors run factories like a boot camp to increase efficiency. The primary domain might not lead this cultural detail either. The military House might apply the grand style of opera and the precision of a well-organized factory to its weapons design and manufacture.

## Areas of Expertise

The various domains listed below are grouped into areas of expertise for the sake of simplicity. They are further subdivided to help offer ideas for what precise domains might be found within each area of expertise. In some cases, you might even choose domains from the same subsection. A farming House might make three different types of crop produce for their primary and two secondary domains. There is nothing wrong with creating new areas of expertise if what you want your House to excel at isn't listed.

Each area of expertise is divided into the following sections:

- **Machinery:** This is any large-scale machinery or devices that might be created, either by the area of expertise or to help craft or maintain the area of expertise.
- **Produce:** This is something the area of expertise actually produces. Many areas of expertise offer several different types of produce.
- **Expertise:** Your House excels at training or managing the people who lead the area of expertise.
- **Workers:** Your House either trains or produces dedicated staff who are responsible for doing the actual work that makes the area of expertise flourish. They are usually required in large numbers.
- **Understanding:** This is the theoretical part of the area of expertise and allows a House to develop secret new techniques or strategies they might share with others, for a price.

### ARTISTIC

Artistic domains may not be very powerful, but they grant the House both fame and respect across the universe. Those famed for their performers might also use the opportunity to put spies within a traveling company. The famous Face Dancer spies of the Bene Tleilax were originally designed as performers (officially at least).

- **Machinery:** Stage effects, scenery pieces, scenic art, lighting and sound systems
- **Produce:** Plays, poems, novels, comedy sketches, musical pieces
- **Expertise:** Playwrights, poets, composers, directors
- **Workers:** Actors, stage crew, musicians, speakers, traveling companies
- **Understanding:** Philosophy, literary criticism, theatrical performance styles

### ESPIONAGE

Intelligence operations and secrets are the meat and drink of most Houses. As such, there are several who are renowned for supplying the mechanisms of the spy trade. A few even infiltrate other organizations to learn their secrets, not for themselves but so they can sell them to others.

- **Machinery:** Surveillance devices, sensors, jamming technology
- **Produce:** Information and secrets from other Houses, probably by a particular specialty (such as military secrets or blackmail information)
- **Expertise:** Spymasters and agent handlers
- **Workers:** Agents, spies, infiltrators
- **Understanding:** Particular forms of espionage and counterintelligence techniques

### FARMING

Houses that rely on farming tend to be pastoral and peaceful places. However, their power lies in creating something basic the other Houses may not realize how much they rely on.

- **Machinery:** Tractors, harvesters, large-scale farming equipment
- **Produce:** Crops and animal products (from special wheat to sheep and cheese)
- **Expertise:** Stewards, land managers
- **Workers:** Farm laborers, shepherds, and herders
- **Understanding:** New farming techniques, such as rotation, that increase productivity

### INDUSTRIAL

Industrial Houses tend to control planets full of factories and production facilities, but most do not let productivity destroy their home. Industrial items can range from filmbook readers to Guild Heighliners, although any technical House must take care to follow Butlerian proscriptions on what they develop.

- **Machinery:** Factory machines, spacecraft, large vehicles
- **Produce:** Mass-produced goods, refined alloys, toys
- **Expertise:** Supervisors, business managers
- **Workers:** Factory workers, craftsman, mechanics
- **Understanding:** New techniques for business management and factory operation

## KANLY

The next step forward from espionage is assassination. To avoid chaos, the Great Houses agreed on a set of rules for assassination to prevent a slaughter. These 'forms of kanly' are designed to limit both assassinations and the inevitable responses and are ruthlessly enforced by all the Houses. As such, they are also a lucrative area of business.

- **Machinery:** Assassination weapons and traps (hunter-seekers, mines, bombs, etc.)
- **Produce:** Poisons (not just to kill but to stun or weaken and to be near-undetectable)
- **Expertise:** Assassin masters, operation planners, and trainers
- **Workers:** Assassins, thugs, infiltration specialists
- **Understanding:** Means of assassination, infiltration techniques, deadly combat strikes

## MILITARY

While war is rarer than assassination, no House wants another to see they have a weak military, as that may be considered an invitation. Military actions are costly and logistically difficult, often requiring expensive Guild payments to move troops to another planet. But if you want to take land or facilities from another House you need soldiers to claim and occupy it.

- **Machinery:** Battlefield weapons, artillery, large-scale shields, tanks
- **Produce:** Ammunition, personal weapons, small arms (rifles, pistols, etc.)
- **Expertise:** Tacticians, officers, strategists
- **Workers:** Soldiers, engineers, pilots, logistics personnel
- **Understanding:** Military strategies and new tactics

## POLITICAL

To some Houses, politics is their meat and drink. These social gadflies don't just play the complex games of the Landsraad for extra power, they make these games their business. They don't have much personal power, but they have powerful friends, very useful for a Minor House seeking to rise. Such Houses are the ultimate courtiers, and the leaders of style and etiquette. They know who is doing what to whom and how to get the ear of the most powerful figures. However, they also make good mediators, understanding the complexities of House politics and how to keep everyone happy.

- **Machinery:** Couture fashion, expensive trinkets, message services
- **Produce:** Information, secrets, and favors, possibly even from the Imperial House
- **Expertise:** Political analysts, mediators, diplomats, fashionistas, social planners
- **Workers:** Courtiers, spies, administrators, servants, entourage
- **Understanding:** Diplomacy techniques, forms of etiquette

## PEOPLE AS RESOURCES

While few refer to it as such, slavery in many forms is rife in the Imperium, as it is a feudal monarchy at its core. On a daily basis people are bought and sold, whether as indentured workers, new assets for a House, or are conscripted into a House military. Though few would call themselves slaves, their lives are relatively constrained under the Faufreluches system, and social mobility is all but impossible. Indentured servitude is the norm, though this is enforced more by social convention than directly by the nobility.

This applies at all levels of society, not just for laborers and farm workers. When a House requires a Mentat they send details to the Mentat School (or to the Bene Tleilax for a twisted Mentat) noting the skills they are after. The school will then assign them with a Mentat that suits those requirements. While money still changes hands, the House is really paying for the training their new employee Mentat has received. Nevertheless, it is unclear how much say the prospective Mentat has about their new assignment, and their assignment is assumedly intended for life. The same can be said of Suk School doctors or Swordmasters, and Bene Gesserit concubines are assigned in a similar but not exact fashion.

This trade in people applies not only to specialists, but to groups of soldiers, workers, medical personnel, and many others. Trained people are 'reassigned for money' and are expected to be loyal to their new employer, whoever they are. While most will be well taken care of like any employee, few have any idea what awaits them in their new assignment. With their new masters in control of the whole planet, and passage on and off that planet controlled by the Guild, leaving is simply not an option for most people.

Luckily, while people might be forced into their new allegiance, not all Houses treat people badly, and most treat them neutrally or even well. Many noble families work hard to make sure their subjects live fulfilling lives. Those born and brought up on a planet might have all manner of career options, so long as they serve their House. Some pyons, as natives of a planet are called, may have little to no contact with the noble House that rules them, and simply fall under the jurisdiction of local authorities or leaders.

Unfortunately, not all Houses are so magnanimous. Some keep their populace cowering in fear and treat their subjects as little more than animals, or resources that can just be replaced when they 'wear out'. So, while life isn't always cheap in the Imperium, it is regularly for sale.

## RELIGION

Faith still plays a large part in the society of the Imperium. It remains a force powerful enough to create leverage in business ventures and is even a service that can be sold. The trappings of religion are popular, and some Houses have found a way to monetize religion and package it for sale.

- **Machinery:** Churches, statues, prayer beads, religious symbols, religious books
- **Produce:** Prayers, hymns, religious and inspirational writings
- **Expertise:** Philosophers, clergy
- **Workers:** Choristers, altar servants, community managers
- **Understanding:** New religious philosophies, new forms of faith

## SCIENCE

While the tenets of the Butlerian Jihad remain in force, it does not mean humanity cannot research and develop new scientific ideas. Many Houses have a research and development department to advance their domains and keep ahead of the competition. This domain often couples well with Industrial domains where a House might take full advantage of what they discover, rather than pass it on to others to make money from.

- **Machinery:** Laboratory equipment, quarantine areas, entire scientific facilities
- **Produce:** Chemical compounds, drugs, genetically-adapted humans and animals
- **Expertise:** Scientists and researchers
- **Workers:** Lab assistants and managers
- **Understanding:** New scientific research (many different possibilities in many areas)

***Example:*** *As a House Minor, House Molay has two domains: one primary and one secondary. For a primary domain, the player group decides to have an Artistic area of expertise. They choose poetry (Produce), making their home world a haven for the arts, where those accepted into their poetry groups are renowned for creating the most incredible verses in the universe. For their secondary domain, the group decides to branch out into assassination, and picks 'Assassins' (Workers) from the kanly area of expertise. The group decides that many of their poetry schools are actually a front for training assassins, who are also taught to kill with a certain poetic elegance.*

# Homeworld

Now that you know a little about what your House does you can detail a little more about its home planet and its coat of arms. The territory the House controls (be it a planet, moon, or just an area of land) is usually defined by the primary domain. Many Houses find their planet especially rich in a single resource, which is why it has become the foundation of their business. However, that still leaves a lot of options for what the place might look like. It is easy to assume an artistic House has an idyllic planet, but blasted features, dead forests, and brooding mountains might inspire an equally gothic form of popular art.

Your group should take a moment to talk about their House's home planet, and how they feel about it. If there are disagreements, the group might decide there are many different areas. Few planets are just one vast desert or entirely a water world. . Life in a crowded city will be different to life on a farm, and even a Minor House might have holdings that contain both.

As a group you should discuss what you want your House holdings to look like. But answering a few of the following questions might help you decide:

- What is the dominant form of weather on the world? Is it hot, a little cold, always rainy?
- What sort of habitation is there? Is it mainly cities, towns, or isolated farms?
- What is the crime rate like? Is the place peaceful or violent? How soft or hard is the House on crime?
- How content are the people? Do they respect their rulers or labor in fear of them?
- How much of the House's wealth is put into the community? Do they keep it for themselves or are their holdings full of public works and support systems?

***Example:*** *House Molay controls a string of large islands on the home planet of their House Major. The islands have a variety of features that might inspire the poets who travel around them. The people are generally happy, but the islands are sparsely populated with fishing villages and only one main town where the noble of House Molay live. Hidden away on several islands are their secret assassin schools, disguised as more fishing villages.*

# Banners and Arms

Each noble House has a coat of arms they proudly emblazon on all their holdings to remind everyone of what is theirs. The heraldry of the Imperium is nowhere near as complicated as that of old England but still serves as a clear symbol of each house.

Most Houses have a banner made up of one or two colors and a crest, which might be an animal, object, or even chemical element. The colors might be represented on their banner divided horizontally, vertically, or as a stripe, usually behind the crest.

It is up to the group to decide on the House banner. There are hundreds of possible options, from the hawk of the Atreides to the lamp of House Richese and the double helix of House Vernius.

***Example:*** *The group decides the emblem of House Molay is a scroll, representing poetry, and their colors are white and red.*

# House Traits

The final element of creating the House itself is to select its traits. These traits (see Traits, p.102) can be used by any of the player characters who are recognized as members of their House and imply the reputation the House has within the Imperium.

If a player spends 1 Momentum, they may apply one of the House traits to their character for the remainder of the scene. They may do this as often as they wish to spend Momentum, for as many of the House traits as they like.

Each House begins with a trait for any primary domains it has. This trait is the same as the area of expertise for that domain.

Each House also begins with a descriptive trait for its reputation. This might be 'Honorable' like the Atreides or 'Brutal' like the Harkonnen. This trait details the way the rest of the Imperium sees your House and expects its agents to behave.

Other Traits may be gained (or lost!) by the House during play, usually after an important event that changes their reputation in the Imperium.

***Example:*** *House Molay has a single primary domain: its well-regarded poetry. So, it has the trait 'Artistic'. As the House hides its assassination training camps and is looking to create a new name for itself, the group decides the House has been plotting for some time, gaining the trait 'Secretive' as its reputation House trait.*

# Roles

While the player characters are important agents of their House, many of them may intend to distinguish themselves and eventually take a more leading role. Within each House of the Landsraad are several positions that require exceptional talent and loyalty, but offer incredible power and responsibility within the House. While the ruler is the most renowned, they do not survive long without the assistance of such as a spymaster or advisor.

While it is not quite time for your player characters to ascend this high, one day they will. So, each player should take a moment to decide who they serve directly in their House. While they may report directly to the ruler of the House, a spy would mainly serve the Spymaster, a bodyguard the Swordmaster, and a courtier one of the many Advisors. Each player should decide who they report to, and to a certain degree, perhaps even who they intend to one day replace...

A character might not actually be the Heir but might still be a noble looking to prove to the ruler of the House that they are more suited to the task than their elder brother or sister. A Suk doctor might hope to replace the aging Chief Physician of the House when they finally retire, an assassin might even have a more direct way they intend to take over the position of Master of Assassins. How such promotion is handled depends on the way the House is run, but each character should have an eye on their own advancement.

If the player characters prefer to take on one of these roles themselves, there is little reason not to. It would be a little odd to have such a vital officer of the House working in the field as the player characters do, but it is not unheard of. In a small House Minor there may be little option when they need a good agent. Your group may also prefer a less direct form of gameplay (see **Agents and Architects**, p.7).

In the meantime, following is a list of common roles among the noble Houses. Not every House utilizes every position, and some might have multiple agents serving in the same position (such as Advisor or even Consort). However, the players and gamemaster should take some time to decide which positions are filled in their House and who it is that does so.

Is your Ruler a kindly old grandmother figure or a ruthless general? Is your Spymaster a secretive shadow behind the throne or a jovial raconteur who always seems to know who is doing what to whom?

For those you decide upon, give them a name and a trait or two to bring them to life. While you should determine the Ruler at the very least, if you can't think what to do for any of the other roles, leave them blank and return to them during the game as the details of your House become clearer to your group.

## RULER

This is the current leader of the House and bears its name as a surname. They hold a noble title such as Baron/Baroness, Graf/Gräfin, Count/Countess, Margrave/Margravine, Marquis/Marchioness, Duke/Duchess, or similar, and as the head of the House, they have a vote in the Landsraad. Every action performed by the House as a whole is done in the Ruler's name (or in the name of their superiors—the House Major above, or the Emperor). The Ruler makes all the most important decisions regarding the House and appoints others to their roles.

If the Ruler is wed to someone, they share in the title and may also take the role of Ruler if they desire. Whomever inherited the position of Ruler by birth takes precedence out of the two, however, and only one other person may be Ruler (others may take the Consort role instead). There may also be a struggle for power if the Ruler dies and two powerful claimants contest the succession.

**Rights & Responsibilities:** The Ruler has complete control over the House, and everyone must obey their commands. However, running the House takes all their time, and if they fail in or ignore their duties the House quickly falls apart.

## CONSORT

The Consort is the spouse, concubine, or companion of the Ruler, but either cannot or will not take on the role of Ruler themselves. In some cases, the relationship is purely a business one, but many Rulers and Consorts do love and care deeply for each other (such as Duke Leto and Lady Jessica). The Consort can attend court and speak on the Ruler's behalf when they are absent and may serve as Ruler if none is present (such as if the Ruler is dead and the Heir is not yet of age). The Bene Gesserit often place their agents (openly or clandestinely) in such a role. The Ruler would determine the Consort's true standing within the household, and by extension, their ability to speak for the House.

**Rights & Responsibilities:** The Consort always has the ear of the Ruler and as such has incredible influence behind the throne. This can often lead to others attempting to manipulate them as a means by which to control the Ruler.

## ADVISOR

There are many areas of expertise that a Ruler needs to be conversant with. This might be politics, CHOAM business, finance, social etiquette, Imperial history, or a host of other subjects. While a single political advisor is most common, some Houses employ several Advisors in many different areas to grant the Ruler the benefit of their experience. Other Rulers are so well trained (or arrogant) they feel no need for any assistance. The relationship an Advisor has with the Ruler also varies. Some Advisors cover a weakness in the Ruler's education or abilities, other times they are simply a trusted sounding board for the Ruler's ideas. The wealthiest Houses (especially the Imperial House) often employ Bene Gesserit Reverend Mothers in this capacity for their Truthsayer abilities.

**Rights & Responsibilities:** Each Advisor has a field of knowledge they are expected to be an expert in. It is up to them to keep up-to-date with any changes in that field of knowledge or new discoveries. When the Ruler asks for their understanding of a particular problem, they had better have an answer.

## CHIEF PHYSICIAN

Most Houses run a sizable medical staff, which requires coordination and management. However, as the most trusted doctor available, the Chief Physician also personally attends to the health of the ruling family. Maintaining the health of just the household staff and soldiers can require a lot of work. The larger the House, the larger the medical staff needs to be, and more so if the House is at war. The Chief Physician also works closely with the Spymaster to ensure no biological weapons or poisons are used against the House or its ruling family. As such they carefully monitor the health of everyone in the House and perform autopsies on enemy agents to make sure there are no further tricks or traps, such as implanted bombs, yet to be sprung. For reasons of security, Doctors of the Suk school are especially valuable, given their conditioning against doing any form of harm to their charges. However, few, if any, Minor Houses can afford Suk-trained doctors.

**Rights & Responsibilities:** A Chief Physician is the head of all medical units and staff in the noble House. As the personal doctor to the noble family they are also afforded an incredible amount of trust. In a world of assassins and spies, a doctor who is willing to betray their House can strike at its most vulnerable heart.

## COUNCILOR

The Councilor connects the Ruler to the people who serve the House, receiving and sorting through the requests of the citizenry to pass on to the Ruler, and then presenting the Ruler's decisions to the people in ways they can understand. It is the Councilor's responsibility to oversee the minutia of how the House is run, and to see that any problems that need to reach the Ruler's attention get there.

**Rights & Responsibilities:** The Councilor has their ear to the ground in terms of the ordinary people of the House. They know and understand their needs and can help the Ruler provide for them—or ignore them. They will also be able to determine the mood of the people and whether unrest may be on the horizon.

## ENVOY

An Envoy is a diplomat, responsible for the House's foreign policy—that is, the peaceful interactions between the House and their rivals, CHOAM representatives, the Landsraad, or third parties like the Bene Gesserit or the Spacing Guild. They oversee a staff of diplomats, messengers, and ambassadors. It is their responsibility to represent the interests of the House and its Ruler to outsiders.

**Rights & Responsibilities:** An Envoy needs to have a keen grasp on the state of the universe outside the confines of their House. Imperial politics can shift quickly and the ability to predict those moods can be the key to the House's survival.

## HEIR

The Heir is usually the ruler's eldest child, whether by blood or adoption. But some elder children can be passed over for a more competent or conniving younger sibling. A few have even been chosen from non-nobles who prove their worth and impress the Ruler. Only the Ruler may choose who the Heir is. Once nominated, an Heir's time is mostly spent learning how to take on the responsibility of Rulership. As such they may also handle some lesser duties on the Ruler's behalf.

**Rights & Responsibilities:** An Heir must simply keep themselves safe and be ready to lead the House should the Ruler fall. With assassins around every corner, this may be sooner than they think. An Heir is often a prime target for the enemies of a House, as without one a House can fall to confusion or infighting should the Ruler fall. As such, some devious Rulers openly nominate an Heir they don't like to provide a target, secretly priming another as their real Heir.

## MARSHAL

The Marshal ensures that the House's laws are enforced, and that the House's territories are orderly and secure. They often coordinate with others (such as the Councilor) on matters of security, but in matters of law and judgment, they answer only to the Ruler. To be an effective investigator, a Marshal must understand the criminal underworld, either knowing where to root out crime or being on first-name terms with gangsters, working to keep the peace.

**Rights & Responsibilities:** The Marshal is responsible for maintaining the rule of law within the holdings of the House. They might be a lone sheriff or chief of a large

police force, depending on the size and stability of the House. A corrupt Marshal can seriously damage the productivity of a House, allowing smugglers and crime to funnel funds away from the Ruler.

## SCHOLAR

The Scholar is a representative of higher learning, handling matters of science and academia on the Ruler's behalf and advising them on anything they are uninformed about. They are a form of expert Advisor, skilled not in theory and politics but in science and academic discipline. They conduct research and gather information under the Ruler's patronage, with the repositories of knowledge they cultivate advancing the House substantially with new innovations or discoveries.

**Rights & Responsibilities:** Most Scholars are left to their own devices to simply work on their studies, only being called upon to report their advances or when their specialized knowledge is required. If the projects they are working on are vital to the House, they may be under immense pressure to deliver solutions quickly. This may lead to dangerous mistakes if they are not careful.

## SPYMASTER

The Spymaster maintains a network of spies, assassins, and informants at home and elsewhere. It is their job to manage the clandestine espionage activities of the House, in terms of intelligence-gathering and counter-espionage. How underhanded they are about this depends on the needs of the House, but most Spymasters are devious in the extreme and extremely well-informed. Many even keep secrets from their Ruler to allow them to claim 'plausible deniability'.

Some Spymasters focus more exclusively on protecting their House using assassins rather than spies and informants. In this case one is called a 'Master of Assassins' rather than a Spymaster, although the term is not derogatory in any way. Some Houses even employ both a Spymaster and a Master of Assassins.

**Rights & Responsibilities:** It is up to the Spymaster to protect the House from the threats lurking in the shadows. They should never be surprised by the actions of their enemies, and always have a trap waiting for those who move against their House.

## SWORDMASTER

Also known as a 'Weaponsmaster', the title of Swordmaster is an ancient and honorable one. They are an expert in martial matters, serving as a military advisor, tactician, and bodyguard to the Ruler. Most also take a personal hand training the House troops and instructing the Heir how to protect themselves. The personal safety of the noble family is their direct responsibility, and one they take very seriously.

**Rights & Responsibilities:** A Swordmaster is not only a lethal fighter but a deadly tactician, often with experience honed on several battlefields. They need to be aware of every possible strategy an enemy might use against them and know how to ensure the noble family can be kept safe, no matter what.

## TREASURER

The Treasurer is the main financial officer of the House. They monitor the state of the House's funds, oversee tax collection, and handle other financial matters that are part of running the House.

**Rights & Responsibilities:** A good Treasurer can see a lot of details in the accounts, as discrepancies will reveal corruption, poor management and a host of other problems. They are also good at ensuring the right investments improve the House's financial portfolio. Many work hand-in-hand with CHOAM advisors to maintain the House's position within the Landsraad.

## WARMASTER

Where a Swordmaster is an expert in single combat, a Warmaster is the House general. It is their job to lead the House troops into battle, in whatever form that might take. They are the highest-ranking member of the House's military, responsible for raising, maintaining, and commanding the House's troops in both peacetime and during war. They may be a warrior themselves, or more of a leader and strategist, but matters of war are their province.

**Rights & Responsibilities:** Most Houses manage to get along without open conflict, but when they do engage one another, the battles are brutal and decisive. A Warmaster must be able to defend the House at a moment's notice and plan the logistics of moving troops with speed and efficiency, even to other planets when required.

# Enemies

Finally, we would be remiss not to mention that your House will have enemies. Even the most pleasant and honorable House has someone that hates them. This might be for some imagined slight or a belief they are not as they appear, but it might just as easily be because they really are honorable and decent and despised for that. One often sees their own failings in the face of one's enemy.

Luckily, such enemies need not be engaged in a deadly kanly vendetta such as between Houses Atreides and Harkonnen. Alliances and enemies can also change, as the politics of the Imperium can be very fluid. A situation that makes two Houses enemies one year might see them making an alliance for mutual benefit when the situation changes the next year.

The player characters' House will probably begin play with an enemy or two. No one gains power in the Imperium without upsetting a few people on the way. How many enemies they have depends on how high the player characters' House has risen.

## Number of Enemies

- **Nascent House:** No starting enemy Houses
- **House Minor:** One Minor House
- **House Major:** One Major House and One Minor House that serves them
- **Great House:** One Great House or two Major Houses (or one faction, such as Bene Gesserit, the Imperial Court, etc.) and a host of minor Houses who owe allegiance to one of these enemies.

## Hatred

Roll 1D20 for each enemy your player characters' House has, determining how much that enemy hates them and how far out of its way it will go to bring them down.

| Roll | Hatred |
|---|---|
| 1–5 | **DISLIKE**<br>Any interaction with this House is at +1 Difficulty, due to distrust, always thinking the worst. |
| 6–10 | **RIVAL**<br>The House actively seeks to bring the player characters' House down. They whisper about them at court and spread lies and gossip where they can. They avoid open conflict unless they see an opportunity to make a gain for themselves. |
| 11–15 | **LOATHING**<br>The House always has some a plan to destroy the player characters' House. However, they won't risk their own resources unless they can do serious damage. |
| 16–20 | **KANLY**<br>The House has dedicated all its resources to seeing the player characters' House not only fall but be wiped out to the last person. They take any risk if it might see an end to the player characters' House. |

## House Threat

As an enemy House is never far away, the gamemaster may spend 1 point of Threat to make any enemy House appear in the adventure in some fashion, whether in person or merely as a rumor. Their appearance might be part of a plan against the player characters, or they may simply be putting into play a plot of their own. They may even just be taking advantage of a moment of weakness with the player character House.

## Reason

There is a reason for this rivalry, although the details may be lost to history in some cases. Either roll 1D20 on the list below or choose a reason that makes sense to the group. Note that the player characters' House is not necessarily the injured party! They may just as easily be the aggressor or the House whose bad behavior caused the rift.

| Roll | Reason |
|---|---|
| 1–2 | **COMPETITION**<br>The House is in competition for a resource or place in the market and needs the other House out of the way to take control. This resource might be a particular holding, monopoly of a business area, or even a planet or moon. |
| 3–4 | **SLIGHT**<br>Something the player character House did at court caused them a loss of reputation or an embarrassment. However, a simple apology isn't good enough to repair their damaged honor. |
| 5–6 | **DEBT**<br>They or the player character's House has reneged on a deal. This might be through a misunderstanding, an unfortunate circumstance, or just because they could. |
| 7–8 | **ANCIENT FEUD**<br>The Houses have been enemies for thousands of years. Something one or more of their ancestors did caused a rift that has only widened as the centuries have passed. It is possible no one remembers what the cause was, although both Houses have their own version of the truth. |
| 9–10 | **MORALITY**<br>Something about the House sickens the other. They might encourage loose morals or a brutal regime but might just as easily be sickeningly loyal to the Emperor, honorable to a fault, or annoying in their religious dedication. |
| 11–12 | **SERVITUDE**<br>One of the Houses used to serve the other and now owes no fealty. The master House might want to return the 'upstart' to their 'rightful place', or the vassal House might seek revenge for being held back or badly treated. |
| 13–14 | **FAMILY TIES**<br>The Houses have intermarried throughout the years, but one House has refused to continue the tradition. The issue has divided each House, for which they both blame each other. |
| 15–16 | **THEFT**<br>Something one House has acquired used to belong to the other House. While the possessor insists the item came to them fairly, the other House insists nothing could be further from the truth. The coveted item might be an ancient artifact, piece of advanced technology, a title, or even something more abstract like the favor of the Emperor. Both Houses have passed the point where simply returning the item, if possible, can solve their differences. |
| 17–18 | **JEALOUSY**<br>One House hates the other for no better reason than they want to be them. They idolize the other House to such a degree it has turned to festering jealousy. They believe the other House unworthy of the amazing benefits it possesses, or they feel that it has squandered all its gifts. If only the jealous House had everything the other has taken for granted, they would have done so much better. |
| 19–20 | **NO REASON**<br>No one knows why these Houses are rivals, including them. They just are. Only a few among each House might even question the situation. |

***Example:*** *As a House Minor, House Molay has only one enemy, which they decide to call House Acturi. In determining the degree of hatred, the players roll a 12, meaning that the Houses loathe each other. Next, they determine the reason for this hatred, and roll a 9, indicating a difference in morality. As House Molay are both poets and assassins, the players decide their enemy House is quite religiously puritanical. After some deliberation, the players and gamemaster decide that House Acturi has uncovered rumors about House Molay training assassins and so believe them to be not only a force for artistic decadence but corruption as well.*

Once your group has determined the nature of any enemy House or Houses, the gamemaster can then use this information to determine more detail, using the same methods as for generating player character Houses. However, with the gamemaster's permission, your group could continue to work together to define everything about their enemies, to the same degree they have done about their own House.

# Chapter 4: Creating Your Character

*"There are countless definitions and interpretations of a life well spent, and of the opposite. There are often widely divergent biographies of a particular person. The same individual can be either demon or saint, and even shades of both."*

*—from "The Wisdom of Muad'Dib", by the Princess Irulan*

Now that you know something about the House your character serves, we can move on to creating the character. In this chapter we will walk you through the steps for you and your group to create the agents of your House: your player characters. This can be done in a couple of ways: following a number of steps in order to produce a character, or only partially creating a character before play and allowing their nature to be revealed in play.

Characters in ***Dune: Adventures in the Imperium*** are divided into a two main types: player characters and non-player characters:

## Player Characters

This chapter deals primarily with player characters and how to create and advance them. A player character is any character directly controlled by one of the players, rather than by the gamemaster. Player characters are split into main characters and supporting characters.

**Main characters** are each player's first and most important character. Each player has a single main character, and these characters are collectively the focus of the adventures you'll play and the stories you'll tell in the Known Universe of Dune. They're the protagonists of the story and will normally be prominent members or agents of a noble House (though not the leaders of the House… yet). This chapter provides two different methods for creating main characters, but whichever method is chosen, it is recommended that the players all use the same method.

**Supporting characters** are player characters too, but they're less-developed than main characters and are intended to be created quickly during the game as-and-when needed to fulfil a particular role needed by the group. These supporting characters represent other officials and agents of the House and its allies, as well as servants, vassals, and other subordinates such as soldiers and spies. Supporting characters can be either notable or minor:

- A **notable** supporting character is likely to be a significant recurring character, and they will be capable specialists in their own right.
- **Minor** supporting characters are the ordinary rank and file subordinates and servants of the House; quick to create and disposable for brief scenes where their skills are necessary.

## Non-player Characters

Non-player characters, also called NPCs, are characters controlled by the gamemaster, rather than by one of the players. While many non-player characters will be friendly or neutral to the players, the ones which will get the most attention in play are enemies or rivals of the player characters. Non-player characters are major, notable, or minor.

- **Major NPCs** are important, powerful people, equivalent or superior to the player characters.
- **Notable NPCs** are significant experts and agents of rival Houses or other factions, similar to notable supporting characters.
- **Minor NPCs** are the incidental enemies: servants, criminals, soldiers, and other persons unlikely to be identified by name.

Non-player characters are similar to player characters in a number of ways, but they are addressed in **Chapter 8: Gamemastering** and **Chapter 9: Allies and Adversaries**.

## Who Are You?

When creating any character, the first step is to devise a concept for the character: who are they, what do they do? You may want to look through the archetypes described later in this chapter, take an idea from one of the concepts below, or select something else inspired by the universe of *Dune*. It's helpful to keep this concept relatively vague when you start creating a character, as it gives you room to change and adapt.

Some sample concepts include:

- **Scion of the House:** You are kin to the House's rulers and may even be a potential heir to the House and its fortunes. You may be seeking your place in the Known Universe or looking to prove yourself to earn an inheritance.
- **Mentat Advisor:** A graduate of the Mentat school, your ability to recall and reason are a vital resource for anyone seeking to hold or gain power, and you serve your House to the best of that ability.
- **Bene Gesserit Agent:** You're a Sister of the Bene Gesserit, and may serve as a consort or concubine, a diplomat, a spy, or any other role the Sisterhood has commanded you to perform.
- **Swordmaster:** You're a warrior first and foremost, a master—or aspiring master—of the blade, brought to the House to fight for them or to teach your art to the House's scions and soldiers.
- **Physician:** For the powerful, there is nothing so vital as health and longevity, so doctors are valuable…

and dangerous. Those of the Suk school are prized for their conditioning that prevents them from betraying their patients, but their services are highly sought-after and not every House can afford them.

- **Smuggler:** The dominance of CHOAM and the Spacing Guild still allow for goods and people to be moved in the gaps between the great powers of the universe. You're one of those people who work in those gaps, skilled in the illicit-but-vital movement away from the gaze of the powerful.
- **Fremen Warrior:** You're a hardened survivor, well-versed in water discipline and the other necessary skills for living on Arrakis. You have little reason to trust off-worlders, but circumstances may lead you to stand beside them for a time.
- **House Officer:** You serve the House, conveying orders to the soldiers who fight the House's battles and leading them by your example.

This basic concept will be refined and changed throughout character creation, whichever method you select, but it provides inspiration for the choices you'll make later.

## Two Methods

We provide two methods for creating a main character, discussed in their own sections later in this chapter. These methods are as follows:

### PLANNED CREATION

This method involves going through several steps, making decisions at each step. You'll choose an archetype for your character, assign points to your skills, choose focuses and talents, select your drives and create your drive statements, and end up with a fully-formed character at the end of the process.

This method allows a player to start with the kind of character they want to play from the outset, and the process allows for a considerable amount of customization of characters.

### CREATION IN PLAY

Creation in play is like planned creation, but you make fewer decisions. You make only a few key choices, such as an archetype, a couple of your skills, one of your drives and one drive statement, and leave the rest blank on your character sheet. The rest of the details will be defined once play has begun—at particular points during the game, you may choose to define one of those elements, choosing a skill rating, a drive, a drive statement, a focus, or a talent to add to your character.

This allows play to begin more quickly, and characters to be developed during the game as they face challenges and overcome obstacles. This is often handy for groups who are less familiar with the system, as it allows them to make choices as they become accustomed to the way the game works rather than having to create a complete character before they start playing.

## Basic Rules Overview

Before you begin creating a character you should know a little about the rules system, so that you know what all the numbers mean. We'll go into all the details later in the book, but all those complications basically boil down to the following.

For the most part, when you want your character to do or say something, you can just describe what they are doing. However, when their actions might prove a test of their skill or abilities, or conflict with someone else, you need to make a ***test*** to determine the outcome. The game would get pretty boring if you always succeeded at everything you did.

Making a test involves rolling twenty-sided dice (or d20s). When you make a test, roll several of these (from 2 to 5) and gain 1 **success** for each one that rolls equal to or less than the **target number**. This **target number** is calculated by adding up the **skill** you are using (rated 4-8) and the **drive** that is driving the character's actions (also rated 4-8).

If any of your d20s rolls a 1 it counts as 2 successes. The same applies if the result is equal to or under your skill, provided you have an applicable **focus** (a type of specialty) you can apply to the test. This result is called a **critical**. Unfortunately, if any die rolls a '20' your character will suffer a problem (such as a wound) called a **complication** that will make further rolls harder.

The gamemaster will set a **Difficulty** rating from 0 to 5, and if you roll as many successes as the Difficulty your test is a success.

Several factors can help you achieve more successes. **Momentum** points can be spent to roll more d20s, and can be replenished by doing especially well on skill tests. Your character's **traits** might help reduce the Difficulty, and you can use the limited **Determination** points you have to re-roll dice or automatically gain successes. However, the gamemaster has a pool of Threat points they can use to enhance their non-player characters and make the situation more dangerous for the player characters.

# The Measure of a Character

Player characters in ***Dune: Adventures in the Imperium*** are a cut above most people. They are those who are the most definitively human, those whose discernment and judgment overrule base instinct. In short, they are those most fit to hold positions of status, and to shape the existences of others with their deeds.

Each character is composed of several elements, which serve to represent and define who the character is and how they interact with the worlds they inhabit. These elements are described in the following sections.

## Personal Traits

A character has two traits, which are essential descriptions of the character. These traits provide a context for a character's actions, influencing the difficulty of the tasks they attempt, and they help you and the gamemaster determine what is possible or impossible for the character to attempt. In this way, they are no different than the traits the gamemaster describes when they set a new scene, described in **Chapter 5: Core Rules**.

A character's first trait is normally their title, status, or role in society. A character's place in society shapes how they move through society, and influences what they can and cannot do. A character's first trait should always mention the House to which the character belongs or serves. Examples include 'Duke of House Atreides', 'House Atreides' Master of Assassins', or 'Consort to Duke Leto Atreides'.

A character's second trait is more personal, taking the form of the character's reputation such as 'Just and Wise' or 'Callous and Ruthless'. It is how the character is perceived by others, and thus influences how others approach and regard them, for better or worse.

These two traits paint a very basic picture of who the character is and how they fit into the Known Universe. Think of these as being the way you'd describe the character to a person out of game. They are the foremost details about who the character is.

Occasionally, a character may have a third trait; this might reflect a secondary affiliation or loyalty, which may pull the character in a different direction or denote another source of connections and status, such as 'Suk Doctor', or 'Mentat Conditioning', or 'Bene Gesserit Sister'.

## Skills

Of course, characters are more than just their position and their drives. Accomplishments come from action, and action requires capability. A character's training and expertise are necessary parts of what allows them to influence the world around them.

Each character has a rating in each of five skills, which are described below. Skills contribute to a character's tests, and they define what a character is doing when they act. Each skill is rated from 4 to 8, and the more proficient a character is, the higher the skill is rated.

### BATTLE

**Battle** describes a character's skill at arms, their awareness of danger, their understanding of tactics and strategy, and their knowledge of the tools, techniques, and history of combat.

- Use **Battle** when you fight, when you seek to avoid danger, when you plan a battle, and when you try to recall some fact about the methods or history of conflict.

### COMMUNICATE

**Communicate** describes a character's ability to skillfully engage in conversations, discussions, and debates. It encompasses the use of implication, innuendo, subtext, and context to convey or hide intent and to read those methods when others use them.

- Use **Communicate** when you attempt to persuade or deceive others, when you need to convey meaning through implication and subtle means, when you need to understand what others are truly trying to say, and when you need to detect attempts by others to use these methods.

### DISCIPLINE

**Discipline** describes a character's ability to influence and control their own mind and body (overruling instincts and autonomic functions) as well as their ability to exert direct, overt influence over others through presence, force of will, and the power of authority. It also allows a character to focus and concentrate on a complex task, such as picking a lock.

- Use **Discipline** when attempting to resist attempts to subvert body or mind, such as poisons, drugs, or mental influence, as well as to suppress instincts and reflexes when subjected to extreme pain or hardship, or to compel or threaten others through presence and authority alone.

### MOVE

**Move** describes a character's mobility, their ability to maneuver around an environment quickly or carefully, and their ability to overcome physical obstacles.

- Use **Move** to walk, run, jump, climb, swim, or otherwise maneuver in situations where speed, precision, stealth, or care are necessary, or when you need to exert physical force in ways other than fighting.

### UNDERSTAND

**Understand** describes a character's ability to take in and process information, and to recall and apply that knowledge effectively at a later point. It also includes logical deduction and intuitive comprehension of situations, forming conclusions from perceived facts, as well as in-depth comprehension of academic, technical, or scientific knowledge.

- Use **Understand** when attempting to discern details about the situation around you, to search an area thoroughly and effectively, to perform research, to recall things you have learned in the past, to reach conclusions and deductions from the things you know and have learned, and to be able to apply your knowledge and available data in practical ways.

| SKILL RATING | MEANING |
|---|---|
| 4 | You lack training or knowledge in this field. |
| 5 | You're trained to a basic level. |
| 6 | You are well-trained, or you have basic training and some experience. |
| 7 | You're highly capable and experienced. |
| 8 | You are a master of that skill, renowned for your expertise. |

## FOCUSES

A character's skills are broad, and each character has a selection of focuses which allow you to demonstrate their specialties and the kinds of advanced expertise that comes with specialized training or hard-won experience.

A character has one or more focuses for each skill rated at 6 or higher. These focuses increase a character's chances of scoring a critical success on tests using that skill, in circumstances where that focus applies. There is no singular, fixed list of focuses. Focuses can be chosen freely during character creation, for there are innumerable areas of expertise and specializations.

In play, while you receive focuses for particular skills, they may be used on any skill test where they might reasonably be appropriate: the skill a focus is listed alongside is simply the skill most likely to use that focus. Where a focus requires you to specify something in particular (all marked with a *) you may only apply your focus to that particular choice. But you may take the focus multiple times to have a collection of different specialties (such as picking Music twice to play two instruments).

### EXAMPLE BATTLE FOCUSES

- **Assassination** (attempting to get close to attack a target)
- **Atomics** (use and understanding of atomic weapons see p.23 and p.200)
- **Dirty Fighting** (brawling and fighting with improvised weapons)
- **Dueling** (duel etiquette and technique)
- **Evasive Action** (dodging and avoiding blows)
- **Lasgun** (use of laser weapons see p.23 and p.200)
- **Long Blades** (use of swords)
- **Shield fighting** (using shields and bypassing them)
- **Short Blades** (use of knives)
- **Sneak Attacks** (ambush attacks)
- **Strategy** (battlefield conflict)
- **Tactics** (small scale unit conflict)
- **Unarmed Combat** (fighting without a weapon)

### EXAMPLE COMMUNICATE FOCUSES

- **Acting** (pretending to be something you are not)
- **Bartering** (reducing the cost of a good or service)
- **Charm** (befriending others and appearing trustworthy)
- **Deceit** (lying and plotting)
- **Diplomacy** (negotiating a deal)
- **Disguise** (appearing to be something you are not)
- **Empathy** (understanding the emotional responses of others)
- **Gossip** (knowing commonly discussed rumors in your local area)
- **Innuendo** (implying something without saying it, often to communicate a plot to only a few people in earshot)
- **Inspiration** (using a spark or artistic ability to create something)
- **Interrogation** (eliciting information from a target, subtly or with threats)
- **Intimidation** (forcing another to back down)
- **Linguistics** (languages and the study of the nature of language)
- **Listening** (overhearing quiet sounds and hidden conversations)
- **Music*** (specify a particular instrument: harp, baliset, drum, etc)
- **Neurolinguistics** (planting an idea in someone without their knowledge)
- **Persuasion** (getting someone to agree to a particular action)
- **Secret Language*** (specify which faction's secret language you know)
- **Teaching** (the ability to explain things quickly and simply)

### EXAMPLE DISCIPLINE FOCUSES

- **Command** (giving orders and getting them followed)
- **Composure** (staying calm in a stressful situation)

- **Espionage** (spycraft, intelligence gathering, following a target)
- **Infiltration** (gaining access to an area or faction)
- **Observe** (paying attention to a person or area to gain intelligence)
- **Precision** (performing a complex task dexterously)
- **Resolve** (resisting environmental danger)
- **Self-Control** (remaining in control of your feelings or actions)
- **Survival*** (specific to an environment: Desert, Jungle, Arctic, Urban, etc.)

### EXAMPLE MOVE FOCUSES

- **Acrobatics** (tumbling and swinging)
- **Body Control** (lowering heart rate, slowing breathing, etc.)
- **Climb** (climbing surfaces)
- **Dance** (knowing how to dance and performing as a dancer)
- **Distance Running** (running a marathon)
- **Drive** (operating a ground vehicle)
- **Escaping** (freeing yourself of bonds)
- **Grace** (moving with poise and style)
- **Pilot*** (specific type of craft)
- **Stealth** (moving without being seen)
- **Swift** (moving quickly)
- **Swim** (swimming in any environment)
- **Unobtrusive** (staying hidden when in plain sight)
- **Worm Rider** (calling and riding a worm - Fremen only)

### EXAMPLE UNDERSTAND FOCUSES

- **Advanced Technology** (making repairs and crafting machines)
- **Botany** (study of plants)
- **CHOAM Bureaucracy** (understanding CHOAM legal systems and operations)
- **Cultural Studies** (understanding non-Imperium cultures)
- **Danger Sense** (knowing when a situation feels wrong)
- **Data Analysis** (collating and cross-referencing information)
- **Deductive reasoning** (making assumptions based on current information)
- **Ecology** (understating of planetary ecological systems)
- **Emergency Medicine** (first aid and basic life saving)
- **Etiquette** (knowing the rules of good society)
- **Faction Lore*** (specify Bene Gesserit, Spacing Guild, Tleilaxu, etc.)
- **Genetics** (the study of genetic data)
- **Geology** (the study of rocks and land)
- **House Politics** (understanding the history and relationship between the Houses)
- **Imperial Politics** (the state, history, and organization of the Imperial court)
- **Infectious Diseases** (understanding disease)
- **Kanly** (knowledge of the accepted forms of vendetta)
- **Philosophy** (knowing how to debate philosophical thought)
- **Physical Empathy** (understanding a person's state from their body language)
- **Physics** (the physical systems of the universe)
- **Poison** (the study, effects, and use of poisons)
- **Psychiatry** (knowing the human mind)
- **Religion** (understanding the Orange Catholic bible and the study of religion in general)
- **Smuggling** (knowing the best ways to evade customs authorities)
- **Surgery** (performing surgical techniques)
- **Traps** (constructing and avoiding physical traps and explosive devices)
- **Virology** (the study of viruses and immunology)

# DRIVES

A character's inner life motivates and defines their actions. A character's drives, thus, shape the things they do, and how successful they are at those things. A character is more likely to succeed when they believe strongly in something, and less likely when they are indifferent. But those strong drives can also lead a character into trouble or lead them to take ill-advised actions.

Each character has a rating in each of five drives, which are described below. Drives are added to a character's skills to derive the target number when they attempt a test. But they also define why a character is taking action, and what drives them to succeed. A character's most important drive is rated 8. The second-most is rated at 7, then the rest at 6, 5, and 4.

Which drive applies to a test is usually defined by which drive statement applies to the action. But sometimes players may wish to speed up play by directly selecting the right drive and looking to see if its statement applies.

### DUTY

**Duty** is the pressure upon a character to find their place in society and fulfill their allotted role, but also the weight of obligations and personal responsibilities.

- Use **Duty** when it is your character's responsibility to get the job done, and when others are counting on the character to succeed. This might be in service to their House or the people under their command.

### FAITH

**Faith** is the moral expectation of religion and a character's spiritual needs. It shows their dedication to a higher power and the guiding hand of destiny. But a high Faith drive does not always mean a religious or spiritual dedication, as some place their faith in their faction or friends as much as the will of God.

- Use **Faith** when the character has a moral imperative to take action, whether from their religion or personal values. This might also be used to rely on luck or a last-minute plan for an action to succeed.

### JUSTICE

**Justice** is a drive toward balance and fairness, but also the will to redress injustices. It often serves the law and the common good, but it can just as easily uphold bad laws and be used as an excuse for revenge.

- Use **Justice** when doing the action is simply the right thing to do, legally if not morally. This might be when the character is enforcing the law, when they are meting out punishment on behalf on their House, or even when taking revenge.

### POWER

**Power** is the pursuit of greater influence, authority, or control over the universe around them. It is the character's ego, representing their belief in their own moral authority and their right to take what they want.

- Use **Power** when doing the action serves the character's agenda in some way, either directly or indirectly. Self-serving actions need not always take from others and might even require sacrifice (for a greater reward), but they are never entirely altruistic.

### TRUTH

**Truth** is the desire for knowledge and the need to uncover or define that which is true. It is dedicated to revealing the right answers, even if they are uncomfortable or even dangerous.

- Use **Truth** when the character's curiosity has got the better of them, or when they absolutely must know the answer to enhance their own knowledge and understanding. It is also useful when uncovering secrets.

Players often try and pick their highest drive as often as possible. This is perfectly fine, as their character will naturally try to play to their strength. But the gamemaster may decide this makes them predictable and grant their enemies an appropriate bonus. Sometimes the gamemaster may also rule that certain situations insist on certain drives, or even preclude them.

A drive being important (and thus having a high rating) can be either positive or negative: a character with a Truth rating of 8 may be scrupulously honest, or they may seek to impose their own version of the truth upon others or control what others know.

| DRIVE RATING | MEANING |
|---|---|
| **4** | You care very little about this thing. |
| **5** | You know that this thing matters, but you have other priorities. |
| **6** | This is certainly something that influences you. |
| **7** | This is a high priority for you. |
| **8** | This is the single most important thing for you. |

## DRIVE STATEMENTS

For each drive with a rating of 6 or higher, you define a single statement. This is a short sentence explaining what the character feels about that drive. Characters don't have drive statements for their lower-rated drives, because they don't feel strongly enough about those things.

Some example drive statements are below, for each drive:

### EXAMPLE DUTY STATEMENTS

- "People are the true strength of a Great House."
- "I serve at the pleasure of the House."
- "Humans live best when each has their place."
- "Acceptance of place is the death of freedom."
- "Those above offer duty to those below."
- "I know my responsibilities."
- "Duty is a sharp blade."
- "What must be done, must be done."

### EXAMPLE FAITH STATEMENTS

- "My faith gives me certainty where others might doubt."
- "Faith is merely obedience to the myths of the past."
- "God will deliver me to whatever fate is mine."
- "Machines are things of corruption."
- "I trust my heart, not my head."
- "Our trials are how God tests us."
- "Those who doubt my faith will be proved wrong."
- "God has forgotten us for we are not worthy."

### EXAMPLE JUSTICE STATEMENTS

- "I must shield those in my care."
- "I will get revenge on those who have wronged me."
- "I have no patience for those who complain that life is unfair."
- "What we do will return to us."
- "Life isn't fair."
- "Justice is what you can get away with."
- "Justice is only for the wealthy."
- "Everyone should be treated equally."

### EXAMPLE POWER STATEMENTS

- "Power must be used wisely and cleverly."
- "The power to destroy a thing is the absolute control over it."
- "All power invites challenge."
- "Those who have true power need seldom wield it."
- "Power attracts those who are corruptible."
- "Power comes at a knife's edge."
- "I will have what is owed to me."
- "Strength is nothing without grace."

### EXAMPLE TRUTH STATEMENTS

- "Respect for the truth comes close to being the basis for all morality."
- "I decide what is true."
- "I seek to uncover the many secrets of the universe."
- "If I do not know it, it is irrelevant."
- "The purpose of argument is to change the nature of truth."
- "What one wishes were true is seldom so."
- "You will know me by my deeds."
- "Truth is the first casualty of war."

If a character wishes to use a drive which has an accompanying drive statement, then their action must align with the statement. If a character attempts to use a drive with a statement that clashes with the action they're attempting, then they may suffer complications or be required to give up that drive statement, as described in **Chapter 5: Core Rules**.

## Ambition

The ability to form goals beyond the immediate, visceral needs of life is a powerful part of human nature, and those who harness this ability to aspire, who can suppress their short-term desires in service to greater achievements, are those who prosper in a ruthless universe.

As a result, each player character has an ambition which guides their long-term actions. A character who takes steps to achieve their ambitions becomes more capable, able to influence others or impose their wills more effectively.

A character's ambition is a short phrase describing their ultimate goal or desire, and it is defined by their highest-rated drive at the time of character creation. Your gamemaster will work with you to define one for your character.

- Duty ambitions are about service to a cause or group, discovering or understanding one's place in the universe, or freedom from the strictures and responsibilities that constrain you.
- Faith ambitions are zealous crusades, spiritual fulfillment, matters of prophecy or destiny, or attempts to undermine or destroy those things.
- Justice ambitions are driven by a sense of fairness or balance, or a desire to right wrongs and injustices… including personal grudges and vendettas.
- Power ambitions are about gaining influence or status, taking those things from others, manipulating those with influence or status, or changing the ways that people gain influence or status.
- Truth ambitions often include uncovering knowledge or revealing secrets, concealing knowledge or protecting secrets, spreading knowledge (including propaganda or misinformation), or exposing the lies of others.

A character's ambition can change over time. If a character's highest-rated drive changes, then you may change the character's ambition as well. You don't have to make this change if you don't want to—a person's goals may remain the same even as their worldview shifts—but if the drive which the ambition was based on ever drops to less than 6 (and thus loses its statement), you must change the ambition.

# Planned Character Creation

**his** method is designed for players to create their characters before the game begins. It's recommended that players create characters together, as a group; this will allow the players to discuss their concepts, bounce ideas off one another, and come up with ideas for how the characters know and interact with one another—are they friends, polite colleagues, rivals for their masters' esteem, or virtual strangers? As the characters all work for the same House, they already have a natural reason to work together, and creating characters together can follow on naturally from House creation.

# Character Creation Summary

**STEP ONE: CONCEPT**
Consider your character idea.

Select a faction template if applicable and record its trait if you do.

**STEP TWO: ARCHETYPE**
Choose or adapt an archetype from the list. Record its trait.

**STEP THREE: SKILLS**
Assign a rating to each skill:

- The primary skill listed for your archetype is rated at 6.
- The secondary skill listed for your archetype is rated at 5.
- The other three skills are rated at 4.
- Add 5 more points among your skills, to a maximum of 8.

**STEP FOUR: FOCUSES**
Choose four focuses and assign them to skills (listing on p.103). At least one should be assigned to your primary skill. Your archetype will offer suggestions you may take if you wish.

**STEP FIVE: TALENTS**
Choose three talents. Each archetype suggests one talent.

Faction characters must pick all mandatory talents but otherwise have a free choice for any remaining picks.

**STEP SIX: DRIVES AND DRIVE STATEMENTS**
Rank the five drives in order of importance, assigning the ratings 8, 7, 6, 5, and 4 among them, with 8 being the most important.

Assign a drive statement to the three highest drives. Some suggestions can be found on p.106.

**STEP SEVEN: ASSETS**
Your character begins play with three assets, one of which must be tangible.

**STEP EIGHT: FINISHING TOUCHES**

- ***Trait*** – Choose a trait based on your character's reputation or personality.
- ***Ambition*** – Decide on a goal for your character, related to their highest drive.
- ***Personal Details*** – Decide on a name, personality, appearance, and relationships.

## Step One: Concept

The first step in creating a player character is to decide what general sort of character to create. You may want to look through the archetypes described later in this chapter, from one of the concepts mentioned in the introduction, or something else inspired by the universe of *Dune*. It's helpful to keep this concept relatively vague at this stage, as it gives you room to change and adapt.

Once you have a concept that you're happy with, move on to the next step.

## Faction Characters and Templates

It's assumed that the majority of player characters will be ordinary people, working for the group's House and capable enough to have achieved some degree of standing and importance, but otherwise typical of the people who inhabit the Imperium.

But that won't be the case for all player characters. Some of the most iconic characters in *Dune* are part of a faction outside the system of noble Houses. You may wish to play a Sister of the Bene Gesserit, a Mentat, an agent of the Spacing Guild, a Suk doctor, or one of the desert-dwelling Fremen of Arrakis. All of these characters will be loyal to the noble House the player characters serve, but they have other loyalties and ties that cannot be ignored. They also possess some of the most advanced training and abilities in the Imperium, so care must be taken to ensure they don't overshadow the other player characters.

Players can pick one of these faction options to add to their concept, and doing so doesn't alter character creation very much. But as the training of such characters is very specific, some of the players' choices will be limited. The benefit is that it grants access to further powerful abilities and connections. Faction characters shouldn't be chosen lightly or on a whim, and their faction should be a core part of the concept from the outset. Until they prove themselves, their absolute loyalty to the House will often be questioned.

If you do opt to play a faction character, the following additional rules apply. These are summarized in a template for each faction option below.

1. The character has an additional bonus trait, reflecting their other affiliation. This is listed on the faction template. For example, 'Bene Gesserit Sister', or 'Mentat', or 'Fremen', etc.
2. The character then selects their archetype as normal. Some may be especially suitable, though, and each template offers some suggestions. But the player is still free to choose any archetype.
3. Each faction template has at least one 'mandatory talent'. This talent can be selected in place of any other talent the player might pick, but it must be taken by the end of character creation. It represents essential training the faction character must complete to gain further abilities.

It should also be noted that no character can take more than a single faction template for their character. There are no Face Dancer/Mentats or Bene Gesserit/Guild Agents.

> ***Example:*** *Claire and her group are creating characters who will all be agents of House Molay. Claire likes the idea of playing a Bene Gesserit Sister but doesn't want to be too tied to the Sisterhood. So, she decides to play a noblewoman who was trained by the Sisterhood as a girl. Her character, Kara, will be a deadly fighter, but also one of the potential heirs to House Molay.*

Now that she has a concept, Claire needs to choose a professional trait for Kara, and so picks 'Noble'. While Kara is a noblewoman, her Bene Gesserit training means she needs to choose the faction template for Bene Gesserit. Claire records the bonus trait 'Bene Gesserit' and notes that she will have to pick the talent 'Prana-bindu Conditioning' at some point.

## BENE GESSERIT SISTER

*But the Bene Gesserit ways were devious and compelling.*

*- Lady Jessica Atreides*

Sisters of the Bene Gesserit are common among all levels of the nobility. The Sisterhood is often sought out to provide consorts, concubines, and advisors by the nobility. But Bene Gesserit adepts are also deadly fighters and highly perceptive and make exceptional spies and bodyguards. Many noble daughters are also sent for basic training with the Sisters as a form of 'finishing school'. Even if the House has not requested the Sisterhood to provide someone, the Bene Gesserit have been known to offer (or even insist on) providing one to a household. However, there is always an agenda behind the appointment, and nothing is ever free.

- **Additional Trait:** Bene Gesserit
- **Suggested Archetypes:** Analyst, Athlete, Courtier, Empath, Envoy, Infiltrator, Protector, Scholar, Spy, Warrior
- **Mandatory Talents:** Prana-bindu Conditioning

## FREMEN

*All of a man's water, ultimately, belongs to his people--to his tribe.*

*- Pardot Kynes*

Exceptionally rare outside Arrakis, the desert Fremen are slow to give their loyalty to anyone outside their tribe, but once given it is absolute. Few, if any, leave Arrakis, but for those on the desert planet they are exceptional guides.

Fremen characters may only be played outside an Arrakis based campaign with the gamemaster's permission.

- **Additional Trait:** Fremen
- **Suggested Archetypes:** Athlete, Duelist, Infiltrator, Protector, Scout, Sergeant, Warrior
- **Mandatory Talents:** At least one of the following: Dedication, Driven, Master-at-arms, Rapid Recovery, Resilience (Battle), Subtle Step, The Reason I Fight, any of which may be taken in place of any other talent choice.

## MENTAT

*You do not withhold information or computation lines from a Mentat.*

*- Thufir Hawat*

Adepts of the Mentat school are considered an essential asset to any House. While these 'human computers' are simply a convenient way to store data, most are trusted advisors at the highest levels of the Landsraad. Some Houses employ several Mentats, if only to 'backup data'.

- **Additional Trait:** Mentat
- **Suggested Archetypes:** Analyst, Empath, Envoy, Herald, Scholar, Spy, Steward, Strategist, Tactician
- **Mandatory Talents:** At least one of the following: Foreknowledge, Mentat Discipline, Mind Place, Twisted Mentat, any of which may be taken in place of any other talent choice.

## SPACING GUILD AGENT

*Power tends to isolate those who hold too much of it.*

*- Edric, Guild Steersman*

While the elusive Navigators and Steersmen are never seen outside the Guild (and therefore cannot be player characters), the faction has agents across the universe. Guild agents are a point of contact for noble Houses wishing to travel or trade, and some are assigned to a noble House to maintain good relations and offer a priority service. They are also commonly assigned to any House that hosts a Guild facility (such as a bank) on their lands. However, a Guild agent is often more than just a point of contact. They also make excellent financial advisors, and while they cannot pilot a foldspace vessel, they are often experienced space travelers.

- **Additional Trait:** Guild Agent
- **Suggested Archetypes:** Analyst, Courtier, Envoy, Messenger, Scholar, Scout, Smuggler, Spy, Strategist
- **Mandatory Talents:** Guildsman

## SUK DOCTOR

*Great store is set on Imperial Conditioning.*

*- Piter De Vries*

While there are many doctors and healers across the universe, the Suk doctors are considered the best. While they cost a fortune, anything they cannot cure, simply cannot be cured. They are also especially valuable to the nobility as their conditioning means they cannot cause any harm to their patients.

- **Additional Trait:** Suk Doctor
- **Suggested Archetypes:** Analyst, Commander, Courtier, Herald, Scholar, Steward
- **Mandatory Talents:** Imperial Conditioning

## STEP TWO:
# ARCHETYPE

Next, select a general archetype for the character. These archetypes are designed to be relatively broad and cover a range of concepts, and it shouldn't be difficult to find an archetype that fits the concept you devised during step one. But if you still can't find something that fits, either change the theme of an archetype that has the right options or create a new archetype that matches what you are looking for. In both cases, make sure the gamemaster approves your choices.

In summary, each archetype provides:

- **Trait:** An archetype provides a single trait, representing the character's role or status, which will be the archetype's name. You may change or expand this if you wish, to something unique and befitting your concept, but the trait provided by your chosen archetype should serve as the basis for whatever you create.
- **Skills:** One skill is marked as primary, and one is marked as secondary. These skills will be increased in the next step.
- **Focuses:** The character receives two focuses for their primary skill. Suggestions for these are provided, but you may choose your own if you desire.
- **Talents:** The character receives a single talent. Suggestions for this are provided, but you may choose your own if you wish.

The archetypes also provide suggestions and ideas for what characters of that type will likely spend time doing and what they might believe. None of these suggestions are mandatory, but they can help when it comes to choosing the character's drives and ambitions later.

***Example:*** *Claire looks through the suggested archetypes for a Bene Gesserit but decides to pick Commander as Kara's archetype instead. She likes the idea of Kara as a social character with fighting skills.*

### ARCHETYPES AT A GLANCE

The archetypes are created to offer every combination of primary and secondary skill. If you already have a combination in mind for your concept, or want to add a different theme to a particular combination, the following table will help you find it.

Remember that some combinations might lend themselves to other styles of archetypes. While we have listed the combination of Communicate/Understand as a Courtier, they might just as easily apply to an Entertainer or Merchant instead.

| ARCHETYPE | PRIMARY SKILL | SECONDARY SKILL |
|---|---|---|
| **Analyst** | Disciple | Understand |
| **Athlete** | Move | Disciple |
| **Commander** | Communicate | Battle |
| **Courtier** | Communicate | Understand |
| **Duelist** | Battle | Move |
| **Empath** | Understand | Communicate |
| **Envoy** | Communicate | Move |
| **Herald** | Discipline | Communicate |
| **Infiltrator** | Discipline | Move |
| **Messenger** | Move | Communicate |
| **Protector** | Discipline | Battle |
| **Scholar** | Understand | Discipline |
| **Scout** | Move | Understand |
| **Sergeant** | Battle | Communicate |
| **Smuggler** | Move | Battle |
| **Spy** | Understand | Move |
| **Steward** | Communicate | Discipline |
| **Strategist** | Understand | Battle |
| **Tactician** | Battle | Understand |
| **Warrior** | Battle | Discipline |

# WARMASTERS

*One enemy at a time, is that it?*

*- Gurney Halleck*

*These archetypes all follow the code of war in some form. Some may consider martial skills to be a pathway to excellence; others might never use a weapon, focusing their mind on strategy and tactics instead. But all know what it is to fight and are lethal in one way or another.*

## DUELIST

Mastery of the blade is a valuable skill in the Imperium, and those who are especially capable are highly sought-after by the rulers of noble Houses, serving as bodyguards, champions, favored gladiators, and even tutors, teaching their skills to others in the House. Because of the prevalence of master duelists as instructors to the young scions of a House, many young nobles find themselves becoming duelists in their own right, even if only for a short while before they take on other courtly duties.

- **Trait:** Duelist
- **Primary Skill:** Battle
- **Secondary Skill:** Move
- **Focuses:** Dueling, Short Blades
- **Talents:** The Slow Blade
- **Drives:** Duelists—particularly those who work as champions and bodyguards—are often believers in might makes right, feeling that Justice is enacted by their blades. Others are reliant on Faith—in their prowess, in their tools, or in a higher power—to keep them alive in their deadly profession.

## SERGEANT

Amongst the rank-and-file troops of a House, and similarly amongst the various mercenary companies that drift from world to world, a select few stand out as leaders, earning the respect and loyalty of their subordinates. These sergeants are often practical people, hardened veterans who are accustomed to leading by example.

- **Trait:** Sergeant
- **Primary Skill:** Battle
- **Secondary Skill:** Communicate
- **Focuses:** Long Blades, Strategy
- **Talents:** Master-at-Arms
- **Drives:** Sergeants commonly feel a strong a bond of loyalty to their warriors, one which is reciprocated and manifests in a powerful sense of Duty. Others are driven by a strong sense of right and wrong, and a strong drive in Justice.

## TACTICIAN

Where a strategist orchestrates the grand plan of battle, tacticians direct the fighting on a smaller scale. A mercenary company, or a House regiment, may have a handful of tactical experts, who drill and train the rank and file and officers alike to hone their responses to particular situations. When pressed into battle themselves, they're cunning, resourceful combatants, often able to see opportunities that less-astute fighters might miss.

- **Trait:** Tactician
- **Primary Skill:** Battle
- **Secondary Skill:** Understand
- **Focuses:** Combat Awareness, Tactics
- **Talents:** Decisive Action
- **Drives:** Tacticians are well-versed in the proper and effective use of force, and thus understand Power extremely well. Many also see their causes as right and proper, and the execution of their duties as a matter of Justice.

## WARRIOR

Might at arms is a necessary part of the politics of the Imperium. While restrained by the traditions and rules of kanly, each House maintains a standing army for defending its people and territory, for putting down rebellions and insurrections from within, and for waging wars against enemies. Mercenary companies hire out their services to any able to pay, often bolstering House forces. Warriors hail from such armed forces, and the most capable amongst them tend to gain prominence and status, often joining elite units or the personal guard of important persons outside the House.

- **Trait:** Warrior
- **Primary Skill:** Battle
- **Secondary Skill:** Discipline
- **Focuses:** Dirty Fighting, Long Blade
- **Talents:** To Fight Someone Is to Know Them
- **Drives:** Warriors often put their trust in their own prowess and capabilities, and thus prioritize Power. Others tend to emphasize the need to use their skills for a good reason, focusing on Justice.

# SOCIALITES

*Reputation can be a beautiful weapon. It often spills less blood.*

*- Bashar Miles Teg*

These archetypes are the social characters, at their best when surrounded by others. They might be manipulative courtiers or inspirational leaders. Whatever their angle, they are adept at getting their own way and manipulating others.

## COMMANDER

Commanders are senior leaders of military forces; their role is to decide upon a plan of action and give orders to their subordinates. Some serve as commanding officers over detachments of troops, or leaders of mercenary companies, while others are freelance strategists hired to help guide a standing army. Many Houses often employ a Warmaster as a dedicated commander for their troops.

- **Trait:** Commander
- **Primary Skill:** Communicate
- **Secondary Skill:** Battle
- **Focuses:** Inspiration, Leadership
- **Talents:** Specialist (Warfare Assets)
- **Drives:** Many Commanders are driven by a sense of Duty and loyalty to their superiors and the chain of command, while others are ambitious, seeking Power and opportunities to elevate themselves.

## COURTIER

Courtiers are the assorted attendants, advisors, clerks, agents, and others with positions at court, or access to the rulers of the House. Not all who have a position at court will be of this archetype—those who attend court because of their knowledge or prowess in other fields, such as soldiers, may fit other archetypes better. Trusted courtiers are skilled speakers and listeners, for access and knowledge are the advantages of the courtier, and they are often at the forefront of palace intrigues.

- **Trait:** Courtier
- **Primary Skill:** Communicate
- **Secondary Skill:** Understand
- **Focuses:** Charm, Musical Instrument
- **Talents:** Subtle Words
- **Drives:** Courtiers tend to be ambitious, seeking the influence and Power that their positions at court can provide, but those courtiers who are rewarded with their masters' trust are those who are driven by a sense of Duty and loyalty.

## ENVOY

Representatives of their employers in negotiations and diplomacy, envoys are charged with traveling from place to place, conveying the will and words of their masters wherever it is required. By necessity, envoys are well-traveled and used to long journeys and rough conditions, and they need to be quick-witted and quick on their feet to survive the perils of their vocation.

- **Trait:** Envoy
- **Primary Skill:** Communicate
- **Secondary Skill:** Move
- **Focuses:** Diplomacy, Persuasion
- **Talents:** Binding Promise
- **Drives:** A trusted Envoy will often have a strong sense of Duty, which may shape why they choose to serve in that capacity. Other envoys have a strong sense of Justice and a reputation for fairness which helps their work.

## STEWARD

The running of a House is a complex, burdensome matter, and those who rule over each House typically delegate many of those tasks and responsibilities to trusted subordinates. These stewards manage the day-to-day operations of the House, overseeing some aspect of it in their master's name. These individuals are capable, decisive, and good at organizing people, because anything less would be unacceptable. A House will have numerous stewards, with more in Houses with larger holdings, and many are given considerable autonomy to take whatever actions they need to in order to keep things running smoothly.

- **Trait:** Steward
- **Primary Skill:** Communicate
- **Secondary Skill:** Discipline
- **Focuses:** Leadership, Negotiation
- **Talents:** Stirring Rhetoric
- **Drives:** Stewards are often chosen from amongst those who prioritize Duty above all else, so long as their dutiful nature is accompanied by sufficient competence. Many stewards are also highly ambitious individuals, seeking to gain status, recognition, and ultimately, Power from their work.

# DISCIPLES

*One observes the survivors and learns from them.*

*- Bene Gesserit Teaching*

These archetypes seek to master an internal stillness where they function with perfect grace and clarity. They are exceptionally focused and dedicated, having honed their skills through practice and intense training.

## ANALYST

Analysts are often in the employ of noble Houses to study the details and trends of business, politics, and warfare—and the points at which those three things blur into one another—and the most skilled are highly-prized. Mentats are especially valuable as analysts, due to their ability to process vast amounts of information quickly and dispassionately.

- **Trait:** Analyst
- **Primary Skill:** Discipline
- **Secondary Skill:** Understand
- **Focuses:** Attention to Detail, Composure
- **Talents:** Intense Study
- **Drives:** Many Analysts are driven by a strong drive to uncover or reveal the Truth, while those trusted with the secrets of their employers are ones who believe strongly in Duty.

## HERALD

Many Houses in the Landsraad appoint ceremonial officers to handle matters of heraldry, genealogy, and similar matters of rank and pedigree: these are matters of the long-term survival of the House. These officers serve mainly as advisors to the House's rulers on these matters, and they frequently consult with the Sisters of the Bene Gesserit who maintain similar genealogical and genetic records. Heralds often fulfil other roles within a Household alongside their official duties, at times serving as messengers, diplomats, and political advisors.

- **Trait:** Herald
- **Primary Skill:** Discipline
- **Secondary Skill:** Communicate
- **Focuses:** Command, Composure
- **Talents:** Rigorous Control
- **Drives:** A Herald will often have Faith in a greater plan or purpose for their House, and Duty is often a common drive for those appointed to such important roles.

## INFILTRATOR

Skilled at finding their way into secure places, infiltrators are an important part of the interplay between Houses and the other great organizations of the Imperium: politics would be drastically different were it not for the subterfuge and espionage that occurs on a daily basis. Infiltrators require boundless resolve and focus, maintaining a clear sense of their goals and their loyalties as they undertake their work.

- **Trait:** Infiltrator
- **Primary Skill:** Discipline
- **Secondary Skill:** Move
- **Focuses:** Infiltration, Precision
- **Talents:** Subtle Step
- **Drives:** Infiltrators often discover their vocation through a powerful sense of curiosity and a need to discover the Truth, while others revel in the Power they can claim through the secrets they find.

## PROTECTOR

Security is a must for anyone of wealth and status, and protectors are those most capable of providing that. Any House will contain a cadre of trained bodyguards and security personnel to secure the House's grounds and protect its members and senior agents. These are distinct from ordinary House troops, as they practice greater restraint and self-awareness, and have an unyielding resolve; they will continue to protect their charges after most soldiers have lost their nerve, and they prioritize the safety of their charges above glory in battle.

- **Trait:** Protector
- **Primary Skill:** Discipline
- **Secondary Skill:** Battle
- **Focuses:** Resolve, Self-Control
- **Talents:** Bolster
- **Drives:** Protectors are commonly chosen because of a strong sense of Duty; many are instead driven by a powerful belief in Justice.

# ADEPTS

*No wind ever ran as he runs. He's a blur atop the dunes.*

*- Lady Ghanima Atreides*

These archetypes are physical creatures who hate to stay in one place. They like to apply their skills to the real world. They are hard to keep up with, and almost impossible to catch.

## ATHLETE

Athletes are those who hone their bodies to achieve great feats of physical prowess. They're often employed as practitioners of sports and games to entertain, but also as teachers and trainers to guide the physical conditioning of a House's members and agents.

- **Trait:** Athlete
- **Primary Skill:** Move
- **Secondary Skill:** Discipline
- **Focuses:** Grace, Stamina
- **Talents:** Nimble
- **Drives:** Athletes are often driven by a sense of pride in their personal accomplishments and a drive for greater Power over their bodies and their lives. Others are driven by Faith in a higher power, in themselves, or in colleagues and teammates.

## MESSENGER

Sending messages and packages quickly and securely is a vital part of the business of the Houses, and they rely heavily upon those who can move a communiqué or valuable item reliably to its destination. Trusted couriers are highly prized and can become targets if their cargo is sufficiently valuable. Messengers often learn unusual ways of communicating messages, secret languages, and techniques for sending multiple messages or hiding one message within others, to ensure that only specific people receive certain information.

- **Trait:** Messenger
- **Primary Skill:** Move
- **Secondary Skill:** Communicate
- **Focuses:** Pilot, Unobtrusive
- **Talents:** Masterful Innuendo
- **Drives:** Messengers are entrusted with their employer's secrets, and that gives them influence they can turn into Power. Others, confronted with the dangers of their profession, put their Faith in a higher power to see them through each job.

## SCOUT

Working alongside military units and exploratory groups, scouts take on the perilous task of venturing ahead of their comrades to discover what lays ahead. Scouts need to be able to move quickly through unknown and potentially hostile territory undetected, gather information efficiently, and return to tell the tale. This is, understandably, a dangerous and difficult task, and good scouts are valuable.

- **Trait:** Scout
- **Primary Skill:** Move
- **Secondary Skill:** Understand
- **Focuses:** Putting Theory into Practice
- **Talents:** Endurance, Stealth
- **Drives:** The dangerous vocation of a Scout is one undertaken by those driven by Duty, as few would willingly undertake their missions without a good reason. Others see themselves as explorers, seeking to discover new Truths about the universe as they venture into the unknown.

## SMUGGLER

Valuable goods often find their ways into hands through unusual or illicit channels, and Smugglers are how that happens. While officially regarded as illegal, these kinds of activities are an integral, invaluable part of the fabric of society… as long as they are kept quiet. Of particular importance are those who smuggle spice from Arrakis, liberating small quantities of the precious substance from the control of whichever House currently controls the planet, and who must contend with deadly sandworms, often-hostile Fremen raiders, and other perils of that harsh world, but who can command a hefty price for their cargo in exchange for their troubles.

- **Trait:** Smuggler
- **Primary Skill:** Move
- **Secondary Skill:** Battle
- **Focuses:** Pilot, Unobtrusive
- **Talents:** Subtle Step
- **Drives:** Smugglers are selfish by nature, as are many who flaunt the law to achieve their goals. Most tend to seek wealth and Power from their work. Others take a stance driven by a sense of Justice, often trying to gain the means to avenge whatever misdeeds forced them into the smuggling life to begin with.

# ACADEMICS

*Belief can be manipulated. Only knowledge is dangerous.*

*- Scytale, Face Dancer*

These archetypes use their wits and powers of observation to understand the world around them. They like to use their minds but often employ their skills outward rather than inward, seeking knowledge as a way to comprehend what surrounds them.

## EMPATH

The ability to detect truth and falsehood when others speak is a valuable and powerful one, and one highly sought-after. Only the Reverend Mothers of the Bene Gesserit have mastered full truthsense. But some individuals are simply born with the knack to understand the motives of others. These gifted individuals can always find employ if they are willing to reveal their ability.

- **Trait:** Empath
- **Primary Skill:** Understand
- **Secondary Skill:** Communicate
- **Focuses:** Body Language, Social Awareness
- **Talents:** Passive Scrutiny
- **Drives:** It may seem obvious, but many Empaths have strong opinions on matters of Truth and perception. Others are ambitious, seeing the potential in their ability and the Power they could accrue from using it.

## SCHOLAR

Knowledge is power, and a scholar is a seeker and curator of knowledge. Whether working independently or appointed as an expert advisor to a House, scholars collect, study, and archive information—about a single subject, or a range of subjects—to inform and advise others effectively. Scholars may specialize deeply in a single field of study, or they may study a wide range of subjects. Many of the most valuable scholars are also Mentats.

- **Trait:** Scholar
- **Primary Skill:** Understand
- **Secondary Skill:** Discipline
- **Focuses:** Data Analysis, Deductive Reasoning
- **Talents:** Intense Study
- **Drives:** Scholars are frequently driven to pursue their studies because of a deep interest in uncovering the Truth. Others see the value and potential Power to be found within knowledge.

## SPY

Espionage is an integral part of the politics between the Houses, the Landsraad, the Spacing Guild, CHOAM, and the other factions in the Imperium, and spies are the ones who perform this work. Some spies involve themselves directly and personally in this work, building elaborate aliases that allow them to move undetected across the Imperium to uncover the secrets their masters need, but this is a dangerous way to do things. Others cultivate networks of informants, gathering information from far and wide… but this has the potential to see misinformation spread if those informants are compromised.

- **Trait:** Spy
- **Primary Skill:** Understand
- **Secondary Skill:** Move
- **Focuses:** Deductive Reasoning, Kanly
- **Talents:** Hidden Motives
- **Drives:** Spies are often driven by a need to know, or control what is seen as, the Truth. Others are instead determined to serve their masters well, driven by a sense of Duty.

## STRATEGIST

Warfare, even within the rules of kanly, is a complex and nuanced affair. Strategists are employed to sift through reams of intelligence on the enemy, and compose the orders of battle, supply chains, deployment of forces, and the overall strategy of war. They are proficient in the science of mass warfare, and the history and traditions of Kanly. Some of the greatest strategists in history have been Mentats, applying their computational thought to the vagaries and variables of war.

- **Trait:** Strategist
- **Primary Skill:** Understand
- **Secondary Skill:** Battle
- **Focuses:** Kanly, Strategy
- **Talents:** Master-at-Arms
- **Drives:** Strategists are experts in the manipulation and coordination of military forces, and thus understand Power extremely well. Many also rely heavily on their Faith in the forces under their command, and in higher powers.

## Step Three: Skills

Each character in ***Dune: Adventures in the Imperium*** has five skills, as described in the previous chapter: **Battle**, **Communicate**, **Discipline**, **Move**, and **Understand**. These cover the character's broad aptitudes and capabilities, forming a major part of skill tests the character attempts during play.

All player characters have each skill rated between 4 and 8.

At this stage in character creation, you will have the following skill ratings:

- The primary skill listed for your archetype is rated at 6
- The secondary skill listed for your archetype is rated at 5.
- The other three skills are rated at 4.

Once you've done this, you may increase any skills you wish; you have five points which you may distribute as you see fit between your skills. No skill may be increased above 8 in this way.

> ***Example:*** *Kara's primary skill is Communicate, so that starts at 6. Her secondary skill is Battle, which therefore starts at 5. Claire decides to put an extra point in each of her other skills to bring them all up to 5, leaving her with 2 left. While she'd like a better Communicate, she decides to balance things out with her combat skills and adds the final 2 points to Battle and Move. This gives her Battle 6, Communicate 6, Discipline 5, Move 6, Understand 5.*

## Step Four: Focuses

A starting player character has four focuses, representing areas of expertise and specialization beyond their broad skills. These focuses will each be associated with a single skill, which represents the skill which will use that focus most often. But any focus can be used with any skill if it applies appropriately to the action in question. However, a focus of Gladiatorial Dueling is going to be used with Battle more often than with Understand, for example.

Your chosen archetype will provide two focuses, one of which will be associated with the archetype's primary skill, and the other of which will be associated with the archetype's secondary skill. While you must pick a focus for your primary skill and for your secondary skill, you need not pick the ones listed for your archetype.

Once you've chosen these, you may choose two other focuses, which may be associated with any skills you want.

> ***Example:*** *Claire likes both of the focuses listed for Commander (Inspiration and Leadership), and picks Inspiration for her Communicate focus. However, she wants something more direct for her Battle focus and so instead picks Short Blades (representing her training among the House Molay assassins). For her third pick she wants something that will help in House negotiations and takes Diplomacy as a Communicate focus. For her final pick she decides the Bene Gesserit taught her how to move unseen and takes Stealth as a Move focus.*

## Step Five:
# Talents

A starting player character has three talents, representing special abilities, advanced techniques, and other significant benefits. These are abilities which define a character, helping them to stand out and feel special.

Your chosen archetype will provide a single talent, and it will suggest several options which are appropriately thematic for that archetype. You may choose a different talent if you wish, but at least one of your talents should relate to your chosen archetypes in some way.

Some talents, such as Bold, have to be connected to a particular skill. This connection is chosen when the talent is picked and can only apply to that skill. However, such a talent may be chosen again and applied to another skill. So a character might have Bold (Battle) and Bold (Communicate) as two of their talent picks, for example.

| Drive Importance | Drive Rating | Meaning |
|---|---|---|
| **1st** | 8 | This is the single most important thing for you. |
| **2nd** | 7 | This is a high priority for you. |
| **3rd** | 6 | This is certainly something that influences you. |
| **4th** | 5 | You know that this thing matters, but you have other priorities. |
| **5th** | 4 | You care very little about this thing. |

Once you've selected that first talent, you may select two other talents. These talents may be selected freely, though individual talents may have certain restrictions on who may take them—Mentat talents can only be taken by Mentats, Bene Gesserit talents may only be taken by Bene Gesserit, and so forth.

The list of talents begins on p.127.

***Example:*** *For her first pick, Claire must take Pranabindu Conditioning as she has Bene Gesserit training. But her other two picks can be anything she likes. As she has access to Bene Gesserit talents, Claire opts for Hyperawareness, as the Sisterhood taught her how to observe. As a mixture of her time with the Sisterhood and her training in the nobility, she takes Masterful Innuendo as her third pick.*

## Step Six:
# Drives
## & Drive Statements

Until now, the character creation process has focused on "What does the character do?". This step deals with the other side of a character: what do they believe?

Every character has five drives—**Duty**, **Faith**, **Justice**, **Power**, and **Truth**—which are described in the previous chapter. These are rated between 4 and 8, representing how important that drive is to the character, with 8 representing the most important thing to the character, while 4 represents something the character cares little about.

During this step, you must rank the five drives according to their importance for the character. Then, in order, assign the associated rating:

You can determine this order in any way you want, but the key is that this is the point where you determine who the character is and what they believe. Each archetype includes a couple of suggestions about the drives that might be interesting to play for that archetype, but these are suggestions only, and shouldn't be considered limits on what you create yourself.

***Example:*** *After much thought Claire chooses Faith 8, Duty 7, Power 6, Truth 5, and Justice 4. Kara believes that family and House are the bedrock of success, but that ambition is what drives it. While she is not a liar, she feels Truth is too easily manipulated and Justice is rarely found in the Imperium.*

Once you've defined the order of your character's drives, you'll need to define some drive statements—a statement for each of the three most important drives. Drive statements are described in more detail on p.105-106, with numerous example statements available there, but this can be a tricky part of character creation, so additional guidance is provided below.

- A drive statement is one of the driving forces of the character's worldview and personality, shaping how they interact with the worlds around them and providing motivation for the things they do.
- Drive statements should be easy to understand, so that you and the gamemaster can both understand when they're helpful, when they're a hindrance, and when they don't apply at all. If you don't know if a drive statement applies to a situation, you're not able to use it.
- You will want to have at least one drive statement that poses a problem for your character, because that's how you can gain more Determination to spend (see p.157).

- Similarly, you'll want at least one drive statement which is helpful to your character, because that gives you more opportunities to use a higher drive score, and more opportunities to spend Determination.
- Drive statements do not have to be positive about the drive they're attached to. Someone with a strong drive in Truth doesn't have to be honest, and someone who believes strongly in Faith may believe that faith and religion are dangerous or harmful.
- Your drive statements can and should change over time. The game allows for a character to challenge their beliefs, changing the order of priority and the attached statements, to reflect how people's feelings and opinions can shift over time. Because they can change, you don't need to worry too much about choosing the perfect statements right away; simple statements might be a better way to start, becoming more complex as you play the character and their feelings grow more nuanced.
- It doesn't matter if your drive statements contradict one another. A person can hold conflicting beliefs, and the situations when those conflicting beliefs clash is often a source of interesting roleplay and tension in play.
- A broad range is also good so you have the option to use a statement on any test. With this in mind, you may want to pick one that reflects how you respond physically, one that reflects how you tend to respond mentally, and one that reflects how you respond socially.

***Example:*** *Claire needs to pick drive statements for Kara's three highest drives, which are Duty, Faith, and Power. Remembering Kara's faith in her family and House, and her own 'enlightened self interest', she chooses "I am the heir of my House" (for Duty),"My family trusts me" (for Faith), and "I get what I want" (for Power).*

## One Way to Choose Drives

One possible method for choosing how to order your character's drives is to compare each individual drive against the others, weighing which of two drives is most important to the character.

With five drives in total, this will take ten questions (listed below, for convenience), and whichever drive wins most often is the most important, second most often is second most important, and so forth, until you've gotten your order. If two drives are tied, look at the question asked about those two drives—that'll tell you how to break that tie. If you get three drives all scoring the same amount, you'll need to think about which one your character prioritizes, as there's no easy way to break that tie.

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Duty or Faith | Duty or Justice | Duty or Power | Duty or Truth | Faith or Justice |
| Faith or Power | Faith or Truth | Justice or Power | Justice or Truth | Power or Truth |

## Making Assets Personal

If you can usually obtain a knife, or a shield belt if your House is wealthy enough, it may seem pointless to take one as one of your starting assets. The obvious answer may seem to be that you don't. But it isn't quite as simple as that. You may not want to risk being caught out in the few situations where you can't obtain something you rely on.

But, beyond preparedness, if you still want to have a 'ubiquitous item' as an asset, it should probably be more than just a tool or resource—it should be something personal, something special. This may mean that the item takes an unusual form, it's exceptionally effective or well-crafted, or it has some significant (and personal) history behind it. You don't merely own a knife: you own a crysknife, or you proudly bear 'the knife the Duke gave you after the battle of Axian', or you carry a 'poisoned knife'.

Such an item works as a normal knife would, though it might have a higher **Quality** (see p.192), but the item's history may also make it useful in other situations. A crysknife is sacred amongst the Fremen and bearing one may grant the wielder an advantage in social conflicts with these desert-dwelling warriors. A knife that was a gift might represent a special bond between characters. In these cases, the extra detail given to an asset reveals details about a character's background that can be explored in play.

## Step Seven: Assets

Assets represent the tools and resources available to a character, which they can use to achieve their goals. **Chapter 7: Assets** contains a list of the kinds of assets available.

Each asset is a special kind of trait (see p. 143-144), which describes a tool, resource, or something else useful which a character possesses. These assets are used during a conflict (as described in **Chapter 6: Conflict**) to overcome opponents and obstacles. Some of these assets are **tangible**—representing physical things, from weapons and other small possessions, to vehicles such as groundcars and ornithopters, to squads of troops and the services of agents and other subordinates. Others are **intangible**, representing contacts, favors, the ability to call upon friends, and similar useful things which have no physical presence in their own right.

A starting character should have three assets, one of which must be tangible.

### SIZE AND SCALE

When it comes to tangible assets, most examples a character will have should be personal equipment… but the possibility exists for assets which represent things larger than a character's personal effects.

As a rule of thumb, your personal assets can include anything you could carry on your person, any vehicle which you could operate yourself, or any group of subordinates which you could lead and coordinate alone, such as a squad of troops. Larger vehicles—ones requiring a crew to operate— and larger groups of subordinates that require other officers or a deeper chain of command are not suitable as assets for a single character, though circumstances might grant you command of these larger-scale assets in certain circumstances.

> ***Example:*** *As Kara is a fighter, Claire decides one of Kara's assets is a knife given to her by the master assassin who taught her. As knives are easily obtained, she decides it has the special attribute of being easy to conceal. As a noblewoman she also has a personal ornithopter as her second asset. While it obviously can't be carried with her, it is easily accessible. Claire was tempted to create a handmaiden for Kara, but another player luckily wants to play such as character already (who will be called Anna). So instead she opts for something intangible and decides she has some blackmail material on a past lover. Who that is, and what it involves, can be decided later.*

STEP EIGHT:

# FINISHING TOUCHES

At this stage, your character is almost complete, and needs only a few final elements and adjustments. This serves as a last chance to customize your character before you begin playing, and a chance to make a few decisions to turn the character from a collection of numbers and rules into a distinct person.

## TRAIT

Select one additional trait for your character, reflecting the character's reputation and how they are regarded by others. These do not necessarily have to be accurate descriptions of who the character is, only how others perceive them; a character may seek to cultivate a reputation distinct from who they actually are.

> ***Example:*** *Claire decides that Kara's dedication to power needs to be tempered a little and decides that Honorable should be her reputation trait.*

## AMBITION

Each player character has an ambition, which guides their long-term actions. A character who takes steps to achieve their ambitions will become more capable, more influential, and generally more effective.

During character creation, your character's ambition should be based on their highest-rated drive, and your gamemaster will work with you to define one for your character, helping to create something which can come up in play frequently. This ambition may change over time as a character's drives shift.

- **Duty** ambitions are about service to a cause or group, discovering or understanding one's place in the universe, or freedom from the strictures and responsibilities that constrain you.
- **Faith** ambitions are zealous crusades, spiritual fulfillment, matters of prophecy or destiny, or attempts to undermine or destroy those things.
- **Justice** ambitions are driven by a sense of fairness or balance, or a desire to right wrongs and injustices… including personal grudges and vendettas.
- **Power** ambitions are about gaining influence or status, taking those things from others, manipulating those with influence or status, or changing the ways that people gain influence or status.
- **Truth** ambitions often include uncovering knowledge or revealing secrets, concealing knowledge or protecting secrets, spreading knowledge (including propaganda or misinformation), or exposing the lies of others.

***Example:*** *Kara's highest drive is Faith, and so Claire decides she believes in destiny. Kara wants to gain power for her House but also wishes to become a premier assassin. Her dream is to appear to be an ordinary noblewoman but create a reputation as a master assassin that no one knows the real identity of.*

## PERSONAL DETAILS

Coming up with the details that turn a character from a collection of numbers and rules into a person is a vital part of character creation, but a part that obviously should be left to the very end, bringing together those disparate elements into a cohesive whole.

### NAME

Every character needs a name. This can be anything, though it's probably best to avoid anything that would break the mood of the game. A character's name reflects their culture—different worlds may have differing traditions for how people are named—and their upbringing. Characters who belong to the group's House (rather than being vassals or servants) will likely use the House's name as their surname, in part or in full. Characters may also have private or personal names, used only by those close to them, or they may assume official or ceremonial names for specific purposes. Many characters may also be known more by informal nicknames rather than their full name. Characters who engage in criminal activity or espionage may have multiple names and aliases which they use instead of their normal name.

Many cultures use a patronymic or matronymic—the father's or mother's name, with a prefix or suffix such as '-son'—alongside or instead of a family name, or they may keep the family names of both parents. It's also fairly common for some cultures to place the family name first, with the personal name afterwards.

Many names found in the novels are provided as an example below, providing common masculine and feminine names, as well as a sample of family names. Given the mixture of cultures, almost any name can suit a Dune character.

- **Male:** Abulurd, Arkie, Aureluis, Bijaz, Cammar, Dmitri, D'murr, Dominic, Duncan, Edric, Elrood, Farad'n, Feyd, Glossu, Gurney, Hasimir, Iakin, Jamis, Korba, Leto, Mattai, Miles, Moneo, Otheym, Pardot, Paul, Piter, Rhombur, Shaddam, Stilgar, Thufir, Tyros, Victor, Vorian, Wellington, Xavier
- **Female:** Alia, Anirul, Chani, Dhuri, Faroula, Ghanima, Helen, Helena, Irulan, Jessica, Kaliea, Margot, Murbella, Norma, Siona, Wensicia

- **Surnames (usually by House for nobility, but also):** Bludd, Calimar, Cour, Dinari, Garon, Hawat, Idaho, Noree, Noret, Pilru, Reed, Reffa, Rund, Trig, Tuek, Wu

### PERSONALITY

Once you've got an idea of what your character does, and believes, and you've thought about how others perceive them, consider what sort of personality your character has. Are they stoic or grim? Are they disciplined and orderly? Adventurous? Wise? Thoughtful? Tired of routine? Calm and circumspect? Even a few adjectives like this can help in locking down the personality of a character.

Whatever you decide, your character isn't always like this—like any person, your character is a nuanced, complex individual who is affected by moods and circumstances as much as their drives and personality. Characters can, and will, evolve over time, but it's a good idea to understand how your character is likely to behave in normal circumstances.

A character's drives and drive statements are a good basis for this: a character who is devout or dutiful may act in ways that reflect their beliefs. If you've had any difficulty coming up with drive statements for a character, now is a good time to think about them in more detail.

If you are stuck, try and find answers to the following questions:

- Are you more of an introvert or extrovert?
- What is the first thing anyone notices about you?
- What part of yourself do you rarely show to others?
- What does it take for you to trust someone?
- What makes you angry?
- When was the last time you cried?

### APPEARANCE

What does your character look like? A character's environment and upbringing will shape this to some degree—such as the distinctive blue-in-blue eyes of those who have lived on Arrakis for years—but the finer points such as build, height, ethnicity, or any distinguishing features will give the other players and the gamemaster something to picture when thinking of their characters. Are they distinctive or average-looking? Do they have any habits, or behavioral quirks? It's often useful to give characters some sort of visual description.

It may even be useful to think of an actor who you can imagine portraying your character: the appearance, voice, and mannerisms of an actor can serve as a source of inspiration.

If you are stuck, try and find answers to the following questions:

- Do you usually wear some sort of uniform?
- Do you take care of your appearance? If so, how much?
- Do you like to be noticed or dress to hide away?
- Do you like to stay fashionable or do you keep to your own style?
- Are your outfits practical or impractical?
- Have you any distinguishing marks, such as a tattoo or a scar?

### RELATIONSHIPS

Life does not occur in isolation. Characters are connected to others and will have formed relationships throughout their life. Consider your character's family relationships: Where is the rest of their family? Do they have a spouse or partner somewhere? Is the character in contact with the rest of their family regularly, and are they close at hand, or on a distant world somewhere else in the Imperium?

What about the people around the character? How do the main characters get on with one another? How does the character regard other members, agents, and servants of the House, and how are they regarded in turn? Is the character close friends with other characters in the House's service, relaxing with them? Does the character have any personal enemies or rivals?

These details can make the interaction between characters more interesting and add more depth to your character. Like a character's personality, a character's relationships can—and should—evolve over time, and some relationships may become so strong (whether friendly or adversarial) that they become major factors in the character's life.

If you are stuck, try and find answers to the following questions:

- Do you have a family and how often do you see them?
- Who among the other player characters do you like best?
- Who among the other player characters do you like the least?
- Do you believe in the goals of your House or is it just a job to you?
- How much do you respect the rulers of your House?
- What (if anything) would make you betray those around you?

***Example:*** *Kara Molay is an average looking woman in her early twenties. She has a natural grace developed from her exceptional fighting skills. She doesn't often say very much, preferring to watch those around her first. She dresses well in the fashions of court, but doesn't try to stand out. She is utterly dedicated to her family but also considers anything that benefits her to benefit the House. While she is dedicated to her friends, she would sacrifice almost anything to advance her House.*

# Kara Molay
## Commander

| Drive | | Statement |
|---|---|---|
| Duty: | 7 | I am the heir of my House. |
| Faith: | 8 | My family trusts me. |
| Justice: | 4 | |
| Power: | 6 | I get what I want. |
| Truth: | 5 | |

| Skill | | Focuses |
|---|---|---|
| Battle: | 6 | Short Blades |
| Communicate: | 6 | Diplomacy, Inspiration |
| Discipline: | 5 | |
| Move: | 6 | Stealth |
| Understand: | 5 | |

**Traits:** Noble, Honorable, Bene Gesserit

**Ambition:** To become a secret master assassin (Faith)

### Talents

- Hyperawareness
- Masterful Innuendo
- Prana-bindu Conditioning

### Starting Assets

- Blackmail Evidence
- Concealable Knife
- Personal Ornithopter

As the eldest daughter of House Molay, Kara was sent to the Bene Gesserit for training, as much for her edification as to keep her out of the way. However, instead of returning from the Sisters with courtly graces, she came back to House Molay a deadly knife fighter and skilled politician. She now works to reclaim her rightful place as heir to the House against her many devious brothers, as she sees all of them as unfit to rule.

# Talents

character is more than the sum of their parts, and a character's skills, drives, and focuses alone do not give a full picture of what they are truly capable of. Exceptional abilities, such as Mentat training, or the many and varied powers of a Bene Gesserit, are a form of talent, but talents can take other forms too, representing some of the ways which set a player character apart from ordinary people.

Talents normally take the form of a mechanical bonus—re-rolls, bonus Momentum, the ability to succeed automatically on certain tests, or unique ways to use Momentum, Threat, or Determination. No talent may be selected more than once, unless otherwise noted.

The following is a selection of talents which characters may select.

### ADRENALINE SHOT (SUK DOCTOR TALENT)
*You are adept at getting people back on their feet, even if you only make them forget their pain for a moment.*

By using an action, the character can remove the effects of any physical complication from a character who is in the same zone. This complication is not removed and returns at the end of the scene unless otherwise removed. This talent can only be used once on a given character during each scene, but can be used on each character.

### ADVISOR (SKILL)
*You've got a knack for guiding others through problems.*

When you choose this talent, select a single skill. Whenever you assist an ally and you use that skill, the ally you assist may re-roll a single d20 in their dice pool.

### BINDING PROMISE
*Whether through your demeanor, your reputation, or the method of your persuasion, you have a way of making people reluctant to break faith with you.*

When you succeed at a Communicate test to persuade someone to agree to a promise or agreement, you may spend one, two, or three points of Momentum to make that agreement binding. If that person wishes to break the promise, they must spend Threat equal to twice the Momentum you spent.

### BOLD (SKILL)
*When you take calculated risks, you tend to succeed more often than seems reasonable.*

When you select this talent, choose a single skill. When you attempt a test using the chosen skill, and you buy additional d20s by generating Threat for the gamemaster, you may re-roll a single d20 in that dice pool.

### BOLSTER
*Your certainty and resolve are a beacon to others, who might waver without your example.*

Once per scene, when an ally fails a skill test, you may immediately spend 2 points of Momentum or add 2 to Threat to allow that ally to re-roll their dice pool. When they re-roll, they may use your Discipline score instead of the skill they were using.

### CALCULATED PREDICTION (MENTAT TALENT)
*Using the facts and figures you have memorized and your ability to process information, you can attempt to predict the future. No such predictions are 100% perfect, as there may be variables you are unaware of that affect the future.*

You may spend a few minutes to meditate upon predicting the future. This requires an Understand test with a Difficulty of 4; if successful, you may ask the Gamemaster to state something that is likely to occur in the future. You may ask for one additional prediction for every two points of Momentum you spend. The Gamemaster can make these predictions vague and they do not have to explain any context for the prediction or why that thing is likely to occur.

### CAUTIOUS (SKILL)
*You are patient and circumspect, acting only when the odds are in your favor.*

When you select this talent, choose a single skill. When you attempt a test using that skill, and you buy additional d20s by spending Momentum, you may re-roll a single d20 in that dice pool.

### COLLABORATION (SKILL)
*You've coached your allies to capitalize on your expertise, and that effort has paid off.*

When you select this talent, choose a single skill with a rating of 6 or more. Whenever an ally attempts a test using that skill, and you can communicate with them, you may spend 2 points of Momentum to allow them to use your score for that skill, and one of your focuses (if applicable).

### COMBAT MEDIC (SUK DOCTOR TALENT)
You are skilled at offering rapid medical attention, even during a battle.

*You may spend 1 point of Momentum to reduce the extended test track of an ally in physical combat by 2 as an action.*

### CONSTANTLY WATCHING
*You're vigilant, bordering on paranoid… and little catches you off-guard.*

Whenever you attempt a skill test to detect danger or hidden enemies, you reduce the Difficulty by 2, to a minimum of 0. In addition, once per scene, when an enemy chooses to Keep the Initiative, you can increase the cost to do so by +2.

### COOL UNDER PRESSURE (SKILL)
*When the situation gets tough, you take a deep breath and get the job done.*

When you select this talent, choose a single skill. When you attempt a test using that skill, before rolling you may spend a Determination point to automatically succeed at that test, but you generate no Momentum. The normal conditions for spending Determination still apply.

### DECISIVE ACTION
*You take risks in combat, often ones that seem foolhardy or needless. You have a knack for making those gambles pay off.*

In a conflict, when you succeed at a Battle test to remove an opponent's assets, and you bought one or more dice by generating Threat, you may spend 2 points of Momentum to remove a second enemy asset.

### DEDICATION

*Your commitment to a cause is unwavering, and this has carried you through many a tough situation.*

At the start of a scene, if there is no Momentum in the group pool, roll 1d20. If you roll equal to or less than your Discipline score, add 1 to the group Momentum pool.

### DELIBERATE MOTION

*Every step you take is considered, and you are exceptionally sure-footed.*

When you attempt a Move test and suffer one or more complications, you may spend Momentum to ignore some or all of those complications; this costs 1 point of Momentum per complication ignored.

### DIRECT

*Your will and presence can drive others to act swiftly and efficiently.*

Once per scene, you may command an ally or subordinate to act. This requires no test from you, but the commanded ally may immediately attempt an action of their own, and you may assist any test they attempt. If done during a conflict, the ally acts on your turn regardless of if they have already acted, and this does not prevent them acting later during the round.

### DRIVEN

*Your determination does not waver.*

After you spend a point of Determination, roll 1d20. If you roll equal to or under your Discipline rating (by itself), you immediately regain that point of Determination.

### DUAL FEALTY

*You owe your service and your life to two different factions equally, and you have the trust of both.*

Choose two factions to be loyal to. This will normally be your House and another group such as the Bene Gesserit, but it can be to any two factions you would reasonably have contact with. Both factions are aware of your loyalties to both and expect that you will not betray one to the other. You may interact on friendly terms with members of both factions, without any expectations of betrayal or other peril.

### FAILED NAVIGATOR (SPACING GUILD TALENT)

*You underwent trials to become a Guild Navigator, but you failed to meet the standards required… yet, for one brief moment, your consciousness became one with the universe. In times of stress, your mind sometimes repeats this, granting you a momentary insight of some kind.*

Whenever you spend a point of Determination, the gamemaster will grant you an additional insight. This may relate to your current activities, or it may be completely unrelated.

### FIND TROUBLE

*You know where to find the criminal element wherever you go.*

Wherever you are, once per adventure, you can always contact the criminal underworld or black market (as long as there is one in that area). This doesn't mean they will be well disposed toward you, just that you can find a contact.

### GUILDSMAN (SPACING GUILD TALENT)

*You have connections to the Spacing Guild, granting you more access to their resources than most. You are not a Navigator, but you may be an agent, representative, banker, diplomat, or similar associate of the Guild.*

Once per adventure, you may call upon your Spacing Guild connection to use Guild facilities or resources, or to organize a meeting with important persons within the Guild. You do not have the authority to make demands of the Guild itself. If you need to use Guild resources more than once during the course of an adventure, the second time adds 2 to Threat, the third time adds 4, and so forth, adding +2 to the cost each time, as your increased use risks drawing undue attention to you.

### HIDDEN MOTIVES

*You are a master at concealing your intentions and motivations. Few truly know what drives you, even if they think they understand you.*

When an opponent fails an Understand or Communicate test against you, you may immediately create a trait which reflects a mistaken belief they have about you.

### HYPERAWARENESS (BENE GESSERIT TALENT)

*Your training has honed your awareness to an incredible degree, allowing you to notice details too small for others to perceive. Armed with these insights, you can uncover secrets and truths that others may be oblivious to.*

Whenever you spend Momentum to *Obtain Information* about the current situation, your current location, or a person you can currently observe, you may ask two questions for the first point of Momentum spent. Further, the limits of what others would be able to notice do not apply to you for any questions.

### IMPERIAL CONDITIONING (SUK DOCTOR TALENT)

*Through intense psychological conditioning, you cannot take a human life, or cause a human to come to harm. This is a necessary step, for those with power and status must be free of the fear that their physicians might be assassins.*

You cannot willingly inflict harm upon or kill a human being. Any attempt to coerce you into such an action automatically fails, and you automatically succeed on any skill test to persuade another that you intend them no harm.

### IMPROVED RESOURCES

*You are entrusted with greater access to the tools and resources you need to achieve your goals.*

You may increase the number of assets you possess by +1. This talent may be purchased multiple times.

### IMPROVISED WEAPON

*You are able to turn the most innocuous items into deadly weapons at a moment's notice.*

Once per scene you may create a Quality 0 asset (at no cost) that you can use in a personal or skirmish conflict. It might be a rock, broken bottle, or shard of glass, but it is enough to function as a weapon. The asset is removed at the end of any conflict it is used for, as it will be too badly damaged to use again.

### INTENSE STUDY

*You are extremely well-read, with vast amounts of knowledge about a wide range of subjects.*

Once per scene, you may use your Understand skill on a single skill test instead of any other skill, and you are counted as having a focus for that test.

### MAKE HASTE

*There is value in speed, even if there are consequences.*

When you attempt a Move test, you may choose to suffer one additional complication in exchange for scoring one automatic success on the test. During any conflict, you may add 1 to Threat to take the first action, regardless of who would otherwise act first.

### MASK OF POWER

*You can intimate that you know more than you do about an enemy's secrets.*

Once per scene you may create an asset (at no cost) such as blackmail evidence or an owed favor that will allow you to initiate an intrigue or espionage conflict with a person of your choosing. The asset is a lie, of course; you don't have anything, but your target doesn't know that. The asset is removed once the conflict is over, and if you are defeated the fact you were bluffing is exposed and you suffer an additional complication.

### MASTER-AT-ARMS

*Your expertise in battle is considerable, and few can match your effectiveness in combat.*

At the start of a duel, skirmish, or battle scene, select a single asset that represents a melee weapon or a unit of troops. Due to your prowess, you may spend 1 Momentum to improve that asset's Quality by 1 for the next conflict in this scene.

### MASTERFUL INNUENDO

*You have a special knack for saying more than one thing at once, conveying one message with the literal meaning of your words and another with innuendo, allusions, and signals that only the intended recipients will understand.*

When you attempt a Communicate test, you may choose to increase the Difficulty of the test by +1 to conceal a hidden message within your words. You must state who is the intended recipient of this hidden message. People other than the intended recipient cannot discern that you have concealed another message, unless they have this talent, or some other ability to detect things which people cannot normally detect (such as the Hyperawareness talent).

### MENTAT DISCIPLINE (MENTAT TALENT)

*Intense mental conditioning and extensive training have developed your intellect into a potent and valuable thing. You can retain and process vast amounts of information at extraordinary speeds.*

You have almost perfect recall, for even the most complex data. When making an Understand test that applies to recalling data, one of the D20s in your pool may be considered to have rolled a 1 instead of rolling it.

### MIND PALACE (MENTAT TALENT)

*You have exceptional recall and can reconstruct events and places you have experienced with perfect accuracy, allowing you to revisit them later.*

You may attempt a Difficulty 0 Understand test to recall a past event or a place you have previously been to. Momentum you generate on this test may be spent to recall facts and details about that event or location; this is treated like *Obtain Information*, but you may ask questions about things you have previously encountered, rather than merely those which are currently present in the scene.

### NIMBLE

*You're quick on your feet, and few obstacles can impede you.*

When attempting a Move test to move over, around, or through difficult terrain or similar physical obstacles (such as during a duel or skirmish), you may reduce the Difficulty of the test by 2. If this reduces the Difficulty to 0, you may move over or around that obstacle freely as if it wasn't there.

### OTHER MEMORY (BENE GESSERIT TALENT)

*You have undergone the Agony attended by another Reverent Mother, and now you can draw upon the memories and wisdom of all your ancestors. In doing so, you have become a Reverend Mother of the Bene Gesserit.*

You must be a Reverend Mother of the Bene Gesserit (and have an appropriate trait reflecting this) to select this talent. If this talent is selected in play, another Reverend Mother must be on hand and in physical contact to pass this genetic memory on to you.

Whenever you attempt a test where knowledge of past events—even those which may have occurred many generations ago—would be beneficial, you score three automatic successes. You may also share your genetic memory with other Reverend Mothers at will.

### PASSIVE SCRUTINY

*You are quick to notice details which may be of importance later.*

When you enter a scene, you may ask one question of the gamemaster as if you'd spent Momentum to *Obtain Information*.

### PERFORMER

*Your skill with music or poetry helps to soothe and inspire your comrades.*

Once per scene you may entertain the group with a short performance. This might be playing the balliset, singing, reciting a poem, dancing, or even juggling. Once the performance is over you may add 1 to the group's Momentum pool.

### PRANA-BINDU CONDITIONING (BENE GESSERIT TALENT)

*You have absolute control over your body. Every muscle and every nerve is under your control, and you have even mastered your own body chemistry and metabolism.*

Whenever you attempt a Move or Discipline test which relies on your control of your body, you may re-roll a single d20. You can perfectly control your breathing, heart rate, and your internal organs (including the ability to choose whether to conceive a child, and to determine the child's physical and genetic traits).

### PRIORITY BOARDING (SPACING GUILD TALENT)

*You can call in a few favors to ensure the Guild inspectors don't take too long looking at your luggage.*

You don't need to offer bribes to ensure Guild inspectors simply take your word for it that all your cargo and possessions are as they should be. This allows you to smuggle anything aboard a Guild ship. However, if something you have brought aboard creates problems for the Guild, you will lose this talent.

### PUTTING THEORY INTO PRACTICE

*You've learned how to quickly turn newfound knowledge into a practical advantage.*

Once per scene, when you *Obtain Information*, you may create a trait for free, which must represent an advantage, opportunity, or weakness you've identified with the information you received.

### RANSACK

*When time is of the essence, you prioritize getting the work done over covering your tracks.*

When you attempt an Understand test to search an area, you may add 2 to Threat to reduce the difficulty of the test by 1, and to halve the amount of time the test takes to attempt.

### RAPID MANEUVER

*You're fast, able to cross ground, find the shortest route, and bring your tools to bear quicker than most.*

When attempting a skill test to reach a destination quickly when moving on foot or in a vehicle, reduce the Difficulty by 1. In a conflict, when moving an asset, you may move the asset an additional zone for 1 point of Momentum, rather than 2.

### RAPID RECOVERY

*You return to fighting form quickly after being injured, even when it may be risky to return to the fray.*

Once per scene, at the start of your turn, you may add +2 to Threat to remove a complication which represents an injury. In addition, you may pay to Resist Defeat one additional time during a conflict.

### RESILIENCE (SKILL) (FREMEN TALENT)

*It takes a lot to put you down in a conflict. You get back up more often than most.*

Usually you may only 'Resist Defeat' once per scene. You can do so twice per scene, but only when in a conflict using the listed skill.

### RIGOROUS CONTROL

*You are an island of calm amidst the chaos of the universe, maintaining control over yourself when you cannot control anything else.*

Whenever you are attempting an extended task where the requirement is based on one of your skills, at the cost of 1 Momentum you may use your Discipline for that requirement instead of the skill normally used. If the requirement would normally be based on your Discipline, add +1 to the final requirement for that extended task.

### SPECIALIST

*Your duties require you to manage a greater type of a specific kind of asset.*

You may purchase this talent multiple times. Each time you select this talent, choose a single category of asset from the following list: dueling, warfare, espionage, or intrigue. You increase the number of assets you possess by +2, but those two additional assets must be from the chosen category.

### STIRRING RHETORIC
*You are an able public speaker, and your words carry weight and purpose.*

When you succeed at a Communicate test to address a group of people, you may select a number of those people equal to your Communicate skill. Those characters may re-roll a single d20 on the next test they attempt which uses the same drive that you used on your Communicate test.

### SUBTLE STEP
*You're well-versed in methods of avoiding notice, and you reveal little that you do not intend to.*

When you attempt a Move test to sneak or otherwise pass unseen through an area, or when you attempt to move an asset subtly during a conflict, the first extra d20 you purchase for the test is free.

### SUBTLE WORDS
*You are skilled at swaying others with a few quiet words spoken in the right place at the right time. Even they may not realize what influence your words have had.*

When you attempt a Communicate test, and you buy one or more dice by spending Momentum, you may create a new trait for free upon the character you have spoken to, which reflects your influence upon their thoughts or mood.

### THE REASON I FIGHT (DRIVE)
*Skill is not the only factor in determining victory; those who want it more, and those who are driven by a greater sense of purpose, may triumph when they should have failed.*

When you select this talent, choose a single drive rated 6 or higher. When you attempt a Battle test using the chosen drive, and the drive's statement aligns with the action being attempted, you may re-roll 1d20.

### THE SLOW BLADE
*The slow blade pierces the shield. You're well-versed in the subtle ways of avoiding an opponent's defenses.*

When you make an attack during a duel or a skirmish using a melee weapon, and you buy one or more dice by spending Momentum, you may choose one of the enemy's assets in the same zone as your attack; you can ignore that asset during your attack.

### TO FIGHT SOMEONE IS TO KNOW THEM (SKILL)
*You are an expert in studying your foes in conflict, learning how they think and gleaning secrets from them based on how they move, attack, and defend.*

When you select this talent, choose a skill. When you win a conflict using the chosen skill, you gain two bonus Momentum points, which you may use to *Obtain Information* or to create a trait that represents some knowledge or insight you've gained about your opponent.

### TWISTED MENTAT (MENTAT TALENT)
*Your Mentat abilities were shaped and engineered by the Bene Tleilax to leave you unencumbered by such petty things as morality, taboo, or decency.*

Whenever you attempt an Understand test, you generate one bonus Momentum point for each die you bought by adding to Threat. This bonus Momentum may only be used to *Obtain Information* about the most effective ways to harm or inflict pain upon a person within the scene, or to create a trait which represents a weakness you have discovered which you can exploit. This Talent may only be chosen in character creation.

### UNQUESTIONABLE LOYALTY
*Your loyalty to your House is such that it can drive you to action even in the direst of circumstances.*

At the start of each adventure, you begin with one additional point of Determination. This extra point can only be used on an action which is in direct service to your House.

### VERIFY (MENTAT TALENT)
*You have so much data at your fingertips you can see where it contradicts and determine where falsehoods lie.*

You may spend a point of Momentum to ask the gamemaster if a piece of information you have is true or false. You need not be making a skill test as with *Obtain Information*, and the data can be your supposition as much as a specific document or rumor.

### VOICE (BENE GESSERIT TALENT)
*You have been trained to modulate your voice to influence the subconscious minds of others. With this skill you can subtly manipulate others, alter motivations and moods, or even compel action from the unwilling.*

You may use Voice whenever you speak to someone else, though you must be able to observe them for a short while beforehand, and they must be able to hear you speak. When you use Voice, you may add one, two, or three points to Threat to score the same number of automatic successes on any Communicate test made to influence your chosen target. The greater the number of automatic successes, the more overt your use of Voice, which others may notice. Your training also allows you to buy those automatic successes on any test made to resist the effects of Voice.

# Creation in Play

**The** other method of creating a main character is somewhat simpler, but does require that you have a greater understanding of who you want your character to be and what you want them to do before you begin playing ***Dune: Adventures in the Imperium***.

This method allows you to partially create your character, leaving a number of details undefined, so that you can choose them when they come up during play, revealing the character through their actions in the same way that a character's capabilities might be revealed to a reader or viewer in a story.

Creating the partial character should be a relatively quick process, but one that requires you to make a few decisions early. This method uses the following steps:

1. Create your character's concept (and faction template if appropriate).
2. Choose an archetype and record primary (7) and secondary (6) skill ratings.
3. Choose a focus.
4. Choose one talent.
5. Choose one drive and create a drive statement.
6. Choose one asset.
7. Fill in character details.
8. Begin play!

## STEP ONE: CONCEPT

***Create concept and pick faction if appropriate.***

Just as in planned character creation, the first step in creating a player character is to decide what general sort of character to create. Again, it's helpful to keep this concept relatively vague at this stage, as it gives you room to change and adapt.

If you decide you want to play a faction character, choose one of the templates and note the additional trait.

Once you have a concept that you're happy with, move on to the next step.

## STEP TWO: ARCHETYPE

***From archetype, record one trait, primary skill (7), and secondary skill (6).***

Next, select a general archetype for the character and record the career trait that comes with it. Put a rating of 7 for the primary skill listed and a rating of 6 for the secondary skill listed. Ignore the other three skills for now. It is perfectly reasonable to pick an archetype based only on the primary and secondary skills it offers and amend it to suit your concept.

These archetypes are the same as those listed under planned character creation, starting on p.114.

## STEP THREE: FOCUSES

***Pick one focus.***

Your chosen archetype will provide two focuses, one of which will be associated with the archetype's primary skill, and the other of which will be associated with the archetype's secondary skill. Record these as your first two focuses. However, if there is a focus you feel would suit your character better you may substitute it for either of these.

Your character has two other focuses, but these are left blank for the moment: you'll decide what they are during play.

## STEP FOUR: TALENTS

***Pick one talent.***

Pick one of the talents listed in your archetype as your first talent. If you have opted for a faction template, you must pick one of your mandatory talents for this option. If your faction demands multiple mandatory talents, record them all now (and you will have fewer to choose during play).

Your character will have two other talents, but these are left blank for the moment: you'll decide what they are during play.

## STEP FIVE: DRIVES AND DRIVE STATEMENTS

***Pick one drive (8) and its statement.***

Every character has five drives—**Duty**, **Faith**, **Justice**, **Power**, and **Truth**—which are described on p.105. From these five, select one drive. This is the character's most important drive and receives a rating of 8. This is the thing most important to the character, so you need to know it in advance.

Next, define a drive statement for this drive. Drive statements are described in detail on p.106, and additional guidance on creating them appears in the **Planned Creation** section on p.120-121.

The other four drives remain blank at this stage: you'll fill them in later, during play.

## STEP SIX: ASSETS

***Pick one asset.***

A starting character should have three assets, one of which must be tangible, but during character creation you only need to choose one of them right away. This will presumably be the asset the character possesses which is most important or obvious.

The other two assets will be decided later, during play.

## STEP SEVEN: CHARACTER DETAILS

At this stage, your character is almost ready for play, but you need to make a few decisions to turn the character from a collection of numbers and rules into a distinct person.

Elements like the character's name—so that other characters know what to call them—and a basic sense of their appearance, personality, and so forth are crucial for bringing the character to life, even in this partially-assembled sense.

Guidance on character details of this sort can be found on p.123.

## STEP EIGHT: BEGIN PLAY!

Your character will have numerous blank spaces on their character sheet:

- You'll have one **trait** left to define, which will reflect your character's reputation.
- You'll have three **skills** left to define.
- You'll have two **focuses** left to define.
- You'll have two **talents** left to define.
- You'll have four **drives** left to define, along with drive statements for two of them.
- You'll have to define your character's **ambition**.
- You'll have two additional **assets** left to define.

While you have these details undefined, you may not gain experience points or purchase advancements for your character.

# Running Creation in Play

While you have a character ready to go, it isn't quite complete. However, as you play the game and develop the concept you have of the character, you can gradually fill in the rest of their skills and abilities. Whenever your character is faced with a new situation, they might use an ability they already have, or choose to define one that would be useful from their remaining options. By defining an ability in this way, the character is not suddenly learning how to perform it; instead, they finally reveal an ability they already had to the other characters.

So, if your character does not have a rating for their Battle skill, they might choose to define it in their first combat. As such, it is up to the player to decide how good they are, based on what options they still must define. You might decide the character is a lethal fighter or not suited for fighting at all. But whatever the rating is, it is something they have always had. This means that if you don't have a rating in the Battle skill and your character gets into a fight, you will either have to run, hide, or make a decision about how good they are pretty quickly. It also means that if the character has boasted of their martial prowess before defining it and the player decides to give them a low Battle score when it is first tested, they have been clearly exaggerating their ability.

As a player it is tempting to assign the highest rating available to the skill you need each time you are faced with a situation. But it is important to remember that eventually you will only have your worst skills left. So consider carefully what you want your character to be good at in the long term and be prepared to take the odd knock or two as you learn about their true abilities. It is also worth watching what each of the other players pick and allowing each other the spotlight. If you are faced with defining your Communicate skill and another player seems keen to have a high Communicate rating, it is worth taking a step back and letting them shine in the situation. As everyone has the same values to assign, sooner or later everyone will get a moment to be the best at something, and this will make the group more dynamic. Remember, your characters are a team, so it is fine to rely on each other. Don't expect to be good at everything.

When running creation in play, the gamemaster should bear a few things in mind as well. The main thing to remember is that the players will need opportunities to define their characters' attributes and abilities. It is therefore a good idea to run as many situations as required to test each of their abilities. While this is reasonably simple for skills, it is a lot harder for drives, as a player may often use the same drive for many different tests and situations. Focuses and talents also offer a problem as the player won't know them all. If the gamemaster is familiar with the various special abilities, they should suggest them to the players when they might be useful. "You know, if you had the Bold (Communicate) talent this test would be a lot easier." Failing that, the players can flag moments they would like to be just that little bit better than usual in a situation and use those moments to check in the book for a talent or focus that they can define to help them out.

While the gamemaster can run creation in play with any adventure, they might consider running more of an 'origin story' for the group. The adventure might bring the characters together, possibly for their first mission. But it might even focus on how they came to be part of their House and what made them pledge loyalty to it.

The needs of continued character creation will slow down the action a little. But that's fine as you are all getting use to the rules and what would suit the characters. So, take your time and allow the group to discuss what they feel would be a useful ability to add to the group (even if the players themselves don't want it for their character). While there is a lot of fun to be had creating in play, the group should also be focused on completing the characters. For this reason, the gamemaster should set a limit to how long this part of the campaign will go on. They might want every character done by the end of the first session or allow three or four sessions or a full starting adventure to be completed before calling creation to an end. Whatever the limit, anything undefined by the end of this time should be defined outside of play at the end of the session. By this time all the players should be familiar enough with their characters and the rules to make informed decisions and complete their characters.

To make creation in play simpler we have divided the remaining character choices into a series of options that can be used a limited amount of times. Each player should ideally copy this list and tick them off as they use them.

## DEFINING A TRAIT

During play, whenever you attempt an action which may be affected by how others regard your character, you may choose to define your remaining trait before the action is resolved. When the action is resolved, the newly-defined trait is considered in how the action is resolved.

This option may be used **once**.

## DEFINING SKILLS

During play, when you attempt a skill test which uses a skill which is undefined, you may choose to define it.

You may choose to give the skill a rating of 4, 5, or 6.

Each of those ratings may only be assigned to a single skill—that is, once you've assigned a rating of 6 to a skill, you may not assign a 6 to any other skill.

Once you've defined the skill's rating, roll and resolve the skill test as normal.

This option may be used **three** times, once for each remaining skill.

## DEFINING FOCUSES

During play, when you attempt a skill test, and you do not have a focus which applies to that test, you may choose to define one of your remaining focuses.

Once you have chosen the focus, roll and resolve the skill test as normal.

This option may be used **twice**, once for each remaining focus.

## DEFINING TALENTS

During play, at any point, you may select a single talent for which you fulfil the requirements and add that talent to those you know. If you are about to attempt a skill test and the talent would provide an advantage on that test, you gain the talent's benefits on that test.

This option may be used **twice**, once for each remaining talent.

## DEFINING DRIVES

During play, when you attempt a skill test, you may choose to define one of your undefined drives.

Decide how important the drive is to your character, and assign the corresponding rating, as shown on the following table:

| DRIVE IMPORTANCE | DRIVE RATING | MEANING |
|---|---|---|
| **1st** | 8 | This is the single most important thing for you. |
| **2nd** | 7 | This is a high priority for you. |
| **3rd** | 6 | This is certainly something that influences you. |
| **4th** | 5 | You know that this thing matters, but you have other priorities. |
| **5th** | 4 | You care very little about this thing. |

If the drive is your 2nd or 3rd most important (and thus has a rating of 6 or higher), then you must also create a drive statement for it.

When you create a drive statement for your character in this way, you immediately receive a point of Determination.

Once you've done this, resolve the skill test as normal; this could include suffering a complication due to the drive statement, though you cannot challenge a drive until the character is complete: that sort of life-changing decision should wait until the character is fully-formed.

This option may be taken **four** times, once for each remaining drive.

## DEFINING AMBITION

At any point during play, you may choose to define your character's ambition. It must be based on the character's most important drive, and the gamemaster will help you define it to ensure that it will come up in play in future.

This option may be taken **once**.

## DEFINING ASSETS

At any point during play, you may choose to define one or your remaining assets. This follows the normal rules for choosing starting assets. You may choose to do this immediately before attempting an action in which the asset would be useful; once you've finished defining the asset, continue attempting the action as normal. Remember to be realistic with any asset you might have supposedly been carrying. However, while you can't have an ornithopter in your pocket, you might come across one ready to fly.

This option may be taken **twice**, once for each remaining asset.

## EVERYTHING'S COMPLETE

Once all the options above have been selected, the character is considered complete. From this point on, the character may earn experience points and spend them to purchase advances.

# Supporting Characters

As described at the start of this chapter, **supporting characters** are the other type of characters created and controlled by the players during a game of **Dune**. Supporting characters are less detailed and are created in a less involved manner than the main player characters, and they are not permanently owned by a single player. Instead, supporting characters are created as and when circumstances require within the game.

Supporting characters serve the following purposes within *Dune*:

- They represent the people who serve the group's House in various minor and lesser capacities, from functionaries, to spies, to soldiers, and more besides. Some of these may even be assets of a player character.
- They allow players to take on different roles in play, allowing them to capitalize on a skillset that doesn't exist among the main characters, to play a more active role in an adventure that doesn't focus on their main character, or to account for players who are absent.
- They allow the players to split their characters between different activities in different locations without being left out of the game for long stretches: players can use supporting characters in situations where their main character isn't present.

## Using a Supporting Character

At the start of a scene, a player may choose which character they are using: their main character, or one of the supporting characters currently available. For the duration of that scene, that player will control the character they have chosen—the character chosen is a player character.

The player, and the gamemaster, should keep in mind—or keep note of—where the main characters and supporting characters are at different times, and it will typically be the case that a player will choose a character located in the scene being established. However, this means that if the gamemaster ends a scene, and then establishes the next scene in a location occupied by a different set of characters, the players can easily switch to the appropriate characters without having to stop and figure out who is involved and who isn't.

If a player has multiple characters in a single scene, then the player may not directly control those other characters. Characters which are not under the direct control of any player cannot perform the full range of actions available to a character under a player's control. Instead, they can do the following things:

- **Difficulty 0 Tests:** A character not directly controlled by a player may attempt any action in which they will automatically succeed, such as any test which has a Difficulty of 0. If required to attempt a test with a Difficulty above 0, an uncontrolled character will automatically fail, without rolling dice.
- **Assistance:** A character not directly controlled by a player may assist another character's tests. The normal rules for assistance apply, and even uncontrolled characters may only assist a single character at a time.
- **Follow Orders:** A character not directly controlled by a player may take actions when ordered. In this instance, the ordering character instructs the uncontrolled character, and then the uncontrolled character can attempt that action—which may include a test—normally, with assistance from the ordering character.
- **Sacrifice:** An uncontrolled character can be sacrificed to prevent a controlled character from being defeated or otherwise incapacitated. This costs 1 point of Momentum or adds 1 to Threat, and causes the uncontrolled character to suffer whatever fate would have befallen the controlled character.

Further, uncontrolled characters can be treated as a trait, to allow a test to be attempted which would otherwise be impossible (for activities that would require multiple people), or to reduce the Difficulty of a test—simply providing an extra pair of hands and an extra set of senses can be valuable. Note that this does mean that, working in concert, a group of uncontrolled characters can achieve more difficult actions—reducing test Difficulty to 0 so that they can attempt and succeed at the action.

If you have multiple characters in a single scene, and the character you are playing is defeated or otherwise incapacitated, you may immediately select a single uncontrolled character to take control of.

## Creating a Supporting Character

The number of supporting characters present during any game is not fixed, and players do not inherently own any supporting characters: they are shared amongst the entire group and brought into play as-and-when required.

Supporting characters come in two types: minor and notable (these are comparable to those types of non-player character as well). Minor supporting characters are inconsequential subordinates, such as House soldiers or similar servants. Notable supporting characters are specialists, experts, trusted lieutenants, and similar people, though not as important as the main characters.

## MINOR SUPPORTING CHARACTERS

You may create an unlimited number of minor supporting characters during play, with each one costing one point of Momentum or adding one to Threat. If you are not controlling another character in the scene, you may ignore this cost for one minor supporting character. This means you always have a free minor supporting character to bring in if you do not have anyone else to play as; bringing in more than that requires spending Momentum or adding to Threat.

You can create a minor supporting character in the following way:

- **Traits:** A minor supporting character has a single trait, which is a basic description of the character's job or role, such as 'House Trooper', 'Servant', or 'Spy'.
- **Drives:** Minor supporting characters do not have any drive scores. Instead, they have a single **Drive** rating, which ranges from 4 to 8, which is added to their target number instead of a drive for any test. This can be thought of as comparable to their Duty drive, as it represents how effective and dutiful they are. They have no drive statements. Most minor supporting characters have a Drive of 5 to begin with. If they serve the secondary domain of the House this may be 6, and if they serve the primary domain it can be 7. Otherwise, especially low ranking minor supporting characters might just start with 4.
- **Skills:** Minor supporting characters have one skill ranked at 6 (which should be the one most relevant to their job), two skills ranked at 5, and two skills ranked at 4.
- **Focuses:** Minor supporting characters have one focus for any skill ranked at 6, two focuses for any skill ranked at 7, and three focuses for any skill ranked at 8 (if an NPC the gamemaster has granted higher score to).
- **Talents:** If your House grants any special benefit to a type of minor supporting character (such as a bonus to House Troopers to reflect special training), this will take the form of a talent. If they do not belong to a House, any talents they have are unique to them.

## NOTABLE SUPPORTING CHARACTERS

Per adventure, the group may use up to five notable supporting characters, which are either created new that adventure or were created in prior adventures and are being used again. Your House may increase or decrease this number, as the fortunes of a House can influence the number and caliber of experts and specialists who serve it.

Creating a new notable supporting character costs 3 points of Momentum or adds 3 points to Threat, plus any additional costs incurred during creation. Reusing an existing notable supporting character requires paying half what it cost to create them, rounding up.

To create a Notable supporting character:

- **Traits:** A notable supporting character has one trait, which is a basic description of the character's job or role, such as 'Military Officer', 'Steward', 'Pilot', or 'Scholar'. For an extra +1 to their cost, add a second trait, reflecting the character's reputation.
- **Drives:** Notable supporting characters have scores in two drives, which are rated at 6 and 7. For all other drives, they use a score of 5. They have a single drive statement for one of their higher-rated drives. For an extra +1 to their cost, add a drive statement to their other higher-rated drive.
- **Skills:** Notable supporting characters typically have one skill ranked at 7 (which should be the one most relevant to their job), one ranked at 6, two ranked at 5, and one at 4. For an extra +1 to their cost, add +1 to two different skills.
- **Focuses:** Notable supporting characters have one focus for any skill ranked at 6, two focuses for any skill ranked at 7, and three focuses for any skill ranked at 8. For an extra +1 to their cost, add two additional focuses to any skills rated 6 or higher.
- **Talents:** Notable supporting characters normally have one talent. For an extra +2 to their cost, add a second talent.

# Character Advancement

**hen** characters serve their own interests, they have the potential to advance. Actions taken during play which serve a character's personal agenda score advancement points, which in turn allow the character to improve their skills, learn additional focuses, and obtain new talents.

There are a few other ways that characters can gain advancement points as well, but these occur less frequently.

## GAINING ADVANCEMENT POINTS

During an adventure, you can gain advancement points in the following ways:

- **Adversity:** You can gain advancement points from facing difficult situations, making mistakes, and suffering the consequences of actions. Failure is a harsh teacher.
- **Pain:** Gain 1 advancement point when you are defeated during conflict.
- **Failure:** Gain 1 advancement point when you fail a test with a Difficulty of 3 or higher.
- **Peril:** Gain 1 advancement point whenever the gamemaster spends four or more points of Threat at once.

**Ambition:** You gain advancement points whenever you succeed at an action which supports your ambition (this does not require a skill test, but if the action involved a skill test, the test must have been successful). You receive 1 advancement point if the action made a minor contribution to your ambition, or 3 if the action was a major contribution to your ambition.

**Impressing the Group:** If the group wants to reward an especially good plan, roleplayed scene, or other especially noteworthy contribution, the player in question may be given an extra advancement point. Such rewards should be restricted to one per session for any player.

## USING ADVANCEMENT POINTS

Over time, you will accumulate advancement points. Between adventures, you may choose to use any points you've accumulated to purchase an advance. You may purchase a maximum of a single advance after each adventure.

- **Skill:** You may increase one of your skills by +1. Each skill may only be advanced in this way once, and no skill may be advanced to more than 8. This costs 10 advancement points, plus 1 for each previous skill advance purchased.
- **Focus:** You may purchase an additional focus for any skill which is rated 6 or higher. This costs advancement points equal to the number of focuses you already have.
- **Talent:** You may purchase an additional talent from those available to you. This costs advancement points equal to three times the number of talents you already have.
- **Asset:** You may select an asset (other than one which only existed for a single scene) to make permanent. This costs 3 advancement points. Alternatively, you may work to improve one of your existing assets, adding +1 to its Quality, by spending advancement points equal to three times the asset's existing Quality.

You also have the option to retrain, allowing one ability to atrophy or diminish with disuse while developing another. Retraining in this way halves the number of advancement points required (round up), but comes at a cost:

- If you retrain a **skill**, then one skill is also reduced by 1, to a minimum of 4. This does not count as the one advancement allowed for that skill.
- If you retrain a **focus**, then you must remove a single focus you already possess.
- If you retrain a **talent**, then you must remove a talent you already possess.

A character's drives cannot be altered through advancement. They have their own mechanism for change, described on p.146-147.

# CHAPTER 5: RULES

*"Science is made up of so many things that appear obvious after they are explained."*

—Pardot Kynes

# Overview

**his** chapter introduces the core rules for playing ***Dune: Adventures in the Imperium***. As the rest of the rules in the other chapters build on the mechanics found here, it's valuable to have a decent understanding on how all this works. Each section within this chapter starts with a brief primer on what that section describes, which is then elaborated upon and described in full.

## Dice

***Dune: Adventures in the Imperium*** uses a single type of dice to resolve the actions a character may attempt and the situations they may face: twenty-sided dice, often referred to as a **d20**. Most of the time more than one die is rolled at once: these dice are collectively referred to as a **dice pool**. The number of dice being rolled are noted as Xd20, where X is the number of dice being rolled, so 2d20 means two twenty-sided dice are rolled.

### Re-rolls

Some situations or abilities allow a character to re-roll one or more dice. When re-rolling dice, you choose the dice you wish to re-roll. You then roll those dice again, and the new results replace the old ones, even if the new result is worse.

Some situations allow you to re-roll a specific number of dice, while others allow an entire dice pool to be re-rolled. You may always choose how many dice you wish to re-roll, up to the maximum listed—in essence, you can always choose not to re-roll a die if you wish to keep that result.

Once you've re-rolled a die, you may not re-roll it again: the second result stands, even if you have another ability that lets you re-roll.

## Characters

This chapter will refer to abilities and details which are described fully across this chapter, but in order to avoid too much page-flipping, we've provided a basic overview here:

- **Traits:** A character has two or more traits, which serve as basic descriptions of who the character is. These interact with the rules in the same way as other traits.
- **Skills:** A character has scores in five broad skills—Battle, Communicate, Discipline, Move, and Understand—ranging from 4 to 8. These determine how capable a character is at a certain type of activity and are used as part of a character's target number when they make a skill test.
- **Focuses:** A character has focuses for several of their skills. Focuses describe areas of specialization and expertise within each skill. If a focus applies to what a character is doing, it increases the chances of scoring critical successes when making a skill test.
- **Drives:** A character has scores in five drives—Duty, Faith, Justice, Power, and Truth—ranging from 4 to 8. These show how strongly a character believes in these facets of life and are used as part of a character's target number when they make a skill test.
- **Drive Statements:** A character's highest drives also have statements associated with them. When a character wishes to use a drive as part of a skill test, they must check to see if the statement agrees or conflicts with the action being taken. If a character's drives agree with their actions, they receive bonuses, while if their drives conflict with their actions, they may be hindered.
- **Talents:** A character's talents are distinctive special abilities setting them apart from other people. The distinctive powers of the Bene Gesserit and the accelerated thought processes of Mentats are both types of talents.
- **Assets:** Described fully in **Chapter 6: Conflict** and **Chapter 7: Assets**, a character's assets represent the tools and resources they have at their disposal, which can be invaluable in overcoming adversity.

# Scenes and Traits

All adventures in ***Dune: Adventures in the Imperium*** are broken down into scenes, which the gamemaster is responsible for setting up. Once the gamemaster has set up a scene, the players may take whatever actions they desire, and once there's nothing else they can, or wish to, do in that place, the scene ends. Scenes also include descriptors called traits, which point out anything important about the scene's time or place, or the characters or objects within it.

A scene is the basic building block of an adventure, just like books and movies are broken into scenes. A scene is a place and time involving a specific set of characters, in which an exciting or dramatic event occurs, usually moving the story forward.

At the start of a scene, the gamemaster will inform you where your character is, what's going on, and anything else useful or important you should know. There'll always be a reason behind this scene, driven by what happened in the scenes before it: perhaps you came here because of a clue left by an assassin, or because you're looking for a specific person. Once the gamemaster has finished setting the scene, you and your fellow players can ask questions about the situation and choose for your characters to do things within the scene: move around, talk to other people, or otherwise take actions. Once you've reached a point where you can't do anything further toward your goal, or you've gained a new goal that requires you go somewhere else, the scene ends, and a new one begins.

During a scene, your decisions are important; the choices you make have an impact upon the world around your character, and you'll have to face the consequences of those choices. The gamemaster can shape the events in a scene, too, by spending Threat and through the actions of non-player characters, but this is normally in response to your choices and those of your fellow players.

For the gamemaster, part of setting up a new scene is describing the **traits** which apply to that scene. Traits

describe the notable and interesting details about a place, time, person, or object, sort of like keywords for other rules to interact with. Each trait is a single word or a short phrase that describes a single detail about the thing it belongs to. A trait is always both true and important: a trait goes away if it stops being *true* or *important*.

As a player, traits influence the kinds of things your character can try and do, and how difficult those actions are, but you can also interact with traits more directly, adding, removing, or altering the traits in a scene as your actions change the situation. How you can do this is explained later in the chapter.

## The Effect of Traits

In practice, traits have a simple impact on your character's actions: if a trait is relevant to an action being attempted, it makes the action possible or impossible, or it makes the action easier or harder. Multiple traits can be applied to a situation at once, whether canceling one another out or adding to one another. Some especially intense or potent traits may actually be multiple identical traits added together: a battlefield might be shrouded in *Smoke*, or visibility might be reduced by *Thick Smoke 2*, with the number indicating that it counts as two traits.

In practice, this is easy to apply. Each trait can be placed into a simple statement, such as one of those below, and if that statement makes sense, then it applies. If it doesn't make sense, then it doesn't apply.

- Because I am [personal trait], this activity is…
- Because of [situation or location trait], this activity is…
- Because I have [equipment trait], this activity is…

The end of each of those statements is either 'easier', 'harder', 'possible', or 'impossible'. At the simplest level, that's as far as the gamemaster needs to go with trait: if the statement ends with 'easier', reduce the Difficulty, if the statement ends with 'harder', increase the Difficulty. If the statement ends with 'possible', then the activity can be attempted while the trait applies, while if it ends with 'impossible', then it can't be attempted while that trait applies.

It's also worth remembering that if a truth makes an action impossible, that doesn't necessarily mean you can never attempt that action: rather, it may mean that the action is impossible *unless you change the situation to make it possible.*

Remember also that assets are also traits. If one can apply to a scene it works just like any other trait. Having a knife makes a combat easier than fighting unarmed. Having blackmail evidence makes an attempt to blackmail a target possible. For the most part, assets (especially in architect play) are what makes the test possible.

***Example:*** *Kara Molay, heir to her House, is trying to negotiate a new trade deal with a spice merchant at a large social gathering. As the merchant is known as a fair trader, Kara's player believes her 'Honorable' trait may apply. She tells the gamemaster "Because Kara is honorable, it will be easier to make a deal with the merchant." The gamemaster agrees and reduces the Difficulty of the test.*

As many traits as you like can be added to a scene, but the gamemaster can veto any they don't believe are appropriate to the situation, or will do what the player wants. As traits can be used to cancel each other they should be brought into play one at a time, giving the other side the option of playing a trait to counteract it. This build up of traits to finalize the total modifier of the action is something that should be played out and described.

***Example:*** *Revisiting the example above this is how the scene might play out with a more complex interchange of traits.*

*Kara attends the party to try and speak to the spice merchant. The gamemaster describes the scene and gives the scene the trait 'Convivial'. As Kara makes her approach the gamemaster tells her player that as Kara doesn't know the spice merchant, he won't do business with her without a proper introduction. Kara doesn't have time to try and make another test to convince someone to make such an introduction. So Kara asks to invoke the Convivial trait to make the attempt possible. It's a friendly party, and so the gamemaster allows Kara to use the trait to approach informally and introduce herself. In this way the trait makes the test possible.*

*The gamemaster then declares the merchant is 'Distrustful 2' upon meeting Kara. Kara can use her Honourable trait to mitigate this a little and drop Distrustful to just 1. But this means the test to negotiate is one step more difficult.*

*Kara wants better odds so decides to use her blackmail evidence asset, making it apply to the merchant. She whispers a few hints into the conversation and the merchant goes pale. The Difficulty penalty is removed.*

*Kara could leave it there, but might spend Momentum to create another trait to make the upcoming test easier. She might even bring in her knife as an asset to physically threaten the merchant, but that might be a little much! The gamemaster might also use Threat to add more traits to make things harder again, such as the merchant having friends or not being easily frightened.*

# Skill Tests

Whenever your character takes action, and there is doubt in the outcome—failure is a possibility, or the result might depend on how well they succeed—the gamemaster asks you to make a skill test. When you make a skill test, the gamemaster tells you how difficult the skill test is, expressed as Difficulty.

Select one of your **skills** and one of your **drives** and add their scores together to make a **target number**. Then, roll two d20s:

- Each die that rolls equal to or under that target number is a **success**.
- Each die that rolls a 1 is a **critical success**, worth two successes.

If your character has a **focus** that would help in that action, then any die that rolls equal to or less than their skill is a critical success instead. Count your successes, and if you scored successes equal to or greater than the Difficulty, your character has passed the skill test and achieves what they set out to achieve.

## Difficulty

For many skill tests, as long as you achieve one success you have succeeded at the action you are attempting. However, some actions are simply more complex than others, or can be made more difficult by circumstances. While it may be a challenge to pick a lock, it is more of a challenge to do so in the rain, blindfolded with an enemy agent about to attack you.

When a player asks to make a skill test, the gamemaster should determine the Difficulty of the task, which is rated 0–5. The player must get at least as many successes on the skill test result as the Difficulty to achieve the task. If they fail they may still opt to 'succeed at a cost'. The

## When to Roll

Much of the time, when playing ***Dune: Adventures in the Imperium***, you simply describe what you want your character to do, and the gamemaster decides whether it's possible and what happens next. Most actions your character takes should be so simple that you don't need to use the rules.

However, there are sometimes actions that aren't so simple to resolve. Most commonly, these fall into one of three categories:

- The action is difficult or dangerous, or both.
- The action is directly opposed by someone else.
- The action is simple, but how well you succeed is important.

In these situations, the gamemaster asks you to make a skill test, following the process described below.

### What's at Stake

Both you and the gamemaster should have a clear idea of what a skill test is for, and what happens if the skill test succeeds or fails. In general, one of the following is likely to be true:

- The skill test is an attempt to achieve something: if you pass, you get the result you desire; if the skill test fails, you don't get that.
- The skill test is to avoid or resist a danger. In this case, a pass means that you avoid some or all the danger, while failure means that you suffer the full effects of the danger you sought to avoid.
- The skill test is to achieve something, but there's something at stake as well. If you pass, you get what you wanted and avoid the consequences, while failure means that you suffer the consequences instead, or must choose to face the consequences if you want to achieve your goal.

The gamemaster should inform you of the potential outcomes for success or failure before you attempt a skill test. Your character is assumed to be capable enough to know the likely outcomes for their actions.

gamemaster should determine the Difficulty as fairly as possible based of the task at hand. However, the gamemaster may then spend Threat to increase the set Difficulty to represent further complications to the task.

The gamemaster may allow a test to be made with a Difficulty of 0. This sort of test is made when the character cannot really fail, but the quality of their action may still apply. This might be staking out an enemy facility to get an idea of the security, scouting out terrain before a battle, or mingling with the guests of a soiree to pick up rumours and gossip. As usual, any successes scored above the Difficulty generate Momentum, and so such tests can grant a boost to the player's Momentum pool before they initiate a conflict, representing their preparations and planning.

In general, the Difficulty should follow the following guidelines:

### SIMPLE (DIFFICULTY 0)

- Nudging open a stuck door
- Following an unaware subject in the dark in a place you know intimately
- Asking for a simple favor
- Deceiving a simple-minded subject
- Investigating a subject of common knowledge

### AVERAGE (DIFFICULTY 1)

- Overcoming a simple lock
- Following an unaware subject in the dark
- Asking for a significant favor from a friend
- Deceiving a trusting subject
- Investigating private but not secret knowledge

### CHALLENGING (DIFFICULTY 2)

- Overcoming a complex lock
- Following a suspicious subject in the dark
- Asking for a favor that costs the benefactor something minor
- Deceiving a wary subject
- Investigating confidential or hidden knowledge

### DAUNTING (DIFFICULTY 3)

- Overcoming a complex lock in a hurry
- Following a suspicious subject during the day
- Asking for a difficult favor from someone you already owe
- Deceiving a deeply suspicious subject
- Investigating knowledge that has been actively hidden by a powerful faction

### DIRE (DIFFICULTY 4)

- Overcoming a complex lock, in a hurry, without the right tools
- Following a suspicious subject in the daytime in streets they know well
- Asking for a complicated or expensive favor
- Deceiving a subject who considers you an enemy
- Investigating knowledge whose very existence has been hidden

### EPIC (DIFFICULTY 5)

- Overcoming a complex lock, in a hurry, without the right tools, during a battle
- Following a subject who knows they are being followed, knows you personally, and knows the streets
- Asking for a dangerous favor from a stranger
- Deceiving a your worst enemy
- Investigating knowledge whose very existence has been hidden for centuries

## WHAT ARE YOU DOING, AND WHY?

When you're attempting a skill test, the choice is yours as to which skill and which drive you want to use. However, this isn't simply a case of picking the biggest numbers.

**First**, select your skill. This should be fairly obvious, as your skill relates directly to what you're doing. Usually the gamemaster determines the skill to be used, but the player is allowed to suggest alternatives.

When you've selected your skill, check to see if any of your focuses apply to the action. For both skill and focus, the gamemaster may overrule your choices and suggest something else, or they may prompt a particular choice in advance. However, you always get to make a choice and try to justify why it fits the situation: the choice of skill is defined by what it is you're choosing to do.

**Second**, select your drive. This reflects your character's motivation and drive behind the action—why they are doing what they're doing. Some of your drives come with a statement. These describe the most important aspects of what your character believes, providing both advantages and limitations. To select which drive to use, look at the character's drive statements and pick the one most appropriate to the situation. This is not necessarily the most advantageous, as drives can often be a disadvantage in some circumstances. The drive linked to the drive statement you choose is the one you must use for the test. If multiple statements are appropriate, choose which of those drives to use. If none of the statements apply, choose one of the character's drives that does not have a statement to use in the test.

When you wish to use a drive, you must check to see if the statement agrees with the action.

- If the drive statement agrees with the action, then you can use that drive on this skill test. In addition, you are allowed to spend a point of **Determination** (described on p.157) on that skill test if you wish. You cannot spend Determination if the drive you're using has no statement.
- If the drive statement clashes with the action—the drive doesn't support the action, or the action goes against the drive—then the gamemaster may offer you a point of Determination and ask you to make a choice about the drive: either comply with the drive, or challenge it. If you comply, you suffer an immediate

complication on the action you're attempting, which could include being unable to carry out the action. If you challenge the drive, you can use it in the skill test, but the statement is crossed out *immediately* after the skill test is resolved, and you can't use that drive until you've recovered it—you now doubt how you feel about that drive, and can no longer rely on it. If you don't want either of those options, you may refuse the point of Determination and choose a different drive.

If the drive you're using has no statement, then you may choose to use it, without restriction. In these cases, the following guidance may be helpful when determining which to use:

- **Duty:** Does the action relate to your responsibilities or obligations? Often easy to justify when acting for your House.
- **Faith:** Does the action rely upon trusting in others, an organization, or a higher power? Often useful when relying on empathy and wisdom.
- **Justice:** Does the action relate to matters of morality, of simple right and wrong, or to the law? Often useful (ironically) in acts of deceit.
- **Power:** Does the action rely on you having authority, status, or power over someone, or does it relate to your ambitions? Often useful in conflict.
- **Truth:** Does the action seek to uncover secrets, or to convince someone of something, whether true or false? Often useful in investigation.

Tests can also be augmented by the players spending points of Momentum or Determination, or hindered by the gamemaster spending points of Threat. A result of 20 creates a complication for the character making the test. This represents an additional problem, similar to a trait, that makes further tests harder. We describe how players and the gamemaster can spend and acquire these points later in this chapter.

***Example:*** *The gamemaster determines that for Kara to make the trade deal with the spice merchant, she needs to use her Communicate skill. This is mainly as they are in an informal setting at a party. Were it a board room negotiation, Discipline or perhaps even Battle might have been another option.*

*Next, Kara's player looks at her drive statements. Kara has three statements:*

- **Duty:** *"I am the heir of my House."*
- **Faith:** *"My family trusts me."*
- **Power:** *"I get what I want."*

*As Kara is negotiating on behalf of her House, her Duty statement seems the most appropriate. Her Faith statement might also apply, but as she is not with her family at this soiree it isn't quite right. If she were negotiating for herself and not her House, her Power statement might be the one to use.*

*Next, Kara's player and the gamemaster must decide if the task is at odds with the drive statement. In this case it is not, as Kara is negotiating as the heir of her House. However, had this negotiation been a minor trade issue that could have been left to an underling, her drive statement might have been at odds with the task.*

## CHOOSING DRIVES

It can be difficult to decide which drive is the most appropriate, but just as difficult to pick when none of your drive statements seem to fit the situation. The following guidelines should help you make that decision.

***If you have exactly the right drive statement...***

Great! Pick that drive and carry on.

***If several drive statements suit the action...***

Here you can pick from whichever you prefer (usually the highest), but consider how your character is deciding to approach the action defined by the drive you choose. If it feels more 'in character' to pick a lower rated drive, that's great too.

***If none of the drive statements suit the action...***

Sometimes there just isn't a drive or statement that fits. In which case, you should choose one of your two lower drives that don't have a statement. This represents the character attaching no real focus to the task as it doesn't mean as much to them.

***If the most appropriate drive statement is one that opposes the action...***

In this case you can choose to challenge the drive. The gamemaster may offer a point of Determination. If you take it, you delete the opposing statement after making the test. The character has chosen to act against their drives and must rethink their values. This is a way for you to change your character's drives if they are not suiting the way you are playing them.

***If you know what drive seems appropriate but the statement doesn't fit...***

Here you might *comply* with the drive and gain a point of Determination, picking the drive you think is most appropriate, even though the statement doesn't quite fit. Your character considers the action at odds with their drives, but not enough to make them question their ideals. They can continue to make the test and keep their drive statement but pick up a Complication to represent how unsettled they are.

# Skill Test Procedure

When attempting a skill test, follow the procedure below:

1. The gamemaster usually selects one skill to be used, then the player should pick one drive they think is appropriate, guided by their drive statements. They may also select an applicable focus if they have one. These are added together to become the **target number**.
2. The gamemaster sets the **Difficulty** for the skill test; this is normally between 1 and 5, but it can be higher. Some skill tests may have a default Difficulty listed in the rules, but **traits**, **Threat**, and other factors can increase or decrease Difficulties. The Difficulty is the number of **successes** you must generate to pass the skill test.
3. The players and gamemaster should also finalize any traits they are applying (some might be required to even make it possible) before moving on to roll the dice.
4. You take two d20s, plus any additional d20s you've bought for this skill test. This is your dice pool for this skill test. Then, roll your dice pool.
5. Each d20 that rolls equal to or less than the target number scores a **single** success. Each die that rolls a 1 is a **critical success**, which scores two successes instead of one.
    a. If a **focus** applies, then each die that rolls equal to or less than the skill being used scores a critical success.
    b. Each die that rolls a 20 causes a **complication**.
4. If the number of successes scored equals or exceeds the Difficulty of the skill test, then you have passed. If the number of successes scored is less than the Difficulty of the skill test, then you have failed.
    a. If the number of successes scored is greater than the Difficulty, each success above the Difficulty becomes a single point of **Momentum**.
5. The gamemaster describes the outcome of the skill test, and if the skill test was successful you may spend Momentum to improve the result further. After this, the effects of any complications are applied.

***Example:*** *Kara's player and the gamemaster have determined that the test to convince the merchant to make a deal should be Communicate + Duty, and that Kara can apply her 'Diplomacy' focus to the roll.*

*The Difficulty would normally be 2, but the gamemaster reduces this to 1 as Kara has the trait Honorable.*

*With a Communicate of 6 and a Duty of 7, Kara's player must roll 13 (6+7=13) or less to gain a success. Any die that rolls 6 or less count as two successes, because of the focus. If no focus applied, Kara's player would need to roll a 1 to gain two successes.*

*Kara's player has 2d20 to roll for the test, and no Momentum yet to buy any more. But as this is an important deal, she decides to give the gamemaster Threat so she can add another die, for a dice pool of 3d20.*

*She rolls 5, 14, and 20. The 5 grants two successes, the 14 grants nothing, and the 20 saddles Kara with a complication.*

*As Kara only needed one success (Difficulty 1), the roll is a success. She also gains 1 point of Momentum for getting one more success than she needed. The trade deal is completed in Kara's favor.*

*However, there is still a complication. The gamemaster suggests that Kara has been so busy negotiating she has failed to notice how often the servants have been filling her glass. She gains the temporary trait 'Intoxicated', which might cause problems if more negotiations must be done.*

## Improving the Odds

While succeeding at most common tasks is a straightforward matter, even the most capable and driven character cannot succeed at the most challenging tasks without effort, opportunity, or assistance. To truly triumph, a character needs to find some other way of improving the odds.

Players have a number of ways to improve the odds: buying more d20s to roll, spending Determination, or getting assistance.

- Momentum can be spent to buy additional dice before a skill test. You can buy up to three d20s for a skill test after the Difficulty has been declared, but before any dice are rolled. The first die you purchase for a skill test costs 1 point of Momentum, the second die costs 2 Momentum, and the third costs 3 Momentum (so buying an additional 2d20 costs 3 Momentum and an additional 3d20 costs 6 Momentum).
- Threat can be generated to buy extra dice instead of spending Momentum. This works in the same way as spending Momentum, above, but you may generate Threat to pay some or all the cost, generating 1 point of Threat for each point of Momentum you would have spent.

- Determination ties into a character's drive statements, and has other uses, but it can be used to improve the odds. If the statement for the drive you're using on a skill test supports the action you're attempting, you may spend a point of Determination before rolling to change one of the dice so that it automatically rolls a 1, or after rolling to re-roll your entire dice pool. Determination and a character's drive statements are discussed above.
- Assistance is when another character actively assists your action. The gamemaster may limit how many characters may assist a given skill test. Each assistant selects a drive and skill to create a target number of their own, based on how they are helping, and rolls 1d20 (assistants cannot buy extra dice themselves). Any successes they generate are added to the skill test you are attempting, so long as you score at least one success of your own. Any complications from anyone involved in the skill test apply to everyone.

***Example:*** *Having completed her trade agreement in principle with the spice merchant, Kara can enjoy the rest of the party. Unfortunately, she notices that her old enemy Marcus Tarin, a courtier from a rival House, is also in attendance. Kara decides to chat with some of the other guests to see if anyone else knows why Marcus has arrived and what he plans.*

*As Marcus wasn't expected, the gamemaster decides learning anything is a Difficulty 3 test, not a result Kara's player believes she can roll easily on 2d20. Kara has a point of Momentum from her trade negotiations to buy another d20, and she decides to give the gamemaster Threat to get another one. This brings her dice pool up to 4d20.*

*While that should be enough, Kara can also enlist the help of Anna, her handmaiden. Anna sees what she can learn from the other servants. She makes a skill test of her own using only 1d20, but any successes she gets are added to Kara's total.*

## Recovering Drives

If any of your character's drive statements are crossed out, then they are less certain of their drives, and of their place in the universe. It takes time, reflection, and counsel to clear away that uncertainty.

At the end of any scene during which your character contemplated personal matters or discussed them with another character, and you did not spend or gain any Determination during that scene, you may ask the gamemaster to allow your character to recover a drive. If you don't do this during play, it happens automatically between adventures, should no suitable opportunities arise.

When your character recovers a drive, select a single drive which has had the statement crossed out, and do one of the following:

- **New Statement:** Create a new statement for that drive, which should in some way reflect your character's changed views and perspectives.
- **Changing Priorities:** Modify the score of that drive by –1 and choose the drive with the next lowest score to increase by +1 (so, if you're reducing a drive with a score of 6, you would increase the one which had a score of 5). If this would mean that the drive is reduced to less than 6, then it no longer has a statement (and similarly, any drive increased to 6 gains a statement). If this doesn't reduce the drive's score to 5, then the statement may remain unchanged (and no longer crossed-out).

Whichever option is chosen, the drive is now recovered and may be used freely, though you cannot challenge a drive which has already been challenged and recovered during that adventure (people's core drives do not change that often).

# Momentum

Whenever you score more successes than you needed on a skill test, each extra success becomes **Momentum**, which you can spend to improve the outcome of the skill test you've just passed. Any Momentum you don't spend can be saved, and saved Momentum goes into a group pool for everyone to use. Up to 6 points of Momentum can be saved like this. Momentum can be used for several things, including getting extra information about a situation, creating or changing traits in the scene, or buying extra dice for skill tests.

## Spending Momentum

You can spend Momentum to improve the outcome of a skill test you have passed, such as gaining more information or creating a lasting effect.

After a skill test has passed, the gamemaster describes what happens. You can then spend Momentum to improve this outcome, gain other benefits, or generally make the situation better for you and your allies, or worse for your opponents.

Momentum that you use in this way doesn't need to be declared in advance, and each point can be spent one at a time as needed. For example, if you spend Momentum to get more information from the gamemaster, you can wait to see what that information is before you decide what to do with the rest of the Momentum, so you don't waste Momentum by using it unnecessarily.

Unless otherwise noted, each use of Momentum—often called Momentum spends—can only be used once on any single skill test. Some uses of Momentum can be used multiple times, or their effect is 'per point of Momentum spent'. These options can be used as many times as you wish.

Once a skill test has been resolved, any unspent Momentum is saved into the group pool, as described below. Momentum that can't be added to the group pool—because the group pool is already full, or because it was bonus Momentum—is lost if it isn't spent.

***Example:*** *Kara's test to learn more about what Marcus might be up to goes very well, yielding 4 successes. She passes the test and gains 1 point of Momentum.*

*The gamemaster tells her that officially Marcus is here to make a spice deal, but many suspect he may have another motive. Kara can spend her bonus point of Momentum to ask a further question. Fearing Marcus may be looking to offer a deal to the same spice merchant, she considers asking who he might be making a deal with. However, she knows Marcus is also known to be a skilled assassin, so instead she asks, "Is he here to kill someone?"*

*The gamemaster replies "Probably", leaving Kara to wonder who the target might be—her spice merchant, or even herself! If only she had another point of Momentum to ask another question...*

### Bonus Momentum

Some assets and talents grant a character bonus Momentum to successful skill tests, under specific circumstances. This is added to the amount of Momentum the character generates when they succeed at a skill test. Something which grants bonus Momentum may specify that it can only be used in specific ways.

Bonus Momentum differs from normal Momentum in that it cannot be saved into the group pool: if it is not used, then it is lost.

## Saving Momentum

Saved Momentum goes into a group collection called the **Momentum pool**, also referred to as the group pool. Momentum in this pool can be used by anyone in the group, representing the benefits of prior successes and collective effort. **The Momentum pool cannot contain more than 6 Momentum points at any time.**

Whenever you wish to spend Momentum, you may spend from the group pool in addition to or instead of any Momentum you've generated yourself on a skill test. As normal, you don't have to choose how you're spending Momentum in advance, so you don't need to choose how much to take from the group pool until after you've decided how to spend it, and you don't need to spend it all at once.

**At the end of a scene, 1 point of Momentum from the group pool is lost.** Momentum needs to be maintained, and it does not last forever, so it's in your interests to spend it rather than saving it up.

### Timing Momentum

The majority of uses of Momentum come immediately after a successful skill test, to improve the outcome of that skill test. However, a few important uses for Momentum happen spontaneously during play. These options have their own restrictions on how and when they are used, which is made clear in their text. Buying extra d20s is the most common example of this.

## Common Uses

You're encouraged to be creative in your uses of Momentum. When you pass a skill test and generate Momentum, think of how your superb performance might be reflected in the outcome, or how it might influence what happens next.

However, there are a few common Momentum spends which are key to how the system works and which serve as examples for what you can do with Momentum.

Regardless of how you use it, Momentum must make a degree of sense in the story—the benefit you've gained from Momentum must make sense from the perspective of the characters—and the gamemaster can veto any uses of Momentum that don't fit with the story or the scene.

- **Buying d20s** is one of the most common uses for Momentum. This is done before you roll the dice pool, but after the gamemaster decides on the Difficulty. The cost increases for each die purchased: the first die costs 1 point of Momentum, the second costs 2 Momentum, and the third costs 3. No more than three bonus d20s may be bought for a single skill test. As noted in **Improving the Odds** (p.149), you may pay for some or all this cost by adding to **Threat** instead of spending Momentum.
- **Create a Trait** allows you to define a new fact about the scene or situation. Spending 2 points of Momentum either creates a brand-new trait, changes an existing one, or removes one currently in play. When you create a trait, it must relate to the action you've just attempted, and it must be something that could reasonably result from that action.
- **Create an Asset** works in the same way as creating a trait, but there are some limitations to the kinds of assets you can create. An asset created has a Quality of 0, and it should be useful in the current type of conflict. Assets created in this way are temporary and cease to exist at the end of the scene. Whatever the asset represents is discarded or ceases to be useful. You may spend 2 Momentum to make an Asset created during a scene permanent (at Quality 0) in which case it is added to the list of assets on your character sheet.
- **Obtain Information** allows you to learn more about the scene and situation. Each point of Momentum you spend allows you to ask the gamemaster one question about the current situation. The gamemaster must answer this question truthfully, but the answer doesn't need to be complete: partial or incomplete answers that leave room for further questions are more common. The answers must reflect the skill you've used to gain the information, and it should be something that your character would be able to determine themselves. "You don't know" or "You can't tell" are valid answers from the gamemaster, but the gamemaster **must** refund any Momentum spent if they give answers like that.

***Example:*** *So far, Kara has used Momentum to buy extra d20s and to Obtain Information by asking about Marcus' secret mission.*

*If she had more Momentum she might ask more questions. However, she could still create a new trait such as 'Inquisitive' that might give her a bonus to further investigations.*

# COMPLICATIONS

When you attempt a skill test, any dice which roll a 20 cause a **complication**. This doesn't mean you've failed—you can suffer complications and still succeed if you get enough successes—but each complication does create an extra problem, and may be inconvenient, painful, or embarrassing.

Things don't always go to plan, and while you may succeed at what you set out to achieve, there may be bumps along that road. When you roll a skill test, any die that rolls a 20 causes a **complication**, which takes effect once the skill test has been resolved. Complications don't stop you from succeeding, but they may impede your actions later or have other repercussions.

The gamemaster can use a complication to inflict an immediate problem upon your character or the situation, which should relate in some way to the action you've just performed. This can often create a **trait**—a fact about the scene—which hinders or impairs your actions, by increasing the Difficulty of skill tests or making some actions impossible. These traits may be persistent problems, or they may be short-lived, lasting only long enough to affect the character's next skill test.

There are other ways for the gamemaster to use complications, however. A useful alternative is to impose some immediate restriction or penalty, limiting a character's immediate choices by prohibiting an action they could normally take. A complication might instead cause an activity to take longer than normal (as a rule of thumb, each complication increases the time taken by 50%). In general, a complication can work like a negative trait. It can stop you from doing something you would usually be able to, or increase the Difficulty of an action by 1.

You are not powerless in this situation, though. When you suffer a complication, you may choose to buy it off by adding 2 points of **Threat** to the gamemaster's pool—in essence, avoiding a problem now in return for potential problems later. The gamemaster may also trade a complication you or another player has rolled for 2 points of Threat if they don't wish to create an immediate problem or simply can't think of one right now. If a non-player character suffers a complication, the gamemaster can buy it off by spending 2 points of Threat.

## EXAMPLE COMPLICATIONS

As complications are tied to a specific skill, the following are grouped by skill only to suggest what sort of tests might result in particular complications.

### EXAMPLE BATTLE COMPLICATIONS

- **Bruised:** The pain is making it hard to concentrate.
- **Exhausted:** I'm too tired to fight.
- **Flanked:** I'm in a tactically bad position.
- **Injured:** I have suffered an injury to <area>.
- **Stunned:** I'm dazed from a strike.
- **Unarmed:** I've lost my weapon.

### EXAMPLE COMMUNICATE COMPLICATIONS

- **Disconnected:** I am out of my depth in this social situation.
- **Gauche:** I am showing off my status too much.
- **Inferior:** My lack of status has been exposed.
- **Outsider:** I don't really fit in here.
- **Rude:** I have caused offense.
- **Tongue-tied:** I can't seem to get the right words out.

### EXAMPLE DISCIPLINE COMPLICATIONS

- **Angry:** I am too full of rage for anything but action.
- **Conflicted:** I am torn between possibilities.
- **Distracted:** There is too much going on.
- **Frightened:** I can't deal with this.
- **Intoxicated:** I've had too much to drink.
- **Unfocused:** I can't seem to concentrate.

### EXAMPLE MOVE COMPLICATIONS

- **Awkward:** I have no grace or flow of movement.
- **Constricted:** There isn't enough room for me to move.
- **Hurt:** An injury is slowing me down.
- **Slow:** I can't move very quickly.
- **Tired:** I am feeling too exhausted to run.
- **Uncoordinated:** I can't seem to control my movements.

### EXAMPLE UNDERSTAND COMPLICATIONS

- **Complicated:** There are too many connections to see an answer.
- **Confused:** I don't quite understand what is going on.
- **Misinformed:** Some of my data is wrong.
- **Overthinking:** The answer just cannot be that simple.
- **Uninformed:** I am missing a vital piece of information.
- **Vague:** I am having trouble thinking.

***Example:*** *Kara has already picked up the complication 'Intoxicated' that has been adding to the Difficulty of her tests. As this is a social scene, further complications would relate to that. She might make a fool of herself in some way (such as spilling something on the wrong person) or fail to remember a point of etiquette and gain further complications like 'Clumsy' or 'Rude'.*

*If the situation with Marcus becomes physical, she might gain complications representing wounds, or even that she has been poisoned.*

## Complication Range

Some situations can make a skill test uncertain, rather than more difficult. These factors make it more likely that complications occur, by increasing the range of numbers which cause complications. A character has a **complication range** of 1 normally, so complications occur on any die that rolls a 20 (only a 1 in 20 chance per die). The complication range can never be increased to more than five, and the effect of changing the complication range is explained on the table below:

| Comp. Range | Description | Comp. Occur On... |
|---|---|---|
| **1** | Normal | 20 |
| **2** | Risky | 19 or 20 |
| **3** | Perilous | 18–20 |
| **4** | Precarious | 17–20 |
| **5** | Treacherous | 16–20 |

## Success at a Cost

Some skill tests can't really be failed outright. Sometimes an action will inevitably succeed, but there might be problems or consequences along the way. In these situations, the gamemaster may allow a skill test to **succeed at a cost**, either before the dice have rolled, or after the result is known. If a skill test succeeds at a cost, then a character who fails a skill test still achieves their goal in some form, but they also suffer one or more automatic complications, in addition to any they're suffering because of the roll. The gamemaster determines how many extra complications are suffered.

Although the failed skill test has produced a successful outcome, Momentum cannot be spent to improve the result of a skill test that succeeded at a cost: Momentum can only be spent if a skill test was passed.

The gamemaster may declare that an action succeeds at a cost, or they may give a player a choice to succeed at a cost. This choice can and should be made on a case-by-case basis according to the situation.

***Example:*** *Kara attempts to make another test to learn more from the gathering before confronting Marcus. However, she fails to get the required successes. The gamemaster allows her to succeed at a cost. For succeeding at the test she learns the spice merchant is indeed Marcus' target. However, the cost is that Marcus becomes aware Kara is asking questions about him and now knows his plan.*

# Threat

Where you and the other players have Momentum, the gamemaster has **Threat**. Threat works much the same as Momentum, but for your opponents and enemies. Threat can be used for the same things as Momentum, but the gamemaster can also use Threat to alter situations or the story in a few special ways. Threat represents perils, unforeseen dangers, and the potential for drama and excitement, and it rises and falls during play. In addition to this, if you're low on Momentum, you can buy extra dice by adding to Threat, essentially taking risks to get an advantage.

As player characters generate and spend Momentum, the gamemaster generates and spends their own resource: **Threat**. The gamemaster makes use of Threat to alter scenes, empower non-player characters, and generally make things challenging, perilous, or unpredictable for the player characters. Threat is a method by which the game, and the gamemaster, builds tension: the larger the Threat pool, the greater the likelihood that something endangers or threatens the player characters. In this way, Threat mimics the rise and fall of tension that builds throughout a story, eventually culminating in a high-tension finale. Strictly speaking, characters don't know about Threat, but they have a sense of the stakes of their current situation, and the potential for things to go wrong.

The gamemaster typically begins each adventure with two points of Threat for each player present at the start of the adventure, though this can be adjusted based on the tone and underlying tension of a given adventure: if the stakes are high, the gamemaster may begin with more Threat, while a calmer, quieter situation may reduce the gamemaster's starting Threat. Part of this is defined by the size of the player characters' House: a powerful House invites challenge and breeds enemies and rivalries, and this is represented by larger amounts of starting Threat.

## Adding to Threat

Player characters can add to the Threat pool in the following ways:

- **Buying d20s:** As noted earlier in this chapter, characters may buy bonus d20s for skill tests by adding points to Threat instead of spending Momentum. As normal, no more than three dice can be bought, and the cost increases for each dice: the first costs 1, the second costs 2, and the third costs 3.
- **Complications:** Whenever a player character suffers one or more complications on a skill test, they or the gamemaster may choose to add two points to the Threat pool to ignore a complication. This may be done for as many or as few complications as desired.
- **Escalation:** At times, the gamemaster (or the rules) may state that a specific action or decision risks escalating the situation, making it more dangerous or unpredictable. If a character performs an action that risks escalation, they immediately add one point of Threat to the pool.

The gamemaster may add to Threat in the following ways:

- **Threatening Circumstances:** The environment or circumstances of a new scene may be threatening or perilous enough to warrant adding one or two points of Threat to the pool automatically. Similarly, some non-player characters may generate Threat simply by arriving, in response to changes in the situation, or by taking certain actions. This also includes activities that escalate the tensions of the scene, such as non-player characters raising an alarm.
- **Non-player Character Momentum:** Non-player characters with unspent Momentum cannot save it as player characters can, as they don't have a group Momentum pool. Instead, a non-player character may add to Threat, adding one point of Threat for every Momentum they have remaining.

***Example:*** *Realizing the stakes have increased, Kara's player decides to shake off the Intoxicated complication, adding 2 points of Threat to the gamemaster's*

*pool. The gamemaster also decides to add another point of Threat to their pool, given that Marcus is now looking to either silence Kara or at least ensure she doesn't interfere.*

## Spending Threat

The gamemaster can spend Threat in several common ways:

- **Buying d20s:** The gamemaster can purchase d20s for a skill test attempted by one of their non-player characters. The cost of this increases for each die purchased: the first die costs 1 point of Momentum, the second costs 2 Momentum, and the third costs 3. No more than three bonus d20s may be bought for a single skill test, regardless of the source.
- **Increase Difficulty:** The gamemaster can choose to make things more difficult for a character, increasing the Difficulty of a single skill test by one for every 2 points of Threat spent. The decision to increase a skill test's Difficulty must be made before any dice are bought or rolled on that skill test.
- **Non-player Character Threat Spends:** When a player character's action would normally add points to Threat, a non-player character performing that same action, or making the same choice, must spend an equivalent number of points of Threat.
- **Non-player Character Complications:** If a non-player character suffers a complication, the gamemaster may buy off that complication by spending two points of Threat.
- **Traits:** The gamemaster may change, remove, or create a trait by spending two points of Threat. This must come naturally from some part of the current situation.
- **Environmental Effects and Narrative Changes:** The gamemaster may trigger or cause problems with the scene or environment by spending Threat.
- **Rival House Action:** The gamemaster may spend a Threat point to introduce a known enemy House to the situation. It may be one of their agents simply taking an opportunity to attack the player characters, or it may turn out that they have an alliance with whomever the player characters are dealing with. Either way, the House makes an appearance in some way to complicate the situation for the player characters.

***Example:*** *As the situation is heating up, the gamemaster decides to spend some of their Threat. They decide that Marcus has a lot of friends at the party who have become irked at Kara's questioning. The gamemaster spends a point of Threat to add the environmental effect 'Hostile Room'.*

# Determination

Determination is a special, scarce resource which you can spend on skill tests which align with your character's drives. It is earned when a character's drives impede or hinder their actions. You can spend Determination before rolling to set a die so that it counts as having rolled a 1, or after rolling to re-roll an entire dice pool, or to create, destroy, or change a trait, or to take extra actions in a conflict.

A character's drives are a vital part of their successes and their failures. Conviction and clarity of purpose, and a potent sense of self, are key parts of why a character takes the actions they do. To this end, all player characters, and many non-player characters, have **drive statements** which reflect the character's personal values and guiding principles. When a character's actions align with these principles, they can be spurred on to greater heights of success, but when a character attempts actions which clash with their values, it can cause them considerable problems.

**At the start of each adventure, you have a single point of Determination for your character, but you may gain more during play. You may never have more than three Determination at once.**

When you attempt a skill test, and the drive you are using has a drive statement, both you and the gamemaster should consider whether the statement and the action you're attempting align. If the statement supports the action—that is, if the statement would be an advantage to the action being attempted—then you can use that drive freely for that action, and you may spend a point of Determination to gain one of the following benefits. Some talents or other character abilities may grant them additional ways to use Determination.

- **Automatic 1:** Before rolling, choose one of the d20s in your dice pool: that die is considered to have rolled a 1, and does not need to be rolled. It thus scores a critical success automatically.
- **Re-roll:** After rolling, re-roll any number of d20s in your dice pool.
- **Declaration:** Before or after rolling, create a new trait, or change or remove an existing one; this must relate to your character, but it may represent something which was always true, but which has only now been revealed or become important. You may retroactively describe how this trait came to be.
- **Extra Action:** In a **conflict**, immediately take an additional action after this one, even if you have already kept the initiative.

However, if the statement would conflict with the action—it may impair your character's judgment, make them biased, blind them to possibilities, or it may be that the action goes against your character's morals, spiritual drives, or sense of honor—then the gamemaster can offer you a point of Determination to give you a choice: comply or challenge.

- If you **comply** with your drive, then you immediately suffer a complication (which may often make the action harder or prevent you from even attempting the action). The character's drives are too strong to allow them to carry out this action freely, causing a problem.
- If you **challenge** your drive, then you may act freely, but you must cross out that drive statement, and you may not use that drive score again until it has been recovered (see below). The character's need to act has outweighed their strongly held drives, and in the process, their worldview has been shaken.

You may refuse to accept the offered Determination to avoid making the choice, but if you do so, you must choose a different drive to use for the skill test. You may also suggest to the gamemaster moments where your drives may conflict with your actions, though both you and the gamemaster must agree for this to happen.

## That's a Lot of Different Points

Momentum, Threat, and Determination have a variety of different effects, and it might seem like a lot of points to keep track of as you make rolls.

But in the 2d20 system, how you spend these points is often far more important than what dice you roll. They grant both players and gamemaster a lot of control over their dice and represent the characters marshalling their resources before making their play. This makes knowing what to spend on which test an important skill to master. Do you put everything into the current test or save something for later? How important is it to succeed, and can you afford the cost? All these factors must be decided before you roll anything. This means any roll of the dice is a carefully considered plan of action, never just the whim of fate.

# Contests

In a contest, the character opposing you rolls first, and their number of successes becomes the Difficulty you need to roll against. Once they've rolled, you roll to see if you can beat them.

When the actions you want to attempt are actively opposed by another, a skill test becomes a contest. In a contest, the opposing character first rolls to set the Difficulty. They gather a dice pool, rolling against their own target number as if they were attempting a skill test. The total number of successes they score becomes the Difficulty for your skill test.

At this point, you make your skill test as normal, rolling against that Difficulty.

If you succeed, then you achieve your desired goal, and can spend any Momentum you generate to improve that outcome as normal. If you fail, the opposing character generates 1 point of Momentum for each success fewer than the Difficulty which you scored—i.e., if the Difficulty was 4, and you scored two successes, the opposing character would get 2 points of Momentum—and they may spend this Momentum immediately, as if they had succeeded at a skill test.

After all this has been resolved, any complications suffered by either side are handled by the gamemaster.

***Example:*** *Given that Marcus is a highly skilled assassin, Kara cannot let him get close to the spice trader, who is chatting amiably nearby to another noble, utterly unaware of the danger he is in. She could try and physically confront Marcus but that may go poorly. However, she might be able to intimidate him into leaving, given that she knows his intentions and has a vested interest in keeping the spice trader alive.*

*Kara finds a quiet part of the ballroom to take Marcus aside. Luckily, he makes no attempt to avoid a confrontation as he wants to know what Kara is up to. Kara explains that she knows his plan and tells him that the spice trader is under her protection, as they have a deal. Assassinating him may start a new conflict between their Houses.*

*This is a Communicate test, with Kara using her Power drive with the statement 'I get what I want'. As this challenge is very much in line with her drive statement, the gamemaster allows Kara's player to spend Determination on the test.*

*The gamemaster rolls for Marcus first to set the stakes, as he is the defending party. The gamemaster spends some Threat and manages to get 4 successes. This means Kara needs to roll 4 successes to win the contest.*

*Kara must overcome the additional Difficulty of a hostile environment, as Marcus knows he has several allies to back him up. This raises the Difficulty to 5, but luckily Kara has bought off her complication so it doesn't get any worse.*

*However, she needs to call upon all her resources. She gives the gamemaster enough Threat to buy 2 more dice and brings her handmaiden Anna in to support her with assistance. This gives her a dice pool of 4 with bonus successes if Anna rolls well with her single die.*

*The roll is not very good, yielding 2 successes, not nearly enough. As the stakes are high, Kara's player opts to spend her Determination to re-roll some of the dice. Two of her dice offered a success each, and while she could re-roll those in the hope of getting a better result, she decides not to risk it. She re-rolls the two other dice, the ones that yielded no successes. Anna's assistance roll was also a failure, but as it isn't part of Kara's dice pool it cannot be re-rolled with the Determination spend.*

*Thankfully, the two re-rolled dice both come up a success, and one of them even rolls a 1. This adds another 3 successes to the existing 2, taking the total to the five successes required.*

*Marcus takes a moment to weigh up his options. He decides that the risk of a House on House conflict is not what his masters are interested in. He chooses to take Kara seriously and withdraws to confer with his superiors. With a small bow he smiles at Kara and tells her he looks forward to their next encounter, then leaves.*

## External Factors in Contests

The procedure for contests assumes that both sides are on roughly equal footing, and that neither side has any real advantages or hindrances beyond their own abilities. This isn't always the case.

If the opposing character has any factors—such as traits—which would make things harder for them, each such factor reduces the Difficulty they set by 1, to a minimum of 0. In essence, fewer of their successes translate into Difficulty for their opponent.

If the active character has any factors which would affect the Difficulty of their action other than the opposing character, then adjust the final Difficulty up or down as normal.

In either case, characters in a contest may accept assistance from other characters on their side.

***Example:*** *In Kara and Marcus' contest the environment was working to Marcus' advantage. Had they been among Kara's allies the circumstances would have been different. Had time been a factor for either party, that too could have made their position trickier.*

# Extended Tasks

Some activities may take a while to complete, requiring ongoing effort over a prolonged period. This is especially useful when an ongoing action can be interrupted or cannot be completed all in one go.

These extended tasks occur entirely at the gamemaster's discretion and can be used for a wide range of situations. When the gamemaster decides that a situation is an extended task—and this can be something caused during play, perhaps by spending Threat point or because of a complication—they choose how big the extended task is. This is called the requirement. Each passed skill test made toward completing an extended task scores one or more points, and when a total number of points have been scored equal to the **requirement**, then the extended task is complete, and whatever event or activity the task represented is resolved.

As a rule of thumb, each passed skill test should score 2 points towards the requirement, which can be reduced by complications and increased by spending Momentum. If an extended task is based on overcoming something set in place by an opponent, then using one of their skill ratings is a good basis for the task's requirement. In either case, appropriate traits may increase these scores further. If an asset has a Quality rating of 1 or above, this also adds to the points scored towards the requirement.

Extended tasks can also be presented from the opposite direction to represent impending problems, with failed skill tests, complications, or perilous actions **adding** points, and the problem occurring when the requirement is met. Situations may have both an extended task for you to work toward, and one representing a problem, with one or other increasing depending on whether skill tests were passed or not.

***Example:*** *Her behavior at the party has not done Kara's reputation any good. She has upset a few of the guests with her questions, and possibly embarrassed herself by drinking too much. She also clearly had a conflict of some form with Marcus, who has many friends at the gathering. Kara's player asks the gamemaster if there is anything Kara can do to repair her reputation, so it doesn't suffer any damage when people talk of how the evening went.*

*The gamemaster decides this is an extended task, with a requirement of 5 to settle any of the other guests' ruffled feathers. However, the party will eventually end, meaning Kara has a limited amount of time to perform the task.*

*The gamemaster decides Kara can only make three rolls before the party ends—there's only so much effort she can make to fix this. The first test makes decent progress, succeeding and scoring 2 points toward the requirement. On the second test, she struggles to assuage the partygoers' concerns, succeeding but suffering a complication, which means she only scores 1 point. On the third attempt, she succeeds—scoring the last two points she needed—and even generates some Momentum, which she saves for later, as it's not needed here. While it takes her the rest of the night, she manages to talk to all the guests and assure them that Marcus simply felt ill and had to retire. While it is exhausting, she finally leaves the party having made a new deal, beaten a deadly enemy, and maintained the reputation of herself and her House. All in all, quite a good evening.*

# Chapter 6: Conflict

*Arrakis teaches the attitude of the knife—chopping off what's incomplete and saying:*
*Now, it's complete because it's ended here.*

—from *Collected Sayings of Muad'Dib*, by the Princess Irulan

# The Nature of Conflict

**Conflict** is inevitable in the Imperium. The interplay of wealth, power, influence, politics, greed, and ambition that forms most interactions between the Houses of the Landsraad, CHOAM, the Imperial Court, the Spacing Guild, the Bene Gesserit, and other factions, breeds strife and turmoil. This creates opportunities to exploit and crises to overcome, and the fortunes of any House, or any person, rise and fall with how they face the conflicts ahead of them.

Conflicts add an additional layer to gameplay, and are used to provide greater detail to specific situations when desired. This does mean they add more complexity to the game, so they should be used sparingly and only in situations where the benefits of including them outweigh the extra effort involved.

Conflict covers a multitude of different forms of contest, from physical fights to intrigue and assassination. These rules assume a few concepts that differ from many other roleplaying games, and allow us to use the same system to cover a multitude of conflict styles.

- Conflict is not just physical combat, and any method to defeat an enemy with any tool can be a conflict.
- The ability and skill of each combatant is more important than the actual weapons used. A knife kills as well as a sword, although different weapons can provoke different advantages in different situations. These advantages are managed by applying traits.
- Each test in a conflict is an encounter and an exchange of blows or political moves, and does not represent a single thrust of a blade. Conflict is swift and deadly, in some cases resolved with a single dice test.
- Assets are often essential to allow the conflict to occur at all. While a fighter might choose to engage a foe unarmed, it is impossible to blackmail someone without something to blackmail them with. So, an asset or trait may often be required to make the conflict possible.
- Conflicts do not need to cause wounds or physically hurt a target. Many things might lead to their defeat, such as exhaustion, lack of resources, or losing allies or the respect of their peers. An enemy can be defeated without a drop of blood being shed.
- Complications suffered during a conflict represent actual hurt combatants suffer. They make winning more difficult but who got hurt the most doesn't define victory.
- Defeat does not mean death. While it often does in ***Dune***, enemies can yield, be exiled, knocked out, or be stripped of resources.

## Conflict Scope

Conflicts take many different forms, and they can occur on many different scales. The following forms of common conflict are discussed in more detail these rules. But new forms of conflict can easily be initiated with the general system:

- **Dueling** is physical conflict between individuals, using hand-held weapons like swords and daggers, envenomed needles, and similar close-quarters tools. Personal shields—either full-body or partial—are common in dueling, making ranged weapons mostly ineffective, and lasguns of any kind a desperate proposition. Dueling can take the form of formalized dueling, assassination attempts, gladiatorial bouts, and one-on-one combat.
- **Skirmishes** are similar to dueling, and employ a similar range of tools, but involve a handful of combatants on each side. A skirmish may make use of ranged weapons in a way that dueling does not, particularly if the conflict starts when attempting to ambush unshielded foes. Skirmishes still take place over a relatively short range, but are close enough that a swordmaster is still able to put their prowess to good use.
- **Warfare** is physical combat on a strategic level, involving groups of armed personnel such as House troops, mercenaries, or even the Emperor's deadly Sardaukar. Outright warfare between Major Houses is rare and highly regulated, in part because most factions must rely on the Spacing Guild to move anything from world to world, and the Guild may refuse to support actions that they do not regard as worthwhile. Amongst the Minor Houses on a single world, however, warfare may be as common or uncommon as the ruling Major House allows—some Major Houses encourage strife between their subordinates to weed out the weak, while others prefer different methods of resolving tensions.
- **Espionage** is conflict relying on stealth and deception to gain access to a secure location or important person, normally to obtain information, steal valuable items, or perform assassinations. Espionage can easily turn into another form of conflict if performed poorly, but it can also negate the need for other, more overt forms of conflict if performed well. Espionage is primarily performed by spies, informants, and surveillance devices, and countered by guards, security systems, and methods of ensuring loyalty or rooting out deception, such as Truthsayers. Mentats, and Bene Gesserit sisters are often exceptionally valuable in both espionage and counterespionage.
- **Intrigue** is social conflict where secrets and individual agendas are most prominent. Participants often seek to discover what others know or what they desire, while keeping their own goals and their own secrets hidden. Intrigue can take place over a long period of time, or it can be focused on a single localized event. It occurs most regularly where society's expectations and cultural taboos would prevent more overt forms of conflict. Intrigue often overlaps with espionage. Achieving goals through intrigue and influence is often regarded as 'soft power', as a counterpoint to the 'hard power' of direct authority, force, and military might.

Each of these forms of conflict are described in more detail in their own sections, later in this chapter.

# The Basics of Conflict

All conflicts have similarities. At their core, conflicts arise when two or more opposing parties have goals which are at odds with one another, and the conflict itself occurs as a means to resolve that tension. Each side in a conflict has a collection of tools and resources—collectively referred to as **assets**—which they can employ. It isn't enough to merely a have a tool, however: one must be able to wield it effectively, maneuvering their own assets to harm their opponents or protect themselves from their opponents' actions.

This section describes the ways that conflicts in ***Dune*** are similar. Later sections describe the specifics of how these common elements differ (often in just a narrative sense) in different types of conflict.

## Assets

Conflict revolves around the use of assets. An asset is anything which a character possesses or controls which they can use to protect themselves, overcome others, or otherwise achieve their goals. Each asset is useful in different circumstances, and can be used in a variety of ways: a company of House troops can be used during warfare to attack or defend, but they can also be used as guards to prevent infiltration during espionage, or in a parade to honor or awe a guest during negotiations or intrigue.

Assets are, by themselves, a form of trait, though specific assets may have additional rules associated with them in some contexts, such as to describe the destructive interaction between a lasgun and a shield. Each asset also notes the type or types of conflict they are most suited for. This is not a restriction, so much as a prompt: using an asset in an unconventional way in a type of conflict it isn't normally used for might be a winning strategy, but that sort of creativity is left to the gamemaster to resolve.

Assets broadly come in two forms: tangible and intangible.

A **tangible asset** is one that has a physical presence, and which has a degree of permanence to it: a weapon is a tangible asset, as is a unit of troops, a surveillance system, or a quantity of material goods. Tangible assets are normally owned by individual characters or by the House. They're difficult to remove from play, and they are normally only removed temporarily.

An **intangible asset** is one that has no physical presence: a bribed guard, the leverage from having other potential trading partners, the mistaken drive of a foe fed false information, or newly obtained knowledge about a rival's weaknesses. Intangible assets are created by individual characters during play… but they're also easier to remove from play than tangible assets.

Assets also have a **Quality**, normally rated from 0 to 4. Most assets have a Quality of 0, with only special or elite versions offering a bonus. The higher an asset's Quality, the more effective or impactful it is compared to other assets of a similar kind. A Fremen crysknife is more potent than a simple footpad's knife, elite professional soldiers are superior to an equivalent number of ill-trained conscripts, etc. Quality gives a guide to the quality of an asset among its peers, not compared to other assets. Quality is used in a few ways, described later in this chapter.

> ***Example:*** *Kara Molay has three personal assets: a concealable knife, her personal ornithopter, and some as-of-yet undetermined blackmail evidence. The knife and ornithopter are tangible assets, and the blackmail evidence is intangible. They are all Quality 0 but any of them might be upgraded with more study, honing, or skill. These are just her most useful possessions, though. She has access to all manner of other specialized equipment her House can provide, and as for normal items, no one in the Imperium is ever very far away from a knife.*

## Zones of Conflict

When a conflict begins, the gamemaster defines the area within which the conflict takes place. This may be a physical area or an abstract representation of the conflict, but in either case, it is divided into distinct **zones**, within which characters can move and use their assets. Zones can be any size or shape. A contest between two merchants might use two zones, each being a whole planet. A fight between some assassins in an alley might be a single zone, or even six different zones denoting different parts of the alley.

How these zones relate to one another (including how they're connected and how characters and assets move around them) is determined by the gamemaster as well. (More guidance accompanies each different style of conflict. Where possible, conflict involving dueling, skirmishes, warfare, and espionage should have clear links between zones, while negotiations and intrigue should have most/all zones 'free-floating' where they all count as adjacent to everything else.)

Some zones may have special effects (usually traits) which apply to assets or characters within them, or which are regarded as more or less important than others; a skirmish may have a zone which is full of hindering obstacles that make it harder to move, while a warfare conflict may denote particular zones as objectives which each side is eager to secure.

Sometimes a conflict might only occur in one zone. This might be because the area is small, or all the participants are forced into a more rigidly defined area. If your group finds zones confusing, it is perfectly permissible to place the conflict in a single zone until everyone is more comfortable with the rules of conflict.

# Action Order

During a conflict, characters perform actions in a specific order. Each character takes a **turn**, during which they may take an **action**. Once each character in the conflict has taken a turn, a single **round** is completed, and a new round begins. This repeats until the conflict is concluded.

At the start of the first round, the gamemaster selects which character takes the first turn. This is normally a player character, unless there is a compelling narrative reason for a non-player character to take the first turn, or the gamemaster spends 2 points of Threat.

Once a character has finished their turn, they may do one of the following: either allow an opposing side to choose someone to act next, or spend 2 points of Momentum (or add 2 to Threat) to Keep the Initiative (enemy non-player characters may spend 2 points of Threat to do this). If they **Keep the Initiative**, then that character may take an extra action immediately, adding +1 Difficulty to any test they attempt, or allow an allied character to take a turn before handing over to an opposing side. Once a side has chosen to Keep the Initiative, they may not do so again until at least one enemy character has taken a turn of their own.

Each time a new character is chosen to act, the character chosen must be someone who has not yet taken a turn during the current round. If there are no characters left on a side who haven't yet taken a turn, that side must pass and immediately nominate another opposing side. If only one side has characters remaining to act, then they each take a turn in sequence until all characters have taken a turn.

Once all characters have taken a turn, the round ends. The character who acted last must either nominate an opposing side to take the first turn in the next round, or spend 2 points of Momentum/add 2 to Threat (non-player characters spend 2 Threat) to allow their side to take the first turn next round.

> ***Example:*** *Kara and her friend Nasir are set upon by two assassins. As it is an ambush, the assassins start with the initiative. One of them makes an attack, and then the initiative passes to Kara and Nasir. The players decide Kara should be the one to act, and after she attacks, the initiative passes to the assassins. One assassin has already acted, so the other one must be the one to take a turn this time. However, before passing the initiative over, Kara and Nasir spend Momentum to Keep the Initiative. This allows Nasir to take an attack. But if they cannot fell the assassins, the remaining one can still take a turn before the round ends.*

# Taking Action

When you take your turn, you may take a single action, to either **move** an asset or **use an asset**. You are welcome to suggest actions which aren't covered below, and the gamemaster determines how to resolve them (often by selecting which action is closest to what you've suggested and using it as a baseline).

## Move

You move one of your assets (or your character, in some cases) from its current location to any adjacent zone. You may spend 2 points of Momentum to move your chosen asset one additional zone, or to choose a second asset to move one zone.

When you move, you may choose to try and gain an additional benefit, but there is a risk to this. You may attempt to move in a **subtle** way, trying to avoid attention, or you may move in a **bold** manner that provokes a response. In either case, this requires a skill test, with a Difficulty of 2. If you pass the skill test, you gain an additional benefit, listed below.

- If you move an asset **subtly**, your subtlety limits your opponents' ability to respond. If you pass, then you move your asset, and you reduce the cost to Keep the Initiative to 0: your subtlety allows you to act again before your enemy can react.
- If you move an asset **boldly**, you provoke a hasty response from your opponent. If you pass, then you move your asset, and then you may move one of an opposing character's assets: your daring ploy has provoked a reaction, just as you planned.

In either case, if you fail, you may not spend Momentum on additional movement, and one enemy may move a single asset one zone, as they react to your failed ploy. Further, if you fail, you may not Keep the Initiative.

> ***Example:*** *Kara and Nasir are both flying ornithopters to a secret facility run by their enemy, House Arcuri. As several security measures are in play, infiltrating the base becomes an espionage conflict. The gamemaster has divided the facility and its surroundings into zones that Kara and Nasir's ornithopters need to move into.*
>
> *Kara goes first and moves subtly. She makes a successful test and moves her ornithopter into the next zone, but it is a zone occupied by an enemy 'thopter. She pays the cheaper price to Keep the Initiative, allowing Nasir to take an action before the enemy pilot.*
>
> *Nasir moves boldly, flying close enough to get the attention of the enemy pilots. Nasir can move to another zone, but also moves the enemy ornithopter in Kara's zone to a different one. The enemy pilot takes the bait, following Nasir's ornithopter as Kara flies low toward the facility, unseen.*

## Use an Asset

You may choose one of the assets you control and use it to achieve some other goal. You must declare what you are doing with the asset, and what effect you wish your action to have.

Common examples of ways to use an asset include, but are not limited to:

- Attacking an opponent with the intent of harming or defeating them (see **Attacks, Defeat, and Recovery**).
- Attempting to remove an opponent's asset from play.
- Attempting to create a new trait for the scene, or a new asset for your character or an ally.
- Attempting to overcome an obstacle in the environment.
- Attempting to gain information about the situation.
- Attempting to remove a trait or similar complication from an ally, or to aid a defeated ally.

Regardless of the desired outcome, this action always requires a skill test. If you pass the test, then you get the desired effect. If you fail, then the action you've attempted is prevented, and you may not Keep the Initiative.

Actions which directly affect a specific opponent are **contests** rather than skill tests: the opponent gets to resist the action taken against them. The final Difficulty of a contest is influenced by the assets the defender has.

Some outcomes may not be possible to achieve in a single action. These turn into **extended tasks**, where the character makes progress toward their goal bit by bit over several actions. The requirement for the extended test is usually based on the defender's skill. The number of points made toward the requirement of the extended task is equal to 2 plus the Quality of the asset used: more potent assets make progress faster.

Remember that assets are simply additional traits you can use to modify the situation. However, in some cases they may be required to allow the conflict to occur at all.

> ***Example:*** *Nasir has an enemy pilot on his tail in the same zone, and he needs to defeat that pilot to escape. Flying in different vehicles makes it impossible for Nasir to take any action against the pilot himself. So, he must first declare he is using his ornithopter asset to make the conflict between them possible. The enemy pilot uses his ornithopter asset to make a defense possible.*
>
> *Nasir may be able to apply other traits, just like any other contest, to get a better Difficulty rating. But having used his ornithopter to initiate the conflict, it cannot also adjust the Difficulty.*

## Conflict Overview

Here is a high-level summary of how to make an attack…

1. Choose an **asset** to use in the attack.
2. Based on the type of attack you are making, choose an appropriate **skill** and **drive**, as well as a **focus** if one applies.
3. Roll your contest against the target.
   a. If you **win** the contest, your attack is successful.
   b. If you **lose** the contest, your attack fails.
4. On a successful attack, the outcome depends on your target.
   a. If your foe is a **minor** character, they are defeated.
   b. Otherwise, defeating the foe is an **extended task** with a requirement equal to the foe's most appropriate skill. Each successful attack scores points equal to 2 plus the Quality of their asset. Once the task's requirement has been reached, the foe is defeated.

*Nasir also has a personal shield, but the gamemaster tells him that won't be any use if his ornithopter is forced out of the sky. He might also create the trait 'Clear Skies' for the environment, but as that helps the enemy pilot as well the advantages cancel each other out.*

Having declared all the traits they wish to use, Nasir and the enemy pilot make an opposed test against each other. Nasir gains a success and so defeats his opponent. In this case he describes forcing the other ornithopter out of the sky with some clever flying.

## ATTACKS, DEFEAT, AND RECOVERY

A common choice in conflicts, characters may attempt to defeat their opponents in order to remove those opponents from the conflict. Any action where the goal is to defeat an opponent is classified as an attack, and defeated opponents are no longer able to participate in that conflict: they may be injured or even dead, they may have been forced out of a social gathering, or they're otherwise incapable of continuing to affect the conflict.

***Example:** Having taken out an enemy ornithopter, Nasir is feeling confident, until he notices a cannon turret activating and taking aim at him. The turret is an asset that was already in the zone Nasir has entered, so now the gamemaster decides to use it.*

*The gamemaster makes an attack with the turret against Nasir in the ornithopter and wins the opposed test. This would defeat a minor character, but Nasir is far more than that! So, the test must be an extended test, which in this case has a requirement of 4. The cannon turret is a powerful asset with a Quality of 1, so the gamemaster scores a total of 3 of the 4 points they need, leaving only 1 left. Another hit, and Nasir will be blown out of the sky!*

Making an attack is always a **contest**, because it affects another character. The type of contest, and the skill and assets involved, can differ depending on what kind of combat you're engaging in (personal, espionage, etc.), as well as the circumstances of that conflict. For example, a skirmish normally involves the Battle skill and a melee weapon, while an intrigue interaction might use the Communicate skill and a blackmail asset. (Examples of appropriate contests appear in each combat type section later in this chapter.)

### CONTEST RESULTS

If you **win** the contest, then you successfully attack the enemy—see **Successful Attack Outcomes**, following. If you **lose** the contest, then your attack has failed, and the action ends. You may not Keep the Initiative after failing. Regardless of the result, complications may allow the enemy to gain an advantage over you, like opening you up for a counterattack.

### SUCCESSFUL ATTACK OUTCOMES

- If the attack is against a minor non-player character or minor supporting character, then a successful attack against them means they are **defeated**.
- If the attack is against a notable or major non-player character, a notable supporting character, or a main player character—or if the target is a military asset in a warfare conflict—then defeating the character is an **extended task**, with a requirement equal to the most appropriate skill of the character. Each successful attack scores points equal to 2 plus the Quality of the asset used; you may spend 2 points of Momentum to increase the Quality of the asset by +1 for that attack only. Once the task's requirement has been reached, the character is defeated.

As noted above, a defeated character can no longer take part in the scene, at least until they've had an opportunity to recover. This may require time, action from allies (see below), a specific condition being met (such as restoring a tarnished reputation after a social defeat), or some combination of the three.

Some defeats may be impossible to fully recover from, such as serious debilitating injuries or death—though permanent defeats for player characters should be rare, as anyone as significant as a player character is likely to be captured, to ransom or subvert, since they're too valuable to simply kill. Defeats with a long-lasting effect may add new traits to player characters, at the gamemaster's discretion, reflecting permanent effects from injury, disgrace, or similar. **If you want to inflict a lasting injury on an opponent, spend 2 points of Momentum after the attack which defeats that opponent.**

## DEFENSIVE ASSETS

The attacker's final Difficulty increases by +1 for each defensive asset in the target's zone. Essentially, a defensive asset is a trait that can be used to increase the Difficulty of any attack to that zone. With the attacker doing the work of initiating the conflict, this is simply the best use of a defensive asset.

In many cases a defensive asset cannot move. Armor is worn on one part of the body, shields cover the whole body (for the most part). Defenses are set up and remain where they are to protect a zone. However, a few defensive assets can be moved as a more active defense. A half shield can be moved to keep the protected side towards the attacker. A knife can be used to parry and is therefore treated like a defensive asset if in the same zone as an attacking one.

The Quality rating of a defensive asset should be is added to the requirement of the extended test to defeat the wielder. For this reason, attacking and removing defensive assets from an opponent can be a vital tactic.

## TARGETING ASSETS

Denying assets to the enemy is a key element of conflict—the fewer assets they have, the harder it is for them to attack you or defend against your attacks—so targeting assets is likely to be a common choice of action.

First, select the asset you wish to target. Then describe how you are trying to remove that asset from play, and make a skill test. Typically speaking, targeting an asset is a skill test with a Difficulty of 2. If the asset is being wielded directly by a character—as in, it is an object in their hands—then it is a contest instead.

If the test is passed, then the outcome depends on what kind of asset has been targeted. An intangible asset is destroyed. A tangible asset is set aside, unable to be used by their owner, but continuing to exist; that asset can be recovered as an action, or at the end of the scene.

## CREATING A TRAIT OR ASSET

It's likely that you'll seek to try and shift circumstances in your favor during a conflict. This may come about by establishing new facts and details about the current scene or environment, by creating a trait, or by obtaining or revealing a new tool or resource at your disposal by creating an asset.

If you wish to create a trait, describe the sort of effect you want, and how you wish to create it. Then, attempt a skill test with a Difficulty of 2. If you pass, then you've managed to create the desired trait.

Creating an asset works in the same way, but there are some limitations to the kinds of assets you can create. A created asset has a Quality of 0, and it should be useful in the current type of conflict. This can be an intangible asset, such as advantageous positioning in a skirmish or duel, additional preparations, useful information, or some other non-physical benefit. Alternatively, it could be a tangible asset, but this must be something that your character could reasonably have concealed from everyone else (and

## RESISTING DEFEAT

Some characters are harder to overcome than others, possessing a limited ability to fend off the attacks—literal or figurative—that would lay them low. This kind of desperate, last-ditch survival cannot be achieved often, and it always comes at a price: something lost, something suffered, or some advantage given to the enemy.

All player characters have this option, as do all notable and major non-player characters, and all notable supporting characters.

Once per scene, if your character would be defeated, you may choose to **Resist Defeat**. Resisting defeat prevents that defeat from occurring—your character remains active in the scene. When you choose to Resist Defeat, it costs 1 point of Momentum, or adds 1 to Threat, and causes you to suffer a complication (non-player characters opposing the players spend Threat instead). This complication could cause the loss of one of your assets, an advantage the enemy has gained over you, or some hindrance suffered avoiding the defeat.

The amount of Momentum or Threat spent to Resist Defeat increases by an amount equal to the Quality of the asset used to cause that defeat; it's harder to avoid an injury caused by a poisoned dagger than some ruffian's blade. The attacker inflicting the defeat can increase this cost further by spending Momentum.

you're revealing it now), or something which you could find in the scene.

Assets created in this way are temporary and cease to exist at the end of the scene; whatever the asset represents is discarded or ceases to be useful. You may spend 2 points of Momentum to make an asset created during a scene permanent, in which case it is added to the list of assets on your character sheet.

> ***Example:*** *While Nasir is maintaining a distraction, Kara has landed and entered the facility. But upon seeing Nasir is in trouble, she decides to try and neutralize the cannon turret. As she is some distance away, she needs some sort of asset to do so. Kara's player spends Momentum and makes a test to create a new intangible asset of 'security access'. Kara's player narrates her sneaking up on one of the House Arcuri technicians and stealing his uniform and access pass.*
>
> *Moving the asset (subtly) into the same zone as the cannon turret represents Kara finding the right control system. Keeping the Initiative, Kara then uses the asset to make an attack on the cannon turret, accessing its controls to overload it. She makes a successful test and the cannon turret explodes in a ball of flame.*

## OVERCOMING AN OBSTACLE

A conflict may occur in an environment littered with obstacles, hindrances, and challenges to overcome. These obstacles are traits and don't strictly belong to any one character, but they are still problems that need to be overcome in some way.

In a physical environment, such as for a skirmish or warfare scene, these obstacles are features of the terrain: walls and similar barriers, fast-flowing water, dense mud, shifting sands, and other features that impair movement and action. During espionage or intrigue, these obstacles may represent factors that prevent access to places or people.

When you attempt to overcome an obstacle, you must describe how you are bypassing it, and then attempt a skill test. The gamemaster determines the Difficulty; this normally has a Difficulty of 1, but more challenging obstacles naturally have a higher Difficulty. Passing this test means that you've managed to pass the obstacle unhindered. Failure means that you've been stopped for the time being, and you'll need to find a different method to overcome the obstacle.

## GAINING INFORMATION

Often, a situation may not be entirely as it seems, and many conflicts revolve around keeping secrets and relying on misdirection and misinformation. You're likely to find yourself in a position where you need to try and gain information during a conflict in order to win, particularly in espionage and intrigue conflicts.

### WHAT IF I DON'T HAVE AN ASSET?

Assets are not only useful, they can be vital. But they are not always essential. Like any trait, they can grant options you wouldn't normally have or make a task much easier. The right tools for the right job. But unless you need one to allow the test, their use is optional, and there are many other traits and talents that might allow a character to perform an otherwise impossible action. Hyperawareness, for instance, allows a character to see the minutiae others miss, making certain advanced observation tests possible. It is important to remember that assets are just one weapon in any character's arsenal. In themselves they are only a potential key to power; opening the door is more about how they are applied and wielded.

How this is resolved can differ based on the nature of the information you seek and what you plan to do with it. Basic information-gathering is typically a Difficulty 0 skill test the skill depending on the conflict, with Momentum spent to ask the gamemaster questions about the situation. Momentum from this can also be used to create traits representing advantages gained from knowledge, or to remove traits that represented concealment or deception. You may instead seek to create an asset, or overcome an obstacle by gaining information, as noted above. The Momentum can even be saved for later if it doesn't exceed the usual limit, representing the advantage of scouting out the terrain or your opponents first.

The Difficulty of this skill test increases if there are any factors that would make the information harder to uncover. Classified, restricted, or obscure information is harder to find, while secrets may be impossible to uncover unless you know where to look or who to ask.

This form of test can be exceptionally useful for a gamemaster. Players often want to ask what their character can learn by (for instance) mingling with the guests at a party, surveying a battlefield, or asking around about their enemy. Often there isn't any specific information they can learn, but the action might yield something useful. So, a test to gain information offers a chance to build Momentum (or ask more specific questions) that represents the minor details they learned that they might turn to their advantage.

***Example:*** *Inside the facility, Kara defeats the base commander in a duel and sets about interrogating him for the information she is after. This could be run as an intrigue conflict, but the commander has already been defeated. So, the gamemaster asks Kara's player to make a Communicate skill test to see what she learns from the interrogation. As the commander has just been defeated, the gamemaster makes the Difficulty 0, but a more resistant captive might offer a greater Difficulty.*

*Kara gets three successes on her test, so she gains 3 points of Momentum. She can save this for later, making it useful information about the base and its soldiers that might aid her in her next objective. But she can also use it to ask the gamemaster questions, representing what the commander actually told her. She asks the gamemaster two questions. Satisfied with her answers, she saves the third point for later.*

## AIDING AN ALLY

Your character may end up in a situation where their allies are hurt or impaired in some way and you want to try and help them. These kinds of problems tend to take the form of traits or complications inflicted on characters, and removing traits from a scene is much the same as adding them.

If you wish to remove a trait, choose which trait you wish to remove and describe how you wish to get rid of it. Then, attempt a skill test, with a Difficulty of 2. If you pass, then you've managed to remove the chosen trait.

Helping a defeated ally during the scene they were defeated in works in much the same way but is somewhat more challenging. There are two ways you can go about this.

- If the defeat would have a lasting or permanent effect (death, adding a new character trait, or some other long-lasting consequence), then you may attempt to prevent that lasting effect. Describe how you wish to aid the defeated character and attempt a skill test with a Difficulty of 2. If you pass, then the ally is still defeated, but the lasting effect is prevented: you've stabilized a dying ally, or you've helped alleviate the lasting effect, but the ally still needs time to recover and can't rejoin the scene.
- If the defeat has no lasting or permanent effect, then you can try to recover the defeat directly. Describe how you wish to recover the defeat, and begin an extended task, with a requirement equal to 4 plus the Quality of the asset used to defeat that ally. If the extended task is completed, then the ally is no longer defeated and they may rejoin the scene.

# The Forms of Conflict

The basic system for conflict can be used for any form of conflict, from chases to intrigue to duels. We've broken the most common forms of conflict into five types: Dueling, Skirmish, Warfare, Espionage and Intrigue. These are not necessarily the only types of conflict, simply the most common ones. The following provides a more detailed and streamlined version of these rules for these particular forms of conflict.

This detail is not a series of extra rules and exceptions that make everything more complicated. Instead, it offers several examples of how the conflict system adapts to different settings. Most of the changes are narrative, detailing what the various assets and zones should represent. If anything appears confusing, refer back to the previous core system.

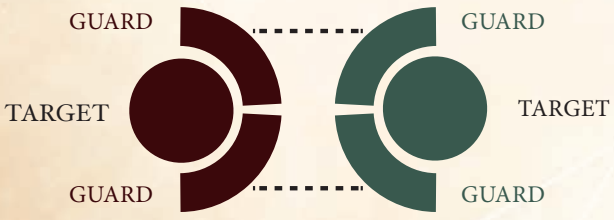
# Dueling

Honor duels amongst nobility and military officers are a common way of settling disputes in the Imperium, and gladiatorial combat is a common form of public entertainment. Alongside this, skill in single combat is also useful for defending against would-be assassins. Elite schools of swordmasters—such as the Ginaz—exist to fight, and teach, combat to those who can afford them.

Most dueling is fought with swords and knives, as the widespread use of shields renders projectile weapons ineffective and energy weapons too perilous to use. Low-velocity projectile throwers remain somewhat common for ambushes and assassins, as they're useful against enemies who don't have shields, or enemies who are unprepared to fight, but they're otherwise quite rare in dueling.

## Zones in Dueling: Maneuver & Positioning

Dueling is a **single combat** between two individuals. As such, the physical environment matters somewhat less than the positioning of the combatants. Thus, each character receives a single zone which represents themselves, and two zones that represent the area immediately around them, which can be thought of as their guard, one to the left and one to the right, with one fighter's right guard zone connecting to their opponent's left guard zone (though they might equally reflect 'high' and 'low', or any pair of areas that a fighter must protect). See the example below.




Each combatant is assumed to turn to face their opponent at all times. Both combatants' assets begin the battle within their own zone, and battle is a matter of moving assets into positions to attack and defend effectively. Moving a weapon asset into the opponent's central zone and making a successful attack typically results in the target's defeat, though some prolonged bouts may require a succession of attacks (using the extended task rules).

***Example:*** *Kara is doing some combat training with Nasir. As it is one-against-one, this is a duel, so the zones are defined as the standard personal zone and two defensive zones each.*

## Assets in Dueling: Weapons & Defenses

The assets used in dueling are, naturally, weapons and defenses.

- **Melee weapons** are the most common form of dueling asset. Blades, varying in size from swords to daggers and knives, are the most common form of melee weapons, and many combatants enter battle with more than one: a blade in each hand, and maybe some extras sheathed about their body for special circumstances. Blades are useful both on offense and defense, and swordsmanship is a complex game of feints, parries, and precision attacks. In single combat, moving a melee weapon asset represents the position the weapon has relative to both attacker and defender. A melee weapon may attack an opponent once it has been moved into that opponent's zone.
- **Subtle weapons** are essentially a specialized form of melee weapon, designed for trickery and deception rather than honest battle. Tiny needles—nearly invisible, always envenomed, often embedded in clothes—can nick or scratch unwary foes with innocuous movements. Concealed blades can be

drawn to provide a sudden advantage. Poison and drug dispensers upon weapons can turn the merest graze into a debilitating hit or leave a foe disoriented.

- **Ranged weapons** are rare in dueling, and they are used more commonly by soldiers and assassins seeking an unfair fight in their favor. They're hard to use against a shielded target—the shield stops fast-moving objects completely—but quite effective otherwise. In dueling, moving a ranged weapon asset represents moving where the weapon is pointed, and what it is aimed at. A ranged weapon may attack an opponent once the asset has been moved into that opponent's zone (that is, it's aimed at them).
- **Shields** are the primary form of personal defense for anyone of any importance. All player characters are assumed to be of sufficient standing that they can equip a personal shield if desired. Most shields protect the whole body, stopping any object moving faster than a few centimeters per second (to allow air to pass through and avoid suffocating the wearer). Some combatants employ a partial shield, or half-shield, which only covers half of their body, but which can be maneuvered around tactically. A full shield asset cannot be moved. A half-shield asset can be moved in single combat, but only to zones adjacent to the wearer's own zone. Attempting an attack in the same zone as a shield is impossible unless the attack is sufficiently slow-moving (normally from a melee weapon). Note that a shield also prevents the wearer from making ranged attacks.
- **Armor** is rare in dueling and gladiatorial combat, but it is commonly used by soldiers who may not be equipped with a shield. Those wearing shields tend to avoid armor as it hinders mobility for little benefit; the kinds of careful attack that can pierce a shield can also find the weak spots in a suit of armor (see also 'Attacks' later).

In addition, characters may seek to create intangible assets to represent an especially favorable position, or taking aim, or other temporary advantages that come about through tactics or circumstances.

***Example:*** *Kara and Nasir are both using knife assets, but to give Nasir a chance, he is wearing a shield and holding a knife in each hand. Kara only has a single blade.*

# Actions in Dueling

This section provides some guidance on the most common actions you're likely to attempt—or have attempted against you—during a duel. These are all explained in the **Conflict Overview** (p.167).

## MOVEMENT

Moving assets in a duel reflects moving weapons and defenses to attack and defend different areas.

- Any asset worn on your character's person, or which represents their overall position or situation, is placed in the zone that represents your character. Such assets cannot be moved—they're there to protect you.
- Any asset mounted upon one of your character's arms, or held in one of their hands, begin the conflict in one or other of the zones immediately in front of them; you can choose which ones go where. These are normally weapons or tools, and they can be positioned to help defend your character or attack your opponent. Moving such an asset to the zone representing your opponent allows you to attack them with that asset.
- If you find yourself without any other weapons, you automatically receive an 'Unarmed Attack' tangible asset with a Quality of 0, allowing you to strike and grapple without the use of a weapon.
- Intangible assets which represent things you've done or are doing to your opponent—such as misdirection, or aiming a ranged weapon—can be moved around freely but are not present at the beginning of the scene; they must be created during the conflict itself.
- Moving an asset **subtly** often involves moving while the opponent's attention is elsewhere. If they're paying attention to the blade in your right hand, they may not notice you moving the blade in your left.
- Moving an asset **boldly** is often a form of misdirection, performing an obvious, dramatic action to provoke a hasty reaction; the daring thrust often serves to draw attention (and defenses) away from the slow blade. Sometimes, moving an asset represents wrestling your opponent into range of your asset rather than moving the asset to them.

***Example:*** *Kara and Nasir both begin circling each other. Nasir cannot move his shield asset, but can move either or both knives in an attempt to get an attack on Kara. He tries to keep one knife on the offensive, moving it into Kara's defense zones, but keeps one knife back in his defense zone to parry with. He uses a lot of subtle moves in case he can get in the right place to make an attack.*

*Kara makes a lot of bold moves, taking her blade close to Nasir's personal zone and giving her the option of moving his defensive knife out of the way (by dodging and weaving to find a gap in his guard).*

## ATTACKS

The following is how the **Conflict Overview** (p.167) applies to dueling:

- A dueling **asset** must be a weapon of some kind, and to defeat your opponent it must be used in the zone that represents your opponent.
- The **skill** you roll in a dueling contest is normally **Battle** for both sides; other skills are possible if there's a good reason. Creating a trait that represents an observation or insight might allow you to use Understand to attack or defend, while a trait that represents good positioning might let you use Move. The attacker's final Difficulty increases by +1 for each defensive asset in the same zone (armor, shields, and weapons being used to block or guard).
- If your successful attack leads to an extended task (meaning the foe is not a minor character), the task's requirement equals the foe's Battle skill.
- A **lasting defeat** can include death, but also covers serious injuries which have a long-term or permanent effect, such as dismemberment, disfigurement, severe organ damage, and similar.

## DEFEAT

A character defeated in a duel may have surrendered (at the controlling player's discretion), been rendered unconscious, or suffered some painful but non-serious wound—something which keeps them from fighting but which won't have any real lasting impact. In a formal duel or training bout, it may simply be reaching an agreed-upon win condition such as first to draw blood.

## TARGETING ASSETS

Targeting an opponent's assets is a useful way of gaining an edge. While it's next to impossible to deny a shielded or armored foe their shield or armor—as such assets are securely affixed to them—you can still remove other kinds of asset from play. In these circumstances, assets and traits are largely synonymous.

- Assets which represent weapons can be knocked from their owner's hands, allowing you to disarm your foe. They can attempt to retrieve weapons lost in this way but doing so requires an action.
- Intangible assets which represent your opponent's positioning or circumstances, or effects inflicted upon you (such as being tricked, put off-balance, or having a weapon aimed at you), can be overcome and removed from play entirely. If an opponent has a good position, you can move to deny them that. If an enemy is aiming at your character, you can disrupt their aim. If your character is off-balance, they can regain their center and restore their balance.

## CREATING A TRAIT OR ASSET

Creating traits to give your character an edge or impair your opponent can tip the balance of a fight in your favor, opening up new opportunities for you or closing off options that your opponent might have used. Similarly, creating new assets can be an important option during a conflict.

- Tangible assets must be something hidden on your character's person, and only revealed now, or they may be something improvised from the environment, such as finding an object to use as a weapon.
- Intangible assets can represent the benefits of observation, positioning, tactical ploys and tricks, and any other advantage that may come from how your character fights rather than the physical tools of combat. Alternatively, an intangible asset might be some hindrance inflicted upon an opponent, such as knocking them off-balance, creating a fake opening to lure them in, using taunts to distract or confuse them, and similar.

***Example:** Kara manages to attack one of Nasir's blade assets, sending it spinning across the training floor out of reach. Nasir fails to bring his other blade back for defense and Kara presses her advantage, subtly moving her blade into Nasir's personal zone. She Keeps the Initiative to make an attack, but the shield asset increases the Difficulty by 1. She succeeds, defeating Nasir by sliding a slow blade under his throat.*

## GAINING INFORMATION

Even in a one-on-one duel, knowledge is power. Being able to read an opponent's fighting style may allow you to form appropriate defenses or figure out a way of attacking that they're ill-equipped to defend against. Being observant might allow your character to detect hidden weapons or discern the signs of their ploys.

While **Understand** is the obvious choice for gaining information, the **Battle** skill can be useful in dueling for learning about an opponent's weapons and fighting style or judging how capable a fighter your opponent is.

When gathering information during a duel, you might wish to create traits that represent identifying a weakness in your foe's defenses (making it easier to attack them), or ones which represent anticipating enemy attacks, to make it harder for the enemy to attack your character. Alternatively, you may be on the lookout for information that doesn't help you during the combat at hand, but which might be helpful later. Many swordmasters swear that you can only learn who someone truly is when you fight them.

# Skirmish

Skirmishes are combats involving a small number of individual combatants, but more than a one-on-one duel. They typically involve movement and maneuver around a small environment, attempting to overcome enemies through positioning and decisive action.

As with dueling, skirmishes are most commonly fought with swords and knives. However, low-velocity projectile throwers are somewhat common in skirmishes, often employed in an opening salvo against unprepared foes or those lacking shields.

## Zones in Skirmish: Maneuver & Positioning

In a skirmish between several combatants, the physical environment is important. Each combatant does not have a set of individual zones as they do in dueling. Instead, combatants maneuver around the battlefield, using the terrain and their relative positions to their advantage.

The environment of the skirmish should be divided up into zones around its features or simply to divide the open space. Individual zones may grant advantages or impose problems on the characters in them, representing terrain features.

Rather than moving assets around individually, skirmishes track the movement of individual characters, moving them using the normal rules for moving assets. Moving a knife obviously moves the character holding it as well. If an asset is in the same zone as a character or non-player character, the asset can be used to make an attack on them.

A ranged weapon can be used to attack enemies in the same zone at no penalty, or in an adjacent zone at +1 Difficulty. Moving a ranged weapon asset into another zone represents taking aim at a target in that zone; it need not mean the character themselves has moved into that zone. When moving a ranged weapon asset into another zone, the player should specify whether their character is moving with it.

> ***Example:*** *Kara and Nasir are set upon by some thugs in a back alley in Arrakeen. The gamemaster could make the alley a single zone, but decides to make things more interesting by creating three zones: the part of the alley near the main road (entrance), the part of the alley with a fire escape ladder (fire escape), and the end of the alley that is a dead end (end).*
>
> *The end of the alley has the trait 'Dark' as it is covered and shaded. The zone with the ladder might offer opportunities to escape. Nasir and Kara begin in the entrance zone with two thugs; three thugs begin in each of the fire escape and end zones.*

## Assets in Skirmish: Weapons & Defenses

The assets used in skirmish are, naturally, weapons and defenses.

- **Weapons** and most defensive assets work in the same way as they do in dueling. However, as each combatant is a single target and not a collection of zones, any attack allows the target to apply all their defensive assets. A weapon used to attack can't be used to parry in the same round. The gamemaster may also decide other defenses can't be brought to bear depending on circumstances.
- **Shields** work in the same way as n dueling, except that ranged attacks against half-shields increase in Difficulty by +2 instead. Melee attacks against shielded foes increase in Difficulty by +1.
- **Armor** is sometimes used by soldiers and other combatants who may not be equipped with a shield. Those wearing shields tend to avoid armor as it hinders mobility for little benefit; the kinds of careful attack that can pierce a shield can also find the weak spots in a suit of armor. Armor makes attacks against the wearer more difficult, with heavier armor providing a bigger Difficulty increase, but it also increases the complication range of actions relating to movement and maneuvering by the same amount.
- **Intangible assets** can represent an especially favorable position, taking advantage of cover, taking aim, or other temporary advantages that come about through tactics or circumstances.

***Example:*** *Kara pulls her knife and Nasir takes out a maula pistol. The thugs also all pull knives. Kara and Nasir really wish they'd worn their shields.*

## Actions in Skirmish

This section provides some guidance on the most common actions you're likely to attempt—or have attempted against you—during a skirmish. These are all explained in the **Conflict Overview** (p.167), but here we've provided some context that is specific to skirmishes for how to use and interpret those actions.

### MOVEMENT

In a skirmish, you do not move your assets individually. Rather, movement actions move your character around the battlefield.

- Ordinary movement allows you to move to any adjacent zone. This can be thought of as a standard

walking pace, or normal wary movement around a combat environment. Spending 2 points of Momentum to move an additional zone represents moving more quickly: a quick dash or run. You may instead spend 2 points of Momentum to allow one of your allies to move to an adjacent zone; the ally must be able to see or hear you, and they take the opportunity to move at your signal.

- Anyone in the same zone as any other character is considered a viable target. Anyone not in the same zone can only be attacked with ranged weapons.
- Moving **subtly** often involves moving stealthily or snatching the opportunity to move when an opponent is distracted or looking elsewhere. This opportune movement allows you to continue acting before the enemy can respond.
- Moving **boldly** is overt, dramatic, and attention-grabbing, often accompanied by a shout or war-cry that might drive a foe away in sudden fear, or a taunt that draws out a chosen foe.
- A failed attempt to move subtly or boldly allows a single enemy to move to an adjacent zone.

## ATTACKS, DEFEAT, AND USING ASSETS

While the zones may be different, skirmish attacks work in the same way as dueling attacks. The same options exist to target assets, create new assets, and defeat opponents. However, the options for defeat may be less formal.

> ***Example:*** *Kara acts first. With no need to move an asset, she slashes at one of the thugs in the same zone as she and Nasir. As the thug is a minor non-player character, and Kara wins a contested test, he drops. On their turn, one of the thugs from another zone attempts to move into Kara's, but he fails, so Kara holds him at bay. Nasir drops the other thug in their zone with his pistol in another contested test.*
>
> *The thugs press their attack, looking to move more of them into the entrance zone to overwhelm Kara and Nasir. While Kara dispatches more as they enter her zone, with numbers on their side it isn't long before all the thugs are in the entrance zone targeting Kara and Nasir.*
>
> *In the next round the thugs make a point of targeting Nasir. As he is a player character it takes an extended test to take Nasir down, but a concerned attempt from the thugs nearly does so. As they are all per-*

*forming essentially the same action, all their attacks on Nasir count to the same extended track.*

*Nasir uses his action to move to a different zone. The thugs close in on Kara, but she manages to hold her own. Nasir can try and shoot thugs attacking Kara but with +1 to Difficulty for attacking an adjacent zone with a ranged weapon. As he is not sure of his skill, he moves his maula pistol asset into Kara's zone. Nasir can opt not to move with the asset, because this is a ranged weapon and he is aiming. If he moved subtly, he might keep the initiative and give Kara a chance to fell one of them.*

*Instead, he moves boldly and is able to move one of the thugs out of Kara's zone, either shooting to force the thug to step back or intimidating him with his pistol.*

*With most of the thugs down, the skirmish ends as the remainder make a run for it.*

## OVERCOMING AN OBSTACLE

The environment where a skirmish happens can be as vital for victory or defeat as the combatants. Individual zones may contain obstacles that are difficult to move over, around, or past, or which otherwise get in the way of fighting.

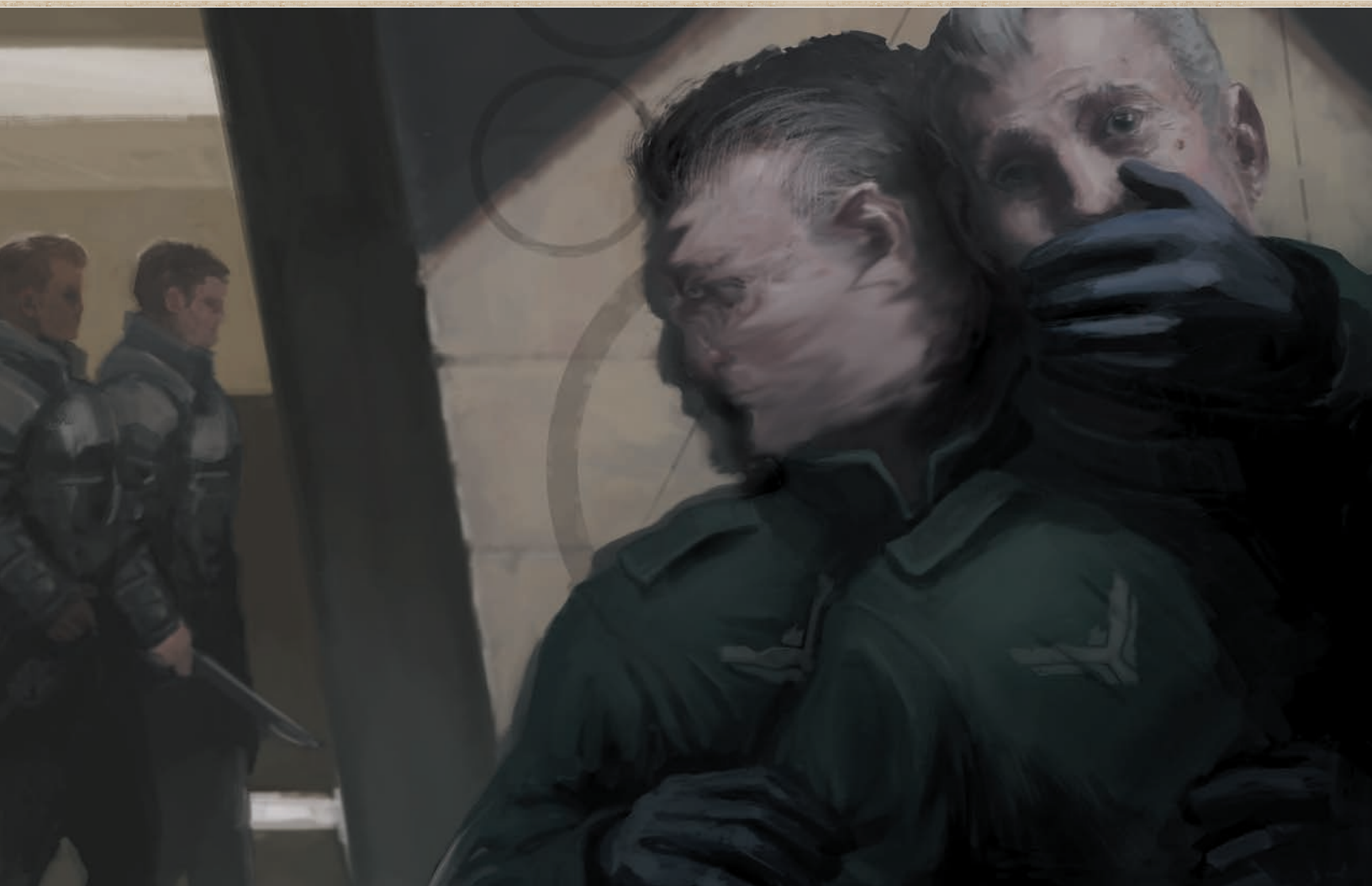
The majority of skill tests to overcome an obstacle use **Move**; the obstacles may be an area of difficult terrain that may slow your character down or ensnare them, or there's a hard barrier that cannot be crossed without effort. It may be possible to use **Understand**, representing trying to discern an easy path through or past the obstacle, or to use **Discipline** to simply force your character through with grit and fortitude.

## GAINING INFORMATION

Even in a skirmish, knowledge is power. Being able to read an opponent's fighting style may allow you to form appropriate defenses or figure out a way of attacking that they're ill-equipped to defend against. Being observant might allow your character to detect hidden weapons or discern the signs of their ploys. It may also be useful for spotting useful details about the environment around your character—spotting escape routes, useful objects or items, precarious or dangerous terrain, and similar.

While **Understand** is the obvious choice for gaining information, the **Battle** skill can be useful in a skirmish for learning about an opponent's weapons and fighting style or judging how capable a fighter your opponent is.

Creating new traits in a skirmish follows the same pattern as that for dueling, detailing the weaknesses of your opponent. But it might also create new hazards in the environment.



# Espionage

Knowledge is power. And knowledge of your enemies is especially potent. Anyone in a position of power is aware of the value of knowledge and the power of secrets. It should come as no surprise that most Houses cultivate a network of spies, informants, and surveillance methods to ensure that they know everything worth knowing, and that they also take precautions to protect their own secrets from prying eyes.

## Zones in Espionage: Social Groups and Secure Places

When resolving an espionage scene, the zones used are somewhat abstract in nature. Each zone represents a person, a group of people, or a place. The links between these zones are the natural connections between them: a zone representing a particular group of smugglers may have a link to someone who does business with them, and links to the places those smugglers regularly do business. Each of these links should denote the nature of the connection. A small example is below.

What defines each zone is that each is a potential source of information or is connected to one.

One element that makes espionage zones unusual is that they may be unknown to the players: a map might only show the zones and links the player characters are aware of, and it may require time and effort (and actions) to reveal links and zones which were previously hidden. Thus, an espionage scene is a process of information-gathering, attempting to discover a way to obtain a crucial secret, or to protect such secrets from being uncovered. These hidden connections are normally revealed—or sometimes created—through actions taken by characters, using assets moved into those zones.

At times, a zone may instead represent an event—a gathering or meeting of some sort. Events only occur at a particular time and a particular place, but they can provide a rare connection between groups or people who are normally unconnected. As they're time-sensitive, they may vanish after a few turns, though recurring events may appear and disappear on a schedule. Needless to say, it can be vital to learn of an event before it happens.

## Assets in Espionage: Spies and Security

The assets used in espionage are normally spies and security measures, but there are other forms of asset.

- **Spies** are highly trained operatives who use stealth, deception, and other covert means to gather information. Most spies divide their efforts between obtaining information themselves—using fake identities, disguises, and similar methods—and building a network of informants of their own. Spies also watch for the activities of opposing spies. However, true spies are a rare and precious resource, and one that should not be squandered. Moving a spy into a zone represents an attempt to infiltrate that particular group or place, or to get into the presence or confidence of that person. Spies can create informant assets and place surveillance devices.
- **Informants** are generally less capable, and less mobile, than spies, but they are often already well-placed within a location or group, or within the confidence of a person. Informants are normally created through bribery or extortion. Servants make excellent informants, as they often are privy to their masters' secrets while being considered beneath notice. Moving an informant is the same as moving a spy, but informants typically have a lower Quality and thus less ability to move around.
- **Surveillance devices** which record sounds and images can be invaluable espionage tools, allowing information to be gathered without the presence of a person. They require the correct placement to be used effectively, and they cannot be moved afterward without being physically retrieved (which also recovers any information they've gathered). They're hard to find, but if they are discovered, the information they've gathered is lost.
- **Security measures** are the antithesis of espionage, and any House makes full use of every method available to keep spies out. Security measures range from guards and sentries—infantry soldiers, normally warfare assets—to physical security such as reinforced walls, locks, penta-shield doors, no-rooms, and similar. Mobile security, such as guards, can be moved around to actively search for spies, informants, and surveillance devices (and question people, for more overt information-gathering), while static security measures are passive and only serve to present an obstacle.

You may also seek to create intangible assets that represent rumors, information leaks, or propaganda that undermines, misleads, or disrupts the enemy. On the defensive side of things, you may use information about suspected spies, additional security procedures such as random patrols or searches, or other actions undertaken by your security measures as a form of intangible asset.

> ***Example:*** *Kara has been sent to investigate a spice smuggling operation. All she knows is that it is based on Arrakis. An investigation gets her a clue that the smugglers are trading with a particular group of Fremen.*

Posing as a spice dealer, she makes connections with the Fremen that lets her make contact with the smugglers. Eventually she manages to infiltrate the group deep enough to learn who is running the organization. However, she could have come at this from any zone. If she were a Fremen, she might have found something going on with the tribe. She might even have run into the leader and become suspicious enough to try and find out what he was up to.

# Actions in Espionage

This section provides some guidance on the most common actions you're likely to attempt—or have attempted against your character—during espionage scenes. These are all explained in the **Conflict Overview** (p.167), but here we've provided some context that is specific to espionage for how to use and interpret those actions.

## MOVEMENT

Moving assets in espionage reflects moving agents and security apparatus to the places and people where they're the most useful. It represents spies and similar assets moving under instructions from their handlers—the player characters—often over a protracted period of time.

- Assets are capable of observing or protecting the zone they are in, so moving them around is a necessary part of getting the desired information or securing your House's secrets.
- Surveillance devices cannot be moved once set.
- Security measure assets protect a zone by making it harder to enter that zone, with the protection provided having a rating equal to the security measure's Quality.
- When you attempt to move a spy asset, compare the spy's Quality with the highest-rated security measures of the zone they are moving to. If the security measures have a higher Quality, the spy asset cannot enter that zone without attempting to move subtly or boldly.
- The Difficulty of skill tests to move a spy asset subtly or boldly increase by +1 for each security measure in place in the destination zone.
- Active security measures—guards and similar—can be moved around freely.
- Moving an asset **subtly** should be fairly commonplace in espionage—stealth and guile are part of the process after all—and getting assets into position quietly has the obvious advantage of preventing the enemy from being able to react to you. Defensively, moving security measures secretly may catch enemy spies off-guard.
- Moving an asset **boldly** may not seem appropriate for espionage, but it can have value. Actions that draw attention in a particular way can create distractions and provoke responses, and a bold action doesn't need to be loud and visible to everyone… in espionage, it just needs to be noticed by an opposing spymaster. Defensively, moving security measures in an overt and dramatic manner may just lure enemy spies into making a deadly mistake.
- If your character is inclined to engage in espionage more directly—perhaps because they are a spy themselves—they may do so, treating themselves as a spy asset. For these purposes, their Quality is the lowest of their Understand and Move, minus four. This may also produce opportunities for skirmishes and dueling scenes if the character is targeted.

## ATTACKS

Direct attacks should be relatively rare in an espionage conflict, because they turn the situation from spying to assassination, as you target an opposing character or try to avoid your own character being targeted. However, more subtle attacks are still an option.

The following is how the **Conflict Overview** (p.167) applies to espionage:

- As mentioned above under **Assets in Espionage: Spies and Security**, assets in espionage are usually things like spies, informants, surveillance devices, and intangible assets like rumors and propaganda.
- The **skill** you roll in an espionage contest is normally **Move** for you, to get close enough to strike; your opponent may use **Discipline** or **Understand** to represent their awareness.
- If you fail your contest, the gamemaster may rule that the scene is now a skirmish or duel.
- If your successful attack leads to an extended task (meaning the foe is not a minor character), the task's requirement depends on how your foe would resist your attack—likely **Discipline** or **Understand**.
- A **lasting defeat** from assassination is much the same as one from dueling. Results include death, but also cover serious injuries which have a long-term or permanent effect, such as dismemberment, disfigurement, severe organ damage, and the like.

***Example:*** *As part of her attempt to discover more about the spice smuggling operation's leaders, Kara attempts to*

*place a surveillance device in the operation. She might do this by bugging one of the smugglers or placing a device in one of their facilities or ships. In game terms, though, she is moving a surveillance device asset into the smuggling operation zone.*

*She is successful in moving the asset, but she needs to use it to learn anything. The gamemaster can set a base Difficulty, but if Kara is trying to learn about a particular person the roll might be contested by that person's skills. The surveillance device in the right zone is what allows her to make the test, so it can't help her with the Difficulty. There is also a surveillance countermeasure asset in the zone protecting the smugglers and adding +1 to the Difficulty.*

*Kara spends Momentum, representing long hours poring over data, and luckily makes a successful test. The gamemaster gives her some information about the leader of the group to help move her investigation forward, but she can also use Momentum to ask some additional questions she may have overheard the answers to.*

## DEFEAT

Espionage often leaves little trace, sometimes not even a body. The consequences of defeat can vary wildly depending on the plot. Usually, victory simply means that one agent has acquired the intelligence they were after, and if they do really well their enemies won't even know they have it.

## TARGETING ASSETS

It can be useful to try and sabotage the assets of your opponent during an espionage scene. This involves eliminating or exposing enemy spies and informants, disabling surveillance devices, and undermining security measures.

- Targeting spies results in the spy being removed from play, but not eliminated. They've been exposed, and need to withdraw and go into hiding to establish new cover identities and rebuild connections, which takes time and effort.
- Targeting informants exposes them, but as they tend to lack the support networks of spies, they're normally captured and executed by their masters. Naturally, this means that they're destroyed.
- Targeting surveillance devices destroys them or renders them useless. Once their presence is known, they can no longer provide valuable information. Spending 2 points of Momentum to create a trait 'Subverted Surveillance' (or something similar) may allow you to use a discovered surveillance device to spread disinformation.
- Targeting security measures does not destroy or disable them, but rather creates a way for your assets to bypass them: a bribed guard, a hidden way through the walls, a way to unlock a door, etc. This renders the asset ineffective, at least until the breach is discovered and closed (recovering the asset).

## CREATING A TRAIT OR ASSET

Creating traits can help shape the landscape in espionage, creating options, opportunities, and connections that may not have existed before.

- A created trait may lay the groundwork for other actions later, such as establishing an alias or cover story to make it easier to bypass security later.
- A trait can also be used, with the right justification for how it is created, to connect one zone to another. Once connected, two zones count as adjacent, allowing your character access (or easier access) to a person or place you had little or no access to before.
- The most common forms of tangible asset created for espionage are informants and surveillance devices. An informant functions just like a spy, though they're normally less capable and somewhat disposable. Surveillance devices can gather information remotely and be very difficult to find, but they cannot really move between zones.
- Intangible assets can represent the uncontrolled spread of information, true or otherwise, which can help influence how the opposition acts or reacts. Similarly, you can create additional intangible assets to represent actions undertaken by active security, such as additional patrols or tighter procedures, bolstering the security measures present in a zone.

## OVERCOMING AN OBSTACLE

Obstacles in espionage are not typically physical obstructions so much as social or political ones. Secretive or isolated factions may be difficult or impossible for an asset to reach under normal circumstances, even if connections exist.

Overcoming such obstacles typically requires work establishing legitimate—or seemingly-legitimate—reasons for access, such as an asset proving themselves worthy or useful to an isolated group who shun outsiders, or obtaining letters of introduction or some other reason to reach a reclusive but powerful individual.

These typically require **Communicate** or **Understand** tests, but tests of worth may require **Battle**, **Move**, or **Discipline** tests depending on the nature of the group you're seeking to access.

## GAINING INFORMATION

Information is the point of espionage, so naturally this action is undertaken frequently during espionage scenes.

You may only gather information from a zone where you have a spy, informant, or surveillance device asset present. Getting such assets into position is the central challenge of espionage. In addition, the Difficulty of any skill tests made to gather information is increased by +1 for each security measure asset the opponent has in that zone, as their presence is a hindrance.

**Understand** is the skill used for most information-gathering actions in espionage, as that is the skill most applicable to obtaining and processing knowledge. Other skills may be applicable, but only in specific circumstances where the skill relates to the kinds of information being gathered.

Some information may not be obtained easily, requiring that it be actively retrieved from people rather than gathered passively from written records or simple observation. This, naturally, becomes a **contest** against the character being questioned (which obviously cannot be done by a surveillance device). Attempting to question a character without revealing a spy's nature is more difficult for the spy but tends to avoid some of the nastier consequences. Alternatively, converting a well-placed non-player character into a double agent can be extremely valuable, but difficult, likely requiring an **extended task** (with a requirement equal to the non-player character's **Discipline**) and some way of persuading them to betray their masters.

Other information may take time and effort over a prolonged period to obtain, requiring an extended task to complete. This may even require working toward the task in different locations or from different people, piecing together information from multiple sources, with all the challenges that ensue in getting from location to location

# Warfare

War in the Imperium is both a constant threat and also heavily regulated. Most Houses maintain a standing army of some sort, and many can supplement this with mercenary companies and other unscrupulous types. However, war has rules. Some methods—such as the use of atomics or equivalent destructive forces—on human populations will make enemies of the entire Landsraad, who are quick to enforce breaches of the rules of warfare, and the proper conduct of war between Houses is serious business.

On a single world, individual Minor Houses may war amongst one another, so long as the Major House that rules over them permits it, and Major Houses may use their own forces to put down rebellious and seditious elements within their own domains. Major Houses cannot so easily war with one another, for moving armies between worlds requires the consent of the Spacing Guild, who charge a hefty fee for their services.

## Zones in Warfare: Maneuver & Terrain

Warfare is similar to a skirmish, but on a much larger scale. When resolving a warfare scene, zones represent locations of strategic importance. The gate to a city, a main road, a defensible hilltop, a valuable mine or factory, an airfield or spaceport, a command bunker… all of these could be

zones in Warfare. The key is to denote the places where fighting is likely to take place, and when armies march to war, they fight over places of importance.

Individual locations often have some benefit or advantage they provide to whomever holds them, or represent something which is valuable to the possessor. A gateway may be one of the few pathways into a city, while a main road may be the fastest route from one place to another. A mine or factory may simply be valuable, while an airfield or spaceport may allow the possessor to mobilize ornithopters and other aircraft more easily, and a command bunker may contain senior officers or even members of the enemy House.

Similarly, some locations may pose problems: terrain may impair the advance of troops and vehicles or leave occupying forces vulnerable to attack. Some locations may only have an effect for one side or another: defending forces may know the local terrain better and be able to take advantage of it in ways that invaders cannot.

The player characters themselves may or may not be directly involved in warfare. Some characters may choose to lead their forces personally (in which case, they move with whichever asset represents the unit they lead), while others may be content to give their orders from the safety of a command bunker or fortified war room.

At the start of the battle, an objective that will lead to victory must be set. This might be something like control of a particular zone (such as 'control of the Arrakeen Residency'). The objective is usually the same for each side, but some battles are fought over several objectives, with each side having to protect something as well as trying to take control of something their opponents have.

***Example:*** *On a deserted moon, House Molay and House Arcuri have come to blows over a mining deposit. The area is divided into five zones, one of which is the mining deposit's richest site. Kara is leading the Molay forces, which have been landed in one zone. The Arcuri forces are in another. Whoever can secure the mining deposits zone or destroy the opposing force's assets first will be the victor.*

### Assets in Warfare:
## Armed Forces and Fortifications

Assets used in warfare are armed forces and fortifications.

- **Infantry** form the bulk of any armed force, and squads or platoons of infantry are a common form of asset. Infantry may be armed and equipped in a few different ways, from lightly equipped commando units, to armored heavy infantry carrying heavier weaponry. They normally carry a mixture of blades and projectile weapons, with occasional use of lasguns if the enemy is likely to lack shields. Shielded infantry fight exclusively with blades, as their shields stop their own projectile weapons as surely as an enemy's. Infantry fight at relatively close ranges, and thus can only attack other assets in the same zone.

- **Ground vehicles** are another vital part of armed forces. An armored groundcar can withstand greater punishment than infantry, and travel more quickly or more reliably over rough terrain. Ground vehicles are normally used for reconnaissance and transport, though they are occasionally fitted with heavier weaponry when the enemy lacks shields. Shielded ground vehicles, naturally, don't carry weaponry, though they do need to deactivate their shields for passengers to embark or disembark or for cargo to be loaded or unloaded. Ground vehicles can carry infantry assets around the battlefield.
- Aircraft are used in many of the same ways as ground vehicles—as scouts and transports—though they tend to be faster and have the advantage of altitude. This also means that anything transported in an aircraft (such as an ornithopter) is far less likely to survive if the craft is destroyed, though a shielded ornithopter has little to fear until it comes time to take on or disgorge passengers or cargo. Aircraft can move significantly faster than ground forces, moving one additional zone with each move.
- **Fortifications** are stationary defenses, such as walls and obstacles, that prevent an enemy from moving into or through an area, or which provide cover and protection for defending troops (or both). The simplest kinds of fortifications are earthworks which can be hastily constructed by troops in the field, while the most potent are House shields that can protect a palace or castle from attack. Such shields cannot be pierced by slow-moving objects—a castle can have life support systems within to sustain the inhabitants while the shield is up, so the shield doesn't need to let air pass through—and are powerful enough that they're impervious even to lasguns. Obviously, the more powerful the fortification, the more costly it is to construct or obtain, and fortifications cannot be moved.

In addition, characters may seek to create intangible assets to represent ambushes, tactical ploys, special knowledge given to (or discovered by) specific units, and so forth.

> ***Example:*** *Kara herself is in a command shuttle and intends to stay there to direct the battle. For assets she has several tanks, soldier assault teams, and ornithopters. She starts moving the ornithopters in as they are 'Fast', to claim the objective area first, bringing the tanks and soldiers up behind them for support.*

# Actions in Warfare

Below you'll find guidance on the most common actions you're likely to attempt—or have attempted against your character—during warfare. These are all explained in the **Conflict Overview** (p.167), but here we've provided some context that is specific to warfare scenes for how to use and interpret those actions.

## MOVEMENT

In warfare, each asset represents a military unit of some sort, and moving them around represents deploying them to different positions and maneuvering them around a battlefield. Units move at the behest of your character's orders and instructions, either conveyed in person or transmitted using radio or similar technologies.

- When you begin a warfare scene, you must declare where on the battlefield your character is. Some player characters may prefer to operate from relative safety, far behind the front lines, while others wish to lead from the front. If ever an allied asset moves from your character's current zone, you may choose to move your character with it if you wish.
- When you make a skill test to move or use an asset and your character is in the same zone as that unit, you may reduce the Difficulty of that skill test by 1 (to a minimum of 1), to represent the advantages of leading your forces directly.
- When you make a skill test to move an asset and your character is not in the same zone as it, you may reduce the normal Momentum cost to move further or move a second asset to 1, to represent the bigger picture perspective you gain from maintaining a distance.
- Some assets are noted as immobile, often representing defenses, fortifications, and similar emplaced positions. These assets can be used, but they cannot move.
- Some assets might be noted as 'Fast'; these are often aircraft like ornithopters, or high-speed groundcars. Whenever a fast asset is moved, you may move it one additional zone.
- Moving **subtly** involves commanding a unit to move stealthily or taking the opportunity to move when the enemy is distracted or looking elsewhere. The opportune movement allows you to redeploy and take further action before the enemy can respond.
- Moving **boldly** is overt, dramatic, and attention-grabbing, drawing attention that provokes a response immediately.

## ATTACKS

The following is how the **Conflict Overview** (p.167) applies to warfare:

- As mentioned above under **Assets: Armed Forces and Fortifications**, assets in warfare are larger in scale than a skirmish, representing such battlefield elements as soldiers, vehicles, and fortifications.
- The **skill** you roll in a warfare contest is normally **Battle** for both sides; other skills are possible if there's a good reason. The attacker's final Difficulty increases by +1 for each additional allied asset in the same zone.

- If your successful attack leads to an extended task (meaning the foe is not a minor character), the task's requirement equals the foe's Battle skill.
- A **lasting defeat** means massive casualties and such a catastrophic loss of morale that the asset may be impossible to recover.

***Example:*** *The ornithopters reach the deposit zone first, granting Kara defensive assets in the zone and making it harder for the Arcuri forces to claim it. Then battle is joined by the heavier tank assets from both sides.*

*Unfortunately, while the Arcuri forces are not as fast, they are more dangerous. Kara loses most of her tanks in the exchange as the Arcuri forces target them.*

## DEFEAT

Battles are not usually decided just on which army destroys the other (although that also works). To win a warfare conflict, one side needs to take control of an agreed objective. This is usually a strategic zone, the control of which grants the power both sides seek to claim. What this objective is should be set at the start of the battle; all sides in the conflict are aware of it as they all know what they are trying to achieve. If one side claims the objective and the other has no assets left in play (or that they wish to engage with), the battle is over and the loser must accept the consequences.

An asset defeated in warfare has suffered casualties and is withdrawn from battle. With some effort, they can be rallied and brought back into the fight, though with a Quality one less than normal due to casualties and reduced morale.

***Example:*** *Having lost a significant part of her forces, Kara's ornithopters can't hope to hold on to the deposit zone against the Arcuri tanks. But while the Arcuri command shuttle is as far away as Kara's, it isn't much distance for an ornithopter to cross. She moves the ornithopters straight to the enemy command shuttle and opens fire on it.*

*With the Arcuri tanks too far to protect it, the shuttle is forced to leave the zone. Kara moves her tanks into the deposit zone and waits for Arcuris' next move. With their command shuttle damaged and Molay tanks now in the objective zone, they decide to retreat and regroup, but only for now.*

## TARGETING ASSETS

Warfare revolves around targeting and defeating assets, and the system for doing so is the same. However, more assets may be in play at any given time. The gamemaster may insist that especially important assets be removed with a contested roll instead, as they have more protection.

## CREATING A TRAIT OR ASSET

Creating traits to give you an edge or impair your opponent can tip the balance of a fight in your favor, opening up new opportunities for you or closing off options that your opponent might have used. Similarly, creating new assets can be an important option during a conflict.

- **Tangible assets** may be emerging from a hidden position on the battlefield, or they may be reinforcements arriving from afar.
- **Intangible assets** can represent the benefits of observation, positioning, tactical ploys and tricks, and any other advantage that may come from how your character fights rather than the physical tools of combat. Intangible assets can also represent misinformation given to the enemy, such as incorrect intelligence about the positioning of assets.

## OVERCOMING AN OBSTACLE

The battlefield can be as vital for victory or defeat as the combatants. Individual zones may contain obstacles and terrain features that are difficult to move over, around, or past, or which otherwise get in the way of fighting.

- **Battle**, **Communicate**, and **Discipline** can all serve as ways to coordinate and motivate military forces to maneuver through or clear out an obstacle.
- **Move** can be used to lead by example, guiding a unit through the terrain with personal experience.
- **Understand** relies on studying information from scouts to find the effective routes through an obstacle.

## GAINING INFORMATION

In war, knowledge is power. Obtaining accurate information about enemy movements and dispositions is a vital part of commanding an army. This typically relies on scouts and reconnaissance operations, who can gather and relay information.

In a warfare scene, you must select an allied asset when gathering information. You may gather information about anything within their current zone or an adjacent zone, as that assets performs scouting and recon missions.

While **Understand** is the obvious choice for processing this information, the **Battle** skill can be useful in warfare for judging the strength of enemy forces based on their armament and disposition, and for spotting enemy strategies unfold. Similarly, **Communicate** can be valuable when trying to decipher intercepted enemy communications.

When gathering information during warfare, you might wish to create traits that represent identifying a weakness in enemy defenses (making it easier to attack them), or ones which represent anticipating enemy attacks, to make it harder for the enemy to attack your character.

# Intrigue

Subtle battles of status, wits, words, and secrets, intrigue is perhaps one of the most difficult forms of conflict to visualize, but also one of the most rewarding to play out. Intrigue is an inevitable part of power and politics, with status, influence, and more tangible resources at stake. Everyone who takes part in intrigue has something to gain and everything to lose, and even those at the very top of society—the Padishah Emperor, the Spacing Guild, CHOAM, and the subtle Bene Gesserit—must play this game carefully.

Intrigue is a social conflict and so bears some similarity with espionage. But in truth it is closer to warfare, using generally intangible rather than tangible assets. Like warfare it should have an objective, which might be control of an area of an intangible zone (an area of politics, a favor or deal) or just the capitulation of an enemy.

### PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENTS

It may be useful, in some social scenes, to think about the physical environment rather than social connections; you may be describing a social gathering such as a party, a diplomatic conference, or something similar.

These function in much the same was as environments described in the **Skirmish** section, though they are typically more comfortable. Each zone is likely to be a different room, though especially large chambers may be divided into multiple zones at the gamemaster's discretion. Characters can move between these zones freely—though there may be locked doors or guards barring access to some areas—and unless you are deliberately trying to be discreet, any character in the same zone as you can hear the conversations you have. This does mean that finding a quiet, isolated place to have a private conversation can be important.

## Zones in Intrigue: Personal and Political Connections

The zones in an intrigue scene are the people and groups involved. This can be very simple, with one zone for each individual participant, or more complex as factions such as Houses, and the interconnected web of loyalties and rivalries, come into play.

In the simplest cases, it should be sufficient to create one zone for each person involved in that particular intrigue. This might be the people in a specific location at a particular time, such as a society party, a meeting, or similar gathering, or it might simply be all the people vying for power and influence in a particular region of a planet, or within the courts of a the Major House which commands your own. Your character is considered to be adjacent to any zone which represents someone they can communicate with in some way: speaking directly, sending messages, etc. If your character is unable to communicate with someone—perhaps their underlings or allies serve as intermediaries—they do not count as adjacent to that person's zone.

As the number of people involved in intrigue grows, the intrigue itself grows more complicated. Grouping individuals into factions and allegiances is often the first step here, creating hard connections between those aligned people to represent their shared interests (and meaning that, if your character can influence one, that can be a way to reach others in that group who might be hard to get to otherwise). Additionally, new zones may be added to the map whenever needed to represent new participants or parties who weren't involved before but are now (such as someone calling on allies to support them).

> ***Example:*** *Kara wants to find some leverage on a spice merchant she thinks may be cheating her House. So, she puts together a list of people to investigate and potentially manipulate and makes them zones. The zones she collects are: the spice merchant, her husband, her business partner, and her secretary. Kara may add more if her investigation brings other people to her attention.*

### DISPOSITION AND DESIRE

A couple of extra considerations for intrigue are disposition (what is the relationship between your character and someone else) and desire (what does each person want). These factors can often influence how characters choose to interact with the people in an intrigue (and the zones that represent them). These might not always be immediately visible, and part of the intrigue may be to discover who hates whom, who is secretly working with whom, and what everyone wants.

A character or group has a **disposition** of Allied, Friendly, Neutral, Unfriendly, or Opposed, which modifies the Difficulty of attempts to influence them by the amounts shown on the table below. Disposition is always that character/group's stance toward the player characters and their House.

| DISPOSITION | MODIFIER |
|---|---|
| **Allied** | –2 Difficulty (minimum 0) |
| **Friendly** | –1 Difficulty (minimum 0) |
| **Neutral** | No effect |
| **Unfriendly** | +1 Difficulty |
| **Opposed** | +2 Difficulty |

Disposition is not fixed and should change over time as a result of various actions. You may attempt to improve the disposition of others if you help them get something they want. You might worsen the disposition of others if you help their rivals or enemies, if you claim something they wanted, or if you do something that causes problems for them.

Noting the **desire** of a zone (whether it represents a person or group) works alongside this. Much like a player character's ambition, this represents what that person or that group wants to achieve or obtain. This both guides the actions of that person or group (it's a roleplaying prompt for the gamemaster), and is something valuable for the player characters to learn, because it allows them to influence that person or group more easily. A desire should be a short statement of intent and it doesn't have any numerical value.

***Example:*** *As Kara has had dealings with the spice merchant before, her starting disposition is unfriendly. However, Kara has met the spice merchant's husband before at a party and they got on very well, so his disposition is friendly. Kara doesn't know the others, and her House has no connection to them either, so their disposition is neutral.*

*Kara decides to focus on the husband first.*

### ASSETS IN INTRIGUE:
## TRADE AND SECRETS

The assets used in intrigue are typically things which can be used or traded to gain an advantage or exert influence. Many of these assets are intangible, representing information learned or rumors circulated (and the potential for extortion, knowledge trading, and similar activities), while tangible assets may represent valuable items such as precious goods, raw materials, land, or hard evidence. However, as your character rarely has those items on their person, the difference between tangible and intangible assets is far less meaningful in intrigue, and you may wish to use this to your advantage by creating intangible assets that represent things your character *claims* to possess.

Moving an intrigue asset into another zone allows you to confront that person with the asset, perhaps to offer it as a gift, to propose a trade, or to try and threaten or coerce them. The asset is considered to be leverage, which allows your character to influence someone else, whether positively (the ability to help that person), negatively (the ability to harm that person or take something from them), or through the status quo (appealing to social standards and norms, religious drives, or the target's reputation).

- **Knowledge** is the basic currency of intrigue. Knowing something that your opponents don't gives you power, especially if you know things *about* your opponents that they don't want known. Trading secrets can be a useful way to gain influence.
- **Rumors and lies** are similar to knowledge, but fake. They are easy to create and can be powerful if well-used… but they're also risky. Finding a rumor and assuming that it's true can lead to mistakes, while spreading lies which are found to be false can worsen the disposition of others. Rumors and lies always appear like knowledge when first encountered, but they can be investigated to determine if they are true.
- **Valuables** are physical items of worth. Money, manufactured goods, precious materials (and any useful material is precious if you have enough of it), land, population, ships, mercenaries, and anything else which has both physical presence and worth. Contracts—such as trade deals, agreements with other parties, and similar sources of potential wealth—can also be considered valuables. Valuables are often traded for other things, either other valuables, or for knowledge.

***Example:*** *Kara targets the husband first to see what she can find out. She creates an asset 'Suspicious Rumor' and brings it into the husband's zone. Using this to get the husband to confide (as part of a roleplaying scene) Kara is told the husband is concerned his wife is having an affair. Having confirmed Kara's suspicions, the gamemaster gives Kara the asset 'Rumor of an Affair'.*

## ACTIONS IN INTRIGUE

In this section you'll find guidance for common actions you're likely to attempt—or have attempted against your character—during intrigue scenes. These are all explained in the **Conflict Overview** (p.167), but here we've provided some context that is specific to intrigue for how to use and interpret those actions.

## MOVEMENT

Assets in intrigue are sources of leverage and things which can be traded to gain an advantage during social interactions. Moving an asset to a character's zone represents putting that leverage or those valuables into a position where they can be used, mentioning or alluding to knowledge your character has or resources they possess in conversation.

- Moving assets in intrigue is relatively uncomplicated, as any individual your character can talk to directly (or any group where they can speak to a representative) counts as an adjacent zone you can move assets into.
- Moving an asset **subtly** can represent using innuendo, subtlety, and implication to bring that asset into the conversation, creating a situation where your opponent may not know what you're implying until it's too late.
- Moving an asset **boldly** is the use of direct, forceful language and mannerisms to bring the asset into the conversation, with the intent of compelling an immediate, hasty response from your opponent.

## ATTACKS

Direct attacks should be relatively rare in intrigue, but where they represent physical attacks in other forms of conflict, they represent a social attack in intrigue—an attempt to diminish or destroy someone's social influence in order to prevent them from meaningfully taking part in the intrigue.

In an intrigue attack, it's important to describe *how* your character is attacking the target. The attack doesn't always require interacting with the character directly; rather, it can represent a concerted effort to shame and disgrace the target character, often by spreading rumors, revealing unpleasant information about them, or attempting to provoke a disgraceful act from the target. It may also represent blackmailing the target to get them to back down willingly, or it may be a process of undermining the target's resources and the sources of their influence.

The following is how the **Conflict Overview** (p.167) applies to intrigue:

- Many assets used in an intrigue attack are intangible, such as knowledge and rumors, as mentioned above under **Assets in Intrigue: Trade and Secrets**. Tangible assets are often in the form of evidence or coveted valuables.
- The **skill** you roll in an intrigue contest is normally a **Communicate** skill test for you, to get close enough to strike; your opponent may use **Discipline** or **Communicate** in response.
- If you fail your contest, it may lead to the target seeking to avenge such a slight, which could include a challenge to single combat if they are of a militant inclination.
- If your successful attack leads to an extended task (meaning the foe is not a minor character), the task's requirement usually equals the foe's **Discipline** skill.
- A **lasting defeat** involves the loss of social standing, a lasting impact upon the character's reputation, a disgrace or dishonor that will be talked about at social events for a considerable time, and perhaps even having influence and power taken from them by their betters.

***Example:*** *Kara's next move is to see if the rumor can grant her any leverage with the partner or secretary. In further roleplaying scenes, Kara engages with each of them. The secretary isn't bothered about the rumor, so it cannot be used to initiate a conflict. But that does tell Kara the secretary has no part in it. However, the gamemaster rules the partner can be brought into a conflict by using the asset. This at least tells Kara the partner is involved, or at least worried about the consequences of an affair being revealed.*

*Kara initiates a conflict with the partner (in a roleplaying scene) and successfully defeats the partner in the contest. The partner breaks down and explains she is the one the spice merchant is having an affair with. The gamemaster grants Kara the partner as a new asset, representing her confession.*

*Now Kara can bring all these assets to a conflict with the spice merchant. Kara won't need an asset to initiate a conflict, as she can negotiate with the merchant at any time. But the assets help her reduce the Difficulty due to the spice merchant's disposition in those negotiations. Kara and the merchant enter a contested test, with Kara managing to defeat the merchant, winning a much better spice deal for her House as long as she keeps a few secrets.*

## DEFEAT

A character defeated in intrigue simply departs the scene; they may leave voluntarily, or be forcibly ejected, but either way, they are no longer present to participate in the scene. They may also suffer reputation loss if the defeat is public. Defeat may also cause the target to submit utterly to the will of the victor for a time, having been forced to capitulate to their argument or leverage. It may grant the victor a new asset, such as an owed favor, new resources, or even their rival themselves forced to act as their agent.

## TARGETING ASSETS

It can be useful to try and undermine the assets of your opponent during an intrigue scene. This involves challenging the truth of information, casting doubt upon the provenance or worth of resources and other valuables, and similar means of rendering an asset ineffective.

- Knowledge assets can be tricky to target, unless your character has access to information which appears to contradict that knowledge, or some way to cast doubt upon the validity or worth of that knowledge. Once doubt has been established, the leverage of knowledge is greatly diminished, but it can be recovered if the information can be properly verified by a trusted source.
- Lies and rumors are similar to knowledge, but easier to produce and easier to remove, as they have little or no basis in truth to begin with. Once sufficient doubt has been cast upon a lie or rumor asset, it loses any Quality it had.
- Valuables can be difficult to target, as the asset represents items with actual physical presence and real worth. As with knowledge, casting doubt upon the real worth of a valuable is possible—are these art items real or fake, do you have as much of this mineral as you claim, etc.—but often more effective is demonstrating that there is no need or demand for those valuables. A shipment of rare raw materials is less useful as leverage against a person who has no need for those materials, or who can obtain those materials more cheaply elsewhere.

## CREATING A TRAIT OR ASSET

Creating traits can help shape the landscape in intrigue, creating options, opportunities, and connections that may not have existed before.

- A created trait may lay the groundwork for other actions later, such as establishing a good rapport with a character you may wish to deal with later, or a falsehood that you've managed to convince someone else to believe.
- Tangible assets are difficult to create in intrigue, but it is entirely possible to pass them between characters; obtaining an asset from another party within the scene to use for your own purposes can be quite useful, but you may have to give something up to achieve that.
- Intangible assets are most commonly lies and rumors, including lies about what valuables or knowledge your character possesses. These are easy to create, but easy to destroy as well, and it is potentially dangerous to lean too heavily on deceit to achieve your goals in intrigue, as it can result in many resentful people who regard your character as a cheat and a liar.

## OVERCOMING AN OBSTACLE

Obstacles in intrigue are not typically physical obstructions so much as social or political ones. Secretive or isolated factions may be difficult or impossible to reach under normal circumstances, even if connections exist.

Overcoming such obstacles typically requires work establishing legitimate—or seemingly-legitimate—reasons for access, such as proving yourself worthy or useful to an isolated group who shun outsiders, or obtaining letters of introduction or some other reason to reach a reclusive but powerful individual.

These typically require **Communicate** or **Understand** tests, but tests of worth may require **Battle**, **Move**, or **Discipline** tests depending on the nature of the group you're seeking to access.

## GAINING INFORMATION

Information is valuable in intrigue, so naturally this action is undertaken frequently during intrigue scenes.

Most characters in an intrigue scene are fairly guarded about their goals and their feelings, seeking to maintain a mask of neutrality where their true intent cannot be easily guessed. As noted above, characters in an intrigue scene have dispositions—how they feel about other characters—and desires—what they wish to gain—which guide their actions, but most try to keep those secret.

So, gaining information about who wants what, and who likes or dislikes whom, can be an invaluable part of an intrigue, as you cannot easily get what *you* want unless you can navigate these social battlefields. This normally involves observation and asking around, trying to glean information from other people. Some may give up small amounts of information freely, while others may be more forthcoming but only if they get something in return, and some information can be obtained simply by standing back and observing proceedings. This is, in fact, an ability that many Bene Gesserit master, allowing them to discern subtle details from signs that most wouldn't even notice.

Learning the disposition of another character is relatively straightforward, requiring only Momentum to be spent to Obtain Information (one question lets you ask the disposition of one character toward a single other character). Learning desires is a longer process.

Discovering the desire of a character is an **extended task**, with a requirement equal to that character's Discipline. Overcoming that extended task reveals the target character's desire. Each successful attempt to gather information scores points toward that requirement equal to your character's **Understand** minus two. You may spend 2 points of Momentum to add +1 to the number of points scored.

# Chapter 7:
# Assets

*The advent of the Field Process shield and the lasgun with their explosive interaction, deadly to attacker and attacked, placed the current determinatives on weapons technology. We need not go into the special role of atomics. The fact that any Family in my Empire could so deploy its atomics as to destroy the planetary bases of fifty or more other Families causes some nervousness, true. But all of us possess precautionary plans for devastating retaliation. Guild and Landsraad contain the keys which hold this force in check. No, my concern goes to the development of humans as special weapons. Here is a virtually unlimited field which a few powers are developing.*

*—Muad'Dib: Lecture to the War College from The Stilgar Chronicle*

# Tools and Resources

As mentioned in **Chapter 6: Conflict**, characters employ assets to manipulate and overcome opponents and obstacles during difficult situations. These assets come in a wide variety of forms and types, ranging from personal items like knives, shield belts, portable poison snoopers, or symbols of office; vehicles such as ornithopters and groundcars; to the service of groups of servants or soldiers, or agents like spies and informants; or resources such as valuable goods or raw materials. Assets may also take the form of information known about an enemy, rumors spread to discredit them, or similarly intangible advantages.

Assets are merely tools for the characters' goals; what matters is how they are used. This is not merely a matter of the skill with which those tools and resources are employed, but also the ends to which they are employed.

## Structure of an Asset

All assets share a common structure that lets you see what they're useful for and how effective they are at a glance. These elements are described below.

Functionally, an asset works as a trait (see p.143-144 & p.164) with the asset's **name**. The other details of an asset are there to provide extra context and differentiation between assets. Each describes a tool, resource, or something else useful which a character possesses.

These assets are used during a conflict (as described in **Chapter 6: Conflict**) to overcome opponents and obstacles just like traits, usually in the following ways:

- To make a task possible when it otherwise would not be (such as using lockpicks to pick a lock).
- To make a task easier, reducing the difficulty (such as using a weapon to attack an opponent rather than bare hands).
- To make a task harder for an opponent (such as using a blade or shield to parry an attack).

Some assets are **tangible**—representing physical things, from weapons and other small possessions, to vehicles such as groundcars and ornithopters, to squads of troops and the services of agents and other subordinates. Others are **intangible**, representing contacts, favors, the ability to call upon friends, and similar useful things which have no physical presence in their own right.

Additionally, some assets are hard to come by and must be either purchased or provided specially by the character's patrons or House. These are usually expensive or use advanced technology such as shields and ornithopters. If a character is trying to create such as asset during play the gamemaster may not allow it without a good reason why they would have access to such a thing. Other assets can be considered **ubiquitous** and are freely available almost everywhere, and easily brought into a scene with a Momentum/Threat spend.

When characters choose their starting assets, or gain assets with advancement, and they opt for a ubiquitous asset as one of their starting assets it should also have another aspect that will grant it a broader range of useful applications, such as the following:

- The asset can be easily concealed.
- A sign of sigil on the asset proves the owner has the backing of someone powerful.
- The asset has a secret compartment.
- The asset can be used as another asset (such as the way a crysknife represents more than just a weapon to the Fremen).

### NAME

An asset's name will normally serve as a basic description of what the asset is. This name will normally provide some clues as to the circumstances where the asset will be useful—a dagger is obviously be of some use in single combat, for example—but this may not be the whole story.

### KEYWORDS

Keywords provide an additional context for how an asset may function and the situations where it may be useful. An asset may have 2–3 keywords, most of which may only be a single word. The keywords don't do anything themselves—there are no specific rules which refer to them—but they can be useful prompts when determining if or how an asset applies to a situation. Knowing that a particular asset is a *ranged weapon* tells you the circumstances where it is useful (and the ones where it isn't, such as if an enemy is shielded).

## Creating and Developing Assets

In addition to knowing how assets work, it is necessary to know who has which assets.

- Main player characters begin play with three assets, as described on p.122.
- Notable supporting characters have a single asset each, created the first time they appear.
- Minor supporting characters have no assets, except at the gamemaster's discretion, such as when assets would be necessary for the character to perform their duties.

- Non-player characters have whichever assets the gamemaster wants or needs them to have, with some consideration as to the kinds of resources a given non-player character has access to.

Beyond these initial assets, characters can obtain assets in several ways during play.

## Assets and Traits

All characters can attempt to create assets in play, in the same way that they can attempt to create traits: at their core, assets are essentially just a slightly more detailed form of trait.

As noted in **Chapter 5: Core Rules**, a character can create a trait by spending 2 points of Momentum (normally after a successful test, but the gamemaster may waive this requirement), or by succeeding at a skill test with a Difficulty set by the gamemaster (normally 2). These common methods can be used to obtain assets as well, though the context of the skill test will determine what kinds of assets you're able to create.

**Intangible assets** can be created in most situations, as they have no physical form and thus tend to represent the benefits of position, information gained, contacts, favors, and similar benefits. What kind of intangible assets are created depends on the circumstances and the actions taken: creating an asset based on positioning requires moving to an advantageous position, while creating an asset based on a favor from someone else requires convincing that person to perform a favor for your character.

The drawback to this is that intangible assets are often easier to lose: they can be taken from your character or rendered useless with relative ease, because they are intangible. Knowledge can be invalidated, positions can be lost, contacts may turn away from you, those who owe favors may refuse to give aid, and so forth. This won't happen unless the gamemaster has a non-player character take action against your character or through the spending of Threat (and even then, there must be a reason for your character to lose an asset), but it is a risk worth considering.

**Tangible assets** are a little trickier to create because they have physical presence—they are substantive, physical things which exist, such as spice. You can reasonably only create a tangible asset during a scene if…

- Your character could normally obtain that asset. Perhaps your character gained the asset in trade, or by leveraging your House's wealth, status, and resources. Maybe your character simply found it in the environment where the scene is taking place.
- Your character could reasonably have already obtained the asset and simply be revealing it now. The asset must be something your character could conceal on their person or within the environment (if they've been there before or had time to prepare), such as a concealed blade, or a squad of troops using camouflage or disguise. Your character is assumed to have obtained the asset at some undisclosed earlier time, without anyone else knowing.

However you choose to create an asset, the asset is created with keywords chosen by the gamemaster (you may suggest keywords, but the gamemaster's ruling is final here; you get to choose the kinds of assets you create, but the gamemaster gets to define the specifics), and it has a Quality of 0. You may, when creating an asset, spend 2 points of Momentum to increase the asset's Quality to 1, to represent obtaining a better-than-average asset.

### Determination and Assets

One method of creating a trait is by spending **Determination**. This is just as useful for creating assets, though these factors are worth considering:

- Assets created with Determination have a basic Quality of 1, or 2 if you spend 2 points of Momentum to increase the asset's Quality.
- Tangible assets are considered to have been obtained previously and are only being revealed now; you must give a brief description of how you obtained the item.
- Assets created with Determination remain in play for the remainder of the current session.

This means that assets created using Determination are often more significant and effective than most newly-created assets and require a little more thought be put into their creation. Because you must describe how your character obtained the item, this is an ideal opportunity to reveal or elaborate upon some aspect of your character, particularly if it relates to the drive statement you used when you spent the Determination.

At the end of a scene, any assets you created which no longer serve a purpose—such as intangible assets based on observations which are no longer relevant or based on positioning on a battlefield your character is no longer on—are discarded. Any assets remaining will stay until the end of the current adventure.

## Quality

Some assets have a Quality rating if they are of a better Quality than usual. An ordinary example of any particular asset, even a rare one, has a Quality of 0. An ornithopter is no better than a knife as a knife isn't much use if you need to fly, just like an ornithopter is only useful to escape a duel. So, a knife with a Quality rating is better-balanced, more durable, or sharper than an ordinary knife. An ornithopter with Quality is faster, easier to handle, or stronger than a standard ornithopter. The higher the Quality, the more advanced or special the asset is.

| Quality | Description |
|---|---|
| 0 | Ordinary, average, or basic in function and effect. |
| 1 | Of above-average quality and effectiveness, or unusual in some way. |
| 2 | Highly effective or very potent. |
| 3 | Extremely well-made or effective. |
| 4 | Spectacular or devastating in effect and function. |

Quality does not just apply to objects and weapons. Documents with Quality are more complete or damning when used for blackmail or intrigue. Soldiers, servants of criminals in your character's employ may be better trained or better equipped. Favors are more clearly defined and harder to ignore when called upon. Any asset can have Quality, tangible, intangible, or ubiquitous, but where a Quality is not noted it is 0.

An asset's **Quality** determines how effective the asset is when used in a conflict. This takes several forms, and different types of conflict may refer to asset Quality for different purposes. Commonly, if you're using an asset to overcome an extended task, then the asset's Quality determines how much progress you make towards that task's requirement with each successful skill test.

In any circumstance where you're making a skill test with an asset and the asset's Quality has no other effect within the rules (for that specific test), then the gamemaster may allow you to generate bonus Momentum on a successful test equal to the asset's Quality. This is purely at the gamemaster's discretion and applies only when the gamemaster feels it would make sense.

Quality can be increased as a character advances. The character can improve their equipment and do the same for those that serve them, who may also grow in their skills and training. Physical items might be improved with better technology, sharpened, or even have secret compartments of poison edges added. An asset might even just be swapped out for a newer and more advanced model. Intangible assets can be grown by gains in the character's reputation or further study into their enemies to make one's leverage more powerful. Servants, spies, and soldiers can undergo better training or be given better equipment.

## Character Advancement

Your character's assets, or at least the most potent and significant of them, will stay with them and may even grow and develop over time. This represents time and effort invested to refine and improve upon their tools and expand their resources. However, your character can only maintain a finite number of assets in this way, as upkeep and maintenance become an increasingly large drain on time.

Your character may have a total of five permanent assets, though you can increase this number through purchasing certain talents.

At the end of an adventure, after purchasing advancements, you may take any of the following actions to maintain your assets:

- You may choose to keep any assets you created during the previous adventure, up to your character's maximum limit.
- If your character is at their maximum number of assets, you may discard any number of them to make room for new assets you have created.
- You may select one of your assets and increase its Quality by 1 by spending a number of advancement points equal to the new Quality of the asset (i.e., if you're increasing an asset from Quality 2 to 3, it costs 3 advancement points). The asset's name and/or keywords may be updated when you change the Quality, to reflect how the asset has been improved.

# ASSETS LISTING

To help you create and understand the array of available assets, we offer the following examples of items and technology to be found throughout the Imperium. We have divided them along the same lines as the types of conflict, to make it easier to see how they might apply. But any asset can be used for any purpose in the right situation. It is up to each player to try and consider how best to use the assets at their command.

- Personal assets are items that can be carried by individual characters. They apply most often in agent level play. Weapons of this type might be used in a personal duel or a skirmish conflict.
- Warfare assets are items too large for one person and turn a skirmish into a battlefield. They are usually heavy ordnance, soldiers, or vehicles.
- Espionage assets are used for assassination, stealth, and information gathering. They come in a variety of forms: some may be personal items, other may be intangible ones, some are agents, spies and even Face Dancers. These assets often suit both agent and architect level play.
- Intrigue assets are used in social occasions and are often intangible assets. They are based on favor, debts, and reputation, but also include informers and servants.

# Personal Assets

## Personal Assets: Ranged Weapons

### LASGUN

The most commonly used firearm in the Imperium. These continuous wave-laser projectors are fitted into either pistols or rifles, enhancing their range. The beam forms a tight, narrow laser that can be widened, reducing the strength while increasing the area impacted.

Lasguns use an energy cell capable of firing 30 shots before needing to be replaced. The number of shots is based on the narrow beam setting, and wider beams require additional energy. The universe is filled with lasguns, befitting the planet, culture, and group using them, making countless variants available for purchase. They are expensive and sometimes unreliable, and the reaction with shields makes them often undesirable in mass combat, when a stray shot could have catastrophic results

**As an Asset:** Lasguns are the conventional method of combat and can be used to destroy obstacles.

**Keywords:** Laser, Ranged Weapon

### MAULA PISTOL

The maula pistol is an assassin's weapon. These pistols have a spring-loaded trigger and can launch poison darts or other projectiles with considerable accuracy up to 40 meters.

They originate from the Faufreluches period and are closely related to stunners. The needle gun is a variant of the maula pistol.

**As an Asset:** The silent nature of the maula pistol makes it an excellent choice for assassinations.

**Keywords:** Concealable, Ranged Weapon, Quiet

## Personal Assets: Melee Weapons

### BLADE

Blades are as ancient as Old Terra and are just as critical for defense now as then. The creation of the personal shield has elevated them into common use. Blades come in a variety of shapes, sizes, and forms. Types of blades include daggers, swords, and rapiers, but many other specialized or culturally specific blades exist.

Since ancient times, numerous new versions of traditional blades have arisen, sometimes crafted from new material, sometimes combined with new technology. Most modern blades are crafted with plasteel or damasteel.

**As an Asset:** If used correctly, can penetrate a shield, and thus are a common part of a hand-to-hand combat attack. Some blades are presented as parts of ceremonies, used to signify rank and status. Historically they are known to be given as a diplomatic gift between warring factions.

**Keywords:** Melee Weapon (different sizes and forms of blade may have additional keywords)

### BODKIN

These tiny, well-crafted blades are used for personal defense and are commonly used by assassins. While not useful for cutting, they are exceptional for stabbing attacks. Several noted cutpurses use them as an aid in their crimes.

**As an Asset:** The bodkin is easily concealed in a wrist sheath and easily disposed of before capture.

**Keywords:** Concealable, Melee Weapon, Quiet

### CRYSKNIFE

This sacred blade of the Fremen is crafted from the tooth of a dead sandworm. An average crysknife possesses a 0.2-meter curved milky-white double blade with a finger-ridged handle. Sometimes the tip of the blade is coated with a deadly, fast-acting poison.

Part of the Fremen tradition surrounding the blade states that one can never be re-sheathed without first drawing blood. Additionally, outsiders are not allowed to view these blades, and if they do, the blade is cleansed through a long ritual or the outsider being put to death.

Crysknives come primarily in two types: unfixed and fixed. Unfixed blades must stay close to a person's electrical field, or they will disintegrate. Fixed blades are treated with a unique process that allows them to be stored.

**As an Asset:** A crysknife is a status symbol for an outsider among Fremen to show that one is a friend. They are an effective weapon against shielded opponents.

**Keywords:** Melee Weapon, Sacred

**Quality:** Even the least crysknives has a Quality 1, and the poison used may increase the Quality further.

### KINDJAL

These large curve-bladed knives range from 18–22 cm long. Their use is common among all noble houses who have been taught in their use since the Faufreluches days. The ability of these blades to safely bypass shields has increased their popularity to the point that they are commonplace.

**As an Asset:** The kindjal can cut through personal shields and can be used in artistic displays of sword use. Many noble Houses engrave the hilts with their House emblem.

**Keywords:** Long Blade, Melee Weapon, Traditional

### PULSE-SWORD

The pulse-sword is a melding of two different worlds: the medieval and the technologically advanced. These blades use vibrations to amplify the attacking power of the sword wielder, but as a result are rarely used on Arrakis due to the possibility of attracting sandworms.

**As an Asset:** The vibration effect of the blade disrupts thinking machine gelcircuitry.

**Keywords:** Disruptive, Melee Weapon, Vibro-blade

## Personal Assets: Armor and Dress

### JUBBA CLOAK

These durable and versatile cloaks are a boon to survivalists. The jubba cloak is a flowing cloak with various styles and functions. The cloaks are easily converted into a hammock or make-shift tent and regulate temperatures by absorbing or radiating heat.

**As an Asset:** The compact cloak appears like any other cloak and goes unnoticed until used. While mainly a survival tool, the cloaks are sometimes woven with intricate designs and worn as a status symbol.

**Keywords:** Adaptable, Fashion, Survival

### SHIELD

The Holtzman shield is named for the creator of the Holtzman effect, used to create a protective field of energy around a larger area such as a castle, or in some cases a planet. Shields are a common defense for facilities and make the use of lasguns deadly for all sides engaging in the battle, due to the unpredictable interaction of the resultant explosion. A shield can provide protection for more substantial areas, making them much harder to penetrate.

**As an Asset:** Shields are affordable for those of means, and always a factor when determining strategies against House operatives and soldiers. Their use on Arrakis is limited, as the vibration attracts the worms in a violent rage.

**Keywords:** Atomic, Impervious, Static Defense

**Special:** No high-velocity attack can bypass a shield, and it requires colossal amounts of firepower to overwhelm one. Lasguns are as risky to use against emplaced shields as against personal ones. See p.23 for more information about the interaction of lasguns and shields.

### SHIELD, PERSONAL

The Holtzman shield was named for the creator of the Holtzman Effect, and, unfortunately, not for his assistant, Norma Cenva, who actually discovered its use before Holtzman took over the project. This effect is used to

create a protective field of energy around a person. The shields quickly became commonly used for personal defense. While shields provide incredible protection, they allow slow-moving objects to pass through them—otherwise, the users would suffocate without atmospheric gasses such as oxygen. The evolution of the shields has allowed them to protect one side or one half of the body. To date, no one has been able to have the shields protect only a single limb or appendage.

Shields are affordable for most Houses and are commonplace with nobles and their retainers, with even some merchants able to have one. Holtzman shields are the primary reason for the move to more medieval forms of combat involving melee weapons. Their use on Arrakis is limited, as the vibration attracts the sandworms and puts them in a violent rage.

**As an Asset:** Shields are used for defense and can be used to threaten someone with a lasgun if activated.

**Keywords:** Atomic, Defense, Protection

**Special:** Ranged attacks cannot harm a character protected by a personal shield. If a shield is struck by a lasgun, either the shield or the lasgun (randomly determined) will produce an atomic explosion; using such methods of destruction upon a human population is strictly forbidden.

### SHIELD, SEMI-

A variant of the personal shield, the semi-shield is a shield built to protect only a part of the body, usually the upper torso or half of the upper torso and one leg. Also called a half-shield. These are often used in gladiatorial games or with light sparring, where an additional level of skill is utilized to strike areas not covered by the semi-shield.

**As an Asset:** As with regular shields, semi-shields are used for defense and can be used to threaten someone with a lasgun if activated.

**Keywords:** Atomic, Defense, Protection

**Special:** It is more difficult to harm a character armed with a semi-shield with ranged combat, and special care must be taken to strike the portion not protected by the shield. In each case, the Difficulty is increased by +1 step. If a shield is struck by a lasgun, either the shield or the lasgun (randomly determined) will produce an atomic explosion; using such methods of destruction upon a human population is strictly forbidden.

As a semi-shield doesn't protect the whole body unlike most defensive assets it can be moved into any personal zone of the user as they shift position to make the best use of its protection.

### STILLSUIT

These full-body suits are essential for survival on Arrakis outside the cities. Their primary function is to preserve the body's moisture by absorbing sweat, urine, and other body fluids. The stillsuit processes these fluids by filtering impurities, recycling captured fluids into drinkable water collected in catchpockets, which is drunk through a tube. The key components of the stillsuit are filt-plug (collects moisture from exhaled air), faceflap (face mask that protects the wearer from fine dust), catchtube (connects the catchpockets), and stillsuit cap or hood.

**As an Asset:** An operable stillsuit allows the wearer to function for weeks in the desert by collecting water as it is lost by the body. Each stillsuit is finely-crafted, with multiple plated layers. The average stillsuit wearer loses 2.7 ml of water per day. Better Quality suits can reduce this.

**Keywords:** Arrakis, Fremen, Survival

## Personal Assets: Communication and Information

### COMMUNINET

The planetary universal system that connects communications.

**As an Asset:** Communinet is essential in relaying information on a universal scale. The communication system can be hacked and used as a weapon against other Houses.

**Keywords:** Communication, Information, Universal

### DAMPER, IXIAN

The secrecy of the Ixians led to the creation of these devices to nullify eavesdroppers. These small tools usually cover a dome of roughly a 10-meter area. Larger Ixian dampers increase the dome's sphere of influence and counteract countermeasures.

**As an Asset:** The damper ensures the privacy of conversations (as a defensive asset against listening agents of devices). It can also be employed offensively if used while an opponent is attempting to communicate with distant allies.

**Keywords:** Countermeasure, Privacy, Technology

### EMERGENCY TRANSMITTER

Emergency transmitters are small, coin-sized devices possessing limited range to alert others that the user needs help. The devices are frequently worn by nobles and high-ranking officials when they are in the field. More paranoid wearers always keep them on hand, with a security contingent ready to respond.

The signal is sent back to a relay station or communicator possessed by the reinforcements. The larger the relay station, the more range the signal has.

**As an Asset:** The emergency transmitter is a useful tool for alerting others or calling in reinforcements. Smaller

groups frequently carry multiple transmitters and receivers to minimize lack of communication.

**Keywords:** Communication, Concealable, Tiny

**Special:** Use of an emergency transmitter is often a good justification for creating assets that represent extra troops.

### FILMBOOK

The filmbook is an imprint of shigawire that uses mnemonic pulses to train students. The exact subject varies per book, though shigawire is only found on Salusa Secundus and III Delta Kaising.

**As an Asset:** Noble Houses and other elite people use them for training their younger House and Guild members.

**Keywords:** Mnemonic, Shigawire, Training

### MEMOCORDER

The technological masters of Ix built these tiny handheld black squares to store written messages. The originator writes a message on the square with a needle, one word on top of the next until the message is compete as the box absorbs each word. The message is read by nerve receptors, with the recipient seeing the message flash before their eyes.

**As an Asset:** The devices can only be cracked by extremely advanced technology.

**Keywords:** Infiltration, Secrecy, Technology

### RIDULIAN CRYSTAL

Ridulian crystals redefined books, as each sheet of a page made of this crystal is only a few molecules thick. Due to the compressed state of the book, they can only be used with an automatic page-turner in the spine of the book.

A single volume of a book with an excess of thousands of pages would be a little over 1 cm thick.

**As an Asset:** A useful tool to convey large amounts of information without requiring much space to accommodate it. Also, for easy transport and disposal of the data if needed.

**Keywords:** Crystal, Knowledge, Skills

**Quality:** Special (the Quality depends on the contents of the book and the usefulness of the information it contains).

## Personal Assets: Tools and Personal Equipment

### BARADYE PISTOL

Baradye pistols are produced on Arrakis by the Fremen to communicate. The pistol fires a static charge capable of turning a large, 20-meter-diameter area orange (or another color if programmed). The charge retains the coloration for several hours before disappearing. The zone has many uses, from signaling traders or spice raiders to capturing sandworms.

**As an Asset:** The baradye pistol is a covert weapon useful in relaying messages and distracting others.

**Keywords:** Arrakis, Fremen, Signaling

### CIBUS HOOD

A malleable, flexible black mask created by the Ixians. When placed over a wearer's face, it completely conceals all their features. The device does not emit any energy readings. When using the hood, the wearer appears as a regular person in passing and looks different when viewed a second or third time.

**As an Asset:** A cibus hood enables its user to easily escape notice and blend into crowds.

**Keywords:** Disguise, Infiltration, Technology

### DEW COLLECTOR

These devices are commonly found on Arrakis. The dew collector is a small egg-shaped tool that collects the morning dew for later use.

**As an Asset:** Dew collectors are one of the ways to maintain life on the planet.

**Keywords:** Arrakis, Survival, Water

### FREMKIT

A desert survival kit created by the Fremen. The kit has all the tools need to survive for roughly a month on Arrakis. It commonly includes a manual, paracompass, stilltent, maker hooks, emergency stillsuit patches, and thumper.

**As an Asset:** The kit's primary purpose is to allow someone to survive in the desert for a short period. The emergency stillsuit patches can be used to temporarily repair tears in a stillsuit for roughly a day.

**Keywords:** Desert, Fremen, Survival

### GLOWGLOBE

These small devices use the Holtzman effect to hover near the user, providing illumination. The color of the light differs based on when it was constructed, and it is powered by an organic battery. They are easily switched on or off with a touch.

**As an Asset:** Glowglobes are used to illuminate areas of darkness, as distractions, and possibly as a concealable explosive delivery system.

**Keywords:** Hovering, Light

### KRIMSKEL FIBER ROPE

Ecaz hufuf vine is woven together from strands to form Krimskel fiber. When pulled, the fiber will 'claw' itself together into a tighter and stronger compos-

ite. Attempting to escape being bound with the fiber instead reinforces the bonds.

**As an Asset:** A Krimskel fiber rope can be used to bind prisoners or even as a device to secure doors when tried to pull open.

**Keywords:** Capture, Prisoners, Utility

## MAKER HOOKS

These narrow metallic shafts are used to open a gap within a sandworm's ring segments, exposing the less-armored hide beneath to the elements. Once pried open, the sandworm rolls onto its side to avoid sand getting in between the exposed flesh between the ring segments. This allows the user to get on top of the sandworm and guide the beast to wherever the rider wishes.

**As an Asset:** Maker hooks can be used to guide sandworms into enemy locations or travel great distances across Arrakis.

**Keywords:** Fremen, Sandworm, Transportation

## PALM LOCK

These small-to-medium-sized locks are usable on objects up to the size of a warehouse door. Each lock is keyed to a specific person's palm or a genetic type (such as a Bene Gesserit). Anyone else must pick the lock to open it. Higher Quality locks are more challenging to pick.

**As an Asset:** A palm lock is a versatile tool to secure locks and can aid in escapes by locking a door while escaping.

**Keywords:** Encoded, Security, Tool

## PARACOMPASS

The paracompass uses magnetic anomalies in a planet's magnetic field to determine directions by measuring instabilities. The device is a small handheld circular object that fits firmly in the palm.

**As an Asset:** Paracompasses are essential to locate directions and determine which way to travel in the wilds.

**Keywords:** Navigation, Survival

## POISON SNOOPER

Poison has long been the preferred assassination method of nobles since Old Terra. It is hard to detect, difficult to identify who one's actual enemy is, and tougher still to prove who used it. Poisons typically come in two forms: food (chaumas) and drink (chaumurky). Countless deaths from poisoning led to the invention of poison snoopers that replaced food tasters. These mechanical devices scan edible substances before they are ingested. Both Ix and Richese are the primary manufacturers of poisons snoopers; however, the continued Ixian propaganda has most of the public believing their models are more sensitive.

Poison snoopers come in two forms. The first is a portable version that is a handheld box with an extendable hose that is placed over the substance. An alarm sounds if the snooper detects poison. More advanced models have the option to vibrate rather than emit an audible noise, facilitating concealed use. A larger form of poison snooper is installed on rooftops, usually above eating rooms, and is always active. Fixed alarms continuously emit an ear-piercing sound elevating in frequency every minute.

**As an Asset:** Poison snoopers are excellent for defense and for use in safeguarding endangered people.

**Keywords:** Detection, Security, Technology

**Quality:** To make matter easier the gamemaster may rule that a poison snooper automatically detects any poison asset in play of the same or lower Quality.

## PROBE, IXIAN

A device wrought by the folk of Ix, the Ixian probe allows the user to scan and replicate the electrochemical signals in a human brain—living or dead—making a copy of personality traits, sense experience, and memory for later reference. The probe itself is a moderately-sized device, and requires sensors be attached to the intended subject, and an operator working while the process is ongoing.

The stored information is compiled into a simulacrum, a digital 'duplicate' of the original subject, which responds to stimulus in the same fashion, answering queries or providing answers. These simulacrums are often disoriented, and if created without permission, can be angry and uncooperative. It is rumored that this technology allows Tleilaxu to create gholas, copies of living persons whose minds have been copied with Ixian probes.

Note that the simulacrum is not a thinking machine in and of itself but is in fact merely a means of recovering information and responses. Simulacrums are necessarily limited in their ability to have original thoughts and to learn, unable to form neural pathways that duplicate human learning and actual cognitive development. Many within the Imperium feel that the distinction is irrelevant, and that the device skirts the limits of what is allowed under the Butlerian Edicts. Due to its immense potential for espionage, the Ixian probe is considered a loathsome innovation to most civilized people and is not generally used, even by the most amoral of spymasters.

The most reliable means of circumventing duplication by an Ixian probe is consuming a drug called shere, which disrupts the probe's ability to collect information, rendering the data useless. Upon death, shere also causes rapid deterioration of the nervous system of the one who took it, rending all further attempts impossible. Shere has no other practical applications and due to its side effects, is not commonly used as a precaution, despite its efficacy.

A later innovation, the T-Probe, is able to copy the memories of a person even if they have consumed shere, but causes incredible, frequently lethal amounts of pain to its subject.

**As an Asset:** An Ixian probe can copy a living or recently-deceased human being and allow access to a digital simulacrum of them, as if speaking to them in person.

**Keywords:** Ixian, Knowledge, Secret Information, Technology,

## SAPHO

A juice created from the roots of plants on the planet Ecaz. The juice is refined into a high-energy drink that amplifies mental powers.

**As an Asset:** Sapho is addictive if used repeatedly and leaves tell-tale signs by staining one's mouth and lips a ruby color. It is favored by Mentats.

**Keywords:** Addictive, Mentat, Stimulant

## STILLTENT

This airtight tent works similar to the stillsuit by capturing the humidity inside of it and gathering it for use by the tenant. These are frequently used under a layer or two of sand. The tents use sandsnorks (installed air tubes) to provide air to the interior of the tent.

**As an Asset:** Stilltents are essential for traveling on the surface of Arrakis and are commonly used by Fremen.

**Keywords:** Fremen, Sealed, Survival

## SUSPENSOR, PERSONAL

Personal suspensors are frequently placed into belts, chairs, and other portable objects. These devices operate on the secondary (low drain) phase of the Holtzman field generator and nullify local gravity. The height and mass of the energy consumed is based on the weight of the object lifted. Personal suspensors do not have the power to allow flight or stop falls from very high distances before running out of power. This application of the field was pioneered by Norma Cenva in the creation of the glowglobes during her tenure working for Tio Holtzman.

**As an Asset:** Personal suspensors can be used as transportation, for carrying heavy objects, or moving large forms of ordinance.

**Keywords:** Anti-gravity, Holtzman, Mobility

## THUMPER

A simple device used to summon sandworms on Arrakis. The thumper is composed of a spring-loaded clapper on a short stake that repeatedly strikes the ground. Delayed thumpers exist which have a candle attached to them that burns for one hour before activating the thumper. Longer candles can be used to extend the duration, with an increased change of failure for each additional fifteen minutes.

**As an Asset:** The thumper is useful in calling or distracting sandworms. The device can be used to cause mass destruction by having the sandworm appear in an area.

**Keywords:** Arrakis, Sandworm

## Atomics & the Great Convention

The Great Convention is the rules of warfare laid out by the Emperor and Landsraad over a millennium ago that all Houses must follow on pain of destruction. The use of atomic weaponry against humans, or the firing of a lasgun against shielded targets (which results in a pseudo-atomic explosion), is outlawed. All Houses have access to atomics, but they do not use them for such.

# Warfare Assets

Warfare on Arrakis has little resemblance to warfare on nearly any other planet in the Imperium. Everywhere in the Imperium shields are ubiquitous, cheap, and easy to produce, and have been common for over a thousand years. Thus, ranged warfare as was commonly practiced throughout history is nearly extinct.

Military units of the Houses of the Landsraad use ranged weapons almost exclusively against unshielded rebellious and riotous commoner populations. Soldiers without shields are utterly outclassed at every turn and can be easily destroyed by shielded infantry. Thus, ranged military tactics like enfilading fire, covering fire, bounding overwatch, air support, missile and bombing attacks of entrenched positions, and other tactics or strategies have almost disappeared.

Warfare between the Houses, in most of the Imperium, involves little to no space combat, as the Spacing Guild severely restricts such warfare in fear of damaging their precious Heighliners. It does, however, involve large units of shielded and melee-armed foot soldiers being transported to and from strategic locations by massive shielded transports. Troops then fight in largely melee formations to wrest control of these locations from the defenders, who are also shielded melee troops. Shielded ornithopters are used as scouts to follow and observe the movements of troops and transports and report said intelligence to command. Strategic locations themselves are shielded to prevent artillery strikes or bombardment.

Conversely, on Arrakis, shield technology is difficult to use, as shields of any size attract the attention of enraged sandworms, and the weather conditions of constant dust particles, frequent sandstorms, and high static electricity make shields unreliable and difficult to maintain. As has often been the case, militaries deployed upon Arrakis are slow to adapt and learn how to fight on the planet. Of course, the planet's long-time inhabitants, the Fremen, have adapted to their terrain and learned effective tactics and strategies, and learned how to fight asymmetrical wars against standing militaries.

WARFARE ASSETS:

# SHIELDS & EMPLACEMENTS

## STRATEGIC/HOUSE SHIELD

Strategic or House Holtzman shields, which derive their name from the Holtzman effect, are large shields that project an energy field around strategic sites. Personal shields also exist, but they cannot begin to compare to the strength of these massive defenses that would require energy levels like that of a crashing spaceship, comet, or meteorite to cause the shield to fail. They are used to defend massive fortresses and small cities from all forms of high-speed projectiles, from bombardments down to small arms fire.

**As an Asset:** A shield is a House-level asset whose control can change the tide of a battle. Widely used throughout the Imperium, on Arrakis they are only used within the Imperial Basin, as sandworms are not found there; if used elsewhere on the planet, sandworms would be attracted to their vibrations and attack.

**Keywords:** Atomic, Impenetrable, Strategic

## FORTRESS

Because they can be defended by strategic shields, fortified locations like castles and fortresses—places that rely on defensive architecture designed to impede melee armed ground troops—have become the standard form of defense of strategic locations throughout the Imperium and even on Arrakis. On Arrakis, only the Imperial Basin combines fortresses with shields, but the various Fremen sietches throughout the planet are also fortified against both conventional and nonconventional attacks.

**As an Asset:** Another strategic asset, fortresses and their control play a major role in who controls a planet, and who can lay claim to ownership of a territory in front of the Landsraad and the Emperor. They are designed to impede and kill attackers while still allowing access for regular business during peaceful times.

**Keywords:** Defensive, Heavy Cover, Strategic

## BUNKER

Bunkers, pillboxes, entrenched positions, or any sort of fortified location, shielded or not, are smaller defensive structures intended to slow or stop attackers. They are smaller than fortresses and can be created quickly with an entrenching tool. At times, more complex permanent bunkers are built in a place too small to secure with a full-sized fortress—for example, at a bridge with limited banks on either side suitable for construction. Bunkers are also used to defend temporary systems like undermining operations designed to penetrate shielded fortresses from below the ground.

## WORMSIGN!

The danger to spice production not withstanding, war and large scale combat on Arrakis is exceptionally difficult. Heavy tracked vehicles and the recoil of large ordinance create tremors and vibrations that the great sandworms can feel from miles away. This is to say nothing of shields, which enrage the worms and make them attack. The worms are among the most deadly things on Arrakis, and while the Houses have many powerful weapons, few can swallow an entire army whole.

**As an Asset:** A bunker is a tactical asset used to secure and give a bonus to defensive units and characters. It defends a smaller but critical location, like the only bridge that crosses a river for miles, or temporary defenses built to hold difficult ground recently won in a battle.

**Keywords:** Defensive, Heavy Cover, Tactical

WARFARE ASSETS:

# SOLDIER

## CONSCRIPT

Conscripts are the lowest of the low. Soldiers assembled with little to no training and bad or non-existent equipment. They almost never have shields and are armed with a combination of ranged weapons and shoddy melee weapons. These soldiers could be used to represent rebelling peasants, escaped slaves, or conscripted prisoners meant to tie up enemy forces while other soldiers maneuver into flanking positions.

**As an Asset:** Used to distract, hinder, or slow down an enemy force, or to attack unprepared enemy locations only defended by noncombatants.

**Keywords (choose three):** Expendable, Poor Training, Ranged Weapons, or Unshielded

**Quality:** 0 (larger units may have higher Quality).

## SHIELD INFANTRY

These are the standard line infantry used throughout the Imperium: shielded soldiers armed with melee weapons and trained to fight efficiently in large formations of a thousand men or more. They learn how to defend quickly and attack slowly, move in formation together, and pin and flank other formations.

**As an Asset:** This asset represents a trained unit from a small squad up to a large brigade of soldiers.

**Keywords:** Formation, Melee Weapons, Shielded

**Quality:** 1 (larger units may have higher Quality).

## SPECIALIST

Specialist troops represent any unit of soldiers not meant for main line combat. Engineers, sappers, military police/security, technicians, mechanics, special operations, drivers, scouts, or even a squadron of pilots without their 'thopters are all military specialists who don't usually fight on the front lines of conventional Imperium battles.

**As an Asset:** This usually represents a standard unit of specialist soldiers large enough to complete their usual specialty task. Designate what their specialty trait is when they are acquired.

**Keywords:** Shielded, Special Equipment: _____, Specialty: _____, or Well-armed

**Quality:** 2 (larger numbers may increase Quality)

## ELITE TROOP

The elite House guard of the Great Houses of the Landsraad. Most of these units are a small elite force meant as an honor guard or security detail to defend the ruler and their immediate family. However, some powerful military-minded Houses may have entire regiments. The Imperial Sardaukar are one such army, and the Fremen Fedaykin are another.

**As an Asset:** This unit represents a generic elite guard of soldiers who have sworn an oath to defend their lieges unto death. They receive all the best training, equipment, and benefits of any soldiers.

**Keywords:** Elite Morale, Formation, Melee Weapons, Shielded

**Quality:** 3–4

## ELITE TROOPS: FEDAYKIN

Fremen death commandos. These warriors swear blood oaths to Muad'dib and are some of the toughest warriors in the Imperium.

**Keywords:** Crysknives, Death Commandos, Desert Power, Guerillas

**Quality:** 4

## ELITE TROOPS: SARDAUKAR

The Emperor's elite guard and personal army. These soldiers were raised on the harsh planet of Salusa Secundus, where more than half die before reaching adulthood and completing their training. Only the Fedaykin can rival their fighting ability.

**Keywords:** Brutal, Elite Morale, Elite Training, Feared, Formation, Melee Weapons, Shielded,

**Quality:** 4

Warfare Assets:

# Transports

## PERSONNEL CARRIER

These massive shielded vehicles are designed to ferry troops across planetary surfaces and are as varied and unique as the planets they are designed to traverse. Most are wheel-based, although walkers, treaded, and even anti-gravity variants are not uncommon. These also range in size from squad-based carriers to massive shielded land ships that carry companies or even a full regiment of soldiers.

**As an Asset:** A fleet of these vehicles is usually maintained by a House so that they can transport troops quickly to various strategic places within their territory. Smaller vehicles are more common.

**Keywords:** All-terrain, Shielded, Troop Transport

**Quality:** Larger carriers carry more troops

## ANTI-GRAV PLATFORM

Not originally a weapon of war, anti-gravity platforms, or just grav platforms, were adopted centuries ago into modern Imperial warfare. Most are shielded like personnel carriers, but their grav systems allow them to be used as ways to overcome fortress walls, deliver troops in tight spaces, work as elevators along unprepared cliff faces, or ferry people and equipment across rivers or other impassable terrain. These vary in size, but most are designed to comfortably carry an entire squad of soldiers, their equipment, and a pilot/operator. As they incorporate a Holtzman effect to function, they are rare on Arrakis, although Glossu Rabban Harkonnen used one as bait when he hunted a sandworm.

**As an Asset:** These can be used as short-range transportation for troops or other supplies, and often are little more than a platform built with a shield, anti-gravity generators, and a control console.

**Keywords:** Anti-gravity, Flatbed, Shielded

## NAVAL TRANSPORT

Naval transports carry troops and supplies across large bodies of water or up rivers at times when traveling by air or orbital transports would be strategically unsound. These ships have changed little from the eras before humanity took the stars. The major difference is the inclusion of a shield to discourage attacks. They can range from small patrol boats to massive cargo transports designed to carry tens of thousands of troops.

**As an Asset:** These can be used as waterborne transportation for troops or other supplies when air or orbital travel is unwise or prohibited.

**Keywords:** Naval, Shielded

## ORNITHOPTER

These advanced flying machines use huge wings to fly like dragonflies. This allows them to take off and land vertically and glide to preserve fuel. They are quiet in flight and far less polluting than a traditional jet engine. It also makes them incredibly agile. Many versions of ornithopter exist, from small one- or two-person craft to

massive cargo aircraft able to carry troops or supplies. In the case of larger ornithopters, jet engines may be deployed to assist with speed and lift.

**As an Asset:** Ornithopters can be used to gather intelligence in warfare as well as move troops and attack both air and ground targets. As espionage devices they allow quiet observation of a target as well as providing a fast and subtle way to escape an area. An exceptionally lavish personal ornithopter might even grant some social status. On Arrakis, they fill an expanded role beyond just recon and transport. They can be armed with guns, rockets, and missiles to work as close air support and air superiority, weather permitting.

**Keywords (grouped by variant):**

- **Scout:** Fast, Flying, Glide, Quiet, Size: Small
- **Troop Transport:** Fast, Flying, Glide, Quiet, Size: Squad
- **Supply Carrier:** Fast, Flying, Glide, Jet-assisted, Size: Company
- **Attack/Arrakis:** Fast, Flying, Glide, Guns, Missiles, Quiet, Rockets, Size: Small

### CARRYALL

Most often seen as air transport for spice harvesters on Arrakis, carryalls are the air transportation workhorse of the Imperium military and civilian sectors. These massive craft, essentially large-scale ornithopters, use a variety of flight systems—from modified ornithopter wings, to jet, rocket, and anti-gravity systems—to quickly travel across the skies of the planets of the Imperium. Designs of carryalls vary based on their intended cargo. Personnel carryalls appear much like massed civilian air transports. Internal cargo carryalls have similar but bulkier builds compared to personnel carryalls, while external cargo carryalls, like the ones used on Arrakis to pick up and transport spice harvesters, appear to be not much more than a large frame with flight systems attached and various cargo clamps for holding the specialty cargo during transport. Cargo carryalls as used in spice mining usually have room for only four crew: two pilots and two journeymen attachers.

**As an Asset:** Depending on the design of a carryall, they excel at transporting cargo or personnel across planets at suborbital altitudes. These workhorses are employed by spice smugglers on Arrakis to quickly come and go from illicit spice harvesting operations in the deep deserts.

**Keywords:** Cargo Space, Flying, Shielded, Size: Large to Gargantuan

## Warfare Assets: Artillery & Anti-Aircraft

### ARTILLERY

Artillery guns are massive cannons, often mounted on a vehicle platform, that fire explosive shells over kilometers to soften up unshielded infantry and fortified positions. Nearly obsolete, artillery is only employed in the rare instances when a military force is fighting against unshielded rebels or on Arrakis, where the inability to use shields on most of the planet makes their use a viable military strategy.

**As an Asset:** These guns need to be crewed by a group of soldiers trained in their use, but if this is done they are very effective and can deploy a variety of warheads from air-burst and explosive rounds designed to eviscerate unshielded soldiers, to armor-piercing, bunker buster, and even gas and toxin shells that can spread deadly pathogens or poisonous gases across the battlefield.

**Keywords:** Crew-served, Long-ranged, Shell Varieties

### ROCKET/MISSILE LAUNCHER

Rocket and missile launchers range from one-man disposable rocket-propelled grenades to large vehicle-driven systems designed to launch masses of 'dumb' rockets or guided missiles at a variety of unshielded targets. Guided missile systems are also deployed in anti-aircraft roles. Much like artillery, rocket and missile launchers have nearly gone extinct with the widespread adoption of shields. However, they continue to be of use on Arrakis and against unshielded targets on other planets.

**As an Asset:** These have been used to great success by various factions on Arrakis over the centuries. Fremen employ rocket-propelled grenades during raids targeting spice harvesters and other vulnerable targets. The Harkonnen effectively used rocket and missile launchers against the Atreides when they seized power on Arrakis.

**Keywords (grouped by variant):**

- **RPG:** Armor-piercing, Explosive, Portable, Single-use, Unguided
- **MPAD:** Anti-aircraft, Armor-piercing, Explosive, Guided, Portable, Single-use
- **Mortar:** Anti-personnel, Arcing Fire, Armor-piercing, Explosive, Two-person Crew
- **Rocket Launcher:** Arcing, Armor-piercing, Explosive, Ground Vehicle, Mass Fire, Unguided
- **Missile Launcher:** Anti-aircraft, Armor-piercing, Explosive, Ground Vehicle, Guided, Mass Fire

## Ornithopers & Shields

In general, anything can be shielded, as the generators required to create the field scale to the size of the object. A fortress requires a large shield generator, but a personal shield can be generated from a belt pack. However, ornithopters are more difficult as their wide wingspan compared to their size means their shield generator needs to be much larger and heavier that it would for a different vehicle of that size. So, in general, ornithopters don't carry shields.

However, few nobles are comfortable traveling in an unshielded vehicle. Some few are installed with heavy shield generators for the protection of important passengers. This cumbersome extra weight is a reason why many owners forgo installing shield generators on their ornithopters, as they are unwilling to sacrifice maneuverability and speed for additional safety.

An ornithopter may replace their Fast keyword with the Shielded keyword.

Warfare Assets:

## Other Vehicles

A large number and variety of other craft exist, but most are never seen during warfare. However, because of their strategic importance three such vehicles may be found at the center of a furious battle for control. Therefore, to provide some context we have detailed them here.

### SPICE HARVESTER

The literal factory that supplies the source of Imperial power, spice harvesters are massive mobile mining and refining factories. They are crewed by daring wildcat crews who work furiously to harvest as much spice as possible from spice blows before a sandworm appears. Sandworms always appear as they are drawn to the vibrations of the harvesters. Designs vary, but they are often described as massive beetle-like ground vehicles that are flown into place by a carryall. During a short period of time they send out scout vehicles to search for the incoming worm while drills and scoops extend to draw the spice into the harvester to begin the refining process.

**As an Asset:** The rulers of Arrakis are nominally the only ones who control spice harvesters, but smugglers and the Fremen employ their own. The Fremen, Imperial-backed rulers, and the smugglers wage an ongoing shadow war, striking at their opponents' spice harvesters whenever they see an opportunity. Thus, they are not infrequently found in the middle of a pitched battle.

**Keywords:** Designed for Carryall Transport, Factory, Integral Scout Vehicles, Massive, Spice-infused, Wormcall

### ORBITAL TRANSPORT

To reach Spacing Guild Heighliners, the Spacing Guild has countless large craft that travel to and from orbital space. Each Guild craft can carry thousands of individuals and millions of tons of goods for planetary markets and exchanges. Some Landsraad Houses own their own orbital transports and prefer to stay aboard their own transports for security and comfort reasons, and these craft vary in size from single- or two-person affairs up to the size of Guild craft. Incidents in space are almost unheard of because of the prohibitions placed on space warfare by the Spacing Guild; although rare events do happen, they are generally limited. More frequently, transports may find themselves engulfed in a mobile battle when landed near a strategic location, or when unloading troops transported to a planet.

**As an Asset:** As with the spice-harvester, these transports are more strategic targets than tools or weapons in their own right. However, cunning characters like Baron Harkonnen have discovered ways to employ them as weapons.

**Keywords:** Cargo, Guild/House Design, Shielded, Spacecraft, Staterooms

### HEIGHLINER

The Imperium exists because of spice and the Holtzman engine. The engine makes instantaneous jumps from one location in space to another by folding the space in between. The spice allows Spacing Guild Navigators and Steersmen to navigate this jump through space while controlling moon-like spacecraft called Heighliners. These immense craft often reach 20 kilometers in length and can house hundreds of orbital transports of all sizes at any one time. Each day multiple Heighliners travel routes to every planet of the Empire to keep trade flowing throughout. With one of these ships one could easily find themselves halfway across the Empire in a day.

**As an Asset:** To wrest control of a Heighliner from the Spacing Guild would be to commit one of the highest crimes against the Empire, and one would need to control the specialized and mutated Navigator to even transport the ship anywhere else. But stranger things have happened.

**Keywords:** Carrier, FTL Travel, Immense, Navigator Pilot Required, Spacecraft

# Espionage Assets

## War of Assassins and Kanly

Conflict between Houses is inevitable. To ensure minimal collateral damage during a clash between members of the Landsraad, a House can declare a War of Assassins. Sanctioned under the Great Convention and the Guild Peace, a War of Assassins allows Houses to battle each other by following a series of strict rules and using only allowed weaponry as described in the *Assassins' Handbook*. Dartguns and hunter-seekers are some examples of permitted tools in this narrow definition of warfare.

Though like a War of Assassins, kanly is less an armed struggle between Houses and more like the single combat duels of the distant past. Kanly negotiations—overseen by an appointed Judge of the Change—or kanly challenges must follow the edicts of the Great Convention. The results of kanly are final and can determine the fate of a House.

### Espionage Assets: Weapons

#### DARTGUN

The Assassins' Handbook sings the praises of the humble dartgun. With its small, inconspicuous rounds coated in War of Assassins-approved poisons, this small weapon is a choice instrument for enacting political and diplomatic change among the Landsraad. Compact and easily hidden, dartguns make for versatile tools.

**As an Asset:** As they fit into the palm of a hand, up a sleeve, or under a jacket, dartguns make for excellent, unobtrusive defensive weapons... or tools for assassination. Coating the darts with a variety of drugs and poisons can provide a wide arsenal of options for employing these handy pieces of equipment.

**Traits:** Ranged Weapon, Quiet, Small

#### FLIP-DART

Tiny and discreet, the flip-dart is named for the flip-cover that hides its sharp barb. The Emperor's elite Sardaukar often carry a flip-dart concealed on them. With the drug- or poison-covered needle hidden among their jewelry or uniforms, Sardaukar use the flip-darts in hand-to-hand combat to provide an arguably unfair advantage.

**As an Asset:** Because they are so easy to disguise, flip-darts work well for both offense and defense. These small weapons are incredibly versatile thanks to the huge number of poisons and drugs available to coat their small needles. Some spies rely on these to deliver antidotes or to prevent themselves or others from talking under interrogation.

**Traits:** Melee Weapon, Quiet, Tiny

#### HUNTER-SEEKER

When stealth and anonymity is paramount, assassins employ hunter-seekers. As small as five centimeters, these compact devices float using a suspensor. Due to the universal prohibition on thinking machines, a hunter-seeker requires a nearby operator to control it, and due to limited visibility are difficult to use against immobile targets. These *Assassins' Handbook*-approved instruments tunnel through skin and muscle to destroy hearts, brains, and other vital organs. Noble children learn to identify these weapons early on in their lives, and how to avoid them by standing resolutely still.

**As an Asset:** Hunter-seekers are brutal and effective weapons of assassination. However, they require a traitor or an infiltrator on the inside to guide the device. Blackmail victims, fanatic loyalists, or highly paid mercenaries all make for good operators.

**Traits:** Remote-operated, Short-ranged, Stealthy

#### POISONED TOOTH

Designed to look like a tooth, a poisoned tooth can even fool poison snoopers and scanners. Only a close, thorough examination will reveal its true nature. These weapons are deadly to the target and whoever carries the tooth in their mouth. Biting down on this instrument of doom crushes the brittle, fake enamel and activates the nerve-shaped tablet within, resulting in a cloud of poison gas that surrounds the tooth's bearer and any in the immediate area.

**As an Asset:** The poisoned tooth is an option of last resort. It's not unusual for spies to have one in their mouths when on missions to avoid capture or interrogation. They've also been used in attempted assassinations when the assassin knows they will get near the target and does not plan on surviving the encounter.

**Traits:** Last Resort, Stealthy, Toxic

### SHIGAWIRE GARROTE

Shigawire comes from the *Narvi narviium* ground vine found on Salusa Secundus and III Delta Kaising. Its primary use is in holding and transmitting messages. However, the Sardaukar were the first ones to use the strong, thin filaments as garrotes. They now carry them as standard issue, often blended into one's hair or concealed elsewhere.

**As an Asset:** Shigawire isn't hard to find in the Imperium, considering its varied uses in communications. If an individual wants one for offense or defense, it's almost always close at hand. That also means that an opponent has easy access, as well.

**Traits:** Common, Melee Weapon, Subtle

### SLIP-TIP

A slip-tip can render even the strongest opponent powerless just by scratching the skin. This weapon emerged from the world of shield-fighting, where combatants carry blades in both hands. In a traditional match, the slip-tip is the shorter, poison-coated blade held in the left hand. Those who use them outside the shield-fighting arena are usually making a statement by using the archaic weapons.

**As an Asset:** Though these blades have a long-established history in the Imperium and originated from ritual combat, some with dangerous intent carry them in day-to-day life. Depending on the poisons chosen, these thin blades can result in a quick, quiet death or a long, torturous one.

**Traits:** Archaic, Melee Weapon, Small

## Espionage Assets: Drugs

### CHAUMAS AND CHAUMURKY

Poisoning a friend, foe, or family member through food and drink is a time-honored practice in the Imperium. Chaumas refers to poison administered through comestibles, while chaumurky is the category of poisoned beverages. These terms include both fast-acting and slow-acting poisons.

**As an Asset:** Those who are members of the Landsraad are wary of both chaumas and chaumurky and make liberal use of poison snoopers. Those who implement chaumas and chaumurky often need to find ways to avoid poison snoopers and the various methods of scanning for and identifying different poisons.

**Traits:** Expensive, Ingestible, Stealthy

## ELACCA

On Ecaz, a planet in Alpha Centauri B, they burn elacca wood to create this potent narcotic. It sends users into an intense rage that suppresses an individual's survival instincts and changes their skin to a peculiar carrot-colored hue. Few in the Imperium choose to take this drug of their own free will. The most common application of this narcotic is in drugging slave-combatants for the gladiatorial arenas. However, some soldiers do choose to ingest it before a battle to harden their resolve.

**As an Asset:** Despite the Imperium generally frowning on the practice, some commanders have dosed their troops to eliminate the risk of desertion before or during an engagement. Some also suggest using it to send an unsuspecting individual on a rampage against a target to deflect suspicion. In the past, unwittingly drugged victims died at the hands of those defending themselves against elacca-enraged individuals.

**Traits:** Bloodlust, Drug, Inexpensive, Orange-tinged Skin

## RESIDUAL POISON

The twisted Mentat Piter de Vries created a system of dependence in which an individual must receive periodic antidotes or the poison coursing through their body will kill them over time. The victim may or may not know about the death waiting for them. This is a savage, but effective, method of control.

**As an Asset:** Residual poison may be used as blackmail or a failsafe. The victim may act out of character to make sure they get their antidotes on time. A victim who doesn't know about the residual poison may simply not receive the antidote when their usefulness runs out.

**Traits:** Drug, Expensive, Unobtrusive

## SEMUTA

Ecaz's valuable elacca tree also produces semuta, a highly addictive narcotic. As opposed to the frenzy that the elacca drug causes in its users, semuta evokes a euphoric bliss when paired with atonal semuta music. A semuta user can counteract the effects with an antidote.

**As an Asset:** Many choose to use semuta as a way to relax. However, others take advantage of the associated addiction as a means of manipulating others through blackmail, withholding the drug, or offering copious amounts of the narcotic to an addict. Having a steady, reliable supply can lead to extreme loyalty. Semuta is also a popular currency for bribery.

**Traits:** Addictive, Euphoric, Expensive, Ingestible

## SHERE

A drug taken by anyone fearing that they will be subjected to an Ixian probe (see p.199). This obscures the neural processes that the probe reads, making collection and duplication of the subject's thoughts, memories, and emotions impossible. Upon death, a subject using shere suffers rapid neural disintegration, eliminating any possibility of future copying. The risk of side effects such as nerve damage make taking this drug a substance of last resort.

**As an Asset:** A subject that has consumed shere is immune to the effects of an Ixian probe while alive or dead. The later T-Probe, however, is unhindered by the drug.

**Traits:** Expensive, Ingestive, Obscuring, Uncommon

## TRUTHSAYER DRUG

By falling into a truthtrance, some remarkable Bene Gesserit Reverend Mothers have the ability to distinguish truth from falsehood in even the most practiced liars. Though not all Reverend Mothers need them, truthsayer drugs allow them to enter the truthtrance. Without the control afforded by prana-bindu training, anyone lacking the conditioning of the Bene Gesserit taking a truthsayer drug dies a painful death.

**As an Asset:** For those possessing both the confidence to believe themselves exceptional and the desire to practice the mystical Bene Gesserit arts, the truthsayer drugs are a powerful temptation. As such, the truthsayer drugs can be used as currency, poison, or on a Bene Gesserit who can enter the truthtrance.

**Traits:** Expensive, Ingestible, Poisonous, Spice-derived

## VERITE

Yet another specialty product of Ecaz, verite is a plant that grows on only that planet. After a specific processing technique, it becomes a narcotic. Verite smashes through a user's willpower, compelling them to tell the truth. It is impossible to resist.

**Asset:** Verite is a viable alternative to a Bene Gesserit Truthsayer. This narcotic is also an effective interrogation tactic or an intelligence-gathering tool for dosed unknowingly.

**Traits:** Expensive, Ingestible, Narcotic

### Espionage Assets:
# Communication

## BENE GESSERIT CODED DOTS

To communicate with each other in secret, the Bene Gesserit developed a system of raised or engraved dots that can be left on almost any surface. Sisters can hide messages for each other in unexpected places that even skilled spies won't find. To read the intelligence left for her, a Bene Gesserit Sister runs her fingertips along the dots.

**As an Asset:** Knowing how to read Bene Gesserit coded dots gives an individual the ability to gather information not meant for them. They can also leave messages for a Bene Gesserit Sister... and possibly send a Sister on the wrong path with deliberate misinformation.

**Traits:** Bene Gesserit, Stealthy, Uncommon

### DISTRANS

While the specific technology varies by planet and subject, distrans enable a user to implant information in an animal and turn it into an unknown accomplice in conveying messages. The recipient of the animal retrieves the message by using a code. The animal relays the message through chirps, screeches, and other noises that approximate words.

Birds are frequently used as couriers, with bats being the most sought after for their nocturnal abilities.

**As an Asset:** Distrans ensure private and secure communication.

**Keywords:** Animal, Courier, Stealth

### INTELLIGENCE

Illicit information comes in many forms in the Imperium. Tiny minimic films made from shigawire, Bene Gesserit coded dots, decoders, intercepted communications, spy-eyes, spies, and traitors can all provide different insights into the trundling gears of the Imperium. Ixian dampers and cones of silence exist in the Imperium for good reason. Trust no one.

**As an Asset:** Intelligence gathering goes both ways. Those searching for secrets might be giving away valuable details themselves.

**Traits:** Secret Information

### INTERROGATION

The Harkonnens in particular are known for their success in wringing intelligence out of unwilling captives. Torture, verite, and all manner of brutal methods are common and accepted in the Imperium.

**As an Asset:** Interrogation is effective. Using it or resisting it will require mental, physical, and spiritual fortitude.

**Traits:** Secret Information

### MAP

Guild bribery, intentional deceit, financial dishonesty, and geographical fraud all contribute to flawed or incomplete maps of the various planets and systems within the Imperium. Accurate maps are helpful for survival and planning but finding them is not always easy. Many Houses and communities have their reasons to hide this kind of information.

**As an Asset:** A reliable map can reveal a lot about a planet, the people, and the local Houses... and what they're hiding. Resources, weapons, technology, warehouses, or sweeping changes to a planet's environment might all be things that different factions want to keep to themselves.

**Traits:** Secret information

### SHIGAWIRE

An organic product of the Narvi narviium ground vine found on Salusa Secundus and III Delta Kaising, shigawire is critical for communication across the Imperium. Though the Sardaukar sometimes use the strong, thin wire as a garrote, it's more often found in recording and transmitting devices. Tiny, unobtrusive minimic films and the mnemonic pulse-imprinted filmbooks are two common uses of this vine.

**As an Asset:** Minimic films are only one micron in diameter, making them easy to smuggle and hide. Encrypted shigawire reels also act as ways to send messages.

**Traits:** Common, Inexpensive, Physical Item

## ESPIONAGE ASSETS: CONTACTS AND AGENTS

### ASSASSIN

Knowledgeable in the rules, regulations, and permissible techniques from the *Assassins' Handbook*, assassins are not rogue actors working outside the system but rather a critical part of how the Imperium functions. By adhering to the restrictions set out in the War of Assassins under the Great Convention and Guild Peace, assassins help to keep warfare between the Houses of the Landsraad civil... or at least with minimal civilian casualties. Assassins are clever, dangerous, and often placed in positions of power within the Great Houses.

**As an Asset:** An assassin has certain skills and an understanding of how society works that not all are privy to. They're a good friend to have and a cruel foe to face. With their contacts spread among the underbelly of the Imperium as well as the highest ranks of nobility, they often have intelligence others don't.

**Traits:** Cunning, Dangerous, Elusive

### CORPORATE SPY

House Vernius, House Harkonnen, and others all have large organizations that they run. They provide technology, weapons, and other resources to the rest of the Imperium. Many Houses also have shares in the Empire-wide economic syndicate CHOAM, the Combine Honnete Ober Advancer Mercantiles. As a result, many Houses, CHOAM itself, the Bene Gesserit, and other factions throughout the Imperium have embedded spies throughout these institutions.

**As an Asset:** Spies may know about, or know how to find, secret schematics, exclusive technology, confidential formulas, and other valuable information. They may also have access to sensitive details about their employers, giving anyone who gets their hands on a spy the chance to turn the tables on a rival.

**Traits:** Elusive, Knowledgeable

### FACE DANCER

These genetically-engineered humanoids cultivated by the Bene Tleilax are unrivaled in the arena of spycraft. With their ability to change their appearance and even secondary sex characteristics, Face Dancers can mimic their

targets to an almost undetectable degree. If a Face Dancer has infiltrated an organization, they may be almost impossible to root out. This gives the Bene Tleilax incredible power in the Imperium, despite the general disdain toward them as a people.

**As an Asset:** Face Dancers can sneak into almost any location, organization, or government without notice. However, they are programmed with loyalty to the Bene Tleilax, so turning one against their masters or toward independence is not a simple task. Their devotion to their Bene Tleilax masters may become a liability in the field. A Face Dancer may also come to believe that they are the person whose life they assumed, if left in place for too long, and in some cases can break free of their Tleilaxu masters.

**Traits:** Elusive, Genetically Programmed, Indistinguishable

## MENTAT MASTER OF ASSASSINS

After the ban on thinking machines in the Imperium, Mentats (or 'human computers') took over the assessment and forecasting tasks that the thinking machines once performed. Mentats are often trained to fight and kill as well. The title Master of Assassins goes to the Mentat who serves a House Major. They mastermind the strategies in a War of Assassins against and for their House. Houses place a high value on their Masters of Assassins.

**As an Asset:** Mentats have incredible abilities that allow them to evaluate situations while considering vast amounts of data. They can often predict upcoming offensives and determine the best course of action for their Houses. A Mentat Master of Assassins is a dangerous and clever opponent.

**Traits:** Human Computer, Intelligent, Tricky

## POLITICAL SPY

The Landsraad represents all the Houses Major and Minor in the Imperium but is only one of its ruling bodies. With so many different parts to the Imperium affecting wide-ranging policy, political spies are rampant. Many Houses try to infiltrate the Padishah Emperor's own government. Others attempt to blackmail rival or lesser Houses with the information they gather. For a member of a House, it is difficult to determine who to trust even within one's own family.

**As an Asset:** A political spy can provide information on a War of Assassins, blackmail material, or plans for Landsraad proposals. Catching a spy can result in new information about a known enemy or an unknown adversary. Protecting one's spies and defending against hostile spies is a never-ending battle for the Houses of the Imperium.

**Traits:** Elusive, Knowledgeable, Tricky

# Intrigue Assets

## Intrigue Assets: Favors

Favors are the kind of resource which the best agents of a House utilize as often as they can, but they must be used with care. Failing to maintain a cover or pushing a selected asset too hard can lead to exposure and catastrophe. After all, if an asset feels themselves to have been betrayed, their trust broken and their friendship (or more) discarded, they are likely to seek vengeance. Intrigue and political chicanery are always dangerous games, and while favors can certainly be the most subtle of all approaches, this must be balanced with their potential for disaster. It requires perspicacity and nerve to achieve successfully. But a favor owed by the right person to the right agent can change the fate of a House, or Arrakis, forever…

### DEBTOR

Someone owes you. Whether it is cash, drugs, or whatever, they have borrowed from you in some way. When needed, you can call in that debt and force them to provide you with something in return. You can do this gradually, always insinuating that the loan you extended to them is about to be withdrawn, or you can do it suddenly, demanding payment now! Of course, as necessary as this might be, it tends to cost an agent their asset. Once burned, or once the favor has been called in and revealed to be a quid pro quo, the relationship between the agent and their asset is usually done. Burned. In a few cases, with the most subtle and most expert of agents—those with Mentat training perhaps—it might be possible to avoid such terminal consequences, but this is rare.

**As an Asset:** A sudden, vital resource can be elicited, when needed. Funds, a safe-house, something. When the situation is bleak and options are few, this can be a life-saving option.

**Keywords:** Desperate, Frightened, Paranoid

### OLD FRIENDSHIP

A favor provided by an agent to someone, in the hope they might become an asset, leaves no trace. An unexpected sum of money is suspicious. It draws attention to itself, or it makes its owner act foolishly. A knife leaves marks, or, worse, a dead body which must be hidden or explained. These are clumsy methods. A true agent, an agent worthy of the trust placed in them, does not leave such obvious paths for a hunter to follow. Where is the harm in a favor, however? It's simply a friend trying to help a friend, after all. A perfectly normal, natural thing to want to do. Of course, gaining trust and building a relationship is not easy. It involves work, carefully assessing the intended target and determining what it is that they wish they could have, what it is that they need. But once you have this knowledge, with care, you can maintain this friendship for years if necessary.

**As an Asset:** A companion you've known for some time, carefully compiling information on them and acting as their friend. They can provide you with information, spy on a target, or hide you when things become dangerous.

**Keywords:** Faithful, Reliable, Wily

### SERVICE

Everything comes with a price. The universe depends on trade. Everything depends on commerce. But for those who are truly powerful, or those who understand how true power works and where it lies, currency is worthless. Favors… now, favors have value. Favors are the only currency, outside of spice, that holds its worth, that isn't susceptible to the fluctuations of market prices. You provide these services to large organizations and in return, you get to know where they send the resources you offer. They know they can call on you when things get tough. And you know you can call on them.

**As an Asset:** A large organization is in your pocket and, within reason, you can gain as much of a different asset as you require.

**Keywords:** Reliable, Valuable

## Intrigue Assets: Valuables

Intrigue often centers around wealth and access to resources, and thus those things can be potent assets during any sort of social conflict. Business contracts and quantities of valuables are traded alongside information and favors and can be used as leverage just as easily… so long as you know what your opponent desires and you can fill that demand.

### LAND RIGHTS

A step up from simply trading raw materials, access to the land where these materials are produced can be traded if the price is good enough, allowing whomever has access to generate as much of that raw material as they want… so long as they're willing to do the work. This can be something of a double-edged sword—everyone wants spice, but few are willing to face the dangers and difficulties of harvesting and refining it—but it can serve as part of a lucrative deal and create great opportunities for influence.

**As an Asset:** Leasing land rights to another can be lucrative, and place another party in a position where they're more open to other deals because they cannot afford to turn you down… but there's risk, because you're giving up some of your capacity to produce those same materials to another.

**Keywords:** Land, Production (plus other keywords according to the type of material, such as Scarce or Abundant)

## MANUFACTURED GOODS

Your House manufactures something valuable, or you've managed to obtain some valuable goods which someone is likely to need. This might be technology or crafted items, such as shields, weapons, or vehicles, or it might be a refined substance ready for use, such as the various useful forms and substances that spice can be transformed into.

**As an Asset:** The ability to manufacture goods can expose you to the influence of whomever provides the raw materials, but finished goods are highly valuable cargo and access to them can open doors that might otherwise remain closed.

**Keywords:** Manufactured, Trade Goods (plus other keywords according to the goods, such as Scarce or Abundant)

## RAW MATERIALS

You have access to a large quantity of the raw materials needed to produce other goods. This may vary from minerals and construction materials such as wood or metals, to raw foodstuffs such as particular kinds of meat or plant matter, and it may vary in rarity from commonplace (but needed in vast quantities) to extremely rare (but precious such as the spice melange). Access to quantities of materials can be useful for trade if you're dealing with someone who needs or wants those materials for something, but anyone skilled in business will be looking for a better deal.

**As an Asset:** Trading raw materials is an easy way to get embroiled in an intrigue, and the ability to produce and distribute resources can be a powerful way to gain influence.

**Keywords:** Raw Materials, Trade Goods (plus other keywords according to the type of material, such as Scarce or Abundant)

## SUPPLY CONTRACT

A one-off sale of goods is one thing, but a long-term contract can be a powerful tool in the halls where politics and trade align. A contract to produce goods for another faction can forge a lasting relationship with that faction and help turn their wealth to your advantage. In turn, contracting another faction to supply something to you can ensure you never lack for the resources you need. Either way, there's a lasting connection between both parties, which can allow for greater influence at a later date.

**As an Asset:** It's difficult to take hostile action against someone who supplies goods to you, or who you supply; these kinds of entanglements help preserve a semblance of peace in the Imperium, tying the interests of competing Houses together. A cunning player of this grand game can use that to their advantage.

**Keywords:** Long-term, Production, Trade (plus other keywords according to of goods, such as Scarce or Abundant)

### VALUABLE ITEM

While not necessarily on the scale of trade contracts and land rights, individual valuable items can be potent assets in trade and intrigue. Items of artistic merit, unique creations of historical or religious value, and similar precious objects are highly sought-after, and their ownership often changes during times of political strife and turmoil, frequently serving as leverage for those possessed of great power, great ambition, and expensive tastes.

**As an Asset:** Valuable items are often relatively easy to move and trade, as they are frequently small and lightweight compared to their value. This makes them an excellent way of moving value from place to place discretely, which in turn makes them a useful tool during trade and negotiations.

**Keywords:** Fragile, Portable, Precious

## INTRIGUE ASSETS: BLACKMAIL

It is a truism amongst agents that the louder a person denounces something, the more they secretly crave it—the clever blackmailer notices these tendencies, these not-so-hidden tells, and seeks to exploit them, laying temptation in the path of their intended victim, or offering the possibility of access to such forbidden fruits. Often this takes time; the agent has to gradually insinuate themselves, shrugging off the initial angry denials of interest or threats. But little by little, the resistance is overcome, and the desire wins out. And then, when the bait has been taken, the agent's trap is sprung. Demanding money in exchange for keeping harmful secrets, blackmail is a messy business and there are Houses within the Landsraad who pride themselves as being above such underhanded methods of attaining leverage. But for those agents and Houses unconcerned by the underhandedness of such techniques, there is much to be gained. There is little more powerful than the threat of exposure hanging over the head of an asset. Of course, as with any intrigue asset, time must be expended to select the most appropriate form of blackmail record—to find the thing that is sufficient to ensure obeisance, as well as guaranteeing silence after the asset has fulfilled their function. Anything that cannot command both obedience and silence exposes not only the victim, but the agent as well.

### HOSTAGE

For those prepared to truly commit their resources to such a thing, blackmail can go far. The kidnap of a loved one, a family member, or a close friend—and the threat of harm being committed against them—can be enough to break even the most devoted of servants to a House. Some Mentats even hypothesize that such an extreme approach might be sufficient to shatter the Imperial conditioning. Of course, no one has ever had chance to test such an outlandish theory, but it nevertheless persists. While shame, ridicule, exile, or death are powerful motivators—of the kind that threaten those subject to exposure from more traditional modes of blackmail—the ongoing torture of a loved one might be sufficient to make a person do anything to achieve its cessation. Only the mind of a particularly twisted variety of Mentat is even capable of conjecturing such things, but nevertheless, such creatures do exist.

**As an Asset:** Kidnapped, imprisoned, and fearful, a hostage is an extremely potent form of leverage, but also carries commensurately high risks. Keeping the hostage well can be difficult, and preventing them from escaping can also require resources.

**Keywords:** Frightened, Trapped, Valuable

### ILLICIT RECORDING

It is human nature to want things. It is human nature to want things that one isn't allowed to have. Drugs, flesh, money… whatever the laws of the Landsraad forbid, or the rules of a House prohibit, human nature desires more. And when have laws and other such trivialities ever prevented people from doing precisely what they wish? After all, there are always those willing to give into forbidden desires and those prepared to profit from it. Not simply through fulfilling the desire and taking payment, of course. Many are prepared to do just that, but some special individuals are prepared to go a little further… 'accidentally' recording such illicit activities in one form or another, before filing it away, ready and waiting for the moment when it becomes useful.

**As an Asset:** Recordings, visual or audible, of an asset's illegal (or at least extremely embarrassing) practices. Can be related to drugs, sex, or other activities an agent's target wants to remain hidden.

**Keywords:** Damaging, Embarrassing

### STOLEN FILE

Politics requires its players to wear different masks at different times, depending on the circumstances they find themselves in. A staunch ally of the Atreides today may become the bosom companion of the Harkonnens tomorrow. It's the way of things and entirely accepted, so long as no one can ever prove those previous allegiances. As long as no one has, say, a record of payments made to an assassin to kill a Harkonnen aide. Or the footage of an asset stealing from the Atreides spice supply. Of course, getting hold of such proofs can be difficult, but worth it. Most definitely worth it.

**As an Asset:** Proof of a target's various machinations against a current employer; extracted from the personal files of the target, these are powerful inducements to ensure a target's continued good behavior.

**Keywords:** Damaging, Illicit, Subtle

INTRIGUE ASSETS:

# CONTACTS

Every agent needs them. Any agent who survives for more than a month likely has them. Contacts are an agent's eyes, ears, and, less frequently, mouthpiece. Agents can't be everywhere, and just as a Mentat has agents everywhere to provide information and analysis they can synthesize, so too does an agent have as many contacts as possible. These contacts are drawn from all the different echelons of society—from the dregs, clinging to life in the gutter outside a Harkonnen palace, to the spice dealer who travels in luxury aboard a CHOAM ship—and all require different things, just as they provide different information back to the agent. Each of these contacts must be handled with care, paid, cared for… nurtured.

## BLACK MARKET TRADER

You need things, naturally. Some of those things are easy to obtain, purchasable in any bazaar, any market, any shop. Other things require sourcing more carefully. That's what black market contacts are for. Anything you need, they can usually find. Yes, they charge a lot, but you get what you pay for. And you might end up looking for some very obscure and illegal stuff. So, you're going to need someone trustworthy, or at least, trustworthy enough.

**As an Asset:** Someone with one foot in the mercantile world and the other in the underworld. They can get you what you need when you need it. No questions asked, so long as the money is right.

**Keywords:** Experienced, Resourceful, Well-known

## COURTESAN

Sex is always a powerful lure, and a courtesan of any gender is a useful contact. People are rarely as guarded when undressed, and a skilled courtesan can learn much, both from conversation and from a quick study of what a person keeps in their pockets—and what company they keep. The courtesan is an ally and a contact of the highest usefulness, provided you can find one prepared to offer such information. The risk of being caught, and the punishment involved for a courtesan selling information, is much higher than that for any other role. The rewards must therefore be much greater.

**As an Asset:** A trained courtesan with access to the bedchambers of the wealthy and influential, capable of discovering a great deal if handled carefully.

**Keywords:** Attractive, Cunning, Resourceful

## EX-AGENT

As long as the Landsraad has worked to undermine each other, as long as the Padishah Emperor has watched the affairs of the Houses with paranoid panic, there have been agents. They work to collect information, to spy on the comings and goings of the Houses, to influence the fate of worlds. A few of these agents retire, some are driven out, and some escape. Some even survive outside of their House. But some never entirely escape the life, and remain at its periphery, calling upon their old training and network of contacts to remain viable and to turn their former experience into profit.

Ex-agents inevitably know other former or even active agents, and can call on them now and then, for advice, for direction, for the kind of favors old agents understand better than anyone else. However, due to the nature of the game, these are not the most trustworthy people, and should be utilized with caution.

**As an Asset:** This is a former agent encountered and trusted in in the past, able to be called on for a safe place to hide or tips on the moves being made by opponents.

**Keywords:** Experienced, Intelligent, Wily

INTRIGUE ASSETS:

# COURTIERS

The Padishah Emperor is the most powerful person in the universe, and like any great ruler in any era of human culture, he has established a court around him. Here people of every gender, every creed, every culture gather to earn his regard and, for those fortunate few, benefit from it. Courtiers are found throughout the inhabited universe, sometimes occupying positions of power, sometimes awaiting an opportunity to seize such power for themselves. Courtiers are as varied in character as they are in origin. Some are genuine artists, hoping to earn patronage from the Emperor or from some Great House. Others are ruthless politicians, accruing influence and watching for the moment when it can be most effectively deployed. Naturally, this latter type is the most dangerous, but all the various kinds of courtier can be useful to an agent prepared to learn how they each work.

## AMBITIOUS NEWCOMER

Gaining access to the court of the Padishah Emperor can be difficult, even for experienced and well-connected agents. Finding someone who understands the right hand signals, the right gestures to gain admittance to this sanctum, to that library, is a vital step for anyone hoping to situate themselves at the ultimate nexus of power. It is not simply about admission, either. Without the right guide to the myriad factions and shifting allegiances of the Imperial court, even the most sagacious agent can become entirely lost. Newcomers to court with the connections to make their way swiftly up the ranks are ideal targets for agents trying to infiltrate the court—potentially powerful, but inexperienced enough to be taken in by a quick enough tongue.

**As an Asset:** Recently arrived at the Emperor's court, this scion of a House or otherwise well-connected youngster wants to rise quickly in the eyes of the court.

**Keywords:** Ambitious, Eager, Pushy

## CONFIDANT OF THE EMPEROR

Those fortunate few who have gained the Emperor's favor are always on the lookout for novelty, for something to amuse or surprise the Padishah Emperor, and for someone who might one day be a useful scapegoat. There is little loyalty in the Imperial court; the Padishah Emperor's whims are far too changeable for that and, as a result, friendships and allegiances tend to be brief, though plentiful. An enemy in the morning might be a bosom companion by the evening and an attempted assassin by the time the sun has set. The Emperor's favorites rarely last long and use any means necessary to retain their position. This can be used by the cunning to their advantage, but it can also spell disaster…

**As an Asset:** Having risen high in the Emperor's esteem, this asset can get you in places and give you information few others can. But this comes with risks; they might be imprisoned or executed for displeasing the Emperor without warning, drawing you into the purge.

**Keywords:** Cunning, Paranoid, Ruthless

## HOUSE RETAINER

Any House, by its nature, has a wide variety of associated and loyal personnel who serve the House's members and its best interests. The nature, quality, and responsibilities of these individuals varies dramatically, but all are extensions of the House itself, and as such are considered as assets.

**As an Asset: Chapter 3: Creating Your House** covers the creation of a House and establishes guidelines for creating retainer assets, before and during play.

**Keywords:** Familiar, Loyal

## INDEBTED LANDOWNER

Not all who bear titles are wealthy, and due to the whims of the market or through political connivance, it is entirely possible that a landowner may be relatively poor, either inhabiting a shell of a former estate—hollowed out by the necessity of selling possessions to survive—or subsisting entirely on a wave of debt incurred to maintain the illusion of prosperity. At the end of the day when the accounting is complete, however, the House, and particularly its head, is in debt.

**As an Asset:** Indebted landowners are potentially the most extreme of courtier assets, as they may range from fiercely loyal and hoping to better their status within the House ruling over them, to embittered has-beens who blame those above them for their sorry state, and can be utilized against the House by its enemies.

**Keywords:** Fallen, Indebted, Loyal or Disloyal (pick one)

## POLITICIAN

A politician is an essential guide to precisely who is in favor, who is about to be in favor and who is about to experience a precipitous fall. Such information is utterly invaluable, enabling agents to plot strategies to ingratiate themselves with one faction at the expense of another. It is in the back-and-forth of courtier politics that the grand fiefs are handed out to those the Emperor wishes to reward (or to punish), and only those politicians intimately tied to the moods of the court, and to the rise and fall of individuals in the Emperor's favor, can predict certain upcoming changes. When Count Fenring was sent to Arrakis to inspect the Harkonnen operation, the move was common knowledge amongst the various politicians at court long before it began to filter through to the Landsraad.

**As an Asset:** A long-serving member of the court, having seen it all and survived various coup attempts, this asset knows everything and everyone, and is wily enough to avoid the worst of the fallout.

**Keywords:** Cunning, Intelligent, Wily

# Chapter 8:
# Gamemastering

*There is in all things a pattern that is part of our universe. It has symmetry, elegance, and grace—those qualities you find always in that which the true artist captures. You can find it in the turning of the seasons, in the way sand trails along a ridge, in the branch clusters of the creosote bush or the pattern of its leaves. We try to copy these patterns in our lives and our society, seeking the rhythms, the dances, the forms that comfort. Yet, it is possible to see peril in the finding of ultimate perfection. It is clear that the ultimate pattern contains its own fixity. In such perfection, all things move toward death.*

—from *The Collected Sayings of Muad'Dib*, by Princess Irulan

# What Does the Gamemaster Do?

Are you ready to run the world? As the gamemaster, you are the ultimate player. You control every chatty assassin, desperate water seller, and snarky smuggler your players interact with. You command the winds of Arrakis and determine if they snap the blades of the players' ornithopter, sending them spiraling down to the scorching sands to face the sandworms and leaving them to a slow slog across the burning face of Dune... or not. It really is all up to you.

## The Gamemaster's Job is to...

The gamemaster is the tour guide, the glue that binds the characters together, and the motivation that gets players to make interesting decisions. It's not an easy job, but it is a fun one! In the end, the goal is to have a fun time and have great experiences with your players.

### ...BE A TEAM PLAYER.

As the gamemaster, you are the primary storyteller, and your players are your creative collaborators. You are shepherding your players through a harsh, exciting world and a thrilling story that is very possibly of your own creation. Your players may make decisions that might take you all in unexpected directions. Together, you're creating a unique experience, a story in the *Dune* universe that belongs only to you and your players, no one else. You are all a team.

### ...CREATE AND MANAGE THE CAMPAIGN.

You can choose to use a pre-made campaign or create one from scratch. Your campaign might take only a single session or turn into a multi-year epic. The non-player characters, the risks and rewards for the player characters, and the pacing of your campaign are all up to you. You can find tips and tricks for adventures and the size and length of campaigns in the **Creating an Adventure** section on p.221 and the **Short Games and Long-term Campaigns** section on p.219.

### ...KEEP THE GAME ENJOYABLE.

While you can expect intense drama in the *Dune* universe, you and your players should always feel comfortable. Talk to your players before you start your adventure together to make sure that you know everyone's boundaries and what topics are sensitive within your group. The respect and consideration between players and gamemasters start before a game even begins. See **Consent and Managing Group Comfort Levels** on p.232.

...Have fun!

All of the above points have the potential to lead to a game where you and your players can work together to create a completely new tale of spacefaring adventurers daring to rise up against the Landsraad or facing the cruel environment of Arrakis. And have a good time doing it.

## The Gamemaster's Job is Not To...

### ..."BEAT" THE PLAYER CHARACTERS.

Even though you control the endless enemies, the scheming villains, and the characters' antagonists, you are not the players' antagonist. Telling a great story together is the goal of a role-playing game. It is a collaboration with incredible results. You don't win if your players 'lose'.

### ...MAKE EVERYTHING TOO EASY.

However, that doesn't mean you can't provide a challenge! Pushing your players to the brink and having them come back in a dramatic fashion is rewarding for everyone involved. It also doesn't mean that your players' characters can't die—the Imperium is a brutal place, after all. Killing characters isn't the goal, though. Telling a good story is.

## Quick Tips

### FLEXIBILITY IS KEY.

It's totally acceptable to go off script. Change the rules. Prepare to swap out your plans to make things more fun. For hints and tips, see **Running the Game** on p.226.

### NOT EVERYONE IS THE KWISATZ HADERACH...

But a player might want to experience what it's like to be the Chosen One every now and then. It's nice to make players feel extra special on occasion. Remember, they're on your storytelling team, not your nemeses.

### DON'T DEMAND IMPROVISATION FROM YOUR PLAYERS.

Some players are great at describing how their character's sharp tongue got the social edge at that banquet by convincing that courtier to admit to cheating water sellers out of profits. Encourage that!

However, some players haven't honed that skill or aren't comfortable thinking up explanations in the heat of the moment. And that's fine. If they rolled well and don't want to expand upon it, you can just explain that their character got the upper hand, leaving the poor courtier to pick up the pieces of their now-tattered reputation. Maybe the player will be more confident to try adding narration next time.

### EVERYONE PANICS. GAMEMASTERS, ESPECIALLY!

Creative blocks happen. Getting flustered and not being able to improvise is normal. Try not to let it get you down. If you've already prepared a one-off that you can slot in anywhere, you can try that. See **Running the Game** on p.226.

Sometimes, it helps to take a small break. Grab a sip of water. Or step out of the room and get something to eat. If that doesn't help, you can always end the session. Leaving your players on a cliffhanger and dying to know what happens next isn't a bad thing. Suspense is an effective storytelling tool!

# Short Games vs. Long Term Campaigns

Exploring the world of *Dune* means addressing its awesome sense of scale. Even its very name conjures images of vast, desolate lands. From the deserts of Arrakis to the great emptiness of space, a player character is a single, fragile individual surviving dangers posed by planetary environments and politics alike. In the face of this, you may feel overwhelmed, uncertain where to begin, or how long to play. Some stories are tightly-plotted mysteries slowly revealed over several game sessions. Other stories are isolated, stand-alone adventures. One way you can manage your game from the start is by defining the scope of the game and its length.

## Scope

Just as **Chapter 6: Conflict** breaks down conflict scope into smaller phases, a gamemaster can better manage a game by defining its setting scope. By establishing the boundaries of the story, you establish expectations for your players. A story set in the city of Arrakeen is different than one that travels between planets in the Imperium. For clarity, you can break scope down into three spheres: **local**, **world**, and **galaxy**.

### LOCAL

Set within a single environment such as a sietch, spaceship, or city, local games have limited scope, but are great for short sessions and new groups of players. Local games can introduce new material while creating conflicts that feel vital and personal. Every player character and non-player character is an essential piece of a larger puzzle with the capacity to affect everyone else involved.

Heists, murder mysteries, origin stories, small-scale political intrigues, and turf wars can serve as the nugget of your local game idea. Games with local scope can answer establishing questions for your players in a more interactive way than just telling them what is going on in the world. What if players learned about the governing authority via a heist or political intrigue? Would an origin story set on a frigate help acclimate your players to the tone of *Dune*? Or could a courier plot, forcing the characters to deliver a highly prized artifact, teach your players about the culture of a city?

The key to a local game is remembering that less is more. For some examples:

- Within a royal palace, servants find a high-ranking noble assassinated. As security locks down the palace to prevent the perpetrator from escaping, the player characters become prime suspects. Innocent, they must clear their names or find the real assassin.
- The planetary governor hires the player characters to protect a spice shipment traveling from Carthag to Arrakeen. But when spice smugglers descend on the transport, they sabotage the carryall. The vehicle crashes some 20 kilometers outside the capital with wormsign on the horizon.

### WORLD GAME

A world game has multiple locations in a single planet. And with a few exceptions, *Dune* is a world story with most of it taking place on Arrakis. The characters in the book explore distinct environments from the streets of Arrakeen to the caverns of Sietch Tabr. Getting from locale to locale requires flying an ornithopter or riding a sandworm. Each area has its own authority, such as a Fremen naib or a governor. Whereas a local game may have been bound by the limits of a single environment, the world game expands the scope of the story to include these settings.

War stories, diplomatic missions, action-adventure plots, and expeditions are a few types of games suited to the world setting. Conflicts featured in world games tend to involve larger groups of people like cultures at odds with each other, divided by ethnic or political ideologies, locked in a state of civil unrest. The challenges player characters face often change the fate of an entire society.

The key to a world game is creating opportunities for players to go globetrotting.

- On the planet Poritrin, player characters discover spies from a rival House. The spies lead the group on a fast-paced chase from Starda, the capital city, to the Isana River and into a secret underground facility.
- In order to kidnap a Bene Gesserit trainee from the Chapterhouse on Wallach IX, the player characters infiltrate the Chapterhouse itself, no small achievement.

### GALAXY GAME

A galaxy game spans the Known Universe and brings with it a sense of expanse and wonder. Galaxy games shine when paired with lengthy campaigns chronicling the lives of the player characters. That said, galaxy games can also work in shorter stories when time is of the essence: A controversial noble must reach a summit on a specific day, or Houses across the galaxy race against one another to obtain a priceless artifact.

Quests, pursuit and rescue plots, galaxy-spanning space operas, large-scale political intrigues, and galactic war stories can send player characters to the ends of the Known Universe and back again. You can make use of the Spacing Guild, traveling from planet to planet on Heighliners to explore established worlds, or even create your own. In galaxy games, character objectives can alter the course of history.

Galaxy games should feel epic.

- The player characters embark on a journey to find a long-lost sibling. Picking up clues from spice smugglers on Arrakis, their quest takes them first to the slave auction houses on Poritrin and eventually leads to the gladiatorial pits on Giedi Prime.
- A collector offers the players characters a job tracking down the personal journals of a Butlerian Jihad veteran. Scattered throughout the Known Universe are filmbooks, the hunt for which takes them from world to world as they unravel the secrets of each location.

## Length

Games range in length from one-shot events to long-term campaigns. Take a book, for example. They range in length from short stories to novels to grand trilogies. A story told by a gamemaster is no different. You choose the length based on the story you want to tell. As a general guide, a one-shot adventure has only one or two major plot points or objectives whereas a multi-session campaign could have dozens.

- **Example (One-shot):** Break out of a brig. The first scene takes place inside the brig and allows the player characters an opportunity to get to know each other. The second scene is their escape. The story ends with them safely reaching a neutral port.
- **Example (Three-chapter Arc):** Kaitain hosts a summit for the Major Houses to discuss a major shortfall in CHOAM profits. The first session focuses on the summit, revealing potential suspects for financial theft. The second session leads them to the suspects' home worlds to gather evidence. And the third session has them confront those responsible.
- **Example (Nine-chapter Arc):** A conspiracy of nine rival nobles overthrow the baroness of a Major House. Each game session focuses on hunting down and dealing with a member of the conspiracy. Each member resides in a separate location, complete with its own troubles and complications.

# Creating an Adventure

This is where things get exciting. What kind of adventure are you going to run for your players? What CHOAM conspiracies will you weave? What kinds of dangers do your characters face as they travel across the Imperium?

Don't feel like you must come up with everything from scratch... unless, of course, you want to. Every gamemaster has their own style. You have lots of options that give you the chance to tailor an adventure to your specifications, even if you're pressed for time.

## What is a Published Campaign?

A published campaign is one that has the storyline, stats, and the antagonist(s) all plotted out for you. Basically, it has most of the work done for you. As the ***Dune: Adventures in the Imperium*** line continues, there will be several published adventures and even a campaign to support your game.

If you're looking for something really thorough that does a great job of supporting gamemasters who don't have the time to alter a campaign to their liking or aren't comfortable running an adventure yet, then the ***Heirs of Dune*** box set is a fantastic option. It comes with a campaign that introduces the rules to players and gamemasters as well offering an exciting adventure.

Some other published campaigns allow for more flexibility in player agency and customization. Read some reviews to find a published campaign that meets your needs.

### TIPS FOR USING PUBLISHED CAMPAIGNS

#### READ IT FIRST.

Unless the published campaign is a starter set that specifies that it's playable right out of the box with no preparation needed, then it's helpful to read through the whole campaign before you start playing it. Basically, knowing what's coming up and the different options the players have is helpful when pivoting during a game.

#### GET ORGANIZED.

Take notes. Get a feel for the non-player characters. Bookmark the different confrontations and items you think you might need to reference quickly. Feel free to create your own maps or reference materials for your players to keep on hand, too. As you become more experienced and get to know your particular player group's play style, you'll get a better feel for what you might want to provide them.

#### WING IT OR STICK TO THE BOOK?

Don't be afraid to improvise and create scenarios outside the published campaign. A published campaign is there to act as a guide for you in whatever capacity you want.

If your players are doing the unexpected and the campaign doesn't account for that and you don't want to make up scenarios on your own, feel free to rein your players in a bit and redirect them back to the campaign's goals. See **Creating Non-player characters** on p.263 for tips on how to use non-player characters to get your players back on track.

## Creating Your Own Campaign

Rub your hands together in villainous, gamemaster glee. When you're creating your own campaign, you can make it whatever you want. Your players can try to pull off a heist, solve a mystery, try to ferret out secret information, perform daring rescues, and more.

There are a million ways to design a campaign, but a couple of the easiest are to start with a story hook and your villain's motivations.

### WHAT'S IN A STORY HOOK?

The most basic story hook has a goal for the players, indicates some of the risks, and hints at a reward. A story hook also often includes a non-player character with a little background, what that character wants to achieve, and how the player characters can get involved.

Here's a story hook that could turn into a bigger campaign:

> *One of the Houses Minor is accusing Pinta, a water-seller in Arrakeen, of peddling poisoned water. She insists that she's innocent. The House Minor is willing to pay for evidence (real or fabricated) of her crimes. Pinta fears retaliation from the House Minor and doesn't have much to her name, but, for anyone who helps her prove that the poisoned water wasn't hers, she is willing to part with a map that's said to lead to an ancient treasure hidden in the sands.*

This story hook provides two sides and the rewards that each side is offering. The players could help Pinta or they could go for the big payday and help the House Minor.

### WHAT DOES YOUR VILLAIN WANT?

This is when the classic 'Who, What, When, Why, Where, How' style questions can help. Answer these questions about your villain to find their motivations.

- Who are they?
- What are they after?
- When do they plan on making their move?
- Where is it?
- Why do they want whatever it is?
- How do they go about getting what they want?

# Roll a Story Hook

Roll your d20 for each column to determine your random story hook. This is an easy way to get a quick campaign or session idea.

It works like this: the players characters must [Plot] [Goal] in the [Location] and defeat the [Hazard] for [Character].

For example, say you rolled a 1 on your d20 four times. Your plot hook would look like this:

> *Your players' characters must break in and steal the Secret Data in the Warehouse and defeat the Sardaukar Soldiers for Bashira, the head of a House Minor's security.*

And, yes, 'The Desert' is both a potential location and a hazard. This is Arrakis, after all.

| ROLL | PLOT | GOAL | LOCATION | HAZARD | CHARACTER |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **1–4** | Break in and steal or kidnap the... | Secret Data | Warehouse | Sardaukar Soldiers | Bashira, the head of a House Minor's security |
| **5–8** | Solve the mystery of the... | House Minor Heir | Manor House | Security Systems | Kaunos, the merchant |
| **9–12** | Investigate the murder or destruction of the... | Artifact | Sietch | The Desert | Anca, the Fremen stillsuit seller |
| **13–16** | Cause the murder or destruction of the... | Illegal Technology | Smuggler's Base | The Spacing Guild | Hegai, the smuggler |
| **17–20** | Rescue or recover the... | Secret Spice Stores | The Desert | The Smugglers | Akira, the ornithopter pilot |

Check out **Creating Non-player Characters** on p.263 for more hints and tips for making well-rounded villains that make great antagonists for your players to face.

You have a story hook and the villain's motivations. Now what?

Now, you have to figure out the how. If you know how things are happening, then that gives you flexibility because the players can find the 'how' several different ways.

> *In the above example with Pinta the water-seller, it helps to know how her water was poisoned. Perhaps, it was poisoned in the merchant's warehouse before it ever even got to her. How can the players figure that out? They can inspect the warehouse and find evidence of poison. They can interrogate other water-sellers, and perhaps one admits to seeing someone sneaking out the warehouse late at night.*

Another couple of useful questions to ask are "Why are they doing this now?" and "What happens if they succeed?" The answers to these two questions can provide the urgency and stakes for the adventure.

By knowing the how of the scheme, you can figure out how to react to your players' actions. Determining how you want to guide the players doesn't have to happen right away. If you need some time to come up with something, postponing until the next session works, too.

# Quick Tips

## Creating Non-player Characters

Non-player characters are lots of fun. To be prepared, have a whole bunch of random, quick **minor** non-player characters ready, so you can pull one out if your players do something unexpected.

You can always turn a Minor non-player character into a **notable** or even a **major** one at a later point in time if the players end up interacting with them a lot. It also helps to give your non-player characters strong motivations, so you understand where they're coming from as you play them. Check out **Creating Non-player Characters** on p.263 for more.

## Creating Locations

If you have some specific locations in mind... jot down a couple notes describing them. Try to hit a variety of senses. What does it smell like? What are the ambient sounds? This helps to round out a place and make it feel more real.

In Pinta's story hook above, a warehouse is mentioned. Here are some example details you could provide. Notice the added sounds, smells, and other sensations in addition to the visuals.

***Describing the Warehouse:*** *"The doorseal hisses as you push your way into the warehouse. You blink as glowglobes flicker on, revealing container after container of water. The humid air makes it hard to breathe. As you inhale, the odor of mildew fills your noses. On one wall, the water reclamation unit thumps like it needs maintenance. Was Pinta's water poisoned here?"*

## ADDING VARIETY

They say that variety is the spice of life. Giving different types of characters the chance to save the day can really make a game extra special for a player, especially if you happen to design an event specifically to a player's or player character's strengths. As satisfying as a good brawl is, not everything has to end in a fight. Sprinkle in opportunities for combat, diplomacy, puzzles, and any other kind of challenge you can think of.

As you're creating, also consider giving your players different ways to solve the same problems. For example, if they want to fight, have some soldiers ready for them. If they want to go about it peacefully, maybe have an option where they can appeal to a neutral party instead. It is always best to prepare for different contingencies—you never know exactly how they'll approach a problem at any given time.

## ACCOMMODATING YOUR PLAYERS

The game shouldn't make anyone feel uncomfortable. You're all there to have fun. As you're designing your campaign, keep in mind the boundaries that you and your players discussed in your Session 0 (see **Consent and Managing Group Comfort Levels** on p.232). Respect your players. You should also expect respect from your players, as well.

SAMPLE VILLAIN

## MALTHACE FERREYRA

**Who?** Malthace Ferreyra, a noble who leads a House Minor on Arrakis.

**What?** She wants to secure a CHOAM directorship for her House.

**When?** She has been patient for many years and is making her big move now.

**Where?** She lives and works on Arrakis but hopes to receive a siridar fief from the Emperor along with her CHOAM directorship.

**Why?** Her family has never had much influence due to their status as a powerless House Minor on Arrakis. They were always expected to support whoever had the planetary governorship. And Malthace has seen how every duke and baron who ran the siridar fiefdom has botched their command. She knows that she and her family could do a much better job.

**How?** Malthace believes she's made a deal with a CHOAM representative. The massive mercantile organization is unhappy with the shares of melange they're receiving from the current planetary governor. If Malthace can find a way to ruin the reputation of the Great House currently running Arrakis, her CHOAM contact believes that they can have the House exiled and transfer their directorship to Malthace's House.

# Setting up a Game

## Arrakis Awaits!

If you're ready to rule over the shifting sands of Dune and the devious denizens of the Imperium as a gamemaster, you'll need some players, a Session 0 scheduled, and player characters.

## Finding a Group to Play With

Where does one unearth the kindred spirits who wholeheartedly dive into this adventure with you?

### REAL-LIFE FRIENDS

The *Dune* novels, movies, videogames, and boardgames have touched a lot of lives and left a lot of fans in their wake over the years. Reach out to the people around you. You might be surprised just how many people you already know who heed the call of the spice trade.

### ONLINE

From social media to digital tools that allow you to play roleplaying games online, there are many resources to help you find or start a new game.

To start your recruitment drive, hunt for the 'Looking for Group' (LFG) sections of your favorite tabletop websites and online tools. Gamemasters are always in demand.

### FRIENDLY LOCAL GAME STORE (FLGS)

Tucked all around the world are wonderful stores that cater to the tabletop game crowd. Game stores often have tables for playing games. Sometimes, they even offer in-person pickup games, one-off adventures, or even specific days where a particular game is the focus.

You're likely to find fellow storytellers in places like these. And they might even let you put up a bulletin or recruit for a player group at the store. These little gems are amazing resources, and they're just a web search away.

### DUNE FANS

There are a lot of people, online and in person, who love *Dune* and the *Dune* universe. And even if those fans haven't played a roleplaying game before—many might just be willing to dive into a spice-filled escapade with you. So, wherever you can find *Dune* fans, you may very well find some players to join your adventure.

## Managing Expectations

### SESSION 0

Session 0 is the first meeting (virtual or in person) you and your players can have before starting the adventure. And it's very important. This is the time when you'll all talk to each other and set boundaries. See **Consent and Managing Group Comfort Levels** on p.232.

Also, this is the time to work on characters together. Your players can either create their characters or become acquainted with any pre-generated characters. Some published campaigns come with pre-created player characters.

### SHORT CAMPAIGNS

When playing with a new group, it helps to start with a one-off adventure or a short campaign no more than a few sessions long (see **Short Games and Long-term Campaigns** on p.219). Starting small like this helps to make sure the group is compatible and gives everyone a chance to get comfortable with each other without a huge commitment.

If you do decide to go with a shorter adventure or campaign to begin with, communicate this to help manage your players' expectations. You may want to create new characters or continue with the ones you have. You may also find that players want to change their characters, based on their experience with the rules and the setting. While this is generally discouraged during a long-term campaign, this is the perfect time to do so, when things are just getting started. Just like the characters in a television series can change slightly between the pilot episode and those later in the season, so too can player characters. Players should not be forced to suffer the consequences of uninformed decisions during character creation that will linger throughout the rest of the campaign.

### INCOMPATIBILITY

Communication is key between players, and especially between the players and the gamemaster. See **Managing Personalities** on p.231 for tips on how to address many issues that may crop up within a group.

However, despite stellar communication and mitigation tactics, sometimes players and gamemasters have different styles that don't mesh. Sometimes, individual players want something different out of the game than do the other players in the group. On the more mundane side of things, life happens, which means schedules and priorities change. And, occasionally, a group just doesn't work out. This even happens to long-standing groups that have years of history together. And that's okay. Oftentimes, no one is to blame. Don't be too hard on yourself if this happens to your group.

That simply means it's time to go out, form a new group, and start telling brand new stories with a new team.

# Tips for Creating Characters with Your Players

When it's Session 0 time, your players should be creating their characters. Here's some advice.

## WORK TOGETHER

Why would a character work in a group? It makes it a lot easier on you to have your players determine how or why their characters would work in a group as they're creating them.

This is especially useful if a player wants to play a 'lone wolf' type of character who wouldn't normally work with others (a popular archetype). This way you and your players are less likely to get caught in complicated situations where everyone's having to come up with on-the-spot reasons for why the team doesn't split up or won't cooperate. The impetus can be money, a shared goal, a shared enemy, or even ideology.

## CREATE IMPERFECT CHARACTERS

As a gamemaster, you should lean into and reward quirks and flaws in the player characters. It fleshes them out and makes the sessions more fun and interesting. Take note especially of their weaknesses, as these are wonderful levels by which you can apply drama and conflict in the game, elements that feel personal to the player character.

## ALLOW UNBALANCED GROUPS

Unbalanced groups are fine! Maybe your players all want to play the same type, or no one wants to take any kind of first aid or medical ability. These types of unbalanced groups can be a fun to play, too.

You and your players should get creative with how they approach different situations. Certain options might close to them because their characters just can't solve a problem a specific way. It might lead to a different play style and gamemaster style to accommodate it. But it often leads to unexpected stories! Even if every player character in the group has a hammer, not every problem needs to look like a nail.

## THINK ABOUT CHARACTER DEATH

If you plan on running a brutal campaign with a lot of character deaths, it might help to have your players start thinking of backup characters early on. This way your players can start getting excited about their next character, and the death of their current character might not sting quite so much. Players can create all manner of minor characters that might act as agents for their main character and take up their mantle if something should happen to them. Fortunately, the House construction of play means that one can relatively easily bring another character to the fore, even one superficially similar to the prior one.

## FOSTER DIVERSITY

Encourage your players to play diverse characters of different races, religions, genders, sexualities, and abilities! See **Manage Diversity** on p.264 for tips on how to do this respectfully.

## PLANT STORY SEEDS

The characters your players create can provide a wealth of information. No background, however small, cannot offer a few plot hooks and story seeds of its own. What made them pledge their loyalty to the House? Who trained them and why? Where did they meet their contacts and how much can they trust them? How did they come by their assets, and did acquiring them pay a debt or incur one? A short discussion about background with the player group can often write whole adventures for you.

## ASK WHAT THE PLAYERS WANT

Finally, remember that the characters the players create tell you the sort of game they want to play. This is the easiest and most obvious form of player investment. A player who creates a socialite most likely wants a game featuring intrigue, one who creates a fighter wants action and combat. It is vital the gamemaster pays attention to this so they can make sure their adventures not only engage the players but give each character the chance to shine.

# Running a Game

After your players have character sheets, and you have tailored your story to their interests, it's time to run a game. Keep in mind, ***Dune: Adventures in the Imperium*** is a heavily narrative system. You should view the rules included in this book as tools to use at your discretion. Whether your players enjoy number-crunching and rolling dice, or defining success or failure with a simple Difficulty test, you can modify and interpret the system to best serve your story and your players' preferred play styles.

## The First Scene

Do the players characters know each other? If not, the first scene should introduce them to each other in some interesting way. For example, an immediate problem they must solve as a team is one way, while using a notable non-player character to bring them together for a task is another.

Consider using a unifying objective for the player characters like fame, duty, or shared survival. Then, think about what sort of initial setting would best highlight the tone of the game. A story that starts in a bar suggests a casual, adventurous atmosphere. A story beginning with the baron giving a powerful monologue may encourage players to lean into the drama. A first scene with said baron dead on the floor evokes mystery and indicates player characters should gather clues and search for evidence.

Introductory scenes set expectations for your players. For example:

- In a holding cell on Giedi Prime, each player character has been arrested for the same crime, though none of them are actually responsible. Do they work together to prove their innocence or plan their escape?
- The player characters attend the wedding reception of two young nobles from rival houses joined in matrimony. The player characters have a chance to mingle and converse with each other while you set the tone for family drama and high political intrigue.
- The story opens with a chase scene. A trio of ornithopters pursue the player characters' carryall. This scenario drops them into the middle of an action adventure. Later scenes can explain how they reached this point, either through narration or even roleplaying them out.

## Using Drives

Drives can be one of the more challenging aspects of the system to use. While they offer an array of narrative and motivational options, and facilitate architect play, their very flexibility can prove confusing. However, you can use drives in several different ways to fine-tune the style of game to what suits your group.

Which drive should be used for a test is usually defined by the drive statements. The statements are designed to offer a quick narrative description of what a drive means to that character. This allows the player to define their own interpretation of the drive and forgo the need to check the definition of the drive in question before deciding.

However, some players find it more intuitive to start with the drive and see if the statement suits it, and that's fine. If the statements are less clear for your group, try asking them to look at which drive is appropriate instead of looking at the statements. Then, having chosen the correct drive they can see if their statement applies to the situation to allow the use of determination. You should use whichever way round your group finds intuitive, and each player can use a different style if everyone knows who is doing what.

When picking a drive, it is important to remember that they define the character's motivation and therefore the way they are being played. As such, the player should be allowed to have the final say on what suits their character. Having said that, the gamemaster can rule they have not justified the use of a particular drive enough and should either pick another or offer a better explanation. Picking a drive shouldn't turn into a long argument or be taken into too much depth. The gamemaster should simply ask the player why they are doing the action and see what they say and how that relates to drives and statements.

This can lead to players using the same drive, their best one, all the time. To a degree, this is fine. Characters can play to their strengths and their highest drive is the way they tend to meet most challenges. As elite agents of their House they are often working with a good chance of success. However, the gamemaster can insist a player consider other options. If they don't, the character's methods become predictable to their enemies and may offer an opportunity for the gamemaster to apply Threat. As a rule of thumb, a gamemaster might gain Threat each time a character uses a particular drive, if it is halfway through the session and they have used no other drives.

While it can seem cumbersome, it is worth taking the time to properly define a character's drive when making a test. It is easy to be overeager to grab the dice and get rolling. But in ***Dune*** a test can often become a game of cat-and-mouse as each side manages Threat and Momentum spends and applies traits and assets.

"The slow blade penetrates the shield", so take time to figure out the nature of each situation. A short discussion can offer new ideas for traits, Momentum spends, and narration for the scene, all of which offer greater roleplaying opportunities for the group. Knowing why they are doing something can offer the player characters much more agency and help craft their characters. Don't be too quick

to waste the opportunity, but at the same time be aware when the game is losing pace and getting bogged down.

When an action is important, motivation becomes easier. When breaking into a facility, it might be on behalf of the House (Duty) to save a friend (Faith) or right a wrong (Justice) to uncover a plot (Truth) or to prove the strength of your army (Power), etc. But when you are just picking a lock or trying to escape a downed ornithopter, your motivation doesn't seem very clear. You just need to get the job done or follow your orders.

There are two options in this situation. The first is for the gamemaster to ask the players what their character's reasons are for doing the mission at all, before they set out. They then all pick a drive that suits that motivation. For any minor tests involving the mission, this is the drive they use, representing their overall incentive. They can use other drives and statements as often as they wish. But if they are ever unsure what applies, they now have a default to use.

The second option is to forego minor tests completely. Dice rolls aren't designed to be as common in ***Dune*** as in many other games. So instead of making a test to pick each lock, make a single test to 'enter the facility'. The more wide-ranging the action, the more important the test and the easier to determine motivation and drive. This method also makes more sense to take time on each roll, as it defines so much.

## Using the Rules System

The ***Dune: Adventures in the Imperium*** rules are designed to offer a toolbox of flexible options you can apply to match the style of your group. Some people prefer fast-and-loose gameplay, others like a complex and more simulationist approach. Others still prefer for roleplaying and narrative to take precedence over the rules.

The 2d20 rules system offers essentially four ways to resolve any action:

- **Simple Test:** For when you only need to know if something passed or failed.
- **Contested Test:** When the action is opposed by someone or something.
- **Extended Test:** When completing the action takes time, and time is a factor.
- **Conflict:** When the contest is especially complicated involving multiple characters, a complex situation, or simply deserves more detail.

While some of these forms of test are better suited to different situations, they can apply to any action if the group prefers. Which you pick defines the options for

the narrative, the focus on the action, and how complicated the test is.

Imagine the player characters must interrogate a group of servants to find an assassin. There are already many ways they can go about this, from sitting each of them in a room to following them to see who they talk to or even searching their rooms for clues. They might even try all of them. Let's say this group elects to try and talk casually to each of them and see what they discover. The gamemaster can use any of the systems described above, to the following outcomes:

- **Simple Test:** The gamemaster tells the players it will take all day to chat to the servants. Each character makes a simple test against a Difficulty based on how clever or well-hidden the assassin is. If any of them succeed, they have found a suspect. This method is simple and quick, but perhaps a little too simple and quick for such an endeavor.
- **Contested Test:** As above, the gamemaster tells the players this will take all day for all of them to talk to everyone. But they might instead get each player to pick which servants their character is talking to. Each player makes a contested test (either for all the servants together or each one they interview). As this is contested, the gamemaster needs to give each servant (or the servants as a group) a basic drive/skill level for their rolls. Players and the gamemaster spend Threat and Momentum and play out a cat-and-mouse interrogation, where winning reveals if the servant can be trusted (or if there is an assassin in the group). Depending on the number of servants this might be a more satisfying option, but only if finding the assassin is an important part of the adventure.
- **Extended Test:** This is best for a time limit, such as if the player characters needing to root out the assassin before the ruler of their House arrives. The gamemaster sets a requirement and each roll the player characters make represents a day of questioning. During each roll, the gamemaster and players can describe what actions they might be taking as they follow clues to uncover the assassin. When they run out of time they have either made the requirement and found the villain, or have run out of time and must figure out how to keep their ruler safe while an assassin is on the premises. This option works best if there is a time constraint. Otherwise, the player characters can just keep going until they find what they are after, with few consequences.
- **Conflict:** For this option the gamemaster needs more statistics for the various non-player characters, although again, it depends which conflict system they use. Intrigue is probably best, with each servant being a zone and the player characters moving assets to defeat them in a challenge. Each defeated servant reveals whether they can be trusted or not. But the assassin can also move assets to attack the player characters. The player characters won't know who is moving the assets against them, but might be able use the movement of assets as a clue to target their own investigation. This system allows for a lot of complex maneuvering and plotting that may take the whole game session, or possibly longer.

So, as you can see, each type of roll has its own strengths and weaknesses. But these are defined not by the rules but by what works for your group. You need not (and should not) stick to only one form of test, as different situations will often require different levels of complexity to offer the players agency and reach a satisfying outcome. But you can tend towards simple or complex depending on the need and desires of your group. This is especially the case if not everyone prefers the same thing. Some players hate rolling dice and using rules, others can't get enough of it. So, make sure everyone gets catered for at some point, especially when it is their character in the spotlight leading the action.

## Adding Narrative

The rules system just provides a way to determine an outcome, so it needs a little help from everyone to add an exciting narrative dynamic. Doing so also makes longer and more complex tests a lot more interesting and involving. Essentially, adding narrative just means explaining what a character is actually doing when a player rolls the dice. Just saying you move an asset isn't very exciting, but saying you are flying your ornithopter low over the desert to avoid the spotter drones is much more interesting.

Adding narrative isn't just for the broad strokes either. When a player spends Momentum or gives the gamemaster Threat, they should say what that represents. "I'm spending a Momentum point as I catch the eye of the noble across the room and realize he's going to back me up as I make my play" or "I'm going to add a point of Threat to the gamemaster's pool as my character isn't taking much care to look around as they launch themselves into the attack".

These narrative flourishes improve the game dramatically and generate more detail about the situation that helps develop the story. However, it is important to remember that not everyone is either good or confident at this sort of improvisation. So, while it is great to have more detail, just a simple description is perfectly fine, and it's all right for other players to make suggestions for a scene to help each other out. If someone has trouble adding narration, let them roll the dice and move on. Hopefully, in time they gradually gain more confidence or have some ideas when they see how everyone else is doing it.

## Managing Social Conflict & Intrigue

Social interaction is one of the most complicated parts of a roleplaying game. As the name implies, roleplaying should encourage playing a role, and that means social interaction should have little or no dice rolling. Leave everything to the player's natural ability to deceive, persuade, and convince, and leave it at that. However, not everyone has the same social skills, and this penalizes those who are quiet and shy or just not natural talkers. They may also want to play a charming socialite character and if everything is roleplay-based, they are at a significant disadvantage.

So, *Dune*'s intrigue and social interaction systems level the playing field. They allow the success of a character to be determined by their character's abilities, not the player's. But by adding narrative, you can still let the scene be guided by the roleplaying. Let the players talk and interact with non-player characters between dice tests, but call for a roll to discover what the result of the conversation or plot was.

If you have a group where everyone is an actor, then you can throw away more of the system and focus on the roleplaying aspects. However, it is rare to find a group where that is the case for everyone, so pay attention to timid players and allow the system to help them get the results their character deserves.

## Managing Conflict, Duels and Wars

Conflicts are an inevitable result of House machinations. In some cases, these manifest as personal duels, at other times they escalate into assassination, and sometimes into all-out war. Combat can be exciting and dynamic, but it can also be rules-heavy, and therefore slow. As gamemaster, you should consider what the group prefers when introducing and managing any form of conflict.

Duels are quite common in the Imperium, so the personal combat system allows you to focus on a single fight, such as Paul's duel with Jamis, or later with Feyd in the novel *Dune*. Skirmishes often come about when minor characters try to challenge or oppose the player characters, or as part of an espionage operation, especially when it goes wrong. These sorts of fights are probably the most common form of conflict. Outright war is rare, as it usually requires the Spacing Guild's assistance to move battlefield weapons from planet to planet to reach their objective.

As with any rules system, it is important to apply the correct one, and remember who is involved. A duel only involves two people. So, unless it is hugely important, or the rest of the group are invested in it to some degree, it's advisable to keep it short. The same goes for skirmish and warfare if not everyone has a stake in the fight. Having said that, any character can become more involved in any conflict without picking up a weapon. They can distract opponents, offer support, or even make bets on who the victor will be! So, the gamemaster should still ask what even less involved characters might like to do when a fight breaks out.

The key thing to remember with any fight is context. A fight on any level should mean something. When Paul fights Jamis, it is a struggle to prove himself to the Fremen. How Paul behaved in the fight and the aftereffects on his character and relationship with Stilgar's tribe reverberate throughout the rest of the novel. The skirmishes led by Muad'Dib on spice production cause the Emperor to travel to Arrakis, and the great battle at the end of the novel decides the fate of the universe. So, while combat can be fun an exciting, make sure there is something important at stake, even if it is just the lives of the player characters.

## Troubleshooting

Cynically, one might argue that no story crafted by a gamemaster survives contact with the players. While you may have an idea how a game session will go, the session is likely to run into challenges beyond any the gamemaster could have anticipated. Let's look at some common solutions.

### ADJUST POWER LEVELS ON THE FLY

Finding the right balance between a game that is both fun and challenging is, in and of itself, a challenge. A game too difficult for the players may frustrate them, while too easy a game will undoubtedly bore them. You can adjust difficulty using Momentum and Threat. If the players are chewing their way through Sardaukar with ease, you can use more dice from the Threat pool to make your antagonists tougher. On the other hand, if your players are having difficulty dealing with some low-grade spice smugglers, you can give them a chance to gain Momentum.

Another idea is to have several non-player character sheets on hand, built at various power levels. If player characters enter combat against a Harkonnen platoon, but you're unsure how they'll fare, you can bring two sets of antagonists to the table. Build the first platoon with beginner-level skills, a single talent, and a single asset. Build the second platoon with a few additional skills, multiple talents, and multiple assets. A selection of beginner-level archetypes can be found in **Chapter 9: Allies and Adversaries**.

A third possibility is to introduce a non-player character who can directly assist the players. Perhaps a Ginaz Swordmaster protects them for a short time, or maybe a

Fremen warrior chooses to guide them out of the deep desert. Serving as a set of training wheels, this non-player character can keep the group alive long enough for them to figure out how to use their skills. After serving their purpose, you can sacrifice the non-player character for the good of the story, or take them off the board to be reintroduced later.

## KEEP THE GAME MOVING

Sometimes players, through no fault of their own, fixate on the wrong thing. You may describe a scene, adding some detail players misinterpret as being vital to the story. Before you know it, they've spent an hour tracking down the provenance of an Albe oil painting which only you know is insignificant. Another twist happens when you present a challenge, and instead of attacking the problem as you imagined, players head in an entirely new (and unprepared for) direction.

One way to mitigate this is to explain, at the start of the story, where the boundaries lie. If the game only takes place on Arrakis, you should feel free to say so. If the players pursue a false lead that would take them off-world, you can remind them of the boundaries established at the start.

Another trick to keep the game on pace is to use a timer, allocating no more than an hour per scene or some equivalent thereof. Basic or unnecessary scenes can be handwaved. And you shouldn't abuse this tactic too much as players like to feel free to make their own decisions. Regardless of how long the scene takes, before you move on to the next, you should make a habit of offering one last request for actions. "Is there anything else you would like to do before we proceed?" is generally a good question to ask.

If you have a non-player character assisting player characters, they can also guide the story on track. The non-player character can offer advice on how best to proceed or warn the characters if they are straying too far from the planned scenario.

That said, if players appear invested in the aforementioned painting or a random side trip, you can develop a plot in the downtime between sessions to highlight their work or tie it in to add further complexity to your planned story.

## ANTICIPATE WILY PLAYERS

While you should have a good idea of where you're headed with the story, you should also anticipate player creativity. A gamemaster cannot plan for every eventuality, and you'll need to be flexible in the face of clever players. When a player takes the game in an unexpected direction, consider their action. This may mean taking the entire story to an unexpected place, or this might mean discouraging the idea and returning them to the primary thrust of the story.

The key is to note what the players seem most interested in doing. If you planned for a combat-heavy campaign, but the players have used every opportunity to circumvent violent encounters, you may want to adjust your expectations and storyline. In other words, if the players are having fun exploring the setting in an unexpected way, you can encourage them while improvising on the fly.

Also, don't hesitate to ask the players why they did something. Their answers can reveal their motivations and provide insight on which clues they'll gravitate toward in future scenes.

## TOTAL PARTY KILL

Sometimes games simply go awry. Maybe the player characters are too stubborn, or the antagonists they're fighting are too overpowered. With no luck from the dice, player characters might be on the verge of a 'total party kill', which grinds the game to an immediate halt. When this happens, you may want to ask the players what they would like to do.

Your goal should be creating a collaborative environment rather than a gamemaster versus player competition. So, don't be afraid to talk about solutions as a group. Listen to the preferences of the players and see if you can come to a compromise that offers them agency in the story even if that means losing a character.

Remember that the members of a House are valuable to that House and may be more useful as captives or bargaining chips, taken prisoner rather than slain outright. They may be ransomed back to the House in return for some concession or favor or may awaken in confinement with an opportunity to escape and learn more about the nature of their enemies. A scene that ends with the apparent death of the entire group may cut to one where they awaken in a medical bay, being tended to by a Suk doctor in the employ of their apparent killers.

Some players may want a mulligan, a second chance at the dice or resetting the scene to start again. Others might be comfortable with the loss because now, having played the game, they want to change their concept. Player character death can be a rewarding part of the campaign but should usually involve options for continuing with your story.

# Managing Personalities

Players are people, and every person has preferences, opinions, and quirks. One person's preference may come into conflict with someone else's opinion. In this way, as a gamemaster, not only are you in charge of managing the story, but you may also need to manage the personalities of the players whether that is as a director or a referee. Remember, you want to foster a collaborative atmosphere where everyone can have fun playing.

## DEALING WITH THE RULES

There is a general misconception that a gamemaster needs to have every rule memorized. This is simply not the case—this is why the book exists. When the players face a challenge, you serve as a referee for the rules, which may require interpretation from time to time. If they have a question, you can quickly review the rules, consult the players, and decide. Some players, however, focus entirely on the rules, reviewing every word or sentence, upsetting the flow of the game. If you cannot convince this player of the merits of your interpretation, and if you cannot appeal to their sense of mutual cooperation, then the easiest solution is to turn to the entire room and solve rules disputes with a majority vote.

## HANDLING DISENGAGEMENT

If a player spends more time focused on their phone than on what is happening around the table, then you should address this. The player may be bored, or perhaps they don't know how to interact with the game and don't want to embarrass themselves by asking. The simplest way to address disengaged players is to ask them directly what they would like to do with their character. If they're unsure, ask them open-ended questions. How does their player character feel about this situation? Does the player character have any assets that might help the group? Making sure that everyone has an opportunity to take part is the best way to keep players invested in the overall story.

With devices in specific, some game tables employ a 'no phones' rule. Everyone can agree to keep their phones in their pockets, or you can leave a bowl out for everyone to put their phones in until the end of the game session.

A more dramatic and adversarial method is to add a point of Threat to the gamemaster's pool every time a player uses a phone at the table for anything other than what might be supported by the game. However, this is not always fair: it may be that the player has some personal issue that needs close attention. It's always better to ask then to assume.

## REDUCING DISTRACTIONS

Distracted players are different from disengaged players—they're present but are more interested in socializing than playing. Socializing is important to a game, but too much can sap the game's flow. One solution is to schedule periodic breaks during a game and limiting non-related conversation to those periods. Another idea is to employ a timer. If your players are prone to idle chit-chat, set the timer for five minutes. When it goes off, gameplay must resume. If the timer goes off too many times during a game session, you can always introduce a random encounter to grab everyone's attention, taken in the form of a failing generator, a Sardaukar platoon, or perhaps even wormsign!

## INTEGRATING LONERS

If most of the players want to do one thing while a lone operator wants to do something else, that's perfectly acceptable. Side adventures and risk takers can, at times, present new and interesting opportunities. But when that lone operator decides to raid the Arrakeen Residency on their own, and ends up getting captured, that is likely unhelpful. Players are not only responsible for their own enjoyment and wellbeing, but also for their fellow players' fun, too. The easiest solution for this is to occasionally check in with the players to make sure that everyone is all on the same page and working toward the same goal.

However, when a player is monopolizing the gamemaster's attention, or their actions become more of a distraction than a help, it might be time to talk to that player privately. After the session wraps and people are getting ready to leave, ask if the problem player can stick around for a few more minutes. Remain calm and keep the conversation friendly, but do your best to explain the issue and work with the player to find solutions. Most of the time you'll find saying something to the player is enough to curb the behavior.

# Consent & Comfort Levels

A roleplaying game requires trust between everyone taking part, including a gamemaster with their players and between the individual players. Communication builds that trust. Players have different preferences and triggers, and it is impossible to predict all of them without talking openly about it first. This is part of what Session 0 (see p.224) is all about.

Session 0 is when you determine what the players are looking for in their experience: here's where they create their characters, to decide on the play-styles, and here is where you can have a conversation about content. While ***Dune***'s setting is not by its nature controversial, it does involve violence, slavery, oppression, eugenics, genocide, torture, unwilling seduction, etc. Some players might find these issues or concepts problematic.

Using safety tools is not a way to sanitize and dull your game or to police your creativity, but to make sure everyone wants to play the same game. Roleplaying can be a very intimate and intense experience, and a good session can be very affecting. Your gaming sessions should be charged with feeling and emotion, but not to the point where events within them traumatize anyone.

## Comfort & Consent

When talking to your players for the first time, ask about their comfort levels. Ask them what subjects you should avoid in your story. Ask them if they have any strong phobias. Some players do not want to be emotionally abused by a non-player character while others might enjoy it. Some might have a physiological response to detailed descriptions of gore. Another might have a powerful aversion to insects.

If the players are uncomfortable voicing their concerns, you can always create an anonymous survey. Make a list of content themes you intend to include in your story. This might be 'domestic violence', 'gore', 'torture', 'spiders', etc. Assign a rating of 1 through 5 to each of them to denote how likely a player is to interact with the content. A rating of 1 would be unlikely whereas 5 would suggest it's unavoidable. Players can then mark which aspects they don't want to engage in. It's your job to dial back and avoid engaging that player without their consent.

And, if you do this during Session 0, you'll avoid pitfalls like basing a game on Caladan when half of your group is afraid of water. But Session 0 isn't the only time you should talk about consent and content because a player is free to give and take back their consent at any time. People change day-to-day, and our responses to stimuli change. So, you should try to gauge player reactions and check in with them periodically as the story unfolds. It may be that once trust is established, players are more open to some of the issues they may have initially had a problem with.

## Mitigating Player Abuse

Players portray characters in a game, but a player who uses their character to conduct themselves in an inappropriate manner can sometimes use their creations as a shield. They might say, "This is how my character would act" to justify their actions. To be fair, you should support your players when they want to explore darker aspects and experiences, but not at the expense of other players. If a player is portraying their character in a way distressing to others, speak to that player privately to discuss how both they, and the other players involved, can cooperate. Avoid criticizing the player but be firm when reinforcing the idea that no single character motivation should supersede the overall emotional safety and enjoyment of the other players.

This applies to gamemaster behavior as well. If you're using a non-player character in a way that makes the players feel uncomfortable, the players must be able to voice their concern. And even if you already alerted players to a content theme in Session 0, it's good practice to ask when it comes up in the game. If you plan to have a scene where a villain tortures one of the player characters, double check to ensure that all the players are still comfortable with the scene taking place.

Often, issues surrounding a game stem from miscommunication rather than malicious intent. So long as everyone is willing to listen to concerns and adjust when necessary, you can resolve most issues swiftly and with cooperation.

## Checking In with Players

As players portray their characters, dramatic and dangerous situations can draw them in. Just like roller coasters or scary movies, fun and excitement can provoke emotional responses. It can be difficult to see when events in a game session are overwhelming for a player, and harder still to tell the difference between the character's reaction versus the player's reaction to something potentially upsetting. And it can be even more difficult for a player in emotional distress to feel comfortable enough to pause a game. They don't want to look like the killjoy, or appear weak, or they may be worried they'll ruin everyone's fun.

As the one in charge, you should keep an eye out for signs of anxiety, call for breaks when necessary, and act as an advocate for players who might be too shy to speak up. To make this easier, the following suggestions are provided to make this easier for everyone.

## 'Okay' Check-in

This system allows players to communicate quickly without interrupting the game. If you or a player worries about someone else's comfort at the table, instead of stopping the game to ask how they're doing, you can use an 'Okay check-in'. Make a thumbs-up sign to the player as a way of subtly asking if the player is comfortable proceeding. The player then responds with a thumbs-up denoting they are comfortable proceeding, a waffling hand suggesting they're unsure if they should proceed, or with a thumbs-down alerting you that they are not all right. At this point, you can pause the game or allow the player to walk away from the table until you're past the disturbing content. Sometimes a player just needs to take a break, but you can use the opportunity to have a private conversation with them to check-in on their well-being.

### COLOR CHECK-IN OR STOPLIGHT METHOD

Each player has a colored item such as a dice, token, or badge. Each color is a level of consent. Green for full consent or comfort, yellow stands for caution, and red means 'stop' or 'no'. The game starts with each of the players displaying their green item. As you run the game, the players can swap out or flash their colored items per their level of comfort signaling their consent or lack thereof to a scene's content.

### SAFE WORD

A final method for checking-in with players is to use a safe word. At Session 0 or the start of game, everyone agrees with a word or phrase, which when said, calls for an immediate five-minute break. If everyone has the freedom to call for a pause, then hopefully everyone feels comfortable using it. As a gamemaster, you can then follow up and ask the player who called the break what aspect of the game they were having difficulty with, if it is not obvious.

# Creating Games in the Dune Universe

*Dune* can be daunting for any gamemaster to tackle, regardless of their skill or experience. Even answering the question of what makes an authentic '*Dune* adventure' has an almost limitless set of possible answers. For some, *Dune* deals with the tension and interplay of power and freedom. How freedom requires power to secure, but that acquiring power can ultimately limit your own freedom and of course trample on the freedoms of others. For others, it is about ecology and the consequences of exploiting resources, an indictment of capitalism and about the cruelty of feudalism. Others still might find it an evocative science-fictional adventure story set in a challenging environment.

A ***Dune*** adventure or campaign may even illustrate how prophecy and prescience further complicate the very definition of freedom, and how that power comes in many forms including but not limited to economic manipulation, religious dogma, genetic engineering and psychosocial conditioning. This depth can seem impossible to grasp in a way that's authentic to the source material, yet it gives players an experience that matches up with their expectations, and lets you have fun with your friends at the same time.

As with many complex settings, such depth creates a tension that arises from the urge to present a gaming experience that encapsulates everything that *Dune* has to offer. This is a trap and an illusion. Larger themes can be distilled in small and fleeting moments, even if they never take the spotlight in your campaign. More importantly, the gamemaster's choice to create an adventure or campaign that focuses on one theme or setting element above all others is not only a valid choice but a necessary one. Part of creating a memorable adventure or setting is determining what to emphasize as well as what to de-emphasize, or ignore outright.

This is further complicated by the hyper-awareness and preternatural introspection that is almost commonplace among the accomplished humans who are likely to stand against your player characters. A multitude of factors, such as the geriatric spice and the lack of thinking machines, have produced a setting filled with humans possessed of unnaturally long life, intense mental discipline, and weaponized emotional intelligence. While these superhuman qualities make them formidable foes and valuable allies, at their core they remain human and vulnerable to irrational and reckless choices when their core identity is challenged or threatened. Duncan Idaho, for example, is a peerless Swordmaster, the equal of any Sardaukar, but when confronted with a conflict of loyalties between his liege Leto and Leto's wife, Jessica, he becomes despondent and lashes out rashly.

## Moving Between Architects & Agents

Identifying what elements of the setting the story will focus on not only helps clarify what kind of characters will prosper in your story, it will also open the possibilities of how your players transition between the architect and agent modes of play. These two modes of play allow players to choose between their player characters

acting directly as agents or pulling the strings behind the curtain as architects.

As an agent, a character is in the right place at the right time. They can directly manipulate events and have more options to change their approach in the mission. However, they are directly in harm's way. If a mission fails, they might be captured or worse. When opting to work as an architect, a character has less direct control over how the mission plays out. But they are also for the most part insulated from its failures.

As the gamemaster, you need not worry which mode is being used at any time, as they apply mainly at each player's whim. Which mode you are using depends mainly on the assets being used. If the asset is equipment, the player character probably needs to be present as an agent. But if the asset is a group or an agent, they are probably being given their orders from afar by an architect. If you are ever confused, just ask the player which mode they would like to be in. But remind them that it is hard to change their mind once the mission is underway! The player characters need not all be in the same mode either. Some might act as agents breaking into a complex while another remains at their base monitoring and using other agents to cause a distraction for the complex's defenses.

Depending on what they are doing, player characters can move between each mode. If they send in a group of soldiers to fight the Harkonnen and everything goes wrong, they might be close enough to follow the soldiers as agents. But if they are giving orders from their home planet or a far away control center, that is rarely possible. Remember that when using architect mode, each architect only has the assets they have in play. Many simply allow the architect to act, rather than grant a bonus, given they are not present. But acting through assets can be just as devastating as being on the front line.

In a story highlighting grand political intrigue, a scene of a few shadowy conspirators plotting against their foes can seamlessly fade into a scene that plays through the most critical parts of their scheme. You could even weave one scene into the other using flashbacks and 'flashforwards', possibly even blurring the lines of which scene occurs in the past and which is in the present. This structure touches upon the themes of hyper-perception and predeterminism but requires a great deal of trust between players and the gamemaster.

Most of the time, scenes are linear, with architect-level play dominating at the onset then, if appropriate, agent-level gameplay coming to the fore. They can alternate, but the transition from one dominant mode of play to another is generally easiest to achieve and less jarring for players. However, creativity is required to make sure that each player is given their time to shine even if their role in the plan itself is less dynamic. Confronting them with unforeseen complications and exploiting their hidden motivations to create dramatic moments that can jeopardize their goals and the safety of their friends. This is especially important when dealing with otherwise routine sequences where each character may have a nearly-identical task to perform. Breaking these up with unexpected twists or dramatic interludes can keep gameplay fresh and engaging for everyone at the table.

## Evoking The Power of Faith

Faith and religion are often central to *Dune*, especially the exploration of the differences between the two. Throughout the Imperium and its history, faith is cynically exploited for political purposes, regardless of the potential consequences. Religion itself is often portrayed as deliberate social engineering of peoples' beliefs to the advantage of groups of such as the Bene Gesserit Sisterhood, or even the Spacing Guild with its secrecy and traditions.

Honest expressions of faith or religion certainly have their place within the Imperium, but a tenet of the setting is that all things that drive humans to action must be examined or they can become dangerous. Blind faith and dogmatic religions are twisted by heroes and villains alike to achieve their selfish ends, but without faith there can be no progress on the Golden Path toward enlightenment. Despite its cynical exploitation, religion often has a positive role when it unites people towards a common purpose against chaos and ruin.

When incorporating elements of faith and religion into their stories, you should try to balance these meta-narratives implicit in the setting against the characters that experience these concepts as authentic expressions of themselves and their beliefs.

> *An adventure or campaign that incorporates a myth planted by the Missionaria Protectiva into a local religion does not invalidate the faith the characters feel within that religious system. It only illustrates that humans are often fallible and that they are always tempted to subvert their most sacred creations to further their own material agendas. How the characters react when this myth is used against their interests is where the drama of the narrative develops. Do they find a way to cling to their faith while rejecting a dogma that is leading them to ruin, or do they accept that their identity is too tied to the institutional practice of their faith to avoid the traps set for them? Both choices are dramatic and allow the player characters to explore their own internal dynamics in a contest with the outside forces pitted against them. Regardless of the outcome, their faith is tested and their understanding of that facet of themselves can be altered as well.*

## Portraying the Galactic Scale

Just as *Dune* can be imposing in its depth, the breadth of that the Imperium, encompassing a vast galactic empire, poses unique challenges in the form of its scale. This scale serves its epic themes perfectly, illustrating the unseen patterns of human lives and individual choices can have lasting impact on all of creation.

The availability of nearly instantaneous interstellar travel may suggest adventures where adventurers solve problems and then move on to the next solar system, but this structure plays against the strengths of the setting. *Dune* lends itself to epic stories that focus on individuals and their exertion of will against a seemingly predetermistic universe. Much like the characters, planets themselves are multidimensional and composed of unique and competing political, economic, and environmental factors.

> *Arrakis is not just a desert planet populated by warrior nomads. Though it is often misrepresented in that way, it is arguably the fulcrum of the Imperium's geopolitical and economic power: the source of spice, the commodity that fuels and sustains the the entire galactic civilization. Because of that, its native population's desire for self-determination is ignored, as Imperial factions vie for control of the planet's irreplaceable resource. Arrakis itself is a character, and while its peculiar geography, creatures and resources are important, it is how humans interact with those peculiarities that create drama.*

A major aspect of *Dune* as a setting is that it's about people and their place in the universe, and how their struggles are more often determined by how they confront internal conflicts than by which planet they happen to be standing upon.

As the gamemaster, you should be willing to explore the setting beyond Arrakis, but understand that just like Arrakis, every planet brings with it a depth beyond scenery or a single note of drama. Caladan, the beloved ocean planet of House Atreides, is more than just a contrast to Arrakis' desert. Caladan is the counterpoint of the familiar to the Atreides once they arrive on Arrakis, forcing them to adapt and ultimately change the universe in the process. Where Caladan represented the fully realized center of their old power, Arrakis embodies the potential seed of their new power. In the tension between these two worlds, and in what the Atreides bring with them both materially and psychologically from the old to the new, is the story of their struggle, triumph and apotheosis.

## The Challenges of Technology

Often, advanced technology can create a challenge within a game, as miraculous devices can suddenly negate all the familiar obstacles that usually confront player characters. To some degree the setting negates many of these concerns: few are the problems in the Imperium that can be solved solely by the application of technology, and the reliance upon technology itself is a cautionary tale around which the entire Imperium was founded. If anything, unchecked use of technology has proven time and again to be ruinous, as demonstrated in the history of the Imperium, or deleterious to the soul, such as is embodied by the 'detestable' and technocratic Tleilaxu.

The unique elements of *Dune*'s setting creates new dynamics and challenges. Body shields produced by Holtzman generators reduce the effectiveness and ubiquity of powerful ranged weapons, meaning most action not on the battlefield will be up close and personal. The Butlerian Jihad and later religious proscription has eradicated the use of thinking machines, so many advanced computational tasks require dedicated and highly trained specialists. Without its dependence on machines humans expanded their own capabilities, some even honing skills bordering on the supernatural.

Thus, despite all of the titanic monsters, genetic engineering, and mind-bending powers, the Imperium embodies a very human future. Humankind and its capacity for both reason and recklessness is at its center. It is in the hands of humans that these great powers become either the path to a golden future or to the dreadful arafel, the cloud-darkness at the end of the universe.

## Prophecy, Prescience, & Hyper-perception

Most formidable and iconic of all human abilities in *Dune* is prescience. This capability is often referred to as prophecy, because of the mystical and religious significance it has to many cultures and societies. The Bene Gesserit's Kwisatz Haderach, the confluence and goal of their immense breeding program, is perhaps the most obvious expression of a foretold prophet. However, this quasi-mystical being is also a result of paradox, foretelling of a so-called 'messiah' that is the result of century after century of overt political manipulation and planned eugenics.

# Respecting People & their Cultures

The Imperium is both recognizably human but also beyond humanity as we know it today. Here is a universe filled with people that are obviously of Earth though set in a future so distant that this origin is lost and obscured. To accomplish this, *Dune* draws heavily from many different real human cultures, languages, and religions. In a few cases these real-world elements are used unmodified, but for the most part they are altered in an attempt to portray human culture as ever-evolving. Not just physical evolution, but psychosocially and spiritually evolving.

Quasi-Arabic words are sprinkled throughout the Fremen language and religious movements. The Zensunni are clearly intended to be melded evolutions of Islamic and Buddhist spirituality. Most telling is the use of the word 'jihad', usually meaning 'struggle' or 'strife' in Arabic, usually towards a noble purpose. This term is liberally used throughout the novels, but strictly in the context of a holy war, an emotionally loaded concept in the modern world.

It can be tempting to make assumptions about Zensunni or Fremen thought based on one's understanding of Buddhism or Middle-Eastern culture, but this was neither the author's original intent nor is it the purpose of this game.

When evoking and utilizing these aspects of the setting, it is important to remember they were meant as a shorthand for the unlimited capacity of humankind to create, adapt, and survive as it spreads across the galaxy, but also to continue tradition of belief, uninterrupted across even greater spans of time. Ideas that seem opposed or antithetical to each other today may be destined to align and grow into something more profound still. That is a powerful and ultimately positive statement, and thus it is advised that the concepts and beliefs from which these game concepts grew should be treated with respect. Thus, it is advised to use utmost care if turning to real-world cultures, ethnicities, and religions for inspiration, rather than presenting them as mere source material to be drawn from and inadvertently exploited or portrayed disrespectfully.



## THE PROBLEM OF PRESCIENCE

Even Muad'Dib himself doubts his divinity and is often paralyzed by his own vision of a future he cannot accept but simultaneously feels powerless to avert. This is the limit and danger of prophecy. The patterns of possibility open before one. To reach a desired future one must cleave to a rigid path, but also be ever aware of the cresting waveform of the present—always adjusting to the minutiae of circumstance or risk falling off the path and into unintended chaos. The power of prophecy thus limits personal freedom, and the path to the future can quickly become a trap to which one must willingly fall victim or risk arriving at an unknown and potentially undesirable destination.

This is further complicated by the more practical and subtle uses of prescience as a method of surveillance. At its most extreme, seeing prescient patterns and outcomes can mean an almost omniscient ability to see and foresee the actions of allies and enemies alike. This is particularly dangerous if these powers are a closely-held secret, as the best defenses against prescience require foreknowledge of such a capability.

## AVOIDING PRESCIENCE

As gamemaster, you should understand how such capabilities will distort the outcome of events in a story and how both player characters and non-player characters alike will react to such capabilities. While certain means of avoiding prescience—the presence of Guild Navigators or later technology such as no-chambers will eventually partly counter it—the most reliable method of countering prophetic power will be the active machinations of other prescient beings. It is often difficult for prescient beings to see and predict outcomes that directly involve the actions of others with this ability. Somehow their ability to observe and interpret the patterns of the future are either themselves variables outside of the larger pattern, or threads within the pattern too subtle for all but the most talented prescient beings to perceive.

Even individuals who are not fully prescient but have the potential for such power, can interfere with a prophet's ability to divine the future. In particular, Guild Navigators are known to disrupt prescient sight in chaotic ways, while unrealized or failed attempts at the Kwisatz Haderach seem to be completely invisible to prophetic sight.

Regardless of the reasons, those that rely too heavily on prophetic abilities risk locking themselves into futures with unforeseen consequences just beyond the edge of their prescience, or they see their carefully-laid plans toppled by the actions of another they could not see. Once this weakness in prophecy is realized, it becomes exploitable by those seeking to defend against prescience. Plotters may seek the presence of a Guild Navigator to cloak their secret meeting, and failed products of the Bene Gesserit breeding program become deadly assassins that even the inner eye cannot see.

## HYPER-PERCEPTION AND EXPANDED CONSCIOUSNESS

Additionally, hyper-perceptive characters can present challenges, especially in games hinging on intrigue and mystery. Advanced machines that emulate the qualities or shape of humankind are considered profane, as is allowing technology said to 'disfigure the soul'. As described extensively in the history depicted within **Chapter 2: The Known Universe**, this prohibition has led to the breeding and training of specialized humans capable of awesome feats of mental calculation, physical prowess, and interpersonal empathy.

Just as human Mentats replace computers, others are trained and shaped to act with inhuman speed or perceive the slightest changes in another's micro-expressions. The elite Imperial Sardaukar of the Padishah Emperor are honed by a secret and brutal training program that makes them into the most feared fighting force in the Imperium. Guild Navigators are perhaps the most profound example of this, being mutated by excessive exposure to spice to force upon them prescience by which they can plot courses across the galaxy.

Finally, the Bene Gesserit Sisterhood uses a carefully monitored breeding program, secret prana-bindu techniques, and precise applications of the mind-expanding spice to create an elite cadre of supernaturally insightful Reverend Mothers. While their prescience is limited, the Bene Gesserit are arguably the most powerful organization in the Imperium before the emergence of the Kwisatz Haderach, in turn a direct result of their machinations.

## GAMEMASTERING SUPERHUMANS

When stories incorporate characters with such superhuman traits, it can be difficult to deal with them in a way that honors their power without disrupting the agency of the other player characters, of retaining any cohesion of the adventure or campaign being played. Political machinations and subtle intrigues are a cornerstone of the setting, and revolutionaries must often navigate a reality that includes human lie detectors such as the Bene Gesserit or act in ways unanticipated by Mentats. The Imperium is not forgiving setting for amateur conspirators, and intrigues often have layers of measures and countermeasures that are meant to defeat the superhuman abilities of one's rivals. Traps are often set for enemies in such a way that their discovery and defeat begin a sequence of events that bring misfortune on their foes by the consequences of their own reaction. As the gamemaster, you should keep in mind that the most dangerous individuals in the Imperium are those who have become adept at navigating these threats to their independence. Such foes rarely take the direct route to achieve their goals, preferring the indirect or unexpected routes. An indirect or seemingly unpredictable approach to a goal hides one's true motivations and invites the player characters to defeat themselves with reckless action, potentially exposing their own goals to attack.

*An enemy spy is discovered within the player characters' entourage. While at first this seems like a major coup for the players, how they choose to deal with this spy will determine the true implications of this ploy.*

- *If they simply eliminate the spy, they may anger those who believed she was a loyal servant.*
- *If they interrogate the spy, they may be exposed to false information planted within her memory that could lead down a path of their enemy's choosing.*

*Perhaps the false spy even implicates a trusted ally as a traitor, backed with the certainty of false memories meant specifically to circumvent powers such as hyper-perception or the Voice.*

Intrigues run deep and take on these indirect and labyrinthine routes because humankind has evolved powers capable of piercing the illusion of lesser ploys. Many plots require a sacrifice, a pawn to be captured and left in the power of one's enemies. Then one's true forces can be brought to bear while enemies are distracted. In the most convoluted of these feints, the pawn itself is revealed to be empowered by its proximity to its captors.

Ultimately, for a gamemaster, all these issues should present more opportunity than obstacle. Every action an enemy takes should be treated with distrust, so much so that even the most blatant and superficially obvious ploy is viewed as a potential stratagem whose true nature has yet to be revealed. Such is life within the Imperium for those connected to the noble Houses: always to be on the alert for subterfuge, even when there is none. The most dangerous threat is that which has not yet been perceived, and often it is quite enough to create the illusion of danger, to divert an enemy's attention from one's true purpose.

# Chapter 9:
# Allies & Adversaries

*To attempt an understanding of Muad'Dib without understanding his mortal enemies, the Harkonnens, is to attempt seeing Truth without knowing Falsehood. It is the attempt to see the Light without knowing Darkness. It cannot be.*

*—from "Manual of Muad'Dib" by the Princess Irulan*

# Non-player Characters

**While** Arrakis and the other planets in the Imperium are mysterious and intriguing places, it is the people of *Dune* and their agenda that create the plot and adventure. The machinations of each of the various characters — be it due to greed, hatred, or love — are what drives each encounter and adventure, whether it leads to exultation or tragedy.

In this chapter we offer an array of characters for the gamemaster to use in their campaign, including a selection of 'off-the-rack' non-player characters. However, we begin with detail on the major characters in the initial saga of *Dune*, as they stand at its beginning. They might serve as inspiration for your own characters and non-player characters or even become part of your campaign. You might even play them as characters (but remember their talents currently apply to non-player characters). In your campaign, it will be up to you to decide if they become allies or adversaries of your player characters' House. They may follow their established destiny, but it is equally possible their fate may be changed by their encounter with your player characters.

Minor and Notable NPCs are created in the same way as Supporting characters of the same rank (see p.136-137). They use Momentum and Determination in a different way (see below) and instead of picking a Talent may instead choose from the NPC Special Abilities (see table on p.328).

## NPCs: Momentum, & Determination

For reasons of keeping gameplay moving, non-player characters do not quite follow the same rules as player characters.

Commonly, non-player characters (at least, those in need of stats and making skill tests) operate as opponents to the player characters. The non-player characters in this chapter have been written under that assumption. Rather than spending Momentum, their abilities spend points of Threat from the gamemaster's pool. Remember that non-player characters can save their unused Momentum as Threat.

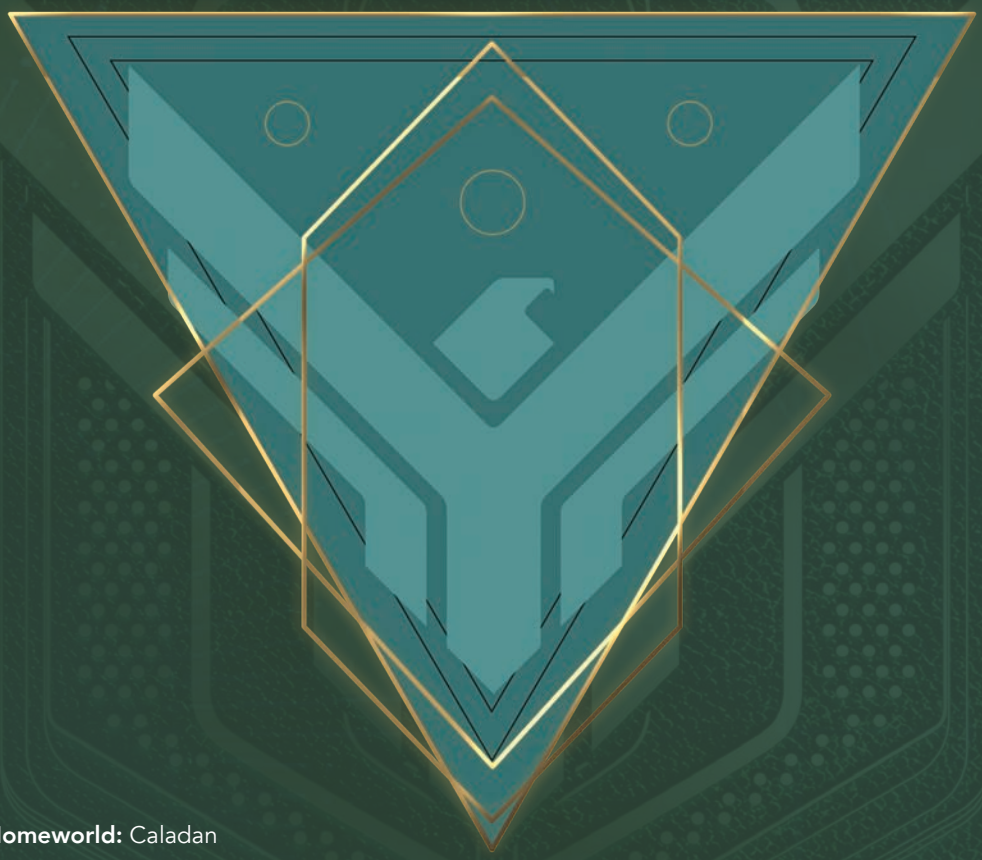
If you have a non-player character used as an ally to the players, their abilities spend Momentum instead, though they can only use Momentum from the group pool if the players agree to it.

Non-player characters do not have Determination as do player characters. Instead, a non-player character adds 3 points to Threat whenever they would gain a point of Determination, and they may spend 3 Threat to gain the benefits of spending a point of Determination. The non-player characters in this chapter have had some abilities altered to reflect this.

Finally, non-player characters do not typically have a reason to Obtain Information as players do. The gamemaster is likely to be much more knowledgeable about a situation than the non-player characters are, but should attempt to role-play non-player characters based on the knowledge they possess. However, non-player characters can still use Obtain Information to know information about the player characters, often as a prompt to call out details about them. With particularly observant characters, such as Bene Gesserit and Mentats, this may allow the gamemaster to ask the players for their characters' thoughts and feelings, or even secrets about them.

# House Atreides

**HOUSE MAJOR**



**Homeworld:** Caladan

**Other Holdings:** None

**Banners and Arms:** **Colors:** Green & Black
**Crest:** Hawk

**House Traits:** Honorable, Popular

**Primary Domains:** Farming (Produce) – Pundi Rice

**Secondary Domains:** Farming (Produce) – Moonfish, Artistic (Understanding) – Negotiation, Military (Expertise) Tacticians, Instructors

House Atreides is one of the oldest and most respected Houses of the Landsraad. While it is not the most powerful, it has carved out an important niche in the Imperium. It has not been responsible for many powerful victories since distinguishing itself at the Battle of Corrin — but it has never really taken any steps backward, managing a slow and steady rise to power.

The main export of House Atreides is a crop called 'pundi rice'. This rice is both nutritious and travels well and given the fair price the Atreides charge it has become a staple food for most of the Imperium. This focus on a minor (but now ubiquitous) farming crop, rather than military might or deadly poisons, has also made the Atreides seem less threatening to the other Houses. This has allowed them to make many friends among the Imperium and secure several allies.

Sadly, the rise in popularity of House Atreides has not gone unnoticed. The Emperor has come to fear that the Atreides might soon have enough allies to be able to challenge House Corrino for the throne. This has driven the Emperor to begin a plot to destroy House Atreides, using their old enemy, House Harkonnen.

Honorable Noble

# Duke Leto Atreides

| Drive | | Statement |
|---|---|---|
| Duty: | 8 | My House, my family, and my people: all are one. |
| Faith: | 5 | |
| Justice: | 7 | Law must rule the people, but the heart must rule the law. |
| Power: | 4 | |
| Truth: | 6 | Part of courage comes from extending our knowledge. |

| Skill | | Focuses |
|---|---|---|
| Battle: | 6 | |
| Communicate: | 7 | Charm, Diplomacy, Empathy |
| Discipline: | 7 | Composure |
| Move: | 5 | |
| Understand: | 6 | House Politics, Imperial Politics |

**Traits:** Noble, Fair and Honorable

**TALENTS:**

- **Bolster:** Leto may spend 2 Threat to allow an ally to re-roll his dice pool. He may use Discipline instead of his skill.
- **Direct:** Once per scene, Leto can give an ally an extra action on his turn.
- **Stirring Rhetoric:** When Leto succeeds at a Communicate test to address a group, select a number of those people equal to his Communicate skill. They may re-roll a single d20 on their next test that aligns with the drive used on Leto's Communicate test.

History may only remember Duke Leto Atreides as the father of Paul, but the Duke was a most able man of an able time. Under his command the Atreides rose to such power and popularity amongst their peers as to threaten the Emperor himself.

Leto took up the dukedom while still a young man following the death of his father, Duke Paulus, in a bullfighting accident. The young Duke was forced to take on the twin burdens of mourning his father and leading his House during a turbulent time. The early years of his reign on Caladan were marked by conflicts both subtle and overt with the age-old rivals of the Atreides, House Harkonnen. When the Bene Tleilax took control of Ix, Leto continued to give the Ixian House Vernius sanctuary despite the political damage it could potentially have done. Time and again, the Duke's choices led to both his increasing popularity in the Landsraad and the jealousy and suspicions of the Imperial throne.

The Duke was also noted for the company he kept. A superb judge of character, Leto gathered around him retainers and comrades who would prove to be among the most talented and insightful advisors gathered anywhere in the universe. That men such as Gurney Halleck and Duncan Idaho would follow the Duke was seen as a testament to his character.

Throughout these times Leto distinguished himself as a fair ruler, as concerned for his subjects as for the members of his own family. While he was rightly considered a just and good man, he was nevertheless remarkably pragmatic. Despite being utterly devoted to his love, the concubine Jessica, Leto never married her, shrewdly choosing to keep the possibility of marriage between himself and a noblewoman of another House as a bargaining incentive.

When the Emperor offered the Atreides the fiefdom of Arrakis and control of the spice, the Duke easily recognized it for the trap it was, but he took the gambit willingly, knowing that his duty as a leader of men required him to rise to meet even the deadliest challenge.

NOBLE CONSORT

# LADY JESSICA

| DRIVE | | STATEMENT |
|---|---|---|
| DUTY: | 7 | The Sisterhood is my family. |
| FAITH: | 8 | Leto and my son are everything. |
| JUSTICE: | 6 | I will pay for my own mistakes. |
| POWER: | 4 | |
| TRUTH: | 5 | |

| SKILL | | FOCUSES |
|---|---|---|
| BATTLE: | 6 | Short Blades |
| COMMUNICATE: | 6 | Persuasion |
| DISCIPLINE: | 7 | Self-control |
| MOVE: | 7 | Body Control |
| UNDERSTAND: | 6 | Etiquette, Faction Lore (Bene Gesserit) |

**Traits:** Consort, Bene Gesserit, Dedicated, and Devoted

## TALENTS

- **Hyperawareness:** Whenever Jessica spends Threat to Obtain Information, she may know two pieces of information about a player character for each point spent. Further, the limits of what others would be able to notice do not apply to her.
- **Passive Scrutiny:** When Jessica enters a scene, she may know one piece of hidden information as if she'd spent Threat to Obtain Information.
- **Prana-Bindu:** Jessica can re-roll 1d20 on a Move or Discipline test.
- **Voice:** Jessica can spend up to 3 points of Threat to buy automatic successes on a Communicate test (1 success/point).

Jessica was born to be a small cog in a vast plan, but through a single act of disobedience she put in motion the fall of the Imperium.

Raised by the Bene Gesserit, Jessica was groomed from childhood to be a tool of their breeding plan. Tutored in all but the deepest mysteries of the Sisterhood, Jessica was an exemplary member of the order. Brilliant, insightful, and possessed of a deep calm even in the face of peril, she was as well-suited to her assigned role as the Bene Gesserit could have dreamed.

Jessica's superiors carefully maneuvered to have Duke Leto of House Atreides choose her as a concubine. This placement was critical. Almost superficially, it was important for the Bene Gesserit to have an agent at the heart of House Atreides, but more crucially, she was ordered to bear the Duke a daughter that the Sisterhood could see married to a Harkonnen, not just mending the ancient enmity between those Houses, but bearing the Kwisatz Haderach. This super-being would then be under the direct control of the Bene Gesserit and bring to fruition millennia of plans.

It should have been a simple endeavor, but for one problem: Jessica fell in love with the Duke, who returned her feelings. Unusually for a Bene Gesserit, Jessica refused to ignore her emotions and do as she was told. Knowing that Leto wanted a son as an heir she chose to bear a boy rather than a girl as her first child. The Sisterhood was livid but could do little. With typical pragmatism they decided that they could wait a few more years for Jessica to bear a daughter as well. However, her actions nearly made Jessica an outcast. She was forced to make concessions to the Sisterhood and allow them to test Paul when he came of age.

Despite her loyalties and love for the Bene Gesserit, Jessica proved to be very much her own creature. Ultimately, it seemed, her love for the Duke and their son, and her fealty to House Atreides, would prove stronger than her duty to the Sisterhood, a fact that would have far-reaching repercussions.

KWISATZ HADERACH IN WAITING

# PAUL ATREIDES

| DRIVE | | STATEMENT |
|---|---|---|
| DUTY: | 6 | People are the true strength of a Great House. |
| FAITH: | 7 | I must learn quickly to be worthy of my father's legacy. |
| JUSTICE: | 4 | |
| POWER: | 5 | |
| TRUTH: | 8 | There are problems in this universe for which there are no answers. |

| SKILL | | FOCUSES |
|---|---|---|
| BATTLE: | 6 | Shield Fighting, Short Blades |
| COMMUNICATE: | 5 | Charm |
| DISCIPLINE: | 6 | Precision, Self-control |
| MOVE: | 5 | Body Control |
| UNDERSTAND: | 6 | Imperial Politics |

**Traits:** Noble Scion, Wise Beyond His Years, Destined for Greatness

**TALENTS**

- **Cool Under Pressure (Battle):** Paul may automatically succeed on a Battle skill test by spending 3 Threat (1 Determination).
- **Direct:** Once per scene, Paul may give an ally an extra action on his turn.
- **Prana-Bindu:** Paul may re-roll 1d20 on a Move or Discipline test.
- **The Slow Blade:** Paul may ignore an enemy asset in a duel or skirmish when he buys additional dice with Threat while making an attack.
- **Voice:** Paul may spend up to 3 points of Threat to buy automatic successes on a Communicate test (1 success/point).

The first and only child of Duke Leto Atreides and his concubine, the Bene Gesserit adept Lady Jessica, Paul was heir apparent to the Atreides dynasty. A boy of only fifteen, none could foresee how his destiny would shake the universe.

Paul's very existence was an issue of secret contention amongst the Bene Gesserit who had ordered his mother to bear a daughter for Duke Leto. Conceived and born during a turbulent time for the Atreides, Paul was raised with great love by his parents. Despite the dangerous political turmoil in which House Atreides was embroiled, Paul's childhood was sheltered from the worst dangers.

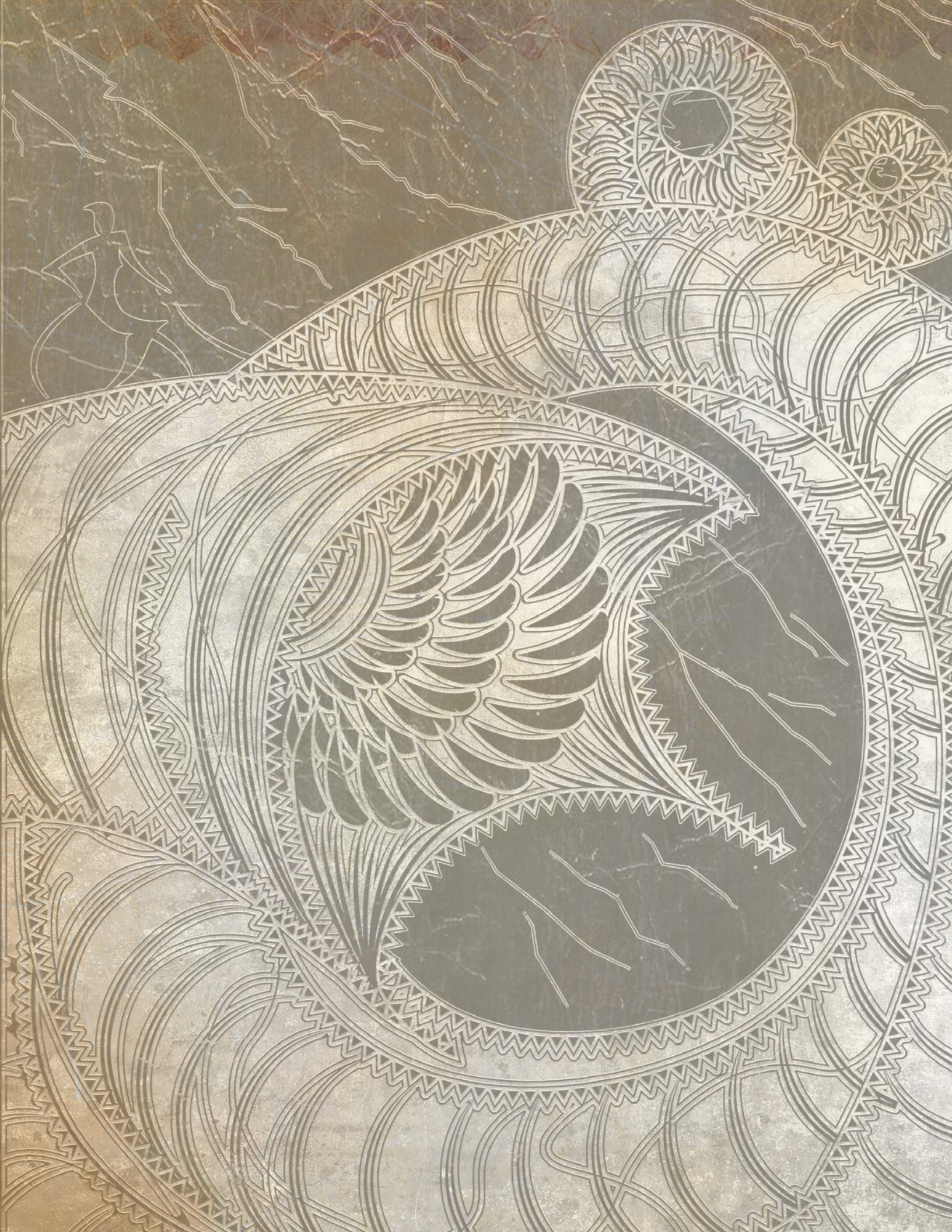
As he grew older, Paul received tutelage from the Atreides' trusted retainers. The Duke had gathered about him some of the greatest men of his age: the renowned swordmaster Duncan Idaho, the warrior-troubadour Gurney Halleck, and the Mentat Thufir Hawat, among others. These experts in their fields provided Paul a superlative education and he proved to be a fine student.

By the age of fifteen Paul Atreides had been groomed for greatness, not least by his mother. The Lady Jessica, though only an adept of the Bene Gesserit, sensed a great fate around her son. Knowing that Paul's birth interrupted generations of breeding plans by the Reverend Mothers, she suspected he might even be the fabled Kwisatz Haderach, the super-being that the Sisterhood sought to control for itself. Accordingly, she trained Paul in the mysteries of the Bene Gesserit, forgoing the usual order of instruction that he might be prepared for the dangerous times she foresaw. This decision was given grudging approval by the Reverend Mother Gaius Mohiam after she administered to Paul the dreaded gom jabbar.

When the Emperor ordered House Atreides to take control of Arrakis and the harvesting of spice, Paul was as prepared for what came next as any boy could possibly be. Though yet untested in command and combat, Paul bore all the makings of a great leader. From his father he'd learned a keen sense of justice and empathy, tempered with steely resolve. From his mother, an appreciation for political subtlety and the philosophies of the Bene Gesserit. His parents were as devoted to him as he was to them, and they gave him every possible advantage against the many dangers they foresaw in his future. Paul would one day rule House Atreides, and the Duke and his concubine knew that the greatest dangers imaginable would one day be his alone to face.

But Paul was still growing into manhood. He'd been groomed to follow in his father's footsteps but had not yet faced the hardest realities of leadership. He was not naïve, but he was inexperienced in the vicious maneuvering of the Imperial throne and the Houses of the Landsraad, to say nothing of the subtlest machinations of the Guild and Bene Gesserit.

At the beginning of the Arrakis Affair, Paul Atreides stood unknowingly at a nexus of events that would prove to change the very order of humanity itself. He had begun to have troubling dreams of a future in which he alone would make decisions with ramifications millennia in their unfolding.



Warrior Troubadour

# Gurney Halleck

| Drive | | Statement |
|---|---|---|
| Duty: | 8 | The Atreides have given me everything, I will do the same in return. |
| Faith: | 4 | |
| Justice: | 7 | There's no justice but what we make ourselves. |
| Power: | 5 | |
| Truth: | 6 | Truth's a complex thing, but we know it when we see it. |

| Skill | | Focuses |
|---|---|---|
| Battle: | 8 | Short Blades, Tactics |
| Communicate: | 6 | Music (Baliset) |
| Discipline: | 7 | Resolve |
| Move: | 6 | |
| Understand: | 5 | |

**Traits:** Warrior, Jongleur

**TALENTS**

- **Bolster:** Gurney can spend 2 Threat to allow an ally to re-roll their dice pool. They may use Gurney's Discipline instead of their skill.
- **The Reason I Fight (Duty):** When Gurney attempts a Battle test using the chosen drive, and the drive's statement aligns with the action being attempted, he may re-roll 1d20.
- **The Slow Blade:** Gurney may ignore an enemy asset in a duel or skirmish when he buys additional dice with Threat while making an attack.
- **Unquestionable Loyalty (House Atreides):** At the start of each adventure, Gurney begins with a pool of 3 Threat (equivalent to 1 Determination) which only he may use and which may only be used on an action in direct service to House Atreides.

The Warmaster of House Atreides, Gurney Halleck is one of the most reputed fighters in the Imperium, renowned for his prowess in combat and his equal skill as a poet and musician.

Born in the slave pits of Giedi Prime, Halleck knew a life of privation and suffering. His time under the Harkonnen boot left scars both in body and soul, but never broke his spirit. He still bears the scars of an inkvine lash across his jaw, and his own sister was murdered by the Harkonnens, an act he has never forgiven.

After his escape from Giedi Prime, Halleck became embroiled in conflicts involving House Vernius of Ix, eventually leading to his arrival on Caladan and his association with the Atreides. In time, his service to the Atreides became more than a matter of employ. Their just and noble ways touched him deeply, and he soon came to view the Duke and his family as his own.

Halleck was a man of contradictions. The hardness of his earlier life left him an ugly man, but his heart was filled with poetry. His skill with all manner of weapons was equaled by his mastery of the baliset and music. His ruthlessness against his enemies was matched only by the kindness he bore for those he loved.

Quick with an appropriate quotation or poem, Halleck became a close friend and mentor to the young Paul Atreides. He taught the young noble to fight with shield and kindjal and tutored him in the finer points of the arts. He saw young Paul as the son he never had and would willingly give his life for him, as he would for any of the Atreides.

In the days leading up to the Atreides investiture of Arrakis, Halleck was one of the key members of the Duke's war council, plotting strategy and tactics and doing everything possible to thwart the Harkonnens. In the years to come his loyalty would be tested and proven again and again.

## Spymaster Mentat
# Thufir Hawat

| Drive | | Statement |
|---|---|---|
| Duty: | 8 | The protection of the Atreides is my reason to live. |
| Faith: | 4 | |
| Justice: | 6 | Right and wrong must be measured against my responsibilities. |
| Power: | 5 | |
| Truth: | 7 | The primacy of my agenda is ruled only by fact. |

| Skill | | Focuses |
|---|---|---|
| Battle: | 6 | Assassination, Strategy |
| Communicate: | 5 | |
| Discipline: | 7 | Observe |
| Move: | 5 | |
| Understand: | 8 | Data Analysis, Deductive Reasoning, Imperial Politics, Kanly |

**Traits:** Mentat, Insightful and Resourceful, Spymaster

**TALENTS**

- **Advisor (Understand):** Thufir may re-roll a single d20 in the dice pool of an ally he assists.
- **Cautious (Understand):** Thufir may re-roll a single d20 gained from spending Threat on an Understand skill test.
- **Mentat Discipline:** Thufir may add two automatic successes on all Understand tests he attempts when remembering facts or data.
- **Mind Palace:** Thufir may revisit a scene in his mind and attempt to Obtain Information.

Thufir Hawat's name rang out with respect and fear across the Imperium. One of the finest Mentats to ever live, Hawat was a trusted advisor to Duke Leto Atreides and a formidable opponent to their enemies.

Hawat had served the Atreides for three generations by the time of the Arrakis Affair. By the time Leto inherited the dukedom Hawat had established security protocols and a vast network of spies honed for over a century. Hawat's counsel was a large part of Leto's success in the following years, and the aged Mentat was a part of the Duke's trusted inner circle, as he had been for the dukes before him.

Hawat was an exceptionally talented Mentat, able to compute likely outcomes with a high degree of accuracy. His natural aptitude was enormous, but the breadth and depth of his intelligence network provided him an unparalleled quality of data from which he could operate. Hawat's spies were thought to be insinuated even amongst the intelligence operations of the Imperial House.

As the Atreides Master of Assassins, Hawat was instrumental in both counterespionage and the elimination of dangerous opposition elements. While the Atreides always took pains to abide by the formal rules of kanly in such disputes, Hawat's ruthlessness saw that the House rarely paid the price of abiding by the spirit of the law when their opponents did not. His love for the Atreides ensured that Hawat provided the most superlative service possible of a Mentat, extending even to the training of Paul Atreides in his dark arts.

Hawat's brilliance and bloody-minded attention to detail was the fist in the Atreides' velvet glove, a fact that their enemies frequently came to learn with regret.

## Loyal Swordmaster
# Duncan Idaho

| Drive | | Statement |
|---|---|---|
| Duty: | 8 | I will give my all for those I have sworn to protect. |
| Faith: | 7 | The universe is vast, a man must find his own way. |
| Justice: | 6 | My own word and oath are all I need to measure the deeds of others. |
| Power: | 4 | |
| Truth: | 5 | |

| Skill | | Focuses |
|---|---|---|
| Battle: | 8 | Long Blades |
| Communicate: | 6 | Charm |
| Discipline: | 8 | Resolve |
| Move: | 6 | Distance Running |
| Understand: | 5 | |

**Traits:** Charismatic Survivor, Ginaz Swordmaster

### Talents

- **Bold (Battle):** Duncan may re-roll a d20 gained from spending Threat on a Battle skill test.
- **Driven:** After Duncan spends 3 Threat for 1 point of Determination, roll 1d20. If he rolls equal to or under his Discipline rating (by itself), he immediately regains those spent Threat.
- **Make Haste:** Duncan may choose to suffer one additional complication in a Move test to gain one automatic success. During any conflict, he may spend 1 Threat to take the first action, regardless of who would otherwise act first.
- **Master-at-Arms:** At the start of a duel, skirmish, or battle, Duncan can spend 1 point of Threat to increase a martial asset he has by +1 Quality for that conflict.

Swordmaster of House Atreides, Duncan Idaho was one of the finest warriors in the universe. Fiercely loyal to the Duke and his son, he was their bodyguard and trusted friend.

Brought up on Giedi Prime, Idaho was trained to be a prey animal, for the entertainment of Rabban Harkonnen, while Duncan was only a boy. However, he managed to escape certain death at the hands of his hunters and find his way to Caladan. When he saw how different the Atreides were from the brutal Harkonnens, he offered his undying loyalty to Duke Paulus. He showed such steadfast dedication to the Atreides, no matter what task was given to him, that Leto sent him for training with the Ginaz swordmasters, where he excelled.

In the years that followed Idaho proved himself time and again against the Atreides enemies, especially the hated Harkonnens. His deeds were many and fearsome, and he was well-liked by the people of Caladan and the other vassals of the House.

A notably handsome man, Idaho was also known for his many dalliances and love affairs. His reputation, good looks, and irreverent attitude made him a subject of popular attention. Despite this, his seriousness was never in question when it came to his duty. Notable among these duties was his service as fighting instructor, and eventually close friend, to the young Paul Atreides.

Despite his love of the Atreides, he never fully trusted the Lady Jessica. Though he had great affection for her, he privately worried that her ties to the Bene Gesserit might one day compel her against her family.

When Duke Leto accepted the fiefdom of Arrakis, Idaho was among the first envoys he sent to that planet. He hoped that the people of Dune might judge House Atreides on the strength of Idaho's character, and that the charismatic warrior might be instrumental in forging alliances that their House could count upon in the turbulent times that lay ahead.

Reluctant Traitor

# Dr. Wellington Yueh

| Drive | | Statement |
|---|---|---|
| Duty: | 4 | |
| Faith: | 7 | Who can believe in a greater power when evil is unavoidable? |
| Justice: | 8 | My course of action is terrible, yet I must find a way to do right. |
| Power: | 5 | |
| Truth: | 6 | I do not know what is true anymore, but I will act nonetheless. |

| Skill | | Focuses |
|---|---|---|
| Battle: | 4 | |
| Communicate: | 7 | Deceit, Teaching |
| Discipline: | 5 | |
| Move: | 4 | |
| Understand: | 8 | Genetics, Surgery |

**Traits:** Suk Doctor, Despises the Harkonnens

**TALENTS**

- **Advisor (Understand):** Yueh may re-roll a single d20 in the dice pool of an ally he assists.
- **Imperial Conditioning:** Any attempt to coerce Yueh into harming a human automatically fails, and he automatically succeeds on any skill test to persuade another that he intends them no harm. Attempts by the Harkonnens are exempt from this talent as they have found Yueh's weakness — the safety of his wife Wanna.
- **Intense Study:** Once per scene, Yueh may use his Understand skill on a single skill test instead of any other skill, and he is counted as having a focus for that test.

Chief physician of House Atreides, Dr. Wellington Yueh was a trusted confidant, advisor, and friend to the inner circle of the Duke's family. He was also a man with a deadly secret.

A graduate of the Suk Inner School, Yueh served the Atreides for many years. He was a superlative medical practitioner and possessed of a kind manner, well-liked by the Duke's household. His modest demeanor made him more popular than many Suk doctors, often known for their arrogance and cold personalities. While Yueh carried himself with confidence and refined manners, he was nonetheless a gentle man who could be very charming when he felt himself to be in the company of friends.

Yueh was a subject of the Suk School's so-called Imperial conditioning, and therefore was incapable of causing the harm of another human being, and certainly not of those under his care. The diamond brand on his forehead assured all who saw it that Yueh was a doctor suitable to minister to the Emperor himself without risk of treachery.

When the Atreides took control of Arrakis, this was no longer true.

In fact, the twisted Mentat Piter de Vries of House Harkonnen had suborned Yueh in secret, years prior. The doctor's wife, Wanna, had fallen into the clutches of the Harkonnens, and through a combination of simple blackmail and subtle, psychological manipulation, de Vries accomplished the unthinkable: he broke Yueh's Suk conditioning.

When the Atreides left for Arrakis they carried with them the most reluctant of traitors-in-waiting. Yueh was wracked by the pressures of the likely futile chance to recover his wife, his hatred for the Harkonnens, and his guilt at knowing he would soon betray the people he respected most in the universe.

The results of Yueh's tortured psyche would have results surprising to all involved.

# House Harkonnen

**HOUSE MAJOR**

**Homeworld:** Giedi Prime

**Other Holdings:** Lankiveil, Arrakis (Governorship)

**Banners and Arms:** **Colors:** Red & Black
**Crest:** Sigil

**House Traits:** Brutal, Cunning

**Primary Domains:** Farming (Produce) – Spice (Current Governors of Arrakis)

**Secondary Domains:** Industrial (Produce) – Refined Alloys, Industrial (Produce) – Mass-produced Goods.

The name Harkonnen is synonymous with brutality, cruelty, and ambition. Among the great Houses of the Landsraad none are as feared and few are as envied as House Harkonnen.

The Harkonnens labored as a House Minor for many centuries, near-outcasts as the result of an ancient betrayal for which they have always blamed the Atreides. Only in comparatively recent times did the Harkonnens manage to gain the wealth and resources to become recognized as a Great House, an accomplishment soaked in blood and born of quiet betrayals.

Their capital and homeworld is the planet Giedi Prime. An industrialized world, the lower castes are held in slavery or near-slavery under the savage whip of Harkonnen rule. The Harkonnens and their associated noble families relished cruelty, and public bloodsports are a leading form of entertainment.

For decades, Siridar Baron Vladimir Harkonnen had been entrusted by the Emperor with the management of spice on the fiefdom of Arrakis (taking over from House Richese). There, the Baron and his family have crushed the planet's natives in order to squeeze every last milligram of spice wealth into their coffers. Few outside Arrakis really care how the people are treated as long as the spice flows.

Another House might be content to have control of the greatest source of wealth in the known universe, but not the Harkonnens. Baron Vladimir has many plans for himself and his dynasty to further their ambitions — ambitions for which they are capable of any act, no matter how terrible.

Devious Noble

# Siridar Baron Vladimir Harkonnen

| Drive | | Statement |
|---|---|---|
| Duty: | 7 | I am House Harkonnen, and I owe loyalty only to my House. |
| Faith: | 6 | Faith's a fine thing insofar as it allows one to control one's inferiors. |
| Justice: | 4 | |
| Power: | 8 | What else is there in all of life but the pursuit of one's strength? |
| Truth: | 5 | |

| Skill | | Focuses |
|---|---|---|
| Battle: | 4 | Strategy |
| Communicate: | 6 | Deceit |
| Discipline: | 6 | Espionage |
| Move: | 4 | |
| Understand: | 8 | House Politics, Imperial Politics |

**Traits:** Noble, Cunning and Cruel

**TALENTS**

- **Binding Promise:** The Baron may spend 1, 2, or 3 points of Threat to make an agreement binding. To break it, an opponent must spend twice this in Momentum.
- **Constantly Watching:** Whenever Baron Harkonnen attempts a test to detect danger or hidden enemies, he reduces the Difficulty by 2, to a minimum of 0. In addition, once per scene, he can increase the cost for an opponent to Keep the Initiative by +2.
- **Direct:** Once per scene, Baron Harkonnen can give an ally an extra action on his turn.
- **Subtle Words:** Baron Harkonnen can create a new trait whenever he spends Threat for extra dice on a Communicate test.

Siridar Baron Vladimir Harkonnen was one of the most feared, hated, and admired men in all the Imperium. From his home on Giedi Prime, the Baron ruled with an iron fist, sans velvet glove.

A corpulent and venal man, the Baron took great pleasure in the discomfort his appearance caused in others. So fat that he required a suspensor harness for mobility, Baron Harkonnen delighted in making his allies and rivals alike uncomfortable. As a younger man he took great pride in his body, until a virulent disease corrupted his hard work. The loss of his athletic physique remained a sore point to the Baron, although he hid this vanity to all but those who knew him well.

Baron Harkonnen was a man of brutal policies but was possessed of a subtle mind. Having raised his House to untold heights of power, his schemes and plots were multitudinous, some decades in the offing. He was a man who did not brook failure in his subordinates, and even his own heirs feared and hated him, a fact of which he was keenly aware and, indeed, encouraged. His closest confidant was the twisted Mentat Piter de Vries, chosen by the Baron precisely for his perverse and cynical mind. It was de Vries whom the Baron encouraged to play his nephews against one another to better control them. This cruelty in policy dripped down to every level of the House, and those that toiled under the Harkonnens suffered terribly.

It was the Baron's maneuvering that gained House Harkonnen the Imperial favor of control of Arrakis and the spice melange. The House's fortunes swelled under the Baron's rule, eclipsing every accomplishment of his forbearers. The wealth gained legitimately was only eclipsed by the embezzling and hoarding of spice that occurred under the Baron's direction.

The Baron's ambitions were not fulfilled through this wealth. It was his desire to see House Harkonnen rise to take the Imperial throne itself, a goal he set about achieving through the most complex of stratagems, utilizing his two nephews as willing pawns. With the aid of de Vries, the Baron set into motion a plan that would see the Atreides temporarily gain control of the precious fiefdom of Arrakis, but only that he might supplant and destroy them entirely, with the help of an Emperor whom he would soon after betray. The outcome of this plot would prove to be more complex than even the Baron himself could imagine.

Twisted Mentat

# Piter de Vries

| Drive | | Statement |
|---|---|---|
| Duty: | 7 | I serve the Baron in all things, but I am my own man. |
| Faith: | 5 | |
| Justice: | 4 | |
| Power: | 8 | Domination is the only noble pursuit. |
| Truth: | 6 | Absolute truth is required when forging a more useful truth. |

| Skill | | Focuses |
|---|---|---|
| Battle: | 5 | Assassination |
| Communicate: | 5 | |
| Discipline: | 7 | |
| Move: | 5 | |
| Understand: | 8 | Data Analysis, House Politics, Imperial Politics |

**Traits:** Twisted Mentat, Killer

**TALENTS**

- **Advisor (Understand):** Piter may re-roll a single d20 in the dice pool of an ally he assists.
- **Driven:** After Piter spends Threat to gain the use of Determination, roll 1d20. If he rolls equal to or under his Discipline rating (by itself), he immediately regains that spent Threat.
- **Mentat Discipline:** Add two automatic successes on all Understand tests Piter attempts when remembering facts or data.
- **Twisted Mentat:** Piter gains 1 bonus point of Threat when he adds to Threat on an Understand test. He may only use this to Obtain Information, or to create a trait exploiting an opponent's weakness or causing pain and suffering.

Piter de Vries was a vicious, sadistic, and brilliant Mentat, and perhaps the closest approximation of a friend to Baron Vladimir Harkonnen. A product of Bene Tleilax 'twisting', de Vries served as House Harkonnen's primary Mentat, working to further his master's ambitions.

Where standard Mentats are meticulously trained and conditioned to act without base emotion, de Vries' worst tendencies had all been encouraged. While he still possessed the razor-sharp insight of any other Mentat, he was prone to adding cruel flourishes to plans crafted from the output of his computations. This sadism was highly appealing to the Baron, who valued him greatly but never fully trusted him or considered him anything but expendable.

De Vries' greatest accomplishment was the breaking of Dr. Wellington Yueh's Suk conditioning in the furtherance of the Baron's agenda. Just how the Mentat accomplished this seemingly impossible feat remains poorly understood, but it is known he utilized the kidnapping of the doctor's wife as a psychological fulcrum against which his conditioning was shattered.

De Vries commanded an intelligence network to rival that of any power in the Imperium and schemed ceaselessly on behalf of the Harkonnens, and likely, himself. The extent of the evils he accomplished in his life can only be guessed.

Elegant Knife Fighter

# Feyd-Rautha

| Drive | | Statement |
|---|---|---|
| Duty: | 6 | I serve the House because it will one day be mine. |
| Faith: | 7 | I am the best at everything I do. |
| Justice: | 4 | |
| Power: | 8 | I deserve to have everything I want. |
| Truth: | 5 | |

| Skill | | Focuses |
|---|---|---|
| Battle: | 7 | Short Blades |
| Communicate: | 6 | Intimidation, Listening |
| Discipline: | 5 | |
| Move: | 7 | Swift |
| Understand: | 6 | |

**Traits:** Duelist, Arrogant and Ruthless

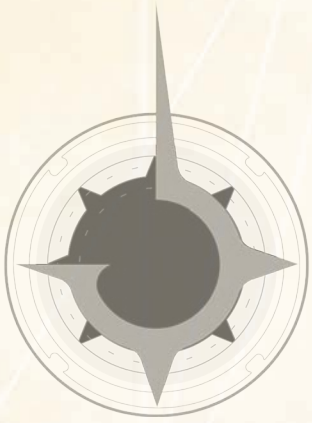
**TALENTS**

- **Bold (Battle):** Feyd may re-roll a d20 gained from spending Threat on a Battle skill test.
- **Decisive Action:** After successfully removing an enemy asset with Battle, Feyd may remove a second enemy asset by spending 2 Threat.
- **Rapid Maneuver:** When attempting a skill test to reach a destination quickly when moving on foot or in a vehicle, Feyd can reduce the Difficulty by 1 for attempts to reach a destination quickly by any means. In a conflict, when Feyd moves an asset, he may move it an additional zone by spending 1 point of Threat.
- **The Reason I Fight (Power):** When Feyd attempts a Battle test using the chosen drive, and the drive's statement aligns with the action being attempted, he may re-roll 1d20.
- **The Slow Blade:** Feyd may ignore an enemy asset in a duel or skirmish when he buys additional dice with Threat while making an attack.

The favored protégé of Baron Harkonnen, Feyd was as beautiful as his mentor was repulsive, and as deadly as almost any man alive. The young noble was noted for a cruel streak surprising even by Harkonnen standards and was poised on the edge of greatness, in no small part due to his existence as another part of the far-ranging Bene Gesserit breeding program.

Of the baron's two nephews and chosen heirs, Feyd was the obvious favorite. The Baron's attraction to Feyd helped forgive many of his faults and indulge his desires. The young man was an accomplished fighter and gladiatorial combatant as a teenager and had already dispatched a great number of slaves in the arena before the age of 20. Feyd favored poisoned blades and was known to illustrate the effects of various toxins on his dying opponents for the entertainment of the audience. However, great care was always taken to ensure no gladiator slave stood a chance of actually winning, granting Feyd an inflated view of his combat skill.

While he lacked the experience of command, Feyd possessed a sharp mind, and was carefully tutored by the twisted Mentat Piter de Vries. The Baron himself took pains to educate young Feyd, seeing in the cruel young man a potential heir to not just the Harkonnen barony but to the Empire he hoped to soon control.



Brutal Warrior

# Glossu 'The Beast' Rabban

| Drive | | Statement |
|---|---|---|
| Duty: | 6 | Fear keeps subordinates in line. |
| Faith: | 7 | I don't need to understand a plan to know it will benefit me. |
| Justice: | 4 | |
| Power: | 8 | I'm stronger so I'm better. |
| Truth: | 5 | |

| Skill | | Focuses |
|---|---|---|
| Battle: | 7 | Lasgun |
| Communicate: | 5 | Intimidation |
| Discipline: | 5 | |
| Move: | 6 | Stealth |
| Understand: | 4 | |

**Traits:** Thuggish Tyrant, Brutal and Vicious

**TALENTS**

- **Bold (Battle):** Rabban may re-roll a d20 gained from spending Threat on a Battle skill test.
- **Make Haste:** Rabban may choose to suffer one additional complication in a Move test to gain one automatic success. During any conflict, he may spend 1 Threat to take the first action, regardless of who would otherwise act first.
- **Master-at-Arms:** At the start of a duel, skirmish, or battle, Rabban may spend 1 point of Threat to increase a martial asset he has by +1 Quality for that conflict.

The eldest of the two Rabban brothers, Glossu was as brutal as his sibling was sly. Infamous as a brute tyrant, Rabban was one of the most hated men of his time.

Having killed his father on their homeworld of Lankiveil, Rabban was taken under the wing of Baron Harkonnen who, lacking progeny of his own, saw that his nephews might suffice to become his heirs. Of the two, Rabban proved a useful tool for brutality but little else. The Baron tried to train him in the art of statecraft and subtle deception. However, Rabban never really understood the complexities of politics and often ruined a plan by taking direct action in an attempt to impress the Baron.

It wasn't long before Baron Vladimir turned his attention to Feyd, although Rabban failed to notice he was out of favor. This is mainly because the Baron granted him the governance of Arrakis after the Emperor bequeathed that fief to the Harkonnens. 'The Beast' brutalized the population of Arrakis, and the native Fremen in particular, for many years. He was too unwise to realize that this mismanagement was precisely what the Baron wanted, as it would allow Feyd to appear as a savior when he took over.

While the subtleties of his position escaped him, Rabban didn't really care. The governance of Arrakis allowed him opportunity for betrayal, revenge, and savagery, which is all he really wanted. Though he despised his cleverer younger brother, and failed to understand his uncle's subtle stratagems, Rabban was utterly dedicated to the Harkonnen cause, knowing that it would continue to give him endless opportunities to delight in violence.

# House Corrino

**IMPERIAL (GREAT) HOUSE**

Imperial (Great) House

**Homeworld:** Kaitain

**Other Holdings:** Salusa Secundus (Prison Planet)

**Banners and Arms:** **Colors:** Gold & Scarlet
**Crest:** Lion

**House Traits:** Imperial, Wealthy

**Primary Domains:** Military (Workers) – Sardaukar Soldiers

**Secondary Domains:** Several diverse interests in partnership with other houses as Imperial partner

The Imperial House and greatest of the Houses of the Landsraad, House Corrino has ruled the Known Universe for thousands of years. Mired in intrigues both internal and external, the Corrinos are ruthless and as addicted to power as they are to the spice.

House Corrino rose to power approximately ten thousand years ago, after a decisive victory at the Battle of Corrin, from which the House takes its name. Their household moved to their present throne-world, Kaitain, from their original homeworld of Salusa Secundus, which they maintained as a prison planet.

The Imperial House's grip on the Empire is absolute. Ruling through a combination of subtle political acumen and the strategic application of brute force, their supremacy has been unchallenged for an unthinkable era.

Corrino hegemony is maintained by the infamous Sardaukar, the premier fighting force of the entire Empire. The merest rumor of their deployment being sufficient to see belligerents seek terms of surrender, the Sardaukar are more than capable of seeing that House Corrino keeps their throne.

It is believed that only if all the Houses of the Landsraad were to join in opposition to House Corrino might they have a chance at defeating the Sardaukar. It is a notion the Corrinos take seriously, working tirelessly to sow division among allies and enemies alike.

PADISHAH EMPEROR

# SHADDAM IV

| DRIVE | | STATEMENT |
|---|---|---|
| DUTY: | 7 | The crown lies heavy, but is made of gold. |
| FAITH: | 4 | |
| JUSTICE: | 6 | Lesser people must look to their superiors to know what is right. |
| POWER: | 8 | The universe belongs to me. |
| TRUTH: | 5 | |

| SKILL | | FOCUSES |
|---|---|---|
| BATTLE: | 5 | |
| COMMUNICATE: | 6 | |
| DISCIPLINE: | 7 | Command, Composure |
| MOVE: | 5 | |
| UNDERSTAND: | 7 | House Politics, Imperial Politics |

**Traits:** Emperor of the Known Universe, Paranoid Schemer

**TALENTS**

- **Cautious (Communicate):** The Emperor may re-roll a single d20 gained from spending Threat on a Communicate skill test.
- **Collaboration (Understand):** The Emperor may spend 2 Threat to allow an ally to use his Understand skill as his own.
- **Constantly Watching:** Whenever the Emperor attempts a test to detect danger or hidden enemies, he reduces the Difficulty by 2, to a minimum of 0. In addition, once per scene, he can increase the cost for an opponent to Keep the Initiative by +2.
- **Rigorous Control:** The Emperor may use Discipline instead of any skill in an extended test. He gains +1 to the requirement if the skill was already Discipline.

Shaddam Corrino IV, 81st Padishah Emperor of the known universe, rules the greatest empire ever known to humankind. The responsibilities and duties of wielding this enormous power are as burdensome to him as they were rewarding.

Father of five daughters by the Bene Gesserit sister Anirul, Shaddam is as concerned with his legacy as he was with ruling his Empire. Without a son, he requires a male heir by marriage to inherit the Empire. As a result, much of his time is spent in subtle intrigues with the lesser Houses of the Landsraad in order to not only find a suitable husband for his favored daughter, Irulan, but to ensure no other Houses might threaten Corrino.

Like all Corrinos, Shaddam is prone to baroque plans and a conspiratorial mindset. Shaddam feels threatened by the growing popularity and martial strength of Duke Leto of House Atreides. Privately, he is known to have admired Duke Leto and once saw in him a suitable heir, but his political analysis has convinced him that Leto is more of a threat than any other.

It is these obsessions that have led Shaddam to court the Baron Harkonnen, a man he finds loathsome, in order to secure what he hopes will be a suitable heir to his lineage and the legacy of his House. With the aid of his maternal cousin and oldest friend, the Count Hasimir Fenring, Shaddam has set in motion a plan to see the Atreides destroyed by the Harkonnens without revealing his direct involvement.

## Heir to the Imperium

# Princess Irulan

| Drive | | Statement |
|---|---|---|
| Duty: | 8 | My destiny was shaped for me, but I will choose how I meet it. |
| Faith: | 4 | |
| Justice: | 6 | |
| Power: | 5 | |
| Truth: | 7 | |

| Skill | | Focuses |
|---|---|---|
| Battle: | 4 | |
| Communicate: | 6 | Charm |
| Discipline: | 5 | Observe |
| Move: | 6 | Dance |
| Understand: | 7 | Imperial Politics |

**Traits:** Princess, Academic, Bene Gesserit

**TALENTS**

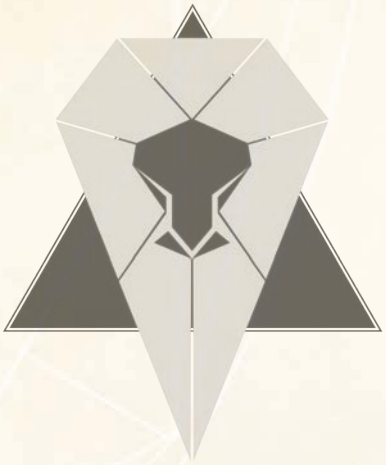
- **Intense Study:** Once per scene, Irulan may use her Understand skill on a single skill test instead of any other skill, and she is counted as having a focus for that test.
- **Masterful Innuendo:** Irulan may conceal a hidden message in a conversation by adding 1 to the Difficulty of the Communicate test.
- **Prana-Bindu:** Irulan may re-roll 1d20 on a Move or Discipline test.

The most beautiful and arguably the most perceptive of Shaddam IV's five daughters, Irulan was groomed from a young age to be a marriageable pawn in her father's schemes. Raised in the Imperial crèche, she was subject to all the intrigues of House Corrino from the moment of her birth.

Highly intelligent, but also proud and haughty, Irulan benefited from a superb education. Her interests in literary and historical writing would prove to be of aid to her over the course of her life, but she was also an initiate of the Bene Gesserit. Her mother, a Bene Gesserit of Hidden Rank, saw that Irulan was tutored in the Sisterhood's ways, but Irulan would prove to be only a moderately talented pupil and never rose above the rank of adept. Even so, she remained more loyal to the Sisterhood than her father in many cases.

Irulan's relationship with her family was quietly strife-filled. Rivalries and intrigue abounded between the royal sisters, and even their parents. Like all her siblings, she was tutored in the means of detecting, and perhaps administering, chaumas and chaumurky. Plots of many kinds were a fundamental part of her life and left her mistrustful and cynical.

While Irulan was well-suited to the role her father intended for her, she also had an independent streak, accompanied by a sharp mind. This, combined with her immersion in conspiracy from a young age, left the young princess able to outmaneuver even her father from time to time.



Imperial Truthsayer

# Reverend Mother Gaius Helen Mohiam

| Drive | | Statement |
|---|---|---|
| Duty: | 8 | I know my place in our plan. |
| Faith: | 7 | The mystery of life isn't a problem to solve, but a reality to experience. |
| Justice: | 6 | People should get what they deserve. |
| Power: | 5 | |
| Truth: | 4 | |

| Skill | | Focuses |
|---|---|---|
| Battle: | 5 | |
| Communicate: | 7 | Deceit |
| Discipline: | 7 | Observe |
| Move: | 5 | |
| Understand: | 7 | Imperial Politics |

**Traits:** Bene Gesserit, Reverend Mother, Truthsayer

### Talents

- **Advisor (Communicate):** The Reverend Mother may re-roll a single d20 in the dice pool of an ally she assists.
- **Cool Under Pressure (Understand):** The Reverend Mother may spend 3 Threat (1 Determination) on to automatically succeed at an Understand test.
- **Hyperawareness:** Whenever the Reverend Mother spends Threat (Momentum) to Obtain Information she may ask two questions for each point spent. Further, the limits of what others would be able to notice do not apply to her.
- **Other Memory:** The Reverend Mother may remember things from years before she was born through this ability.
- **Passive Scrutiny:** When the Reverend Mother enters a scene, she may ask one question of the gamemaster as if she'd spent Threat to Obtain Information.
- **Prana-Bindu:** The Reverend Mother may re-roll 1d20 on a Move or Discipline test.
- **Voice:** The Reverend Mother may spend up to 3 points of Threat to buy automatic successes on a Communicate test (1 success/point).

Truthsayer to the Emperor, the Reverend Mother Gaius Helen Mohiam epitomized what it meant to be a Bene Gesserit. Aged but not frail, Mohiam was a powerful woman in every way conceivable.

A product and progenitor of the Bene Gesserit breeding program, Mohiam was steeped in the Sisterhood's ways from the time of her birth. As a young woman she had been instrumental in furthering their plans, birthing nine children by fathers of the Sisterhood's choosing (including Baron Vladimir Harkonnen). She was a master of prana-bindu and a full Reverend Mother, having successfully transmuted the Water of Life.

Notably, Mohiam possessed the full Bene Gesserit truthsense. Her ability to interpret another's intentions and drives was unparalleled, and paired with her staggering intellect, she rose quickly through the ranks of the Sisterhood.

At the time of the Arrakis Affair, Mohiam has been elevated to the Imperial court where she serves as the Emperor's personal Truthsayer. Though she is a dedicated servant of Shaddam IV, she never wavers from her commitments to the Bene Gesserit. Her role as Imperial Truthsayer affords her and the Sisterhood access to vital intelligence with which they might advance their own plans. Mohiam is utterly dedicated to the Bene Gesserit, and willing to do anything in their service.

Courtier Assasin

# Count Hasimir Fenring

| Drive | | Statement |
|---|---|---|
| Duty: | 7 | What is expected of me is the least of my obligations. |
| Faith: | 4 | |
| Justice: | 6 | Law is the concern of lawyers and victims. |
| Power: | 8 | I do as I please. |
| Truth: | 5 | |

| Skill | | Focuses |
|---|---|---|
| Battle: | 7 | Assassination |
| Communicate: | 6 | |
| Discipline: | 6 | Command |
| Move: | 8 | Stealth |
| Understand: | 6 | Poison |

**Traits:** Noble Courtier, Assassin, Psychopath

**TALENTS**

- **Advisor (Battle):** Fenring may re-roll a single d20 in the dice pool of an ally he assists.
- **Hidden Motives:** When an opponent fails an Understand or Communicate test against Fenring, he may immediately create a trait which reflects a mistaken belief they have about him.
- **Passive Scrutiny:** When Count Fenring enters a scene, he knows one hidden or concealed piece of information about the situation or the player characters as if he'd spent Threat to Obtain Information.
- **Subtle Step:** When Fenring attempts a Move test to sneak through an area, or to move an asset subtly during a conflict, the first extra d20 he purchases for the test is free.
- **Subtle Words:** Fenring may create a new trait whenever he spends Threat for extra dice on a Communicate test.
- **To Fight Someone Is to Know Them (Understand):** Fenring adds 2 points to Threat when he defeats an enemy using the Understand skill. He may use them to Obtain information or create a trait about that enemy.

Supremely deadly, the courtier-assassin Count Hasimir Fenring was the closest confidant of Emperor Shaddam IV. The Count was a small, unassuming man, and easily underestimated — a persona he carefully cultivated.

A distant cousin to the Emperor, Fenring was Shaddam's only real childhood friend. Despite his status as a genetic eunuch — or perhaps because of it — the Bene Gesserit maneuvered him into the confidence of the Emperor. The two men grew to have a genuine friendship, and no other individual enjoyed such trust from the Emperor. They participated in so many plots and even assassinations together that Shaddam eventually feared Fenring might not keep all their secrets. Upon Shaddam's ascension, Fenring was rewarded with a marriage to the Bene Gesserit adept Lady Margot, and a position as Imperial Observer on Arrakis.

Fenring served the Emperor as an advisor and an emissary in delicate political matters. It was widely believed that Fenring also operates as an assassin in the Imperial House's constant political intrigues, but little proof exists. Even less proof can be found of the accusation that Fenring was responsible for the previous emperor's death by poisoning.

The Count is known for a stammer and other verbal tics which makes him frustrating in conversation. In fact, Fenring's mannerisms are all conscious choices. Those who are aware of his full reputation noted the Count's disposition as troubling. Baron Vladimir Harkonnen once described him as "a killer with the manners of a rabbit... the most dangerous kind."

Fenring is often found at the Imperial court but has been known to turn up in unexpected places, acting as the Emperor's eyes and ears, and occasionally delivering messages on behalf of his Emperor and friend.

# The Fremen

## Fremen Naib
## Stilgar

| Drive | | Statement |
|---|---|---|
| Duty: | 7 | The tribe's life is my own. |
| Faith: | 8 | Shai-Hulud shows us the way. |
| Justice: | 6 | Harsh laws are needed in a harsh world, but we must know mercy in all its forms. |
| Power: | 4 | |
| Truth: | 5 | |

| Skill | | Focuses |
|---|---|---|
| Battle: | 7 | Short Blades |
| Communicate: | 5 | Intimidation |
| Discipline: | 7 | Command |
| Move: | 6 | Worm Rider |
| Understand: | 5 | |

**Traits:** Fremen Leader, Fierce and Dedicated

**TALENTS**

- **Cautious (Battle):** Stilgar may re-roll a single d20 gained from spending Threat on a Battle skill test.
- **Cool Under Pressure (Move):** Stilgar may spend 3 Threat (1 Determination) to automatically succeed at a Move skill test.
- **Deliberate Motion:** When Stilgar attempts a Move test, he may spend Threat to ignore some or all Move-related complications at 1 point per complication ignored.
- **Rigorous Control:** Stilgar may use Discipline instead of any skill in an extended test. He gains +1 to the requirement if the skill was already Discipline.
- **To Fight Someone Is to Know Them (Battle):** Stilgar adds to 2 points to Threat when he defeats an enemy using the Battle skill. He may use them to Obtain Information or create a trait about that enemy.

The naib of Sietch Tabr, Stilgar was among the most respected of the Fremen of Arrakis. He was noted for his wisdom and pragmatism as a leader and led his people unflinchingly in times of great peril.

As a youth, Stilgar was nearly killed by Harkonnen soldiers and saved only thanks to the actions of Pardot Kynes, then Imperial Planetologist. It was Stilgar's testimony to his tribe that saved Kynes' life as an intruder in Fremen territory, and he soon became a believer in the planetologist's vision of a verdant Arrakis. In the years that followed, Stilgar would become the naib of Sietch Tabr and a friend to Pardot Kynes' child, Liet.

The life of the Fremen was harsh and Stilgar could be uncompromising as a leader, but he was noted for his sense of justice and love for his people. Under his leadership Sietch Tabr thrived even under the depredations of the Harkonnens. And always, Stilgar sought to bind the needs of his tribe with Liet's vision of the future. Stilgar was instrumental in the initial stages of the slow process of conserving sufficient water to truly change the face of Arrakis.

Like most Fremen Stilgar was a deeply spiritual man, but he saw no contradiction in the prophecies of his people and Kynes' scientific plans. He was utterly dedicated to the liberation of the Fremen by any means necessary.

Fremen Warrior

# Chani Kynes

| Drive | | Statement |
|---|---|---|
| Duty: | 6 | I am but one Fremen, but I owe all to them as they owe all to me. |
| Faith: | 8 | The Faithful will be rewarded with ennobling struggle. |
| Justice: | 7 | Justice and Faith are inextricable. |
| Power: | 4 | |
| Truth: | 5 | |

| Skill | | Focuses |
|---|---|---|
| Battle: | 6 | Short Blades |
| Communicate: | 5 | |
| Discipline: | 7 | |
| Move: | 6 | Stealth |
| Understand: | 5 | Religion (Fremen) |

**Traits:** Fremen, Warrior

**TALENTS**

- **Bold (Move):** Chani may re-roll a d20 gained from spending Threat on a Move skill test.
- **Deliberate Motion:** When Chani attempts a Move test, she may spend Threat (Momentum) to ignore some or all Move-related complications at 1 point per complication ignored.
- **Subtle Step:** When Chani attempts a Move test to sneak through an area, or to move an asset subtly during a conflict, the first extra d20 she purchases for the test is free.
- **The Reason I Fight (Faith):** When Chani attempts a Battle test using Faith, and the related drive statement aligns with the action being attempted, she may re-roll 1d20.

A young woman of Sietch Tabr, Chani was a consummate Fremen. Little more than a teenager by the standards of the Faufreluches, she was already an accomplished warrior among her people as required of all among them at her age.

The daughter of the Imperial Planetologist, Liet Kynes, and Liet's Fremen wife, Faroula, Chani was raised as a full member of her Fremen tribe. A sandrider, killer of Harkonnens, and dedicated member of her sietch, Chani was as respected as any Fremen in Sietch Tabr. Like all Fremen, she was pragmatic and ruthless when need be, but also kind and loving when survival permitted.

As the daughter of Liet, Chani was a great proponent of the planetologist's plans for the transformation of Arrakis. Her Faith in Fremen ways married perfectly to this ecological dream, and she worked tirelessly in its realization. She had great conviction in the Fremen Faith and was already on the path to becoming a sayyadina of her tribe as a teenager.

Chani was a lethal fighter as well, having led retributive raids against the Harkonnens on numerous occasions. Slight of build, almost elfin, she possessed great skill with the crysknife and was accomplished in the ways of stealth and ambush. Naib Stilgar saw greatness in her and trusted her as a close companion.

IMPERIAL PLANETOLOGIST

# LIET KYNES

| DRIVE | | STATEMENT |
|---|---|---|
| DUTY: | 6 | I owe the Emperor my allegiance but the Fremen my life. |
| FAITH: | 8 | The desert will provide the Faithful with what they need. |
| JUSTICE: | 5 | |
| POWER: | 4 | |
| TRUTH: | 7 | Fact cannot be obscured, only confused. |

| SKILL | | FOCUSES |
|---|---|---|
| BATTLE: | 5 | |
| COMMUNICATE: | 6 | |
| DISCIPLINE: | 7 | Survival (Desert) |
| MOVE: | 4 | |
| UNDERSTAND: | 7 | Botany, Ecology |

**Traits:** Fremen, Planetologist

## TALENTS

- **Cautious (Understand):** Kynes may re-roll a single d20 gained from spending Threat on an Understand skill test.
- **Collaboration (Understand):** Kynes may spend 2 Threat to allow an ally to use her Understand skill as their own.
- **Unquestionable Loyalty:** At the start of each adventure, Liet Kynes begins with 3 Threat, which only she may use, and which may only be used on an action in direct service to the Fremen.

It was said that Liet Kynes served two masters: the Emperor and Shai-Hulud. In truth, Kynes was dedicated only to the Fremen and their dreams of Arrakis as paradise.

Born to Pardot Kynes and his Fremen wife, Liet inherited Pardot's position as Imperial Planetologist. Liet was raised with Pardot's visions of ecological transformation, but as a child of the Fremen Liet adopted their ways. Where the senior Kynes was concerned only with scientific rigor, Liet was as devoted to the Fremen as people and not simply willing field assistants.

As an adult, Liet spent as little time in the city of Arrakeen as possible, preferring the company of the Fremen and scientific pursuits to the politics of the city. The planetologist's work as an Imperial servant was an inconvenient necessity, and Liet made no friends among the ruling Harkonnens in this work. Liet took a Fremen spouse, and together had a daughter, Chani.

It was this perceived impartiality that led to the Emperor naming Liet Judge of the Change and overseer of the transition from Harkonnen rule to Atreides. Kynes despised the Harkonnens and expected little better from the Atreides. Kynes' only concern was the wellbeing of the Fremen and their generational work to make Arrakis a world of plenty.

# Creating Non-player Characters

Non-player characters make a world richer and bring more excitement to the story. Though as a gamemaster you do not need to go too in-depth into their creation, it would help for you to understand their backgrounds to express their intentions and act out their motives. As mentioned earlier, there are three types of non-player characters: **major**, **notable**, and **minor**. Some non-player characters may not fit into those categories but appear for moments in the game to give players a bit of context in certain situations or provide assistance. Here we will go through different ways of inserting non-player characters into the story and making them interesting to the players.

## Make Them Believable

Everyone has motivations and needs, hopes, and dreams. People aspire to different goals — sometimes they align with other characters in the world, other times, not as much. When making a non-player character, consider what makes them interesting. Think about the people in your own life. Maybe you have an ambitious coworker who enjoys sucking up to the boss. Or maybe you cross paths with the same person on your commute to work every day.

For **major** and **notable** non-player characters, ask yourself questions about who they could be and how they got to the position of power that they're in now. Since these characters are more prominent in the game, start with the basic questions:

- What is their position? Are they a House ruler, or are they at the same position of power as the player characters?
- What is their name and what are their pronouns? Pronouns help show one aspect of a character's identity, before we dive deeper into their other facets.
- Where do they live? This could give you insight into their habits and the cultural norms that they have adopted.
- Have they lived there all their life? If not, this could be a good opportunity to see how they feel about moving and how it shapes their identity.

From there, think about what their motivations are and what is a valuable resource to them, taking into consideration their environment. This can go hand-in-hand when thinking about building out the details of the setting that you are building.

- What is considered most valuable in their environment/society? Is it water, or spice, or something else? How rich is the character in terms of the valuable resource?
- Does the character value power? Do they value wealth? Or maybe they are more interested in the protection of their community?
- Is there someone in their life that they care about more than power or wealth? Perhaps this is a relationship partner, a parent, or a child in their family? In some instances, it could even be a pet.
- What sacrifices have they made to get to this position? Maybe they will do anything for their community, willing to sacrifice even those they love? Or maybe they have killed over control of the spice trade?

Motivations and power can act as a double-edged sword. Though a non-player character can have a lot of power, they can be crushed under the pressures of societal expectations, or the expectations that they have put upon themselves. This can expose itself in gameplay in many ways. Maybe the character has a short temper, or they're wracked with guilt and often hide indoors, barely exposing themselves in public view. Think about their weaknesses and what makes them vulnerable. Here are a few questions that you can pick and choose from to get you started:

- Why do the people around the character fear them?
- Why does the character fail to communicate their commands properly to those around them?
- Why do the rest of the citizens hardly ever see the character?
- Why does no one seem to believe the character, despite their best intentions?
- What was something that the character did recently that caused political tension?

For a lighter tone, it could be interesting to think about what a non-player character's quirks are. These are not limited to just major or notable non-player characters but can be used for minor non-player characters as well. Quirks make room for humor in a game, especially when a session seems to be taking a moodier tone and you would like to break up the atmospheric tension. They also create more relatable characters that parallel with the personalities we see in our day-to-day lives. Here are a few questions to pick and choose from that you can answer for your non-player characters:

- What are they like around other characters? Are they shy and quiet or expressive and passionate? Or maybe they are indifferent, until they realize a character has something that they want?

- Is there a personality type that they tend to have an affinity toward? Maybe they prefer being around louder, more boisterous characters, or maybe they tend to open up more around quiet, more thoughtful characters.
- Do they have a very specific pet peeve? Maybe they always need to keep their stillsuit hanging up and they get annoyed when they see others lying theirs on the floor.
- Do they have a hobby outside of their job? Maybe it's sculpting or weaving or some other art.

Minor non-player characters do not need as much detail as major or notable non-player characters, but can require a bit of a personal touch, so players can feel invested. They usually act as a threat to the player characters but act more as obstacles than a named villain. Though minor non-player characters are unnamed, they can still slip in a bit of context for the player characters. Maybe the player characters overhear two soldiers chatting, before they sneak into an enemy base. Or maybe it's a smuggler who is nervously reciting back a distrans to themself on what the next shipment will be. Here are some questions you can ask yourself when you prepare for an encounter like this with the player characters:

- What are the minor non-player characters trying to do?
- How much do they want to be here? Would they rather be at home and not face any danger at all, if given an excuse? Or would they die for the job that they have signed up for?
- Before the player characters attempt to fight, sneak past, or incapacitate the characters, what bit of information do they drop to the player characters?
- If they do not fight back, how would they try to negotiate or communicate with the player characters?

Once you've written up some details, answering a few questions here and there, you should have a non-player character that is both engaging and believable enough for players to feel invested in interacting with them. Remember, these details that you have filled out are for you to process before stepping into the mind of the character, and they do not need to be perfect. The players do not need to know every single detail, but the exercise of filling out the details should help you deepen your understanding of the character before you act them out.

At the table, it's up to you to decide which parts of the character's personality and background you'd like to show. And as always, the goal is to have fun and enjoy the narrative that you are building together, so there is no pressure in trying to perfectly emulate any of the characters.

## Manage Diversity

The world of *Dune* is vast and large, filled with unique characters that have different needs. Embrace that diversity and make it apparent in your game, without

relying on two-dimensional tropes. Focus on a character's motivations and their wants and needs. A Fremen warrior character might make sacrifices for their sietch, but they are more than just a heartless fighter. Breathe life into that character by touching on a hobby they might have or a familiar quirk that can feel relatable to the players. Keep in mind that even a warrior has other things going on in their lives that can make them feel emotional. Show those vulnerable sides!

Be sure to include characters that look different from one another, who have different cultures and religious backgrounds, like how we function in the real world. Think about a time you went to a friend's house. Maybe they asked you to take your shoes off, or maybe they were a shoes-on type of household. Doing what your friend asked you to do is not only a sign of respect, but a sign of caring. The same goes for the non-player characters the players might encounter — someone from Caladan would consider spitting as a sign of rudeness, whereas someone from Arrakis might consider it as a sign of great honor.

Though it is good to integrate these differences, try to avoid stereotypes. For example, a character with a disability is not solely defined by that disability, because they have several other facets that make up their personality and background. Maybe they enjoy gossiping, with an abundant knowledge of all the rumors in their area, or maybe they are a stealthy escape artist, able to sneak past any guards in the way.

Additionally, a way to avoid stereotyping is to inject this diversity in every level of society, not just one. A Mentat character who is a wealthy woman working at for a House would not be the same as a smuggler character who is a woman distributing illegal goods at the marketplace. Though some of their experiences as women might parallel one another, they are not entirely the same. This is one of the occasions where many possibilities exist and limiting a character to just one trope can leave the players feeling like they might have missed out on the larger picture.

Some other things that are good to keep in mind are:

- Replicating accents that are not your own might dampen the mood of the game (and make your players a little confused). Instead, try changing the pitch of your voice or the speed at which you're talking when acting as different characters. A nervous House guard might talk faster at a higher pitch with a more rushed tone than a laidback Bene Gesserit Agent, who knows how to remain calm in the face of danger.
- If you would like to include the use of different languages in the game, instead of attempting to speak a made-up version of the language, stick to English or the language that you, as a group, have chosen to use at the table, so that everyone as players can understand one another. As characters, they might be missing bits and pieces of information, but you can try to find ways to bridge that communication. Let the players know that their characters would not know certain things, but maybe they discover what is happening through a non-player character. Treat it similarly to if you were attempting to eavesdrop into a conversation behind a wall, only catching pieces of the overall context.
- Sexuality and romance can also look different between characters. Who are they attracted to, if anyone? Do they have one partner, multiple partners, or no partners at all? These are aspects that you can also fill into your characters' identities without reducing them to one trope and can also build out what the community around them looks like. Do they have a disapproving family? Do they have a secret partner? Are they in a community where they feel okay with showing their sexuality?
- Include different people of color! There should be representation for Black characters, Indigenous characters, and other people of color, since it reflects how the real world looks too. Don't be afraid to introduce characters that look different from the players. This will make the world richer and easier to play in. However, when describing them, try not to use words that might dehumanize them, even if they are non-player characters. Get to the point and avoid language that compares anyone to inanimate objects.
- Talking about the different religions in the *Dune* universe, especially on Arrakis, gives players different perspectives of the world. It also provides clarity into why some non-player characters have certain cultural practices. For example, Shai-Hulud takes on the form of a sandworm because of the sandworm's relationship with spice and the environment. Understanding the religion, culture, and environment grants players insight into how to interact with non-player characters.
- If you are using non-player characters that initially feel unfamiliar to the player characters culturally, or even if you are including a language barrier, make sure the character is relatable with realistic needs, wants, and personalities that players can understand, so they do not feel exoticized. Keep them grounded in reality, by showing off what the non-player character is most excited about. Maybe they have just graduated the Mentat school and they are working on some interesting new studies, or maybe they have been assigned a new task by the Bene Gesserit Sisterhood to infiltrate a secret base, or maybe they just went on a first date! Despite any kind of training that the character might have, it is okay for them to show parts of themselves to the players so that the table can understand what lies behind their motivations.

- Use pronouns to your advantage! This can show the players the different characters that you are playing with and help them gain insight into their identities.
- Need some help trying to come up with names? Look for a name generator and edit the names that come up as you need to.

Chances are you will be playing this game with people who are not exactly like you. Be mindful of differences at the table and think about how you can support the players in creating an engaging story. Though you have the power to direct the players through an outline that you have planned, the story should feel like it belongs to everyone. Encourage the use of safety tools (see **Chapter 8: Gamemastering**) and make sure that everyone feels comfortable with stopping in the middle of the scene if they need to rewind and redo something that does not fit with what they want from the game. If players do not feel comfortable engaging in a topic, acknowledge it, change the topic, and move on.

## Don't Let Them Take Over the Adventure

Even though you will be taking the time to fill in several details about the non-player characters, these details are more for you than they are for the player, so that you can process them and really step into the character's shoes. Condense what you know about the non-player characters into manageable chunks so that the players get to see facets of their personalities shine through. Instead of overloading the players with what the character had for breakfast, give them snippets of details that the players would find important or engaging to mesh with the story. What you show the players will make it easier for them to interact with the character, encouraging players to go on missions or dig deeper for more information.

Try to keep the focus on the player characters. The non-player characters should probably not hold the spotlight longer than the player characters. Instead, non-player characters should be guiding the player characters and attempting to lead them down exciting paths of the story. When you're interacting with player characters, here are some ways that a non-player character can support a player character's story and lead them to interesting plot points that you may have already set up:

- Introduce player characters to problems that only they have the solution for. You might have outcomes pre-planned for when players decide to go one way versus another. Just remember there is no right or wrong answer. Instead, focus on creating a fun story that can make room for fun and strange solutions.
- The non-player characters can act as guides or messengers to keep players on track, but if the player characters decide to go off-course, that's okay too! Just make sure that everyone at the table is okay with the way things are going and if you need to, use the non-player character to steer the players back to the plot points you want to hit.
- Placing non-player characters in difficult situations (within the safety of the pre-established lines that the players have already discussed) for the player characters to save them is one way of giving player characters agency. Maybe a non-player character is slipping off the edge of a cliff and only one of the player characters is close enough to save them. Or maybe the player characters are escaping from bandits, and the non-player character who has tagged along is falling behind.
- Let the presence of a non-player character generate questions for you to ask the player characters. These questions could be triggered by the character attempting to make a connection with the player characters. For example, you tell one of the player characters that a character they have just met, Ani, reminds them of their mother. Questions could include: "What is a memory you have of your mother?" "How does Ani remind you of your mother?" "How does that color your perception of Ani?" Questions not only allow players to create their own context, they can also drive tension between characters.
- If a player gets stumped on what to do, let the non-player character drop some hints. Maybe they overheard a bit of gossip about a location of spice thieves and raiders, or perhaps there's a hidden entrance into a secret Tleilaxu laboratory.
- If an opportunity arises where a player character can influence a pivotal moment in the storyline, let them! Use the non-player characters to guide them there, without letting the non-player characters take charge of the moment.

Overall, remember that the player characters are the main characters in the story. How they interact and engage with the non-player characters and the world that you are guiding them through is what makes the narrative engaging. Shine the spotlight on player characters and give them opportunities to act and react to their surroundings. Sometimes you might be thrown a plot twist that even you were not expecting! Assuming everyone agrees to the new twist, it might be even more exciting than what you were planning. Keep an open mind, play it out, and see where it leads the story, while using the non-player characters to maintain the original plot framework that you had created.

## Don't Cross the Line

Creating a villain is similar to creating a major or notable character, but their wants do not necessarily align with the wants of the world they inhabit. Although villains have motivations much like any other character, they are taking a more extreme approach when handling situa-

tions. For example, spice is a valuable resource, but only some will go to great lengths in order to gain ultimate control over the spice trade. Perhaps they have made huge sacrifices along the way in order to gain the control that they have now. Maybe these sacrifices have shaped the way the villain looks at the world or how they react to others around them. While these can make for interesting plot devices, be sure to take a step back and look at how some of the hooks can impact the players' well-being.

Think of the villain as someone who has deep and intense motivations, but do not define their villainy through their gender, sexuality, race, or disability. This paints a picture of a more three-dimensional villain whose goals exceed those of everyone around them, while keeping in mind the safety measures.

Even though you, as the GM, might have control over the story framework, there will be times when players would rather go in one direction instead of another. Playing with a villain is no different, especially when you have an idea of a scary antagonist carved out in your mind, only to find that the players would rather have a cartoonish supervillain. Even after agreeing on the tone of the game beforehand, you might have an idea of what the villain would do to place the player characters in danger or threaten the people around them. Sometimes this could cross over to very real situations and behavior that can hurt the players, damage the story, and essentially break the game.

Listen to the players and ask them questions, before jumping into something that could potentially harm them, especially when it comes to topics such as violence. If you are not sure where to start, before the game begins ask the players a few questions:

- "What are some lines that we would like to draw when it comes to the villain? These will be lines that we do not cross and we will not bring up these topics in play."
- "Is there anything you would like to see, but you do not want to go into detail? For example, action movie violence would be okay in the game, but let's not go into every detail about every punch the villain throws, because then we would be playing for another three hours."
- "What do you think your character would hate to see, but you as a player, would love to see? Maybe your character has a fear of insects, but you as a player would love to see a villain with an affinity towards insects." Use what the players tell you as inspiration for how you will shape the villain and the obstacles that you will throw at the player characters.

Setting expectations is a great way to start the game, so players know what to expect and both you and the players would know how to maneuver around certain plot points. In other words, be sure to pre-negotiate before the villain plans on doing something extremely catastrophic to any of the characters, non-player characters included. If this is something that could be a huge reveal leading up to a cliffhanger, you can always re-write the scene or adjust it according to what you and the players want. Remember that the story that you are creating is a story that is being created together. You might be directing the scenes, but the players are lead actors, writers, and producers, so make sure they have some agency as well, especially in scenes with the villain. Some questions that you might ask that grant the players agency in telling the story are:

- "Why does the villain despise your character?"
- "What does the villain do that makes your character nervous or scared?"
- "At what point does your character realize that the villain is ready to do whatever it takes to achieve their goals?"
- "What is the villain doing that causes your character to fight back or flee?"
- "How does your character know that the villain is close to wreaking devastation across the world? To what lengths will your character go to make sure they do not carry out their plans?"

Make sure that you use safety tools (outlined in **Chapter 8: Gamemastering**), if things get too intense at the table and course correct as needed. Set the expectation that they will be available, so that everyone is comfortable using them. These safety tools are not for players to police one another's behavior, but they are there for everyone to make room for a more engaging story. Constraints provide room for more creativity, allowing you and the players to come up with more interesting solutions and plots.

Being mindful of everyone in the room is hard work, but it is a skill that you can develop and hone over time. Just remember that if you do make a mistake, be gentle with yourself. Thank the player that pointed it out rewind, and re-do the scene. The same goes for other players at the table. If you note something that someone else did that makes you feel uncomfortable, it's okay to let them know. No one is perfect, not even the writers of this book!

## Breathing Life into Minor NPCs

When we talk about non-player characters that are ordinary folk, we are talking about the barkeeps or the market traders who will likely remain at the location where the player characters found them, before going home at night after a hard day's work. Unlike minor non-player characters, they are mostly neutral and can help the player characters, instead of attempting to create obstacles for them. They probably will not go on adven-

tures with the player characters. Instead, they might help them with clues, dropping hints of information, leading the player characters on to their larger adventures.

Though it might not seem like they are too important, they oftentimes actually serve as an introductory point for the player characters. They are also great sources of information and can give players insight on the ins and outs of the planet they are on. When these non-player characters are introduced as the first point of contact that the player characters will have, they can act as a hook for the players to stay engaged. Introducing interesting characters with engaging information can lead to many interesting avenues for gameplay later. You can draw your players into the game with these non-player characters in many ways, such as by asking yourself these questions:

- What are some defining characteristics about the non-player character's personality? Are they boisterous and welcoming, or do they always carry a look of exasperation?
- How does the character react to conflict? If they're a barkeep, maybe they've seen one too many fights happen at the tavern, so instead of reacting with shock, they might be annoyed or apathetic when they see a fight break out.
- How much does the character know? Do they have some secrets that they would like to divulge to the player characters? Do they have any leads to adventures that the player characters might be interested in?

Using the market trader as an example, just because they spend most of their days selling their wares, this does not mean that they don't see a lot of action happening in the marketplace or have insight toward the politics that are happening on the planet that they live on. Maybe they are familiar with all the gossip that spreads between traders. This could be things that they have heard from their customers, whether they are traveling as tourists or are locals with political power. Or maybe their distribution networks have been cut because of a catastrophic event and they have opinions on how the current governing body is dealing with that event.

They have probably seen many different people go through the marketplace, so they are used to constant interaction, maintaining a positive façade so customers will make a purchase. If you have ever worked at a retail shop, you probably know how draining that can be! If and when a fight breaks out, they might be annoyed. Their merchandise could be ruined at any moment, like many times in the past! Maybe that is when the player characters catch glimpses of the non-player character showing their true self, when they are placed in a moment of high stress. They are no longer that efficient salesperson that the player characters saw earlier, but a tired parent who is trying to make ends meet in an oppressive society. Introducing moments like these create empathy for the non-player characters, making them feel more real, while also giving you the opportunity to reveal secrets and hints about the world that the characters are playing in.

# ARCHETYPES

**he** archetypes that are provided in this game are **notable** supporting characters that you can use to introduce your players to the world that you create (as opposed to more general **minor** supporting characters or **major** NPCs such as for the canon characters). They will probably spend quite some time with the player characters, pushing them along with the story. Even though these archetypes have been pre-generated, it is encouraged that you still spend some time putting yourself into their shoes by asking yourself questions.

If you are planning to spend a bit more time on expanding on these supporting characters, after reading through their traits, drives, skills, focuses, talents, and assets, consider the supporting characters' internalized thoughts for each of these. For example, if we were to look at a Sardaukar who has the Military Officer trait, ask whether they enjoy command over others. Do they enjoy having that authority or would they prefer doing something else? One way of doing this is by adding statements to each point that would give you a better understanding of the archetype's thoughts and feelings. Ask yourself questions such as:

- Has this archetype ever felt the sting of failure? If so, how did they react?
- What would they do if given a difficult choice or if they are put under a lot of pressure? Would they act instinctively or think before acting out?
- Did they always want to be in this job or did they have dreams of doing something else?

Continuing with our Sardaukar Military Officer example, under Traits, you could have: "I'm not sure if I'm fit for this job. I know others see me as competent, but I'm not sure of myself sometimes." This could give you some insight into how the archetype feels about themselves in their position and how they could choose to relay plot information to the players when you roleplay as them.

For drives, write down something that summarizes the other statements related to their drives. Maybe it's something like "I have a duty to my people, but I don't believe the House rulers have our best interests at heart." Perhaps there was a time when the archetype noticed something wrong with the House rulers and have been suspicious ever since. That could be shown through how willing they are to divulge secret information to the player characters. Maybe they have a stronger sense of community that goes beyond their job.

Continuing with skills, how do they feel about their set of skills? Do they feel like they are an expert, or do they downplay what they know? Find the one that they are strongest at and write a brief statement on how the archetype uses this skill. For example, if they play the baliset, a statement could be: "I'm well-trained in the instrument, but I only play around my closest friends." If they become closer to the player characters, they might surprise them with a song, showing their affection for their new friends.

What is the archetype's talent? Perhaps it's Improvised Weapon, which means at some point, they must have used this talent in the past. When they did, what did it look like? How were they able to defend themselves with a makeshift weapon? Through answering these questions, you can come up with a short bit of background through your statement that might sound something like: "The last time I had to fight a smuggler, I used the closest thing I could find — a vase from the poor market trader's stall! I paid them back for the damages, of course."

And finally, write a brief sentence or two for each of their assets and how the archetype feels about them. Some questions you might ask yourself about human assets are:

- Does the archetype trust them? Are they longtime friends or work acquaintances?
- How does the archetype treat the asset? Do they have inside jokes or petty slights that the player characters might notice?
- Why would this asset be important for the archetype and the player characters? Do they sell water to the archetype? Maybe they have an emotional attachment?

Again, these exercises of writing down brief statements are optional, but it should help you process the characters' personalities and motivations, so that you can better portray them in the game. And of course, you are welcome to adjust these archetypes if you would rather see them take on new skills or talents. Maybe you would like the Bene Gesserit Agent to understand geology instead of psychiatry, and that is absolutely okay if you think that fits better with your game.

When introducing these archetypes, think about how they would benefit the player characters. Maybe they have an adventure for the player characters, or maybe they were assigned to help them, or maybe they are just interested in tagging along somehow. Whatever the motivation is, keep the players engaged to find out more, while still maintaining a supporting role. Some ways that an archetype can help connect the dots for players are:

- Taking the player characters to meet with one of their assets so that they can find out more about the adventure and advance in the task at hand.
- Using the archetype to introduce other non-player characters, so player characters can note the interpersonal dynamics of the different societies that reside in the Imperium and speak with other personalities.
- Letting the archetype set up obstacles, leaving it up to the player characters use their skills to overcome the problem.
- Use the archetype as a messenger when you want to drop in various plot points. Maybe they overheard soldiers talking at the tavern or they find an important message in the sand.

When playing with the archetypes, let them give the player characters chances to succeed, and remember that they are there to give the players new ideas to explore the game and come to their own conclusions. You can use them to try and help the player characters whenever players feel stuck, but they are ultimately there to provide guidance. The spotlight should mostly be on the player characters.

# Arrakeen Native

| Drive | | Statement |
|---|---|---|
| Duty: | 6 | Hard work and talent lead to advancement. |
| Faith: | 5 | |
| Justice: | 4 | |
| Power: | 4 | |
| Truth: | 4 | |

| Skill | | Focuses |
|---|---|---|
| Battle: | 3 | |
| Communicate: | 4 | |
| Discipline: | 6 | Composure, Precision |
| Move: | 4 | |
| Understand: | 5 | Advanced Technology |

**Traits:** Commoner

### Talents

- **Cool Under Pressure (Discipline):** May spend Determination to automatically succeed at a Discipline skill test.

**Assets:** Tools of Trade, Workshop

*The native population of Arrakeen—its 'pyons' as designated within the Faufreluches—make their livings in a variety of ways not intimately connected to Noble Houses or organized crime. Many are artisans, skilled in a particular trade, and nobles sometimes call on them to carry out specialized work beyond the ability of their servants. Some hope to impress and become permanent staff. Others gather information, hoping to sell it to the highest bidder.*

## Example Arrakeen Natives

- **Elna** creates murals for pay. Devoted to her art, she keeps an ear out for saleable information.
- **Renki** is a plumber who knows more about water than the Fremen think he should. He has a large family to support.
- **Gral** is a cobbler who has a stall in the market. Everyone needs shoes and Gral seems to know something about everybody.

## Scenario Hook

An artisan working for the player characters' House has valuable information that could harm a rival. In exchange for this, she asks for permanent employment. Background checks reveal she was formerly employed by that same rival House. Why is she no longer working for them? Could this be an opportunity to plant false information?

# ASSASSIN

| DRIVE | | STATEMENT |
|---|---|---|
| DUTY: | 6 | |
| FAITH: | 4 | |
| JUSTICE: | 4 | |
| POWER: | 7 | Death determines who rules. |
| TRUTH: | 4 | |

| SKILL | | FOCUSES |
|---|---|---|
| BATTLE: | 7 | Assassination, Sneak Attacks |
| COMMUNICATE: | 4 | |
| DISCIPLINE: | 5 | |
| MOVE: | 6 | Stealth |
| UNDERSTAND: | 4 | |

**Traits:** Assassin, Advisor to a Great House

**TALENTS**

- **Master-at-Arms:** At the start of a duel, skirmish, or battle, they may spend 1 point of Threat to increase a martial asset they have by +1 Quality for that conflict.

**Assets:** Dartgun, Hunter-seeker, Poison

*In the Imperium, assassins are sanctioned professionals. As strange as it may be, these killers are as much a part of the fabric of the Imperium as the Emperor himself. They tip the balance of power by removing their employers' political competitors, economic rivals, or social adversaries, all while following the Great Convention's rules and the guidelines in the Assassins' Handbook, of course.*

*Assassins of the Imperium often employ poisons and hunter-seekers to minimize collateral damage, as per the regulations put on a War of Assassins. However, they train in a variety of martial arts and can also kill by combat and direct means, when necessary.*

*When they are not on a mission of murder, assassins often double as advisors to their Houses, and as a result, they have a deep understanding of the inner workings of the Landsraad. It is not unusual for these professional killers to have influence and titles of their own.*

## EXAMPLE ASSASSINS

- **Alcott** is occasionally tasked with murdering a competitor to their House Minor. However, they spend most of their time training the young heirs of their employer to avoid assassins.
- **Ratna** is a sharpshooter and specializes in long-distance assassinations for her House. She is most known for her ability to find and neutralize other assassins.
- **Fraze** has no loyalty to any particular House. He works as a freelancer and will kill anyone for enough solaris. His knife skills have toppled more than one member of the Landsraad.

## SCENARIO HOOK

After disappearing, an assassin is on the run from their former employer. They have a lot of valuable secrets and will pay someone to help keep them safe. Several influential Houses want this assassin alive. Even more want them dead.

# Bene Gesserit Agent

| Drive | | Statement |
|---|---|---|
| Duty: | 7 | I know my responsibilities. |
| Faith: | 6 | |
| Justice: | 5 | |
| Power: | 5 | |
| Truth: | 5 | |

| Skill | | Focuses |
|---|---|---|
| Battle: | 5 | |
| Communicate: | 4 | |
| Discipline: | 7 | Composure, Espionage |
| Move: | 6 | Body Control |
| Understand: | 5 | |

**Traits:** Bene Gesserit

**TALENTS**

- **Prana-Bindu Conditioning:** May re-roll 1d20 on a Move or Discipline test.
- **Hyperawareness:** Whenever she spends Threat to Obtain Information, she may know two pieces of hidden information for each point spent. Further, the limits of what others would be able to notice does not apply to her.

**Assets:** Concealable Dagger, Dot Coder, Minimic Film (blank)

*Anyone educated by the Bene Gesserit is a dangerous adversary, whether they're in rags or Imperial finery. Their training also gives them the charisma and confidence to manipulate an individual to their will or even influence a crowd.*

*Cloaked in mystery and appearing in every corner of the Imperium, Bene Gesserit agents gather information and further the schemes of the Order — all while the Sisterhood makes efforts to appear neutral in all political matters. These infiltrators are usually Sisters or acolytes, whose skills in heightened observation, prana-bindu conditioning, and mastery of the Voice makes them a boon to any venture.*

*Viewed by some as witches, the Sisterhood embraces this reputation. They use their supernatural mystique to strike fear in the hearts of men. But whether they are loved or hated, they have gained much by unearthing the secrets of others while obfuscating their true agenda and the extent of their true powers, keeping themselves shrouded in mystery.*

## EXAMPLE BENE GESSERIT AGENTS

- **Catriona**, a Bene Gesserit acolyte, is working to infiltrate the personal guard for one of the powerful merchants on Arrakis. The stark harshness of the desert planet appeals to her.
- **Peronel** is on Arrakis under the orders of the Reverend Mother Superior herself. They are to become a participant in a War of Assassins between two Houses. Their knowledge of poisons is unparalleled.
- **Elinor** is a cunning spy who has inserted herself into a Major House on behalf of the Sisterhood. But when spycraft fails her, she relies on her enchanting nature to beguile anyone who might suspect her ulterior motives.

## SCENARIO HOOK

Representing a rival House, the Bene Gesserit Agent offers the player characters a diplomatic armistice. She provides a royal signet to back her claim and arranges a clandestine summit. Could this be an opportunity to put aside past differences and gain a powerful ally? Or is this a scheme to learn more about the player characters' plans?

# Bene Gesserit Reverend Mother

| Drive | Statement | |
|---|---|---|
| Duty: | 6 | |
| Faith: | 7 | The Sisterhood will prevail. |
| Justice: | 5 | |
| Power: | 5 | |
| Truth: | 6 | |

| Skill | Focuses | |
|---|---|---|
| Battle: | 5 | |
| Communicate: | 6 | |
| Discipline: | 7 | Command, Composure |
| Move: | 5 | |
| Understand: | 8 | Faction Lore (Bene Gesserit) |

**Traits:** Bene Gesserit, Reverend Mother

### Talents

- **Hyperawareness:** Whenever she spends Threat to Obtain Information, she may know two pieces of information for each point spent. Further, the limits of what others would be able to notice does not apply.
- **Other Memory:** She may remember things from years before she was born through Other Memory.
- **Prana-Bindu Conditioning:** She may re-roll 1d20 on a Move or Discipline test.
- **Voice:** She may spend up to 3 points of Threat (1 Determination) to buy automatic successes on a Communicate test (1 success/point).

**Assets:** Dangerous Secret, Group of Bene Gesserit Acolytes, Robes of a Reverend Mother

*Dignified, solemn, and powerful. With their robes swirling about them and their proud, knowing gazes, the Reverend Mothers of the Bene Gesserit Order are an imposing sight. These mighty women possess minds as sharp as a Mentat's and command their own bodies with an almost supernatural control. Only the truly reckless make an enemy of a Reverend Mother.*

*A Reverend Mother of the Bene Gesserit Sisterhood has survived the Agony, a ritual wherein the Sister ingests a fatal toxin (often the Water of Life) and alters her own body chemistry to neutralize its toxicity. The ordeal unlocks the Reverend Mother's access to the Other Memory of their ancestral bloodline, which may then be passed along genetically by another Reverent Mother. Other Memory provides them with the collective personalities and memories of previous Reverend Mothers, enhancing their considerable experience and wisdom.*

*Gifted with generational knowledge and the ability to detect lies and falsehoods, Reverend Mothers operate as counsellors and advisors. From their base of operations on Wallach IX, they manipulate the Landsraad in their search for the Kwisatz Haderach, a genetically engineered superhuman who will bring order to the galaxy.*

## Example Reverend Mothers

- **Axenus Arlana Avina** is a Truthsayer offering her services to help with the negotiations between two feuding Houses on Arrakis. Her intent is to tease out leverage the Sisterhood can use against both Houses.
- **Celestin Wilhelmina Sarraf** is an instructor from the Bene Gesserit Chapterhouse on Wallach IX. While some deride her as too much of a black sheep and others simply consider her eccentric, her ability to bring out the talents of others has made her indispensable.
- **Titus Leanne Naser** has a strong connection to her Other Memory. One particular Reverend Mother from the past is urging her to find a hidden cache of knowledge left somewhere on Arrakis.

## Scenario Hook

The Reverend Mother arrives unannounced at the House of the player characters, tasked by the governor of Arrakis with uncovering a plot against the Imperium. Each player character is subject to the Reverend Mother's interrogation, but is there something else at play here?

# CRIMINAL

| DRIVE | STATEMENT |
|---|---|
| DUTY: 4 | |
| FAITH: 4 | |
| JUSTICE: 4 | |
| POWER: 7 | I take what I need. |
| TRUTH: 4 | |

| SKILL | FOCUSES |
|---|---|
| BATTLE: 6 | Dirty Fighting, Evasive Action |
| COMMUNICATE: 4 | |
| DISCIPLINE: 4 | |
| MOVE: 6 | Stealth |
| UNDERSTAND: 4 | |

**Traits:** Commoner, Lawless

### TALENTS

- **Make Haste:** They may choose to suffer one additional complication in a Move test to gain one automatic success. During any conflict, they may spend 1 Threat to take the first action, regardless of who would otherwise act first.

**Assets:** Krimskel Fiber Rope, Maula Pistol, Small Gang

*Wherever laws exist someone will attempt to profit by breaking them. Arrakis is no exception. Law enforcement away from the residencies of the noble Houses is minimal and pickpocketing, protection rackets, housebreaking, kidnapping, and even arson are rife.*

## EXAMPLE CRIMINALS

- **Dalon** operates a protection racket in the market. She knows every trader, and most fear her. She is well known by the criminal fraternity, including smugglers.
- **Tomlin** runs a pickpocketing and shoplifting racket. For a reasonable fee, Tomlin will arrange to obtain specific items from specific people.
- **Krat** likes to set fire to things. Sometimes he does this for pay and sometimes just for the pleasure of seeing things burn.

## SCENARIO HOOK

An associate of the player characters comes home from the market without their wallet, which — apart from a small amount of currency — contained the key to a cypher the characters' House uses to communicate with an agent in an enemy House. Was this just a random act of theft or was the characters' friend targeted deliberately? If so, how did anyone know they were carrying the cypher key?

# Courtier

| Drive | | Statement |
|---|---|---|
| Duty: | 5 | |
| Faith: | 6 | Arrakis needs the ruling class. |
| Justice: | 5 | |
| Power: | 7 | |
| Truth: | 5 | |

| Skill | | Focuses |
|---|---|---|
| Battle: | 4 | |
| Communicate: | 7 | Charm, Gossip |
| Discipline: | 6 | Espionage |
| Move: | 4 | |
| Understand: | 5 | |

**Traits:** Courtier, Aristocrat

### Talents

- **Mask of Power:** Once per scene they may create a temporary intrigue or espionage asset (at no cost) that will allow them to initiate an intrigue or espionage conflict. If they fail, the bluff is exposed, and they gain a complication.

**Assets:** Bodkin, Groundcar, Manor House

*The Houses on Arrakis, like those throughout the Imperium, are always vying for power. So, too, are the courtiers. Many, but not all, are nobles. Heirs to Houses Minor and shipping fortunes are the types drawn to this world of intrigue. All have a stake in melange.*

*One can find courtiers at generous banquets where rumors fly faster than the sumptuous dishes can arrive at the table. As they sip rich wines with heady aromas and attend rowdy sporting competitions held inside out of the burning sun, the courtiers work to claw their way up the social ladder, not caring who they trample beneath their heels in the process.*

## Example Courtiers

- **Ramsay**, the heir to one of Arrakis' most influential Houses, believes their House should have a monopoly on all maintenance of the spice mining equipment on the planet. They have a deep love of listening to music from other planets.
- **Jivin's** mother is an incredibly wealthy and ruthless water seller from Carthag. And he wants to join the ranks of nobility – even if it means killing to get there. He has a fascination with other languages.
- **Orphe** intends to use her merchant family's riches to get revenge on the House Minor that killed her father. Her hobby is piloting ornithopters.

## Scenario Hook

To impress one of the Houses Minor, a courtier is looking to arrange a meeting with a representative from CHOAM. Their goal is to receive permission from the economic powerhouse to ship highly regulated and restricted goods onto Arrakis.

# ENVOY

| DRIVE | | STATEMENT |
|---|---|---|
| DUTY: | 6 | |
| FAITH: | 4 | |
| JUSTICE: | 4 | |
| POWER: | 4 | |
| TRUTH: | 7 | The message is what matters. |

| SKILL | | FOCUSES |
|---|---|---|
| BATTLE: | 3 | |
| COMMUNICATE: | 7 | Charm, Diplomacy |
| DISCIPLINE: | 5 | |
| MOVE: | 5 | |
| UNDERSTAND: | 6 | Etiquette |

**Traits:** Diplomat, Traveler

**TALENTS**

- **Binding Promise:** Spend 1, 2, or 3 points of Threat to make an agreement binding. To break it an opponent must spend twice this in Momentum.

**Assets:** Cypher Key, Elegant Clothing, Local Agents of their House

*As it is quicker to send a messenger on a Guild ship than to try sending a signal between distant stars, envoys fulfill an essential function. They sometimes commit their messages to memory or are trusted to carry them securely on their journey. They have a great deal of flexibility in how to achieve the required outcome. Failure, for an envoy, is frequently fatal.*

## EXAMPLE ENVOYS

- **Tatil** is an envoy for a player character's House and has just returned from a failed mission. They desperately need to cover up their failure.
- **Lina** has come to a player character's House with a proposal that the head of the House is determined to reject.
- **Tanir** is an envoy from a friendly House from a distant planet, sent to negotiate with the Harkonnens. They are having trouble even getting an audience.

## SCENARIO HOOK

A rival Espionage House sends an envoy. They propose your Houses join them in opposition to a powerful Military House with which your House is currently allied. Is this a genuine offer or will they back off after you have broken off the friendship and made a powerful enemy?

# Face Dancer

| Drive | | Statement |
|---|---|---|
| Duty: | 6 | |
| Faith: | 7 | The universe is as inconstant as I am. |
| Justice: | 5 | |
| Power: | 5 | |
| Truth: | 4 | |

| Skill | | Focuses |
|---|---|---|
| Battle: | 5 | |
| Communicate: | 7 | Acting, Disguise |
| Discipline: | 5 | |
| Move: | 6 | Body Control |
| Understand: | 5 | |

**Traits:** Imposter

**TALENTS**

- **Prana-Bindu:** May re-roll 1d20 on a Move or Discipline test.
- **Facedance:** They suffer no penalty to attempts to disguise their features, whether old or young, male or female, or as a specific person.

**Assets:** Face Dancers steal or copy the assets of the person they are mimicking, and frequently kill them to avoid exposure.

*Some Face Dancers work as entertainers, which was their original purpose. Others, with their ability to mimic anyone, make supremely effective, if expensive, infiltrators. Many potential employers believe the Tleilaxu use the Face Dancers to further their own agenda, though none know the precise nature of that agenda.*

## EXAMPLE FACE DANCERS

- **Hakaar** is most skilled at infiltrating seedy places and currently works as an entertainer in an exotic bar. Their employment provides a deep vein of blackmail material.
- **Sarah** is adept at replacing specific people, often spending time getting close to a target as a friend or servant to study them before replacing them.
- **Torbyn** likes to work with machines and is a skilled pilot. They like to masquerade as an unobtrusive technician to access an enemy's technology.

## SCENARIO HOOK

A Truthsayer told a close friend that the person they are about to marry is a Face Dancer. The friend wants to find out what happened to the 'original partner' the Face Dancer was imitating. Are they alive somewhere, or did the Face Dancer kill them? The Face Dancer insists they are the original partner and is genuinely upset by any accusations thrown at them.

# Fremen Elder

| Drive | | Statement |
|---|---|---|
| Duty: | 5 | |
| Faith: | 7 | Arrakis will be transformed. |
| Justice: | 6 | |
| Power: | 5 | |
| Truth: | 5 | |

| Skill | | Focuses |
|---|---|---|
| Battle: | 7 | Tactics, Short blades |
| Communicate: | 4 | |
| Discipline: | 8 | Survival (Desert) |
| Move: | 6 | Worm Rider |
| Understand: | 5 | |

**Traits:** Fremen

### Talents

- **Binding Promise:** May spend 1, 2, or 3 points of Threat to make an agreement binding. To break it an opponent must spend twice this in Momentum.
- **Cautious (Discipline):** They may re-roll a single d20 gained from spending Threat.
- **Resilience (Battle):** They may Resist Defeat twice in a scene when in a conflict using the Battle skill.

**Assets:** Crysknife, Maker Hooks, Small Band of Fremen Warriors, Stillsuit

*Rarely seen in the city, these mysterious elders prefer to stick to the deep desert. Long the victims of Harkonnen persecution, they are mistrustful of off-worlders and despise the pyons from Arrakeen. They are mines of information about the desert, its ways, and melange.*

## Example Fremen Elders

- **Akrab** is naib of his sietch, aging now and concerned that younger Fremen are building up their courage to challenge him.
- **Tefik** is the sibling of a naib but has never really found their place in the sietch. They take any opportunity to visit the city on sietch business wondering if they will find a place there.
- **Silandra** is weighed down with watercounters of former husbands and needs to prove that she still has a place in her sietch.

## Scenario Hook

Deep in the desert, a Fremen elder lies injured on the sand. She makes it clear she does not desire rescue. She asks only for the return of her water to her sietch. There is a rumbling in the distance, a sandworm is coming…

# Fremen Warrior

| Drive | | Statement |
|---|---|---|
| Duty: | 7 | The sietch before all others. |
| Faith: | 8 | |
| Justice: | 6 | |
| Power: | 5 | |
| Truth: | 5 | |

| Skill | | Focuses |
|---|---|---|
| Battle: | 8 | Dueling, Short Blades, Unarmed combat |
| Communicate: | 4 | |
| Discipline: | 7 | Survival (Desert), Resolve |
| Move: | 7 | Worm rider |
| Understand: | 5 | |

**Traits:** Fremen

**TALENTS**

- **Decisive Action:** After successfully removing an enemy asset with Battle, remove a second enemy asset for 2 Threat.
- **Nimble:** When attempting a Move test over difficult terrain they may reduce the Difficulty of the test by 2. If this reduces the Difficulty to 0, they may move over or around that obstacle freely.
- **Resilience (Battle):** They may Resist Defeat twice in a scene when in a conflict using the Battle skill.

**Assets:** Crysknife, Fremkit, Stillsuit

*"Who can turn away the Angel of Death? What Shai-Hulud has decreed must be." The Fedaykin, the Fremen death commandos, speak these words as they prepare for battle.*

*Just as the harsh conditions on Salusa Secundus produce the dreaded Sardaukar, the inhospitable landscape of Arrakis hones the Fremen into a terrifying force. Even the young know how to wield a knife and survive the deep desert. But those who claim the mantle of Fremen warrior are truly formidable, lethal on their own and devastating in large numbers.*

*With blue-within-blue eyes, a Fremen soldier wears a stillsuit and is equipped with a distinctive crysknife — a specialized dagger made from the teeth of sandworms. They prefer the desert to the city and use the terrain to their advantage. This includes mounting sandworms to ride across the dunes. They're known to ambush their opponents with stealth and speed before vanishing without a trace.*

## EXAMPLE FREMEN WARRIORS

- **Fara** is the captain of a platoon of elite Fedaykin. Fanatical and intractable, she wages open war against her enemies (both real and perceived), even when her elders might prefer a more diplomatic approach.
- **Nasir** is an impatient, resentful Fremen warrior. After being passed over for promotion, he seeks to issue a tahaddi challenge against the Naib despite his family cautioning him against it.
- **Estes** is a veteran of many battles, all of which are beginning to take their toll. As age sets into their bones and muscles, they have little time left before becoming a burden. They would like to pass on their knowledge to a protégé before offering their water to the sietch.

## SCENARIO HOOK

After the player characters find a rare and valuable crysknife during the excavation of a desert site, a trio of Fremen warriors confront them. They demand the blade be handed over to them for purification. However, the blade is incredibly valuable and deadly. The House could benefit immensely from its keeping. Do the player characters relent, or do they refuse?

# Guild Agent

| Drive | | Statement |
|---|---|---|
| Duty: | 7 | The spice must flow. |
| Faith: | 5 | |
| Justice: | 4 | |
| Power: | 5 | |
| Truth: | 6 | |

| Skill | | Focuses |
|---|---|---|
| Battle: | 4 | |
| Communicate: | 6 | Diplomacy |
| Discipline: | 7 | Composure, Self-Control |
| Move: | 5 | |
| Understand: | 5 | |

**Traits:** Guild Agent, Diplomat

**TALENTS**

- **Priority Boarding:** Avoid customs check on Guild vessels.

**Assets:** Guild Contacts, Shield Belt, Supply Contracts

*Due to their inability to survive outside their tailored environment tanks, a Guild Navigator is a rare sight. The Guild does business through its agents who are easy to find anywhere a person might go to arrange interplanetary transport — for themselves, those they serve, or goods. Guild Agents are skilled at fitting in with their environment in manner and appearance. They pride themselves on being unremarkable and often hide their totally blue eyes.*

## EXAMPLE GUILD AGENTS

- **Senver** is a broker who will sell you passage on a Heighliner or arrange for transportation of your exports or imports but, mostly, Senver deals with smugglers.
- **Joh** is more likely to be at a dinner party or House entertainment than the Guild offices, but they arrange deals with Major Houses and act as an observer at high level meetings.
- **Rellis** is a mechanic who works on maintaining the sealed containers the Navigators need. She also sources supplies for the Guild office from the market.

## SCENARIO HOOK

Someone identified as a spice smuggler is talking to a Guild Agent in the market. What deal do the Smugglers have with the Guild? Or do they have a deal at all? Might the consequence of looking into this too deeply be that the Guild refuses to work with your House?

# Healer

| Drive | | Statement |
|---|---|---|
| Duty: | 5 | |
| Faith: | 5 | |
| Justice: | 6 | |
| Power: | 5 | |
| Truth: | 7 | A harsh truth is superior to a kind lie. |

| Skill | | Focuses |
|---|---|---|
| Battle: | 4 | |
| Communicate: | 5 | |
| Discipline: | 6 | Composure |
| Move: | 6 | |
| Understand: | 7 | Emergency Medicine, Surgery |

**Traits:** Healer

### TALENTS

- **Intense Study:** Once per scene, they may may use their Understand skill on a single skill test instead of any other skill and are counted as having a focus for that test.

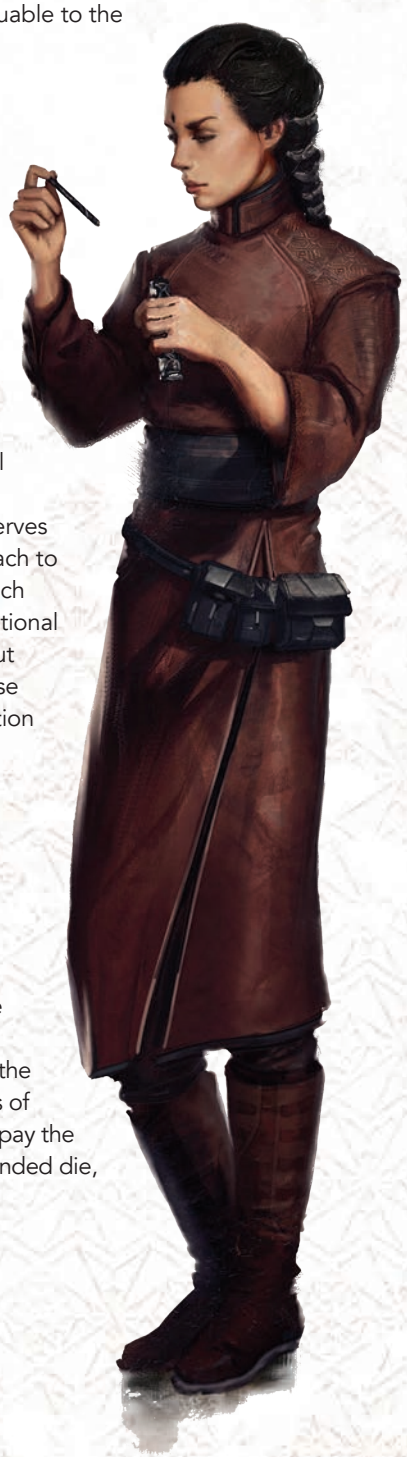
**Assets:** Glowglobe, Medical Records, Medkit

*In a universe wrought with battles, duels, and various skirmishes in-between, healers are in high demand. Every noble House, Minor or Major, has at least one medical advisor who tends to the health of the family. Healers also find employment as medical technicians, surgeons, researchers, and advisors to planetary governors. From the combat medic assigned to the infantry to the country doctor who uses herbs to mend the sick, healers are pervasive throughout the Known Universe.*

*While many medical schools exist, none carry the prestige of the Suk School of Medicine. Identified by the diamond tattoo on their forehead, Suk graduates are the most skilled healers in the Landsraad. Imperial conditioning ensures these doctors' loyalty and incorruptibility, making them incapable of taking another life, even under extreme duress. Suk doctors are also the most expensive, with a percentage of their fees tithed to the Suk School of Medicine on Kaitain.*

## EXAMPLE HEALERS

- **Roya** is an old medicine woman for Sietch Gara Kulon. Her bedside manner is sharper than a crysknife, and her knowledge of herbs, poisons, and toxins makes her invaluable to the Fremen.
- **Gallen** is a street surgeon operating from a private stall in Carthag. A dropout from a second-tier medical academy, he is addicted to semuta. However, he is also a viable option for someone in need of discreet medical services.
- **Shay** is a newly minted graduate of the Suk School of Medicine. Talented and often overconfident, she serves a Major House. Her approach to medicine is innovative, which clashes with the rigid, traditional Baron who employs her. But after curing a diabolical case of poison-induced indigestion during a tense summit, he complains less about her methods.



## SCENARIO HOOK

After an ornithopter crashes in the middle of Arrakeen, the survivors rush the wounded to a local healer. Unfortunately, the healer, who is not a member of the Suk School, refuses to treat the injured unless they pay ten liters of water. Do the player characters pay the healer's steep price, let the wounded die, or find a third alternative?

# House Soldier/Guard

| Drive | | Statement |
|---|---|---|
| Duty: | 6 | I never desert my post. |
| Faith: | 5 | |
| Justice: | 4 | |
| Power: | 4 | |
| Truth: | 4 | |

| Skill | | Focuses |
|---|---|---|
| Battle: | 6 | Lasgun, Tactics |
| Communicate: | 4 | |
| Discipline: | 5 | Composure |
| Move: | 5 | |
| Understand: | 4 | |

**Traits:** Military

### TALENTS

- **Unquestionable Loyalty:** At the start of each adventure they are utilized in, they begin with 3 Threat (1 Determination) which only they may use, and which may only be used on an action which is in direct service to their House.

**Assets:** Conscripts, Lasgun, Security Clearance, Shield Belt

*Every House needs soldiers and guards, brave men and women who ensure no intruders invade the residency and who stand in the front line of battle in times of war. Faithful and loyal though they are, they remain human and have weaknesses a wily enemy can exploit.*

## EXAMPLE HOUSE SOLDIERS/GUARDS

- **Finain** is loyal but has a sick mother in need of expensive medical treatment.
- **Zavir** has worked for the House since childhood and is honored to serve in a military capacity. Incorruptible.
- **Gideron** is loyal but gets distracted when worried about their wayward daughter.

## SCENARIO HOOK

One of the House military has started to behave oddly. It emerges that her husband has gone missing, kidnapped by a rival House that is trying to subvert the loyal soldier by threatening those she loves.

# Mentat

| Drive | | Statement |
|---|---|---|
| Duty: | 6 | |
| Faith: | 5 | |
| Justice: | 5 | |
| Power: | 5 | |
| Truth: | 7 | There is always a reason. |

| Skill | | Focuses |
|---|---|---|
| Battle: | 5 | |
| Communicate: | 6 | Diplomacy |
| Discipline: | 4 | |
| Move: | 5 | |
| Understand: | 7 | Data Analysis, Deductive Reasoning |

**Traits:** Mentat, Political Advisor

### Talents

- **Mentat Discipline:** Add two automatic successes on all Understand tests they attempt when remembering facts or data.

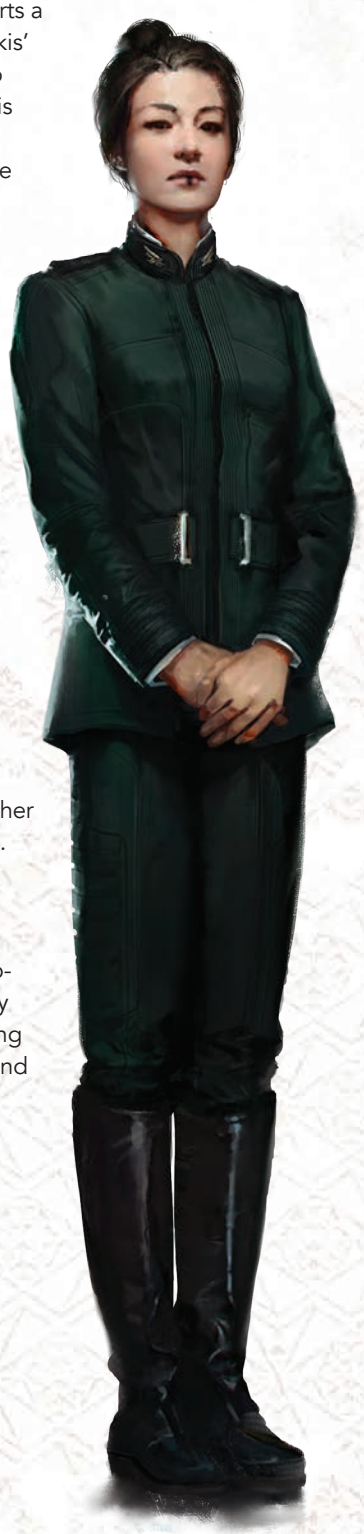
**Assets:** Access to Employer Data, Informant Network, Sapho Juice

*Mentats undergo rigorous conditioning, turning themselves into human computers who are both moral and truthful. Bound by ethical constraints, Mentats are inherently honest, a conviction prized by the majority of the Landsraad. With their intense mental conditioning and exceptional cognitive ability, Mentats are employed by almost all influential entities within the Imperium, like Houses and high-volume traders. They are trusted as military strategists, administrators, political advisors, and tutors for young nobles. Many Mentats enhance their mental abilities by drinking Sapho juice, a liquid that stains their lips red.*

*From economic strategy to military tactics, Mentats replaced computers and thinking machines generations ago. On the desert planet Arrakis, they help their employers consolidate power, gain more control over the melange trade, or outwit the competition. Rivalries are common, and so is pitting the brilliance of Mentats against each other.*

## Example Mentats

- **Oren Yudin** works for one of the merchants who imports a large percentage of Arrakis' technology. His goal is to create dependence on his merchant's goods, and a captive market, across the planet.
- **Nellis Entrekin** is the Mentat for a House Minor located on Arrakis. Their House has plans to absorb one of their rival Houses in their ambition to become a House Major of the Imperium.
- **Devin Vinal** has a position with the Tleilaxu representatives on Arrakis. As a Twisted Mentat, her specialty is to identify even the tiniest irregularities in accounting that will give her Tleilaxu masters an edge.



## Scenario Hook

For a hefty sum, a Mentat is seeking access to all the shipping records for Arrakis. They believe someone is stockpiling melange, and they want to find out who.

# MERCHANT

| DRIVE | STATEMENT | |
|---|---|---|
| DUTY: | 5 | |
| FAITH: | 5 | |
| JUSTICE: | 6 | |
| POWER: | 7 | There is power in solaris. |
| TRUTH: | 5 | |

| SKILL | FOCUSES | |
|---|---|---|
| BATTLE: | 4 | |
| COMMUNICATE: | 6 | Bartering, Persuasion |
| DISCIPLINE: | 4 | |
| MOVE: | 4 | |
| UNDERSTAND: | 5 | Data Analysis |

**Traits:** Broker, Wealthy

**TALENTS**

- **Driven:** After they spend Threat to gain a point of Determination, roll 1d20. If the roll is equal to or under their Discipline rating (by itself), they immediately regain that spent Threat.

**Assets:** Information Network, Ornithopter, Warehouse,

*The swish of their exquisite clothing whispers of wealth. Expensive perfumes waft in their wake. They glide from place to place in their groundcars, avoiding the hot sun of Arrakis. With a tight stranglehold on legitimate trade, Arrakis' merchants handle most of the goods that enter the cities. From luxury imports to precious water, these cunning individuals work hard and will do almost anything, to make solaris on every transaction.*

*Many merchants, especially those with the fewest morals, are wealthy individuals with unsavory connections. Some deal with CHOAM, others with smugglers. Most act as brokers, buying and selling in bulk, and are rarely the ones braving the scorching sun to peddle their goods to the population. They leave that to the water sellers and small shop proprietors.*

*One area that the merchants can't seem to touch are the Fremen-manufactured wares, like their high quality stillsuits. That doesn't mean the merchants don't try, however.*

## EXAMPLE MERCHANTS

- **Flair** runs a hefty percentage of the water trade in Carthag and Arrakeen, taking advantage of her water sellers whenever she can. She treasures her vast collection of antique weapons.
- **Joash** primarily brokers imports with CHOAM and spends resources trying to crush the local smugglers. He has a weakness for adding exotic animals to his personal menagerie.
- **Druce** focuses their merchant empire on weapons and vehicles. They outfit many of the guards and soldiers of Arrakis' Houses Minor. Their passion is collecting fine wines.

## SCENARIO HOOK

A merchant who claims to want to expand their business is looking for an introduction to a group of technology smugglers. But it's also possible that this merchant, instead, wants to identify and eliminate the smugglers who they see as competition.

# Noble (Young Heir)

| Drive | | Statement |
|---|---|---|
| Duty: | 7 | I am born to lead. |
| Faith: | 5 | |
| Justice: | 6 | |
| Power: | 5 | |
| Truth: | 5 | |

| Skill | | Focuses |
|---|---|---|
| Battle: | 5 | |
| Communicate: | 6 | Diplomacy |
| Discipline: | 7 | Command, Composure |
| Move: | 4 | |
| Understand: | 5 | |

**Traits:** Noble, House Minor

**TALENTS**

- **Bold (Communicate):** May re-roll a d20 gained from spending Threat on a Communicate skill test.

**Assets:** Influence, Kindjal, Ornithopter

*Despite their luxurious homes, unlimited access to water, and aristocratic experiences, the young nobles of the Imperium lead uncertain lives. From an early age they learn to identify a hunter-seeker and other methods of slaughter. Poison snoopers are common at the dinner table. The knowledge that a War of Assassination could happen at any moment makes the wisest of them wary and mistrustful.*

*Their banquets, games, and lavish spending may make them seem carefree. In fact, they are almost anything but. Political and social clashes, both overt and covert, rule their lives. If they survive to adulthood, they understand that they will become even more of a target.*

*Young nobles are always on the hunt for allies and looking to surprise their enemies in unexpected ways. And they always have solaris to help them get their way.*

## EXAMPLE YOUNG HEIR NOBLES

- **Bionbir** is learning to manage their family's water reclamation holdings on Arrakis. While they don't love the drudgery of their family's business, they feel a duty to follow in their House's footsteps.
- **Honora**, heiress to one of the Houses Minor, has a talent for codebreaking and counter-espionage. And she has plans to make her House into a major power within the Landsraad.
- **Belteshazzar** wants to escape Arrakis at any cost. He'll marry into another family. He'll give up his title. He'll become a smuggler. He'll join CHOAM or the Spacing Guild. He just never wants to see the Shield Wall or endless dunes again.

## SCENARIO HOOK

Smugglers are eating into one House's bottom line, and the Landsraad is making noise about their weakness. The young heir is hiring mercenaries to put a stop to it. The smugglers, on the other hand, would love to get the jump on the ambitious noble.

# Noble (Veteran)

| Drive | | Statement |
|---|---|---|
| Duty: | 5 | |
| Faith: | 5 | |
| Justice: | 5 | |
| Power: | 7 | Possession is nine tenths of the law. |
| Truth: | 6 | |

| Skill | | Focuses |
|---|---|---|
| Battle: | 5 | |
| Communicate: | 6 | Diplomacy |
| Discipline: | 6 | |
| Move: | 5 | |
| Understand: | 7 | House Politics, Kanly |

**Traits:** Noble

*TALENTS*

- *Putting Theory into Practice: Once per scene, when they Obtain Information, they may create a trait for free, representing an advantage they've identified with the information they received.*

**Assets:** Bodyguards, Kindjal Engraved with House Crest, Shield Belt

*Not every young heir manages to survive the deadly games of politics. Those who do are deadly opponents, with the power of a noble House at their command. Many Houses both Major and Minor have representation on Arrakis, but an experienced noble needs some compelling reason to visit. Few come out of curiosity, more on business too secret to entrust to an envoy. Veteran nobles rarely travel alone; it would be dangerous for a prominent member of a noble House to do so.*

## EXAMPLE VETERAN NOBLES

- **Horace** is a respected noble of an Agricultural House, on Arrakis to strike a secret deal with the Harkonnens.
- **Slynn** is a cousin of the head of a rival House, on Arrakis to improve their standing by finding a new way to obtain spice.
- **Edvan**, a close relative of the head of a House Richese, is on Arrakis to avoid the manipulations of a rival within their House.

## SCENARIO HOOK

A veteran noble of an allied House seeks the assistance of the Atreides. They claim they have been the intended victim of chaumas, administered at a banquet in Carthag, and that they only escaped death because their bodyguard tasted the food before them. They want revenge. A Truthsayer reveals he is lying. Is he trying to escalate the rivalry between Harkonnen and Atreides?

# Sardaukar (Elite Soldier)

| Drive | | Statement |
|---|---|---|
| Duty: | 8 | My knife is never sheathed. |
| Faith: | 5 | |
| Justice: | 5 | |
| Power: | 6 | |
| Truth: | 5 | |

| Skill | | Focuses |
|---|---|---|
| Battle: | 8 | Lasgun, Long Blades, Short Blades, Tactics |
| Communicate: | 5 | |
| Discipline: | 7 | Self Control |
| Move: | 7 | Swift |
| Understand: | 4 | |

**Traits:** Sardaukar, Soldier

### Talents

- **Bolster:** Spend 2 Threat to allow an ally to re-roll their dice pool. The ally may use the Sardaukar's Discipline instead of their skill as well.
- **Decisive Action:** After successfully removing an enemy asset with Battle, they may remove a second enemy asset for 2 Threat.
- **Master-at-Arms:** At the start of a duel, skirmish, or battle, the Sardaukar may spend 1 point of Threat to increase a martial asset they have by +1 Quality for that conflict.

**Assets:** Sardaukar are equipped as according to their assignment, but generally carry a variety of concealed weapons including Lasgun, Shigawire Garrote, Shield, Kindjal, Flip-Dart, and more.

*The Sardaukar are an elite military force, loyal only to the Padishah Emperor. They have a suicidal disregard for personal safety and a talent for brutality, due to their secret training on the prison world of Salusa Secundus. Only the most talented and resolute of warriors can face a Sardaukar with any hope of survival. Such is their reputation, even the suggestion they will be deployed by the Emperor is enough to bring a noble House to heel.*

## Example Sardaukar

- **Lucan Savarese** is acting as a bodyguard and accompanying a member of House Corrino as they tour the Known Universe. His charge touched down on Arrakis mere days ago.
- **Valen** is a skilled warrior who fights on behalf of the Emperor at public Landsraad tournaments. Smug and arrogant, there are many fighters who would like to see him cut down.
- **Channing Hudgeons** has a swift sword and swifter temper. They arrived on Arrakis embedded in the troops of one of the Great Houses that has plans to rule the planet one day. They'll make sure to put an end to those ambitions.

## Scenario Hook

The player characters need vital information from a stubborn noble, and a Sardaukar bodyguard is acting as an impassable gatekeeper. Do the player characters take the Sardaukar head on, attempt to bribe him, or find an alternative means of eliminating the imposing figure from the equation?

# SCIENTIST

| DRIVE | STATEMENT | |
|---|---|---|
| DUTY: | 5 | |
| FAITH: | 5 | |
| JUSTICE: | 5 | |
| POWER: | 4 | |
| TRUTH: | 7 | Science will solve the problem. |

| SKILL | FOCUSES | |
|---|---|---|
| BATTLE: | 3 | |
| COMMUNICATE: | 4 | |
| DISCIPLINE: | 6 | Observe |
| MOVE: | 4 | |
| UNDERSTAND: | 7 | Deductive Reasoning, Physics |

**Traits:** Researcher

### TALENTS

- **Intense Study:** Once per scene, they may use their Understand skill on a single skill test instead of any other skill, and they are counted as having a focus for that test.

**Assets:** Shigawire Reels, Laboratory, Data About Arrakis

*One can find scientists all over the Imperium. Some handle caustic chemicals under ventilation hoods, while others are smeared in grease from tinkering on the latest carryall design. From designing ships that travel the stars to concocting poisons from local flora, these brilliant researchers change the way the Imperium functions.*

*On Arrakis, several Houses have secret laboratories dedicated to trying to create an artificial source of the spice melange. Other groups are trying to find a way to increase the efficiency of harvested spice. Some Houses are searching for melange's origins and a way to farm it from the planet reliably. And then there are those entities searching for new weapons and ways to destroy their competition. Scientific research supports them all.*

*Scientists do not often participate in political games. However, they can become pawns. Depending on their expertise, kidnapping or assassination is a very real possibility.*

## EXAMPLE SCIENTISTS

- **Talaith Ng** always has a wrench in one hand and the sharp smell of oil about her. She is working with one of the Houses on creating hardier ornithopters that can withstand Arrakis' famous coriolis storms.
- **Izel Antaya** works out of one of the hidden smugglers' bases deep in the desert. In exchange for helping the smugglers cobble together whatever medication and tools they need, they are also working to understand the sparse plant and animal life on Arrakis.
- **Windham Jalloh** isn't officially on Arrakis at all but smuggled in by one of the local merchants who wants him to find a way to distill spice out of the planet's very air — on pain of death, of course.

## SCENARIO HOOK

A less-than-ethical scientist wants their competitor's data. They're offering a pretty payday for anyone who breaks into the lab, steals the data, and sabotages all the ongoing experiments.

# Servant

| Drive | | Statement |
|---|---|---|
| Duty: | 4 | |
| Faith: | 4 | |
| Justice: | 4 | |
| Power: | 5 | |
| Truth: | 6 | What one wishes were true is seldom so. |

| Skill | | Focuses |
|---|---|---|
| Battle: | 3 | |
| Communicate: | 5 | Listening |
| Discipline: | 6 | |
| Move: | 6 | Unobtrusive |
| Understand: | 4 | Etiquette |

**Traits:** Servant

### Talents

- **Nimble:** When attempting a Move test over difficult terrain they may reduce the Difficulty of the test by 2. If this reduces the Difficulty to 0, they may move over or around that obstacle freely.

**Assets:** Illicit Recordings, Old Friendship, Trusted Access

*With quiet footsteps, House servants go about their business, often unnoticed by those they serve. Though the nobles may pay them little mind, domestic attendants are observant, perceptive, and more powerful than the Houses could imagine. They see and hear scandals that could destroy reputations within the Landsraad. They know secrets that could turn to blackmail. In subtle ways and with understated suggestions, they can manipulate their employers into taking actions without their nobles ever being the wiser.*

*Servants handle the day-to-day operations of a noble House, functioning as assistants, couriers, cooks, gardeners, guards, maids, mechanics, secretaries, and tutors. Servants tend to be close-knit within a given House with a shared responsibility for the success of the nobles. Many servants on Arrakis also have outside loyalties. Some are powerful Fremen and are influential within their communities and their sietches. Others have connections to spies or smugglers or assassins.*

## Example Servants

- **Trophnus** works as a cook for one of the Houses Minor on Arrakis. He knows the preferences, and deadly allergies, of every one of the nobles in his House. He also has family ties to one of the local merchants.
- **Noemi** manages the fleet of vehicles belonging to one of the Houses Minor. As a result, she knows her nobles' schedules down to the second. She is the daughter of a naib.
- **Rheged** is the head housekeeper for a House Minor. They command respect and trust within their household. They also have vast connections reaching outside the House they run.

## Scenario Hook

The player characters discover one of their servants is working with spice smugglers on Arrakis. The player characters need to decide what they will do with this servant. Do they punish the servant, or do they use this as an opportunity to learn more about spice smuggling on Arrakis?

# SMUGGLER

| DRIVE | STATEMENT |
|---|---|
| DUTY: 5 | |
| FAITH: 5 | |
| JUSTICE: 7 | They will not control us. |
| POWER: 6 | |
| TRUTH: 5 | |

| SKILL | FOCUSES |
|---|---|
| BATTLE: 5 | Dirty Fighting |
| COMMUNICATE: 4 | |
| DISCIPLINE: 3 | |
| MOVE: 6 | Drive, Stealth |
| UNDERSTAND: 5 | |

**Traits:** Smuggler

### TALENTS

- **Constantly Watching:** Whenever they attempt a test to detect danger or hidden enemies, they reduce the Difficulty by 2, to a minimum of 0. In addition, once per scene, they can increase the cost for another to Keep the Initiative by +2.

**Assets:** Hidden Base, Maula Pistol, Ornithopter*Ornithopters hum between bases deep in the deserts of Arrakis, while space-worthy vessels laden with contraband climb into near orbit around the planet. Smugglers supply illegally acquired spice that leaves no record of its existence to anyone who can pay.*

*They chafe under the power structures of the Imperium, like the abuses suffered at the hands of the ruling House of Arrakis and the tyranny of CHOAM. The smugglers of this world will do anything they can to undermine it.*

*But living outside the law on a planet as unforgiving as Arrakis isn't for the faint of heart. There is the constant risk of discovery and death at the hands of the Landsraad, CHOAM, and the sands. These rebels make it work by keeping their wits about them and possessing a fierce determination to survive. Though they may seem like a ragtag bunch, Arrakis' smugglers are clever, motivated, and driven.*

## EXAMPLE SMUGGLERS

- **Terris Ghurani** coordinates the movements and sales for one of the largest smuggling rings on Arrakis. They tend to stay in a ship in near orbit, watching for any movements from their foes and shifting their plans accordingly.
- **Maelee Lyng** is first into the fight whenever her smuggling group comes up against House soldiers or CHOAM law enforcement. She's quick with a knife and a garrote.
- **Abdulmujib Hake** pilots one of the ornithopters for smuggler grab-and-go operations. He has a sharp eye for untouched spice fields. The rumor is that he was once a noble himself.

## SCENARIO HOOK

Someone is planning to betray one of the smuggling rings on Arrakis. The smugglers will pay for the informant — dead or alive. The betrayer, on the other hand, is willing to part with their solaris for protection.

# Spy/Infiltrator

| Drive | | Statement |
|---|---|---|
| Duty: | 6 | |
| Faith: | 5 | |
| Justice: | 5 | |
| Power: | 5 | |
| Truth: | 7 | The truth is what you make it. |

| Skill | | Focuses |
|---|---|---|
| Battle: | 5 | |
| Communicate: | 6 | Deceit |
| Discipline: | 5 | |
| Move: | 5 | |
| Understand: | 7 | Danger Sense, Traps |

**Traits:** Imposter, Spy

### Talents

**Ransack:** When they attempt an Understand test to search an area, they can spend 2 Threat to reduce the Difficulty of the test by 1, and to halve the amount of time the test takes.

**Assets:** Cibus Hood, Lockpicks, Memocorder

*A person who can find information about a rival is invaluable in House or Imperial politics. One who can penetrate to the very heart of an enemy's household is worth their weight in spice. On Arrakis a successful spy or infiltrator gains rich rewards. Failure or detection is, however, often fatal. Or worse.*

## Example Spies/Infiltrators

- **Tellia** poses as a trader in an Arrakeen market while collecting intelligence for a 'friend' who is a Harkonnen employee.
- **Haley**, posing as a skilled chef, has infiltrated the House kitchen and awaits a signal to administer chaumas (ingested poison).
- **Aury**, a talented musician, has befriended the heir to a House and is obtaining information for rivals while giving baliset lessons.

## Scenario Hook

An infiltrator placed in a rival House sends a trusted messenger to inform the player characters they fear their cover has been blown. They request extraction, but the messenger says the infiltrator has been 'turned' by the player characters' rivals and the rescue operation is really a trap.

# TECHNICIAN

| DRIVE | | STATEMENT |
|---|---|---|
| DUTY: | 5 | |
| FAITH: | 6 | My skills will keep us running. |
| JUSTICE: | 4 | |
| POWER: | 4 | |
| TRUTH: | 5 | |

| SKILL | | FOCUSES |
|---|---|---|
| BATTLE: | 3 | |
| COMMUNICATE: | 4 | |
| DISCIPLINE: | 6 | Precision |
| MOVE: | 4 | |
| UNDERSTAND: | 6 | Advanced Technology, Deductive Reasoning |

**Traits:** Technician

**TALENTS**

- **Rigorous Control:** They can use Discipline instead of any skill in an extended test, and gain +1 to the requirement if the skill was already Discipline.

**Assets:** Technical Access, Tools, Vision Enhancement Goggles

*Smelling of grease and oil and with the always-present jingle of extra parts rattling in their pockets, clever technicians keep Arrakis humming. These mechanics and tinkerers can replace ornithopter blades or clean sand out of a water reclamation unit with their eyes closed. A good technician is worth their weight in spice.*

*On Arrakis, nothing is easy. Creativity and flexibility are the keys to survival on this parched planet. And technicians are no exception. More than one has had to improvise an air filter from a discarded stillsuit to get a broken carryall into the sky before a sandworm arrives to destroy profits. The planet's blistering heat and endless sand are a technician's biggest challenges.*

*Though the job may not be a glamorous one, Arrakis would grind to a halt without the quick-thinking and tenacious technicians employed there.*

## EXAMPLE TECHNICIANS

- **Terilynn Hasan** works for smugglers and has a knack for fixing anything mechanical. Her favorite things are broken Holtzman field generators she can repair.
- **Alik Vidiri** builds their own vehicles and races them, legally or illegally, whenever they have the chance. Groundcars? Ornithopters? If it moves, Alik will make it go fast.
- **Alahhaois Ranum** is one of the many technicians who repairs carryalls and spice harvesters. He has saved more than one harvesting expedition on the scorching sands of Arrakis.

## SCENARIO HOOK

A technician comes to the player characters, concerned that they've been requested to make some components that they suspect are going to be part of a thinking machine. The person ordering the parts did so through a proxy, so the player characters must discover who ordered them and what they are planning to do. The technician is terrified of what will happen to them if people think they are complicit in breaking Butlerian edicts. However, could the technician be trying to frame the player characters and their House as creators of thinking machines?

# Tleilaxu Master

| Drive | | Statement |
|---|---|---|
| Duty: | 5 | |
| Faith: | 6 | |
| Justice: | 3 | |
| Power: | 5 | |
| Truth: | 7 | Science holds the answers. |

| Skill | | Focuses |
|---|---|---|
| Battle: | 3 | |
| Communicate: | 6 | Neurolinguistics |
| Discipline: | 6 | |
| Move: | 5 | |
| Understand: | 7 | Genetics, Faction Lore (Tleilaxu) |

**Traits:** Tleilaxu, Biologist

### Talents

- **Masterful Innuendo:** They can conceal a hidden message in a conversation by adding 1 to the Difficulty of the Communicate test.

**Assets:** Face Dancer, Illicit Recordings, Ixian Damper

*All Tleilaxu look odd. Most have sharpened teeth (whether this is innate or acquired is not known). Some are abnormally short; others have greyish complexions. Whatever the differences, their appearance makes humans from other planets feel uncomfortable, as if the nature of the Bene Tleilax's services — artificially grown limbs and organs, ghola returned from the dead, and, of course, the Face Dancers — were not disconcerting enough. Tleilaxu masters use this discomfort to their advantage.*

## Example Tleilaxu Masters

- **Azarz**, having placed a Face Dancer in a rival House, will ensure the Face Dancer will report to their client, at a cost.
- **Hintrock** has recently arrived in Arrakeen with a ghola of the dead spouse of a senior House member.
- **Pergale** has much to offer. What do you want? A super-efficient limb? Eyes that double as binoculars? Pergale can arrange it.

## Scenario Hook

A Heighliner has disappeared. A spy in the market reports she saw a Tleilaxu Master pass a package to a Guild Agent. Could this have been a Tleilaxu experiment with synthetic spice? Or are the two incidents unrelated?

# Water Seller

| Drive | Statement |
|---|---|
| Duty: 4 | |
| Faith: 4 | |
| Justice: 5 | |
| Power: 6 | Everyone wants water. |
| Truth: 4 | |

| Skill | Focuses |
|---|---|
| Battle: 2 | |
| Communicate: 6 | Bartering, Gossip |
| Discipline: 4 | |
| Move: 4 | |
| Understand: 5 | |

**Traits:** Water Seller, Merchant

**TALENTS**

- **Subtle Words:** They can create a new trait whenever they spend Threat for extra dice on a Communicate test.

**Assets:** Small Group of Thugs, Water, Wealth

*With their distinctive cry of "Sook Sook!" water sellers can be found all over the city of Arrakeen. As a precious commodity, water fetches a high price and many water sellers can become quite rich. However, the majority are quite poor, often buying water in bulk from a merchant and selling it on for a minimal profit. Some more desperate souls even sell part of their own vital water rations to make ends meet. But despite the hardships, no water seller ever lacks for customers.*

## EXAMPLE WATER SELLERS

- **Manan** is a wealthy water merchant who love to flaunt his wealth and overcharge his customers.
- **Binda** is an old lady who sells water as a sideline and loves to gossip with her customers.
- **Nia** is actually an informant for a rival House and is always on the lookout for secrets.

## SCENARIO HOOK

A water seller complains that their wares have been stolen, but the people they accuse insist the seller has actually drunk their own stock. But given the accused are agents of the player characters' House, is there more to the dispute than meets the eye?

# Rival Houses

**t** is not only the agents and allies of the Houses of the Landsraad that might be lined up against the player characters, but whole Houses themselves. In a universe where most people owe loyalty to one House or another, who you serve is an important question, and counting one House as a friend always means making an enemy of others. Where alliances and vendettas stretch back in some cases for thousands of years, peace between certain Houses is an impossible dream.

In this chapter we offer a few example Houses, which might be allies or enemies of the player characters' House. They might be old friends or rivals, or they may be a new connection whose allegiance depends on the player characters.

Each House is defined quite loosely to allow the gamemaster to adapt it to suit their campaign. Each one just needs a name and a reason to encounter the player characters. While each House has a theme, it is important to remember that none of them are 'one trick ponies'. Every House in the Landsraad has the means to protect itself and its holdings. So, just because the theme is art or science, it does not mean the House has no standing military or never sells any crops. However, its theme is the way it distinguishes itself from the other Houses of the Imperium and the area where it is at its most powerful. Remember, anyone who controls an entire planet is not to be underestimated.

# Military House

This House is renowned for its military might. It commands well-trained and well-armed soldiers, all led by battle-hardened generals. The Military House might have built such a force to feel safe, or so they might hire themselves out as mercenaries.

The noble family ruling the House revolves around strict military protocol. Heirs are trained extensively in various forms of combat, and those who hope to lead the House are driven to excel. This might make the members of the House quite bullish, but they respect strength and may also follow a code of honor.

**As a Great House:** The Great Military House is a master of all things military. House Corrino, ignoring its Imperial benefits, is a Military House whose famed Sardaukar soldiers strike fear into the hearts of even the most powerful Great Houses. Other Great Houses of military might exist in the Imperium, but are careful to show their undying allegiance to the Golden Lion Throne, lest the Emperor turns their eye upon them.

**As a Major House:** The Major Military House is a tiger you do not want to wake. However, for all its fighting power it is still reliant on the Guild to move its troops around the universe. An invasion is an expensive operation. But this may lead to a deadly cycle of the House needing to make more conquests to pay an ever-growing debt to the Guild.

**As a Minor House:** The Minor Military House is more of a specialist. It cannot produce the best army and weapons and strategy, etc., so it works to be the best at one particular aspect. This makes it a useful friend, as it might have just the right specialty to fill a gap in an ally's fighting force without being so powerful that a betrayal cripples them.

**Resources:** The resources and holdings of a Military House are all rated in their use on the battlefield. If something cannot have a weapon added to it, be it a person or a vehicle, it is of little use to the Military House. However, these Houses may need a good source of metal ore so they can construct their weapons and war machines.

**Ruler:** If the ruler of this House is getting old, their fighting days may be behind them but they are still an expert tactician. If they are young, they may still be spoiling for a fight, possibly against the advice of their advisors. But it is equally possible the ruler may have tired of war and fighting and now tries to avoid it. This may lead to more militant factions in the House looking to replace them.

**As an Ally:** The uses of a Military House as an ally are quite obvious. Their force of arms might give the player characters' House the 'teeth' they lack. However, the player characters had best be careful they don't rely too much on the Military House. Those same troops might easily turn and take control of any installations they are guarding.

**As an Enemy:** A Military House is usually easy to see coming. If their strength is in force of arms, they usually meet any potential conflict head on with firepower. This makes them a little easier to politically flank. For instance, a large Guild bribe would stop them from moving their forces off planet. Unfortunately, outthinking such a House may make them all the more dedicated to proving their superiority. It is unlikely that any conflict can be considered resolved by them unless it has been settled on a battlefield.

**Domains:** The following list represents likely domains of this style of House at each level; feel free to mix and match to fit your story. Military Houses focus on producing military power in various forms and supporting that power, so expect secondary domains to support the primary: food supplies or small arms for their soldiers, or tactics and shields for officers, etc.

## MINOR HOUSE

**Primary Domain (1):** Military Machinery (Armored Fighting Vehicles)

**Secondary Domain (1):** Military Produce (Ammunition or Engineers)

## MAJOR HOUSE

**Primary Domain (1):** Military Workers (Soldiers)

**Secondary Domains (2):** Military Produce (Small Arms) and Farming Produce (Military Rations)

## GREAT HOUSE

**Primary Domain (2):** Military Workers (Pilots) and Military Machinery (Armored Fighting Vehicles)

**Secondary Domains (3):** Military Produce (Shields), Farming Produce (Military Rations), and Military Understanding (Specialty Tactics)

## ADVENTURE HOOKS:

- In the player characters' darkest hour, when their House might be overrun by a rival House, this Military House offers its aid and services. They might see the characters as noble and just and therefore undeserving of destruction. Maybe they are also an enemy of this House and see this as a chance for them to strike a blow against a shared rival. Or perhaps they are playing a long game where the attack on the player characters' House was nothing but an attempt to place them in the debt of this Military House.
- Whatever the motivations of this House, they are placing extensive military aid at the service of the player characters. Do the characters accept their terms, even the hidden ones? Or do they face the enemy alone and perhaps gain respect from them for their tenacity, or disgust for the way the characters waste their peoples' lives?

- The player characters' House has discovered a secret technique, method, or weakness of a Military House. This House is not aware that the characters know about this closely guarded secret. Do the characters approach them openly and offer it back to them, or offer to pay them for having gained this knowledge for free? This might raise the characters' prestige within the Landsraad, and if they are an honorable House the characters may have just purchased their friendship, ended an old grudge, or even made an ally.
- Or do the player characters keep it secret amongst their House as a weapon to employ against them if they ever have thoughts of betrayal? Perhaps the characters can even sell it to other enemies of this House, but then the Military House might discover the leaked information and compensate.
- Just or unjust, this House feels that the player characters' House has wronged them in some way. They have called one or more members out to face them on the field of honor, in either an honor battle or a duel where one or more members settle the dispute via ritualized armed conflict.

Is this a common pattern of this House, using these methods of bullying to stomp or weaken other Houses? Or do they have a real case against the player characters' House? They have refused all other forms of compensation and the Landsraad sees this as an equitable form of dispute resolution, less wasteful than kanly for both sides. Champions are allowed, so if the characters are not well-trained in the art of war, perhaps one of their militant allies can stand in for them, in exchange for a favor.

## Espionage House

This House strikes at their enemies from the shadows or lures other Houses to their side via indirect means, often leaving the new ally unaware of the maneuvering behind the scenes. This House thrives on plots within plots and may even employ a strict secret police force within their own populace to better control enemy activities, but also foster growth of new agents.

The noble family rules with a subtle but strong hand. Rivals die of mysterious illnesses, while friends seem to be lucky without reason. Often these Houses' rulers have multiple heirs and pit them against each other so that the strongest or luckiest survive to rule as ruthlessly as they do. Perhaps the rulers bait their heirs into coup attempts against them.

**As a Great House:** The Great Espionage House rules from the shadows with the ability to apply unorthodox political pressure upon even the most powerful Houses and entities within the Empire. CHOAM, the Spacing Guild, and even the Bene Gesserit step with care around this House, as they never know where the poisoned dart might fly or for what reason. House Harkonnen is an infamous example of just such a House. The Baron and his twisted Mentat were both masters of intrigue and deception so refined that they broke the mental training of a Suk doctor and, at the time, brought House Atreides low through this impossible betrayal.

**As a Major House:** It is best to leave viper nests alone. This House has mastered one area of espionage and likely offers its services to other Houses, such as employing Face Dancers on singular missions using connections to the Bene Tleilax, or purchasing the diplomatic secrets of a rival House from this Espionage House. Even still, at this level, this House might want to hide their abilities from other Houses, as they might seem less than honorable.

**As a Minor House:** Specializing in one area of espionage, this House might train superb diplomats or craft an expert tool for assassins, or even anti-espionage equipment, but if they know how to build it they know how to subvert it. This House goes to great lengths to hide their full subversive abilities so as to not draw the ire of the Great Houses or lose the trust of their own House Major.

**Resources:** The resources and holdings of this House only matter insofar as they further the agenda of the Ruler of the House. If purchasing 5,000 tons of whale fur that rots on the docks is needed to hide an assassin or smuggle out important documents worth far more to the right buyer, then such purchase is justified, and even better if the whale fur can be sold, even if at a loss.

**Ruler:** Old rulers are uncommon for this type of House as they become too slow to survive the schemes and plots of their heirs. The rare older ruler of an Espionage House is a master of terror all should fear. Younger rulers may still be jumping at shadows and poorly estimating the abilities of their rivals as they try to settle into their role as a spider at the center of the web that is their House.

**As an Ally:** Espionage Houses make for poor allies as they often have fewer scruples about selling out an ally for their own ends. However, if a true alliance can be formed with such a House then the benefits of excellent intelligence, the deaths of rivals, and ways of subverting the system others must follow are unparalleled.

**As an Enemy:** It is rare for a House to know if they are true enemies of an Espionage House. For they often accept apologies, payments for slights, and profess friendship all while planning a House's destruction for whatever reason suits them. They go to unusual lengths and often employ convoluted plans to strike back at their enemies so that no one knows that it was the Espionage House who drove the dagger into their back.

**Domains:** The following list represents likely domains of this style of House at each level; feel free to mix and match to fit your story. Espionage Houses often cloak their subterfuge activities in more innocuous domains. Secondary domains are often presented as the primary domain of an Espionage House to outsiders. They are the cloak that hides the dagger.

## MINOR HOUSE

**Primary Domain (1):** Kanly Workers (Assassins)

**Secondary Domain (1):** Artistic Workers (Traveling Performers)

## MAJOR HOUSE

**Primary Domain (1):** Espionage Understanding (Counter-intelligence Techniques)

**Secondary Domains (2):** Espionage Machinery (Surveillance Devices) and Espionage Workers (Infiltrators)

## GREAT HOUSE

**Primary Domain (2):** Kanly Produce (Poisons) and Kanly Workers (Infiltrators)

**Secondary Domains (3):** Industrial Workers (Servants), Science Expertise (Pharmacists), and Espionage Produce (Blackmail information).

## ADVENTURE HOOKS:

- A powerful member of the Espionage House, who is neither a rival nor ally, comes to the player characters' House seeking asylum and wishes to join. They claim to bring secret knowledge with them that benefits the House, and it does appear, at short glance, that the information they have is useful. But can they be trusted? Are they truly trying to defect? Or are they a double agent trying to infiltrate the characters' House on behalf of their own House? Would it be better to take them in, kill them, or turn them back over to the other House?
- The player characters have discovered that there is at least one mole in their House who is feeding information back to their enemy, the Espionage House. There may be more. The players need to uncover who the mole or moles are and decide whether to leave them in place and feed bad intelligence back to the enemy, or if they should purge them and see if they can clear out any other internal spies that might have taken up root.
- A minor House that is friendly towards the player characters reveals that they are not what they seem. Instead of the innocent merchants they have long purported to be, they are, in fact, an Espionage House. They tell the characters this so that they might ally with them against a common enemy. They offer to help train the player characters' own intelligence operatives and improve their counter-intelligence systems. In exchange, they would like help in the characters' domain. Do the players trust them? Is this House being upfront and helpful, or are they just setting the characters up for a betrayal to the third House that they purport to hate as much as the characters do?

# Technological/ Industrial House

Anything can be overcome with the proper application of superior technology and engineering know-how. This is a common phrase that the engineers and scientists who flourish and prosper within this House often echo. Their armies may not be as well-trained or numerous as those of a Military House, but they have better armor, better vehicles, and better everything. They may not know every secret, but they do have the technology to gather intelligence more efficiently than others. And while their art, farms, or religious institutions may not be as subtle or celebrated, they certainly are efficient and sophisticated.

The ruling family of this House is highly educated and well-versed in the various technologies and industries that they produce. They may even push the boundaries of the Butlerian proscriptions, but if they do they know to keep such things well hidden or risk the Houses of the Landsraad joining forces to destroy them. They even see their own family as a thing to be improved with technology. They may have multiple senior family members trained as Mentats, and the ruler themselves might have Mentat training.

**As a Great House:** The Great Technological and Industrial Houses are the masters of innovation and the backbone of industrial production within the Imperium. Everything from the grand Heighliners of the Spacing Guild to the ubiquitous utensils used by the countless masses on every planet are invented, engineered, and produced in the sprawling factories of the Grand Technological and Industrial Houses and their satellite minor Houses. The Spacing Guild and other great Houses buy the very best from such a Great House. House Richese and House Vernius are both examples of at times Great Technological Houses, and later the Bene Tleilax assume that role more directly after taking over Ix.

**As a Major House:** A Major Technological/Industrial House can be considered the very best in one area, or at least rivaling the innovations of one Great House. They have integrated their supply chain to be able to not only create, but produce as well, and maybe even provide the raw materials needed to develop their primary product. In addition, they are not without one form of defense: Many other powerful Houses would be displeased if their supply of the goods produced by this House were to slow down or stop.

**As a Minor House:** A Minor Technological/Industrial House is often one step in a line of production of some major specialty good, or a major producer of some common good like furniture. While they cannot corner the market with what they produce and innovate with, they still can be useful as their sheer ability to fabricate goods dwarfs major Houses with other focuses. And if given the proper motivation and resources they can push themselves to work above their own standards for short times.

**Resources:** The resources of this House are focused on one thing: increasing the profits and production of the House. Military, artistic, and espionage resources are only developed up to the level where they prevent major profit loses for the House, and no further. Everything in this House is bent toward squeezing profit from whatever domain this House focuses on, and beyond that it does not matter.

**Ruler:** Rulers of these Houses tend to be older as they are often less involved in plots and ploys and directly dangerous ventures. They also usually have access to medicines and technologies that extend life beyond the longevity benefits of spice. Younger rulers often come into power when something has befallen their previous ruler and often look to shake things up. Sometimes this means employing their massive production or technological edge toward dangerous ventures like war or espionage, or instead focusing on mundane changes like increasing quality or output.

**As an Ally:** Militaristic Houses love alliances with technological- and industrial-focused Houses as superior production and technology often gives an edge when superior numbers are not there. Technological- and industrial-focused Houses desire material that is difficult for them to produce, access to technological breakthroughs, and highly-skilled personnel; in exchange, they offer beneficial trade deals and access to their best finished products and technologies.

**As an Enemy:** Often these Houses do not strike directly at their enemies. They instead prefer to pay others to do the fighting for them. Be wary of militant Houses suddenly disliking you for little cause or espionage Houses trying to cozy up to you if you are enemies with a powerful Technological or Industrial House. Those other Houses have likely been paid off or offered sweetheart deals in exchange for your destruction. If they do take a direct tack against you, then expect highly sophisticated and advanced technological attacks that might be difficult to counter.

**Domains:** The following list represents likely domains of this style of House at each level; feel free to mix and match to fit your story. Technological and Industrial Houses focus on building up vertical or horizontal monopolies related to their primary domain.

## MINOR HOUSE

**Primary Domain (1):** Industrial Produce (Rare Refined Alloys)

**Secondary Domain (1):** Industrial Produce (Mined Metallic Ores)

## MAJOR HOUSE

**Primary Domain (1):** Science Understanding (Technological Research)

**Secondary Domains (2):** Science Expertise (Scientists) and Industrial Expertise (Engineers)

### GREAT HOUSE

**Primary Domain (2):** Industrial Machinery (Spacecraft) and Science Understanding (Spacecraft Drives)

**Secondary Domains (3):** Industrial Workers (Ship Builders), Industrial Expertise (Foremen), and Science Workers (Lab Assistants)

### ADVENTURE HOOKS:

- Either through direct or indirect means, the player characters' House has discovered that another House has been creating machines that could fall under the Butlerian-Jihad-proscribed thinking machines. No one else knows. This new technology they are employing has already revolutionized their House's abilities. They have seemed friendly toward the characters' House in the past. Perhaps the player characters could ally with them to gain access to these machines. If they do, both Houses could be wiped out for breaking the dictates against thinking machines. The player characters may decide it is better to destroy the other House and take the spoils for themselves. Then again, the characters don't think anyone else knows.
- A large number of advanced military craft that appear to be painted in the colors of the player characters' enemy have been delivered to them. The Spacing Guild is adamant that the delivery is not a mistake, and the House that produced the craft claims that no such craft were sent to the characters, and if so, then they should return them. However, the Guild refused to explain how the characters should go about returning them. The craft would give the characters a significant advantage against their enemy in a battle, but it might turn the current cold war with them hot, and who knows what gremlins or Trojan horses have been implanted in these craft.
- While working on another project, the player characters' scientists and engineers have had a massive breakthrough in a new area of technology. It would revolutionize the current system (entertainment, small arms, transportation, housing, etc.). Another House controls that market, and if the characters pushed this revolutionary product they would surely make an enemy for life. However, this competing House has stagnated for decades and the market deserves this innovation. Could the characters ease their pain by offering them something in exchange, or do they crush the other House with this product and then hit them with spies and/or military when they are at their weakest?

## ARTISTIC/ RELIGIOUS HOUSE

Drawing upon millennia of tradition in the arts of humanity, the Artistic and Religious Houses create experiences that draw humanity closer to the great ideas, and closer to God. While they may outwardly seem very different, Artistic and Religious Houses are at their core similar in how they go about producing experiences for their patrons. Artistic Houses produce art of various sorts ranging from the profane to the profound. Religious Houses produce experiences similar to those profound Artistic Houses. They both require hierarchical leaderships that focus legions of dedicated personnel towards creating these moments that awaken humanity from their slumber of selfish personal focus to the greater goals of the Imperium and God.

**As a Great House:** These Houses have produced some of the greatest thinkers and artists in the history of the Imperium. Art like the Golden Lion Throne or the great palaces of the Imperium are but minor works compared to the litany of art installations these Houses display on their planets. Great Religious Houses closely follow the strictures of the Orange Catholic Bible and often act as leaders in questions of religion and morality within the Empire, often producing religious leaders as advisors to other Houses. The Bene Gesserit could arguably be considered a Religious Great House, as their Reverend Mothers have infiltrated almost every major and great House in the Imperium. However, they are not on the Landsraad, avoid direct political and military power, and instead focus on more ineffable concerns.

**As a Major House:** A Major Artistic or Religious House can be considered the source for a single type of artistic or religious product. They have cornered the market in something like the most couture fashion of the Imperial Court, or they craft the finest religious jewelry like prayer bead necklaces with Zensunni mystic icon portrait pendants. Much like the Industrial Houses, they are not seen as a direct military or espionage Threat, and the disruption of their products would bring the ire of many powerful Houses.

**As a Minor House:** As a House Minor, an Artistic House is likely an emerging art trend that recently became popular. Or they are a custodian of art trends past and struggling to maintain relevance. Religious House Minors are more likely to contain shrines at locations of minor miracles or holy places. They often have monastic orders associated with them that produce personnel for the Orange Catholic Church.

**Resources:** Artists and priests are the two most important resources either House can produce, as they are the source of all great art and wisdom created by these Houses. Keeping them happy and highly productive is their primary concern, and all resources are aimed at

these endeavors, be they the latest tools and resources for them to create, or other personnel aimed at reducing stress and boosting artistic output and keeping religious figures going as they preach the word of God.

**Ruler:** Old and young rulers of Artistic Houses push the boundaries to keep their artistic creations fresh and exciting for patrons. They cultivate friendships with as many other Houses as possible, both as potential security and as potential customers for their creations. Religious rulers do much the same, but their focus is on saving the souls of their allies and keeping them on a righteous and holy path, not deviating into proscribed technologies or sins of disfigurement.

**As an Ally:** Many Houses have Religious and Artistic Houses as allies, as the goal of both is to befriend as many Houses as possible. You can expect them to provide support to win over the hearts and minds of your enemies, and keep your House well-received by others of similar mindset. They invite you to the best parties and the hottest shows, or involve you in august and wise discussion about the need for morality within the halls of the Imperium.

**As an Enemy:** Everyone seems to be against you when you make enemies with a powerful Artistic or Religious House. Their social power and whisper campaigns bar the doors of power to you. You are snubbed at every turn, and word that you are unfashionable, gauche, or immoral begins to spread amongst other Houses. Even if not true, such esoteric rumors are harder to dispel with displays of power or scientific breakthroughs than when rumors of weakness in military or technological realms are spread. One cannot become fashionable or moral when the decision makers of what is fashionable and/or moral are arrayed against you.

**Domains:** The following list represents likely domains of this style of House at each level; feel free to mix and match to fit your story. Religious and Artistic Houses have eclectic domains, as they might pursue multiple avenues of expression. In addition, they sometimes also expand into domains that support potential patrons or industrial bases when their artistry has a great need for certain resources. It is also worth noting that Artistic/Religious Houses are just as likely to have teeth as any other House. Actors and performers often make very good spies, and it is good to remember that (officially at least) the Face Dancers of the Bene Tleilax are entertainers.

## MINOR HOUSE

**Primary Domain (1):** Artistic Understanding (Advertising)

**Secondary Domain (1):** Artistic Workers (Actors)

## MAJOR HOUSE

**Primary Domain (1):** Artistic Understanding (Fashion)

**Secondary Domains (2):** Industrial Produce (Textiles), Industrial Workers (Tailors/Dressmakers)

## GREAT HOUSE

**Primary Domain (2):** Artistic Produce (Broadcast Entertainment) and Religion Understanding (Religious Philosophies)

**Secondary Domains (3):** Artistic Machinery (Production Studios), Religion Expertise (Clergy), and Religion Produce (Religious Texts)

## ADVENTURE HOOKS:

- A troupe of performers who were trained by one of the player characters' enemies, but declare themselves independent performers, has arrived at the characters' House. They wish to spend time performing in the House's territory. They are considered popular throughout the Imperium, and slighting them would hurt the characters' image among the Landsraad. However, they also brought along an incredible amount of electronic gear that is legitimately for productions, but can also be used for espionage purposes. Do the player characters dare snub them? And if they let the troupe perform, are they merely a distraction for another form of attack, or are the characters being too paranoid and risking the troupe's ire from their distrust?
- Disaster! One of the senior members of the player characters' House has become the laughingstock of the Landsraad for their unfashionable wardrobe choices. Even Imperial guards and functionaries titter behind the characters' backs as they deny appointments to meet important officials to conduct business. One even laughed in a character's face after making a joke about their own wardrobe! Clearly, the House's enemy, an Artistic House, is behind these attacks, but how to stop them? A makeover of the characters' House attire might stem the tide, or perhaps leaning into the archaic and backwards dress of the House is the way to go. The respect of Houses not constrained by fashion can only deepen.
- The player characters' ally, one of the Religious Houses, notes their piety and has invited them to sit upon the latest council of the Orange Catholic Caucus within the Landsraad. However, the characters' other ally has significant enemies within that organization and may cut ties if the characters join them. But if the characters refuse to join, they risk angering the first House. How can the characters keep both Houses happy, or at least mollified, without losing valuable contracts and much-needed goods and services from one or both? They must tread carefully, for if they misstep here they could destroy both relationships and lose it all by trying to please everyone.

# Agricultural House

Considered by many to be the most basic, yet vital Houses, the Agricultural Houses (or Farming Houses) focus on feeding the people of the Imperium. Their task is monumental and never-ending, and it affects every member of society from the lowliest slave up to the Emperor himself. After the spice melange, food is considered the single most important resource that keeps the Empire running. Without enough food to feed the countless masses, chaos would reign supreme. Many other Houses produce large amounts of food as a way to feed their people, but these Houses focus on producing enough food to feed the large numbers of people on planets that do not or cannot produce enough food for their people. Thus, the Spacing Guild has become a major part in the food supply chain transporting mind-boggling amounts of foodstuffs every day in a dizzying web of supply and demand.

The ruling families of Farming Houses are often considered backward and parochial because of the simplistic and basic domain(s) of their House. Many do not realize the highly advanced levels of production, co-ordination, and management that leaders of such Houses need to successfully dedicate entire planets — or at least continents — to producing food, preparing it for market, shipping it off-world to planets that need it, and turning a profit after each growing season. Many have embraced that simplistic outlook and often embrace strong views on honor and loyalty.

**As a Great House:** These Houses feed countless people, although they likely know just how many they can feed down to the number of meals they provide per credit spent in production. They may focus on one or two staple foods, like pundi rice or golden wheat, but they also must have major skills in management, logistics, and basic defenses to protect their massively vulnerable production facilities, including fields that cover continents. House Atreides is a similar example, as it is often overlooked because their primary domain is pundi rice, yet their history of integrity has attracted some of the most skilled advisors and leaders to their House.

**As a Major House:** These Houses often control one major sought-after specialty food source, like cultivating turtlebugs or growing grapes for the coveted Caladanian wine, as well as specializing in domains that support this production. Ecologists and meteorologists are trained and paid handsomely by these Houses as they give insight into the future needs of their lands and thus their future productions and profits.

**As a Minor House:** These Houses often act as a staple producer for a larger House that focuses on other ventures. Often Great and Major Military and Industrial Houses have farming-focused House Minors that are built solely to provide the necessary supplies for the soldiers and workers of their parent Houses. Or they focus on providing a singular farming domain that is no longer as popular or as useful as other sources of nourishment. A minor House might also focus on an area outside production, such as processing or packaging deliveries from a producing House.

**Resources:** The resources of Farming Houses are aimed at producing the largest amount of quality crops in the shortest amount of time. Timed watering systems; experts skilled in biology and the genetics and care of plants and livestock; and advanced soil and water management techniques are their highest priorities. In addition to crops, some food production Houses might focus on precooking agricultural produce, such as preparing cake and other baked goods from the raw ingredients they produce or import.

**Ruler:** Farming rulers tend toward the stoic and those capable of the long-distance view. They understand the most basic needs of humanity, and that to fulfill those needs takes massive long-term planning to not only succeed but survive. Older rulers often focus on adapting to political change and understand that even when disaster strikes, you must pick up and move on. Young rulers see the enormous burden they have taken on and often fight for their beliefs as if the very life of the Imperium is at stake.

**As an Ally:** All ruling Houses worry about feeding their people. Having a Farming House as an ally takes that concern from one of their top priorities to a minor issue as food becomes cheap and plentiful and allows the ruler and their council to focus on other pressing matters. This often-symbiotic relationship frees the Farming House from concerns beyond the need to provide food.

**As an Enemy:** Nothing is certain when a Farming House is your enemy. The spice melange is the reason the Empire exists, but food is the reason the Empire continues. Cutting off or poisoning food supplies can lead to not only the death of the people of an enemy House, but the death of the House itself.

**Domains:** The following list represents likely domains of this style of House at each level; feel free to mix and match to fit your story. Most secondary domains within a Farming House focus on supporting the primary domain of agriculture, but often the primary process is simple enough so that other simple domains like natural resource extraction or military training can be practiced.

## MINOR HOUSE

**Primary Domain (1):** Farming Understanding (Advanced Farming Methods)

**Secondary Domain (1):** Science Expertise (Agricultural Biologists)

## MAJOR HOUSE

**Primary Domain (1):** Farming Produce (Gourmet Cheeses)

**Secondary Domains (2):** Industrial Machinery (Cheese Production Machinery) and Farming Workers (Cheesemakers)

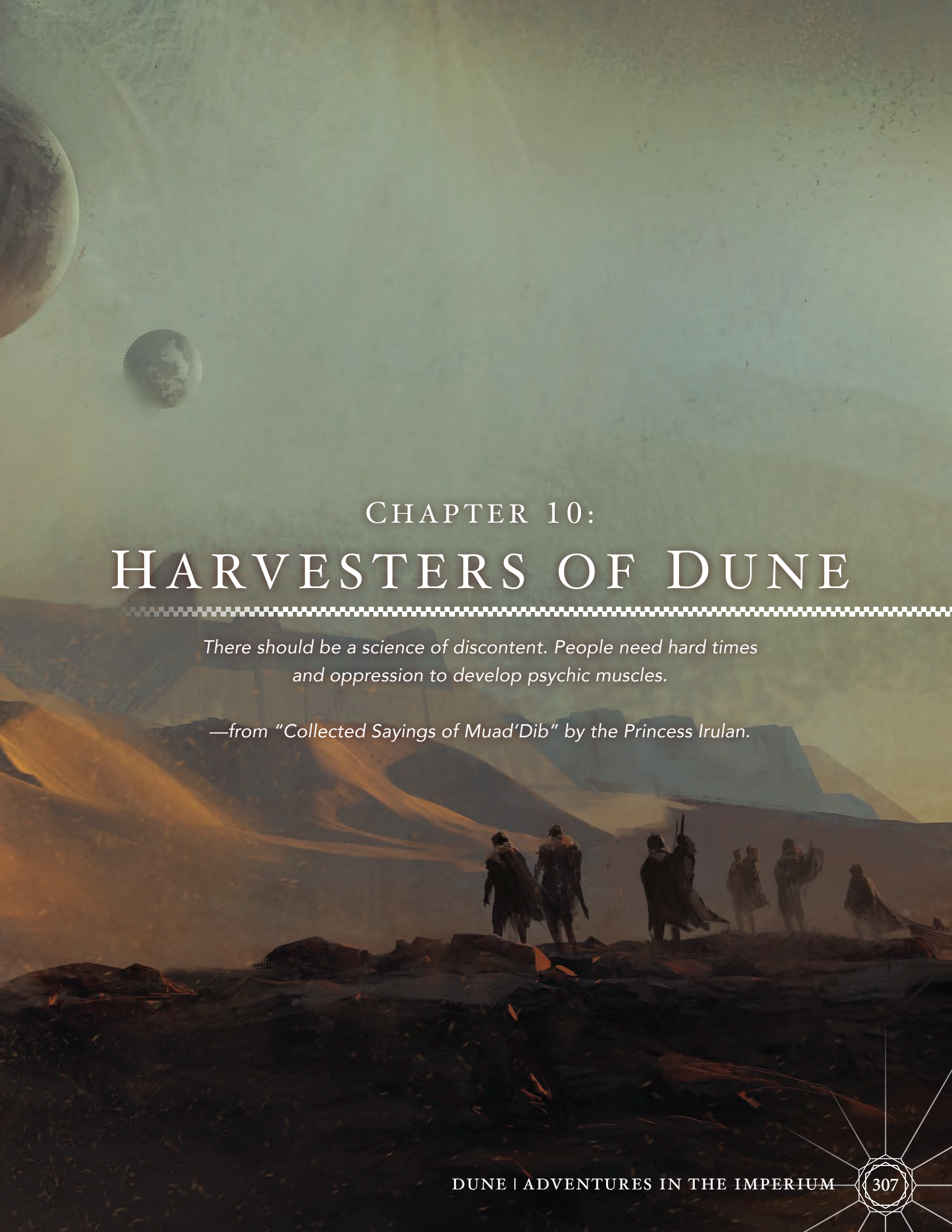
## GREAT HOUSE

**Primary Domain (2):** Farming Produce (Beef) and Farming Produce (Sweets/Candy)

**Secondary Domains (3):** Farming Expertise (Land Managers), Farming Produce (Cattle), and Industrial Machinery (Sweet Production)

## ADVENTURE HOOKS:

- An allied Farming House has asked the player characters for help. A radical preacher has spread their message throughout the lands of this House and now most of the farmers refuse to work until their demands are met. The farmers' demands do not seem radical, but the characters' ally insists that giving in will ruin the current crop and the next harvest as well. They want help eradicating the preacher and forcing the farmers back to work. What do the characters do? They can try to convince their ally to leave the preacher alone, but this might destroy the relationship with them and the favorable trade deals in place. They could instead help eliminate the preacher and break the farmers' strike, but that way leads to bloodshed and violence.
- The player characters' latest delivery of rice from a Farming House they have a standard trade agreement with has been poisoned. They only learned of it when one of their guards snuck some for a late-night snack and died in agonizing pain a few hours later. The House declares themselves a victim of a setup as their bill of goods to the Spacing Guild shows that the rice was untainted when delivered to the Heighliner. The Spacing Guild also has proof that they never tampered or let anyone tamper with the rice while they possessed it. The player characters didn't poison their own rice, and no one had enough time to poison all of it after delivery. Therefore, someone is lying. Who is the true enemy here? The Guild? The Farming House? Or a 3rd House or party that somehow defeated the security measures of one or both other parties?
- Two Farming Houses have come to the player characters to resolve their dispute. During a border skirmish started by the first House, the second House started a fire than spread widely and destroyed millions of hectares of both of their lands. The first House wants the second House to pay for it, but the second House refuses because they only started the fire by accident, they claim, and in defense of the first House's attack. They don't want the Landsraad involved because the disputed land was being used to grow illegal narcotics for both Houses. They promise to cut the player characters in if they arbitrate.



# Chapter 10:
# Harvesters of Dune

*There should be a science of discontent. People need hard times and oppression to develop psychic muscles.*

*—from "Collected Sayings of Muad'Dib" by the Princess Irulan.*

# Adventure Outline

**The** player characters are members—or notable supporters—of a Noble House with spice mining rights on the planet Arrakis. A crisis threatens the House's profits this year: one of their flying carryalls, and its small fleet of ground-based harvesters—has a poor spice productivity record. The carryall in question is named after a historical Harkonnen lord: the Graf Von Dreissen, but its crew know it as 'The Grief'.

The player characters are dispatched to the carryall to discover the cause of the Grief's poor productivity and to take whatever actions are necessary to eliminate problems and improve matters.

## When is the Adventure Set?

This adventure is set during the final period of the Old Imperium, before the events of the book *Dune*, and concerns player characters whose House currently has fiefdom over spice harvesting on the planet Arrakis. If the players have already created their House but do not have holdings on Arrakis, you can discuss changing the era to one when their House does have rights on the planet.

Alternately, they can play as another House for this adventure—for example House Harkonnen, the brutal stewards of Arrakis in the decades leading up to the assumption of the Arrakis fiefdom by House Atreides.

Finally, they might also be running a spice harvesting operation under a franchise from another House. This might be as a favor, or simply because the House in control of Arrakis is feeling stretched. While this usually means access only to the less profitable parts of the operation, the potential for wealth and power cannot be underestimated.

The business of spice harvesting is known to be a dirty, dangerous affair, and tensions between the House, the hard-bitten spice workers, and the elusive, unfriendly local Fremen are often strained and threaten to boil over into open hostilities, whether through industrial action or acts of physical conflict.

This adventure is a great introduction to ***Dune*** if you have not played before. However, if you have the ***Heirs of Dune*** you might play this adventure after completing the Starter Set as part of the ongoing campaign as the player characters go about managing their new fiefdom.

## Structure

The adventure consists of three scenes. The first is set aboard the massive carryall Graf Von Dreissen, 'the Grief'. There, the player characters experience first-hand the poor management, shoddy equipment, and tension among spice workers that is partly responsible for the low productivity. They also can avoid a lethal equipment malfunction which proves to be the result of industrial sabotage.

The second scene takes place in the trackless sands of Arrakis, when the player characters' 'thopter crash-lands and they are forced to march out of the desert to safety before the myriad dangers of the desert bring death to them all. The player characters must face hostile Fremen and the ever-present threat of Dune's colossal sandworms.

In the third scene, the player characters reach the dubious sanctuary of the spice harvester Alberich and its shady crew of spice workers. No sooner do they discover the identity of the saboteur than an incoming sandworm is spotted, forcing the player characters to make difficult decisions in a short space of time. They must choose between escaping the worm, saving the raw spice cargo, or dealing with the saboteur before the great sandworm arrives to consume the harvester and everyone on board.

## Assets

The player characters should all be equipped with Arrakis-manufactured water-retaining stillsuits (assets of Quality 0), as they are going about the surface of the desert planet. Unless a player has specifically indicated that their suit is of Fremen manufacture—rare and costly—they are of the inferior type more commonly available to all.

As this is assumed to be a routine inspection of an industrial facility needing (at most) a little managerial troubleshooting, the player characters are unlikely to arrive on the Grief accompanied by a large retinue of staff or guards, though they can of course create supporting characters during play using Momentum or Threat (**Supporting Characters**, p.136). If so, these are limited to members of their personal retinue(s).

Should the players strongly request physical protection, remind them of their characters' personal combat assets, be they melee and ranged weapons, shields, or armor.

ACT I

# THE GRIEF

The player characters disembark from a 'thopter in the landing bay of the massive carryall Graf Von Dreissen as it flies over the deserts of Arrakis. The 'thopter—one of the Grief's own—picked them up from their House's estate and they have spent the voyage to the carryall in its cramped and dingy interior. The carryall itself is not much better. It is incredibly noisy onboard the flying factory, and the sweet cinnamon scent of spice pervades the air, mixed in with the baser industrial tangs of grease, oil, and ozone.

They are immediately met and welcomed on board by Jaris Obregon. Obregon is an old friend, relation, or colleague of one or more of the player characters—allow the players to choose who—and she greets them all warmly. The character chosen receives the trait 'Friend of Obregon'.

"It's good to see some friendly faces here! Come, let me show you around."

## GUIDED TOUR

Obregon takes the player characters on a tour of the Grief, guiding them through the decks of the carryall, passing through bulkheads and ducking under cabling. Spice workers bustle to and fro, going about their business wearing grimy overalls, some with goggles and breather masks.

Unless the player characters dictate otherwise, Obregon guides them down the decks of the carryall, past the crowded untidy crew quarters, the noisy industrial spice compressor, the deafening engine room, and finally to the lowest deck where a large harvester vehicle is currently being unloaded of its cargo of raw spice. As they move through the ship the characters may **Understand** (average, D1) that the Grief is in a poor state of repair and shoddily maintained, and also that many crew members bear the bruises and cuts of scuffles or beatings.

### JARIS OBREGON, SPICE OPERATION MANAGER

**(NOTABLE SUPPORTING CHARACTER)**

Jaris Obregon serves as the overworked second-in-command of the Grief, a thankless role which combines secretary, administrator, and general gofer. She is a minor member of the characters' House, but due to the circumstances of her birth—she was fathered by an heir of the House on a lowly servant—she was seen as something of an embarrassment and eventually sent to work as far away as possible.

Outwardly meek but inwardly seething with resentment and ambition, Obregon has turned traitor to the House and has been sabotaging the Grief's already poor spice production on behalf of her mysterious 'new patron'. She secretly loathes the House that has treated her so badly, including the player character(s), whose friendship toward her she sees as patronizing.

Obregon is the true villain of the adventure, though it is important that this not become apparent to the players in Scene One. The gamemaster should take care to portray Obregon as an ally of the player characters, though not an especially interesting one. She should come across as a friendly but meek member of the House, and something of a middle-management nonentity, not likely to amount to much due to her low station and seemingly modest personality.

She is secretly quite skilled in mechanics and electronics and has received some personal combat training by her father's staff. She also has a few interesting personal assets, courtesy of her new patron, such as a personal shield.

| DRIVE | | STATEMENT |
|---|---|---|
| DUTY: | 5 | |
| FAITH: | 6 | |
| JUSTICE: | 7 | I'll get what I'm owed. |
| POWER: | 5 | |
| UNDERSTAND: | 5 | |

| SKILL | | FOCUSES |
|---|---|---|
| BATTLE: | 5 | |
| COMMUNICATE: | 6 | |
| DISCIPLINE: | 7 | Spice harvesting |
| MOVE: | 4 | |
| UNDERSTAND: | 6 | Electronics, Mechanics |

**Traits:** Spice Worker, Administrator

**Talents:**

- **Cautious (Understand):** Obregon may re-roll a single d20 gained from spending Threat.

**Assets:** Maula Pistol, Second-in-Command, Patron, Personal Shield

## THE SPICE COMPRESSOR

The large industrial compressor machine onboard the carryall takes the raw spice gathered by the harvesters and compresses it into solid bricks to be transported off-planet and refined into the myriad of useful spice products which makes Arrakis such a valuable resource.

## Meeting the Commander

Unless the player characters dictate otherwise, the deferential Obregon swiftly escorts the characters to the bridge of the Grief, to meet the carryall's commanding officer, Globus. The blustering Globus, more an incompetent factory manager than a commander, grudgingly greets the characters with the respect due their stations in the House, but with a degree of exaggerated self-importance.

He vastly overstates the difficulties of running the carryall's spice operation, while downplaying any suggestion that the poor condition of the ship and low morale of the crew is in any way down to shortfalls in his management abilities. Globus blames the low productivity on the poor quality of the crews.

A successful average (D1) **Communicate** test identifies Globus as a blustering fool who has little involvement in the daily operation of the Grief. The player characters may make a daunting (D3) **Discipline** test to upbraid him for his poor management. Doing so grants them the temporary trait 'Envoy of my House' to represent pulling rank.

## Compressor Malfunction

At an opportune moment determined by the gamemaster—perhaps in the midst of one of Globus' diatribes about the difficulties of recruiting competent workers on Arrakis—an alarm sounds on the bridge, mercifully cutting him short. It is followed by a scratchy comms message: there is a mechanical malfunction in the spice compressor. All spice processing must halt until the fault is cleared.

If the player characters hurry to the compressor, they arrive in time to see a carryall worker climbing down into the spice-caked machine itself. The worker shouts out to the assembled crew.

"There's a blockage jamming up the compression plates. It's another damned creosote bush. Don't they ever weed the spice before unloading?"

The player characters can **Understand** (average, D1) that the compressor machine's emergency stop button has been thrown, ensuring that the massive metal compressor plates are deactivated so that the worker can safely climb inside to investigate.

Another successful **Understand** test (challenging, D2) reveals that underneath the din of the carryall engines, there is a low thrum that indicates the compressor machine is still powered on. The worker is in imminent danger of being crushed to death! If so forewarned, the player characters can shout a warning to the worker, try to cut the power somehow (no roll required as the machinery is fairly easy to understand). Or they can bravely try to haul the worker out—a daunting (D3) **Move** test.

If the player characters do not intervene, or are not even present at the compressor, as soon as the doomed worker tugs the mangled creosote bush free of the mechanical jaws, he is bloodily crushed to death by the compressor.

## Sabotage

The player characters can make a thorough investigation—a daunting (D3) **Understand** test—of the compressor, or another carryall mechanic does so if none of the characters take the initiative. Someone has deliberately and recently rewired the machine's power supply so that it remains powered on, even though the emergency stop button was pressed. That means that the machine was a potential death trap from then on. It was just a matter of time until it jammed and someone climbed down to investigate.

While the player characters consider who might have sabotaged the compressor, the helpful Obregon disappears off and soon reappears with the carryall maintenance log. The log shows the characters that it was a carryall mechanic named Euler who last worked on the compressor.

Obregon obligingly notes that Euler has a record of bad discipline, elaborating that he was recently caught 'being disrespectful'—'Answering back to Globus', she adds—and consequently demoted to work at a distant spice storage depot and reserve processing facility across the desert. The depot is many kilometers away in the desert, but reachable by fast 'thopter flight in under an hour. Though she is not so blatant, everything Obregon says suggests that she believes that the accident was a work of sabotage by a malcontent Euler.

"An act of revenge!"

The scene ends with Obregon leading the player characters to a 'thopter so that they can question this Euler themselves, be he fool or saboteur. If they do not come to this conclusion, it is suggested by the helpful Obregon. If they ask to divert the carryall itself, they are told that such would cause an even greater delay with production, cost valuable fuel, and they would still need to use the 'thopter to land.

Unknown to the player characters, the real saboteur is none other than the friendly Obregon herself. Wary of outsiders continuing to sniff around the Grief and uncovering her activities, the treacherous Obregon has misdirected them toward Euler, to lure them off the carryall. Moreover, she has used her mechanical skills to sabotage their 'thopter. It will never reach the depot...

## LORRIMER GLOBUS, CARRYALL CAPTAIN

### (NOTABLE SUPPORTING CHARACTER)

Lorrimer Globus is the commanding officer of the Grief. He is a time-serving bureaucrat who has advanced as high as his lack of ability permits and has thus reached the pinnacle of his incompetence. Unimaginative, self-important, and lazy, he lets Obregon handle the day-to-day administration of the Grief.

His favorite problem-solving method is to find a likely scapegoat and brutally punish them, and then make a blustering announcement to the crew over the comms system that the problem has been solved.

Globus resents interference from higher up the command structure—such as the player characters—but grudgingly complies with direct orders. He is happy to see the departure of interfering higher-ups and outsiders, particularly the player characters.

**Traits:** Carryall Commander, Unpopular

**Talents:**

- **Constantly Watching:** Whenever Globus attempts a test to detect danger or hidden enemies, he reduces the Difficulty by 2, to a minimum of 0. In addition, once per scene, he can increase the cost to keep the initiative by +2.

**Assets:** Carryall Commander, Knife, Servant of the Residency

| DRIVE | | STATEMENT |
|---|---|---|
| DUTY: | 6 | |
| FAITH: | 5 | |
| JUSTICE: | 5 | A commander should be obeyed. |
| POWER: | 7 | |
| TRUTH: | 5 | |

| SKILL | | FOCUSES |
|---|---|---|
| BATTLE: | 5 | |
| COMMUNICATE: | 6 | Intimidation |
| DISCIPLINE: | 7 | Spice Harvesting |
| MOVE: | 4 | |
| UNDERSTAND:: | 5 | |

# ACT II
# 'THOPTER DOWN

The player characters take a 'thopter from the carryall and head to the distant storage depot to question the suspected saboteur Euler. But some kilometers out, a mechanical alert blares. Their pilot, Taryn Jellicoe, shouts that the craft's engine has suffered a catastrophic failure. Smoke and fire billow from the engine, visible from the cockpit, and the cockpit begins to fill with metallic-smelling smoke.

The 'thopter starts to lose power and altitude, dropping toward the searing desert below!

## GOING DOWN

If a player character chooses to wrest the controls from the pilot, they can attempt to pass a daunting (D3) **Move** test and land the 'thopter rather than letting it crash. They land hard and the 'thopter takes a lot of damage, but there is no serious harm to anyone inside the 'thopter, and they suffer only minor bumps, taking the new temporary trait 'Rattled'.

If the 'thopter is not piloted by a player character, their pilot Jellicoe fails to bring the 'thopter down safely. It crashes to the desert floor, sending the vehicle tumbling violently across the dunes, until it comes to a shuddering stop, half buried in the sand. The pilot suffers a broken leg, and everyone else must pass a challenging (D2) **Move** test to only suffer the 'Bruised' trait. If they fail, they become 'Battered'.

## ASSESSING THE DAMAGE

However they get down, the 'thopter is a wreck and cannot be flown. The pilot may be incapacitated. The radio inside the craft is inoperable. The player characters' personal comms devices don't have the range to raise the distant carryall Grief, or the even more distant storage depot.

Smart players may direct their characters to examine their wrecked 'thopter to **Understand** what went wrong. Among the burnt remains of the engine they discover a charred but obviously cut fuel line, the source of the engine fire. Was someone trying to murder them before they can uncover the truth of the compressor sabotage?

The stillsuit of one of the player characters—the gamemaster chooses who, likely based on who was injured—was ripped in the crash-landing. If the player characters check their stillsuits, they discover that a catch pocket on one suit has been slashed open. A rough repair job with tape can limit the water loss, though that player character is still a little low on water.

The player characters can salvage some meager supplies from the wreckage if they think to do so: extra water, rations, and a medical kit. But the poor maintenance condition of the 'thopter—just as with the carryall itself—means that there is little else of use. No toolkit, no signal devices, no camping equipment. Certainly not a Fremkit.

## REVIEWING THE OPTIONS

The pilot Jellicoe can help the player characters review their options. With comms inoperable, there is no way they can complete their journey across the vast, searingly hot desert to the distant storage depot on foot. Their best bet is to head back to the sector of desert where the carryall and its harvesters are operating until they can get within comms range or can signal a scout 'thopter. Nonetheless, this is still a journey of many kilometers across the sand on foot.

If Jellicoe suffered a broken leg in the landing, the player characters must decide whether to be humane and bring her along, though she slows them down, or pragmatically leave the pilot behind, as she expects them to (albeit with a promise to send help).

If the player characters need encouragement to get moving, a successful average (D1) **Understand** test shows a distant crest of sand heading their way. A sandworm has detected the impact of the 'thopter and is coming towards the crash site. They need to hurriedly **Move** (challenging, D2) at least a kilometer from the crash site before the worm breaches the desert surface and consumes the wrecked craft (and possibly Jellicoe). Anyone who fails is able to get to safety but gains the complication 'Exhausted'. Anyone carrying Jellicoe who fails the test cannot escape the worm. They must choose whether to abandon Jellicoe and live or both be consumed. There is no time for someone else to take her. The desert only offers hard choices.

## CROSSING THE DESERT

The player characters' trek across the desert is slow, tiring, and thirsty work. After their exertion, the player characters need to drink water to refresh themselves. If they thought to bring extra water from the 'thopter, then they are all fully refreshed. If they did not think to bring extra water, they must rely on their stillsuits, which, unless they are of Fremen design, are less than optimal and all affected player characters suffer the 'Thirsty' trait. If they have no extra water and did not discover that one of their number has a damaged stillsuit, then that character also receives the 'Weakened' Complication.

Bringing Jellicoe along forces the player characters carrying her to make a challenging (D2) **Move** test, with failure earning them the 'Fatigued' trait.

## TARYN JELLICOE, 'THOPTER PILOT

### (NOTABLE SUPPORTING CHARACTER)

Taryn Jellicoe is a 'thopter pilot for the carryall Graf Von Dreissen, or the characters' House if that is more appropriate. Arrakis born and bred, she has some desert survival skills which the characters may need. She might also be a Fremen, secretly weighing up the characters' worth/threat to her people. Either way, Jellicoe is honest, extremely pragmatic, and not very talkative.

**Traits:** Pilot, Arrakis Native

**Talents:**
None

**Assets:** Knife, 'Thopter, Stillsuit

| DRIVE | | STATEMENT |
|---|---|---|
| DUTY: | 7 | I cover the back of those who cover mine. |
| FAITH: | 6 | |
| JUSTICE: | 5 | |
| POWER: | 5 | |
| TRUTH: | 5 | |

| SKILL | | FOCUSES |
|---|---|---|
| BATTLE: | 5 | |
| COMMUNICATE: | 4 | |
| DISCIPLINE: | 6 | Survival (Desert) |
| MOVE: | 7 | Pilot (Thopter) |
| UNDERSTAND: | 5 | |

## DRASIL, FREMEN LEADER

### (NOTABLE SUPPORTING CHARACTER)

Drasil is the chief of a small band of desert Fremen. Like all Fremen, he is characteristically wary of off-worlders. His people have been much wounded by hostile encounters with the player characters' House of late, and he is proud, so he does not offer the hand of friendship easily. He is curious about these particular off-worlders, however, traipsing across the desert and risking their lives. But he is also accustomed to trading his band's own small spice reserves with smugglers in return for contraband goods like weapons and other technology.

**Traits:** Fremen, Wary

**Talents:**

- **Resilience (Battle):** Drasil may resist defeat twice in a scene when in a conflict using the listed skill.

**Assets:** Crysknife, Fremen Leader, Fremkit, Stillsuit

| DRIVE | | STATEMENT |
|---|---|---|
| DUTY: | 5 | |
| FAITH: | 7 | The desert takes what it is owed. |
| JUSTICE: | 6 | |
| POWER: | 5 | |
| TRUTH: | 5 | |

| SKILL | | FOCUSES |
|---|---|---|
| BATTLE: | 7 | Short blades |
| COMMUNICATE: | 6 | |
| DISCIPLINE: | 8 | Command, Survival (Desert) |
| MOVE: | 7 | Worm Rider |
| UNDERSTAND: | 6 | |

## Fremen

A daunting D3 **Understand** test alerts the player characters to the presence of several people hiding up ahead, behind a rocky outcrop. If forewarned, the player characters can quickly prepare, such as arming themselves, changing direction, or splitting up.

Regardless of what they plan or attempt, a group of wary Fremen (see Fremen Warrior, p.280) appears atop the rocks before the player characters, at a distance just beyond close combat weapon range. The Fremen are well-armed and seem ready for a fight. At first, they unnervingly say nothing and make no signal, interested in seeing how the player characters react to their presence. Unknown to the player characters, unless they pass a daunting (D3) **Battle** test, two further Fremen are hidden off to one side, flanking the player characters, ready to attack should they make a hostile move.

The player characters have a tricky social challenge. Do they immediately enter into combat with the reclusive, notoriously hostile, natives, or try to **Communicate** with them? If the player characters are quick to reach for knives the gamemaster should remind them they are outnumbered and the Fremen appear to be experienced fighters. Perhaps the Fremen can be bought off, for a suitable payment from the player characters, but this is unlikely as the player characters are carrying little of value and the Fremen do not take promises instead of something they can carry.

Perhaps the Fremen can be convinced of the player characters' worth to them in other ways. The wrong choice could end in death for either party, or the start of a Fremen vendetta against the House.

If the player characters do nothing, at length the Fremen chief calls out to them and asks what they are doing here. Jellicoe, if still with the player characters, advises them to consider carefully before replying, but not to take too long. If the player characters act suspiciously, or lie badly, or reply with disrespect, aggression, hostility, or assumed authority, the Fremen quickly turn hostile and demand that the player characters show them—and the desert—respect. The player characters will need to defuse tempers with an immediate **Communicate** test, the Difficulty depending on how they have behaved. If they have been respectful and polite it will be average (D1) but if they have been rude and aggressive it might easily be dire (D4). If the test fails, the Fremen bring out their weapons and attack—or worse—simply vanish and leave the player characters to the desert.

The gamemaster should handle this combat carefully, reviewing the rules on p.174-176. This may be the players' first experience with combat using these rules, and it is encouraged that their introduction emphasizes tactics, strategic thinking, and the potential deadliness of plunging into combat in unfamiliar terrain against unknown enemies.

See p.280 for a writeup of the Fremen warriors. Each is equipped with crysknives, full desert gear, and wearing Fremen-made stillsuits. They have ample water, and were just setting out from their home sietch, on a mission they will not divulge. There will be at least as many as two per player character.

The Fremen are not fanatics, and fight cannily, using the terrain as cover, attacking, and then moving. The Fremen do not regard the player characters as worth losing the lives of any of their own. If the player characters put up a strong resistance and kill or seriously wound one or more of the Fremen, the desert band tactically retreats, carrying off any fallen allies, disappearing into the dunes.

The player characters have now made an implacable enemy.

## Trading with the Fremen

If the player characters manage to not provoke the Fremen, Drasil the chief asks for a gift in return for granting them safe passage through the desert. The Fremen do not want the characters' 'inferior' stillsuits—nor would even they sentence someone to walk the desert without one—but they do accept containers of precious water or personal weapons, though not personal shields, which they scoff at. The player characters might consider this a small price to pay for surviving an encounter with the Fremen.

If the player characters show the Fremen respect and gift them willingly and appropriately, the Fremen chief Drasil becomes well disposed towards them, and offers them a gift in return. It is a Fremen thumper device, which he explains how to use. The player characters have made a potential ally.

The scene ends with a crackle on the player characters' comms devices. A scout 'thopter from a nearby harvester, loyal to their House, has followed their trail, but does not know their exact location. The nervous thopter pilot is reluctant to set down in the desert with reports of Fremen about, so instead he directs the player characters to his harvester, the Alberich, not far away.

If they have a wounded person with them, a challenging (D2) **Communicate** test convinces the pilot to land and pick the wounded pilot up, or any player characters injured in battle with the Fremen. They can also emphasize how it is essentially their right as representatives of their House, which does not require a test but earns them gruff, unfriendly service. The 'thopter is a light one, with a cramped cabin able to fit only two additional people, so the rest must continue on foot.

Whichever the case, the Fremen disappear into the dunes before the 'thopter can see them.

# ACT III
# THE ALBERICH

Either onboard the scout 'thopter or by following it while it circles overhead, the dusty, weary player characters reach the harvester. Alpha-Barrex-8—also known as the Alberich—is a dirty, noisy, belching and angular beetle-shaped monstrosity, sucking up spice from the desert floor. The wind and dust swirling around the harvester's enormous tracks make standing outside the vehicle an unpleasant place to be for any amount of time.

The scout 'thopter that found them buzzes away to continue its duties after the interruption.

## BOARDING THE HARVESTER

A hatch opens up high on the harvester's side and a big, filthy, thuggish spice worker demands to know who the player characters are and what they want.

"We've got a job to do here. We can't stop operations just to pick up idiots who can't keep their 'thopter up in the air!"

In truth, the thuggish spice worker Metzos is running a lucrative spice smuggling racket from the Alberich and does not want anyone climbing on board and snooping around. The player characters must successfully **Communicate** (challenging, D2) how it is to her advantage to let them onboard, or else stamp their authority on the thug and her crew with a daunting (D3) **Discipline** test. Alternatively, there is always the option of physically forcing their way on board.

If the player characters manage to climb on board the Alberich and take shelter from the desert at last, they find a cramped, badly-lit interior that is louder and filthier than the carryall Grief, and even more suffused with the cinnamon scent of spice.

### JOTHI METZOS, HARVESTER CAPTAIN

**(NOTABLE SUPPORTING CHARACTER)**

Jothi Metzos is the thuggish skipper of the harvester Alberich. Big, crude, and unafraid of a little trouble, she runs a neat little smuggling racket, skimming off substantial amounts of raw spice and selling it to private enterprises. She pockets much of the profit herself but shares enough with the rest of the harvester crew to make it worth their while. That and the threat of being thrown out of the harvester if they say anything keeps them in line. Metzos is direct and lacking in any cunning, but is greedy and can be bought off, or intimidated by anyone able to prove they are tougher than she herself is.

**Traits:** Spice Worker, Captain

**Talents:**

- **Find Trouble:** May contact the criminal underworld.

**Assets:** Maula Pistol, Harvester Captain, Criminal Contacts

| DRIVE | | STATEMENT |
|---|---|---|
| DUTY: | 5 | |
| FAITH: | 6 | |
| JUSTICE: | 5 | |
| POWER: | 7 | Everyone has an angle. |
| TRUTH: | 5 | |

| SKILL | | FOCUSES |
|---|---|---|
| BATTLE: | 7 | |
| COMMUNICATE: | 6 | Deceit |
| DISCIPLINE: | 8 | Spice Harvesting |
| MOVE: | 7 | |
| UNDERSTAND: | 6 | |

## CORINTH EULER, MECHANIC

### (NOTABLE SUPPORTING CHARACTER)

Corinth Euler is a capable mechanic who has worked in the spice mining industry for years. But he has never advanced far due to his surly personality and lack of respect for his superiors. He is not particularly interested in Metzos' smuggling racket but is so badly disposed to the House—especially their representative Globus on the Grief—that he is content to take his cut and keep quiet.

Euler takes any accusation that he might have sabotaged equipment, or simply caused a malfunction through technical incompetence, as a slight on his reputation and becomes outright hostile to his accusers.

**Traits:** Mechanic, Hard Worker

**Talents:**

- **Dedication:** If there is no Threat at the start of a scene, Euler may roll 1D20 under his Discipline to gain 1 Threat.

**Assets**: Toolkit, Knife

| DRIVE | | STATEMENT |
|---|---|---|
| DUTY: | 7 | I cover the back of those who cover mine. |
| FAITH: | 6 | |
| JUSTICE: | 5 | |
| POWER: | 5 | |
| TRUTH: | 5 | |

| SKILL | | FOCUSES |
|---|---|---|
| BATTLE: | 5 | |
| COMMUNICATE: | 4 | |
| DISCIPLINE: | 6 | Survival (Desert) |
| MOVE: | 7 | Pilot (Ornithopter) |
| UNDERSTAND: | 5 | |

## THE CREW OF THE ALBERICH

### (MINOR SUPPORTING CHARACTERS)

This rough group of spice harvesters are used to life in the cramped and noisy environment of the Alberich. They've worked for whomever pays them and have no particular loyalty to the player characters' House. Native to Arrakis, they are from the 'pyon' class, city-bred and without the hardy resilience of the Fremen, whom they despise and fear. Though they are compliant with Metzos' smuggling and have enjoyed the personal gains, they know that exposure could lead to their deaths, so they are reluctant to fight the player characters, unless prodded by Metzos, Obregon, or both.

**Traits:** Spice Workers

**Drive:** 4 (use for all Drives)

**Talents**: None

**Assets:** Tools, Knife

| SKILL | | FOCUSES |
|---|---|---|
| BATTLE: | 4 | |
| COMMUNICATE: | 5 | |
| DISCIPLINE: | 5 | Spice Harvesting |
| MOVE: | 6 | |
| UNDERSTAND: | 4 | |

The rough crew of two dozen spice workers and their thuggish leader do not take kindly to this unexpected interruption of their smuggling operation, and give the player characters a grudging, if not openly hostile, reception on board the harvester, depending on how the player characters managed to get on board.

It is important to remember that as agents of their House, the player characters have the right to be wherever they want, and that they can assert this at any time.

If the player characters pass a challenging (D2) **Understand** test, they notice that several barrels of raw spice are marked with a crudely sprayed symbol in chalk. An additional point of Momentum provides the additional information that the symbol is a rough representation of a rival House. These barrels are to be smuggled off Arrakis for a healthy profit, all of it going to Metzos and her crew, not the player characters' own House. If the player characters confront the harvester crew with this accusation, they react by giving up Metzos and blaming her entirely, out of fear that the House's reprisal will result in their imprisonment or even execution.

## Putting the Clues Together

If the player characters do not yet suspect that setting off in their 'thopter to question the 'malcontent mechanic Euler' at the distant storage depot was a wild goose chase, the gamemaster can put them on that track by pointing out that one of the gruff Alberich crew is the very mechanic identified as the compressor saboteur by Obregon's maintenance log back on the Grief. What is he doing here on the Alberich? **Discipline** does not work on Euler but **Communicate** does.

The mechanic is surly and disrespectful when talking to the player characters, but he is telling the truth when he says that he had nothing to do with the compressor sabotage, and has never worked at the storage depot the player characters were going to. In fact, he has been working ceaselessly on this harvester for weeks, with no time for carryall maintenance duties. With a further challenging (D2) **Communicate** success, he also reveals that in fact he was assigned here by Obregon herself. Someone somewhere is lying. If the player characters have any Momentum they might use some here to Obtain Information.

If the player characters investigated their 'thopter wreck and found the cut fuel line, the gamemaster can use the pilot Jellicoe, if still present, to remind them of that second act of sabotage.

The player characters may now realize that Euler is obviously innocent of the charge of sabotaging the compressor on the Grief. They may further conclude that the true saboteur may be someone they thought of as a trusted friend.

## A Not-so Friendly Face

Before the player characters get too involved with Metzos' smuggling operation or any revelations about Euler not being the saboteur, a 'thopter lands outside. It is Obregon. She flew directly from the Grief the moment she picked up comm signals that the characters were alive and on the Alberich.

Obregon tells the player characters that she was 'worried' when she received no signal that they had reached the storage depot. Allow the player characters daunting (D3) **Communicate** tests to detect that she is both nervous and lying (the trait 'Friend of Obregon' will be useful here). In truth, as the real saboteur and a traitor to the characters' House, she sabotaged both the compressor and then the 'thopter to rid herself of the meddling player characters. When comms from the harvester's scout 'thopters reached the carryall with word of the player characters' survival, Obregon flew to the Alberich to deal with them personally, though at great risk to herself.

If the player characters have seen through their supposed friend's feeble story, and want to have some harsh words with her, Obregon drops the friendly act and stands unashamedly revealed as a traitor to the House, freely admitting that she was the saboteur all along and has been promised to be well rewarded, by her new patron, for damaging the hated House's spice operations. She takes cover behind the harvester crew and offers the greedy Metzos a substantial bribe to deal with the player characters, which leads to violence between the characters, the Alberich crew and the traitor.

How this plays out is up to the gamemaster, based on the player characters' actions. If the gamemaster has Threat to spend, Obregon might have a bomb that could destroy the harvester or at least call a worm.

## Worm Sign

A great sandworm will be upon the harvester in 15–20 minutes. Any conflict brewing ceases immediately as survival becomes the pressing concern for everyone aboard the harvester. The scout 'thopter that encountered the player characters lands, along with two others who were on patrol.

Unfortunately, the carryall Grief, if signaled on the Alberich's comms, regrets that further mechanical difficulties on board mean that it will be at least an hour before they can get to the Alberich. This is the truth but is the result of commander Globus' poor management and the dreadful state of the carryall.

The harvester crew immediately ceases any hostilities toward the player characters and flies into a disorganized, panicking rabble. Most grab a few personal items and sacks of raw spice, and begin to fight over seats in the four available 'thopters—including Obregon's—which have now landed outside. There are far too few seats in the 'thopters to fit the entire crew and the player characters. Even if they are packed with people and can just barely take off, roughly 12 people will still be left behind to face the oncoming worm.

Metzos shows surprising courage, or greed, and chooses to stay with the Alberich, looking to the player characters to somehow save the harvester and her cargo of spice. The traitor Obregon, if she is not already immobilized, takes advantage of the confusion to disappear, either to escape or further imperil the player characters, at the gamemaster's discretion.

As the clock ticks away and the great worm draws ever closer (it will be there in three rounds) the player characters have some tough choices to make:

- Do they offer the panicking crew valuable rewards to claim evacuation spaces on the 'thopters for themselves, or do they **Battle** (challenging, D2) the crew for seats? Or do they use **Discipline** (challenging, D2) to impose some sort of order and fairness on the panicked evacuation?
- Do they attempt to **Move** (dire, D4) the harvester to a distant rocky outcrop and claim the relative safety of solid ground, gambling that they and the precious cargo of spice will make it there before the sandworm arrives? This is an extended test with a requirement of 10 (p.159).
- Do they try something clever to lure the sandworm away from the harvester, using knowledge or assets they acquired in the desert, such as planting a Fremen thumper at a distance from the harvester? And do they have the means, skill, and luck to pull it off? This is an extended task (see p.159).
- Do they try to **Understand** (average, D1) what drew the sandworm here, and search for the concealed thumper in the landing gear of Obregon's 'thopter, activated by her to doom the player characters? A successful test reveals the thumper, causing the ground to vibrate ever so subtly near the rear landing strut.

And what of the traitor Obregon? Does she use the imminent worm situation to make good her escape in a 'thopter? If confronted, she admits to using the thumper, claiming that she planned on getting away and destroying the harvester entirely, sacrificing the crew to cover up the murder of the player characters.

Or does she take advantage of the player characters' attempts to save the harvester to attack them with her personal assets, even at the risk of losing her own life?

Does she succeed? Does she get away?

# Conclusion

How do the player characters intend to follow up on the dreadful state of the carryall Graf Von Dreissen? Do they reprimand the terrible commander Globus? Does the chastised commander remain in place, now quite hostile to the player characters? Do they recommend that Globus be removed from his post? What then becomes of the dismissed Globus? Who does he throw his lot in with? Does the poor spice production of the Grief and its harvesters improve or continue?

How did the encounter with the Fremen end? Did they part as enemies, allies, or something in between? Was blood spilled, or were gifts given? Were the player characters effectively robbed and shamed? Is the Fremen chief Drasil now an implacable enemy, or a potential friend and ally? Either way, the Fremen do not forget their chance meeting in the desert, and soon contact the characters, wanting either revenge or a favor.

Which House was Metzos smuggling raw spice to? Do the player characters put a stop to the racket, or turn it to their own advantage?

What became of the traitor Obregon? Was she exposed by the player characters' investigations or did she choose to reveal herself? Was she captured alive, killed in a struggle, or did she escape? Will she bedevil the player characters another day, now a fugitive from her own House but with intimate knowledge of its operations and facilities?

Did she reveal the identity of her new patron? Is it an obvious suspect like a rival House, or a supposedly friendly House? Perhaps her new patron is not really from another House at all, but from a cunning third party—such as the Bene Gesserit or the Padishah Emperor himself—intent on instigating a war between the player characters' House and a rival House for their own Machiavellian reasons.

# APPENDIX

*Deep in the human unconscious is a pervasive need for a logical universe that makes sense. But the real universe is always one step beyond logic.*

*—from "The Sayings of Muad'Dib" by the Princess Irulan*

DUNE

ADVENTURES IN THE IMPERIUM

HOUSE RECORD SHEET

# BACKGROUND

HOUSE NAME

HOMEWORLD

HOUSE TYPE

TRAITS

## DOMAINS

# HOUSE ROLES

RULER

CONSORT

HEIR

ADVISOR

CHIEF PHYSICIAN

COUNCILLOR

ENVOY

MARSHALL

SCHOLAR

SPYMASTER

SWORDMASTER

TREASURER

WARMASTER

# ENEMIES

NAME | TYPE

HATRED | REASON

NOTES

NAME | TYPE

HATRED | REASON

NOTES

NAME | TYPE

HATRED | REASON

NOTES

NAME | TYPE

HATRED | REASON

NOTES

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# DUNE

ADVENTURES IN THE IMPERIUM

CHARACTER SHEET

## BACKGROUND

NAME

HOUSE

ROLE

FACTION

PERSONALITY TRAITS

AMBITION

## DRIVE STATEMENT

**DUTY:**

**FAITH:**

**JUSTICE:**

**POWER:**

**TRUTH:**

## SKILL FOCUSES

**BATTLE:**

**COMMUNICATE:**

**DISCIPLINE:**

**MOVE:**

**UNDERSTAND:**

## TALENTS

## ASSETS

ADVANCEMENT POINTS

DETERMINATION

## Skills

p.102

- **Battle:** Physical conflict and strategy.
- **Communicate:** Social tests.
- **Discipline:** Stamina and willpower.
- **Move:** Athletics and speed.
- **Understand:** Mental challenges and knowledge.

## Drives

p.105

- **Duty:** What is your responsibility.
- **Faith:** What your heart says.
- **Justice:** What is right.
- **Power:** What you want.
- **Truth:** What the facts are.

## Difficulty Levels

p.146

### Simple (Difficulty 0)

- Nudging open a stuck door.
- Investigating a subject of common knowledge.
- Asking for a simple favor.

### Average (Difficulty 1)

- Overcoming a simple lock.
- Investigating private but not secret knowledge.
- Asking for a significant favor from a friend.

### Challenging (Difficulty 2)

- Overcoming a complex lock.
- Investigating confidential or hidden knowledge.
- Asking for a favor that costs the benefactor something minor.

### Daunting (Difficulty 3)

- Overcoming a complex lock in a hurry.
- Investigating knowledge that has been actively hidden by a powerful faction.
- Asking for a complicated or expensive favor.

### Dire (Difficulty 4)

- Overcoming a complex lock, in a hurry, without the right tools.
- Investigating knowledge whose very existence has been hidden.
- Asking for a complicated or expensive favor.

### Epic (Difficulty 5)

- Overcoming a complex lock, in a hurry, without the right tools, during a battle.
- Investigating knowledge whose very existence has been hidden for centuries.
- Asking for a dangerous favor from a stranger.

## Traits

p.144

- Let you try something you couldn't do normally.
- Make something easier to attempt (–1 Difficulty).
- Make something harder to attempt (+1 Difficulty, or need a Skill Test when it wouldn't normally).
- Stops you doing something that you could normally do.

## Skill Test Procedure

p.148-149

1. Player describes action.
2. Gamemaster decides on appropriate skill and assigns a Difficulty.
3. Player chooses a Drive statement:
   - If one is relevant, use that Drive.
   - If none are relevant use one of the remaining Drives.
   - If one conflicts or mismatches you may **challenge** or **comply** with the test.
4. Check to see if a focus can be applied (max of 1)
5. Spend Threat, Momentum, and/or Determination points to modify the test
6. Roll the dice and count successes:
   - Each die that scores the target number or below is a success.
   - A roll of 1 (or up to the skill value if using a focus) is a critical and yields two successes.
   - Each success beyond the required Difficulty earns 1 Momentum.

- **Target Number** = Skill + Drive
- **Dice Pool** = 2d20, max dice pool 5d20

### Assistance

- Each assistant rolls only 1d20 (Momentum cannot increase).
- Target number is their choice of skill + Drive, Focus may be applied.

### Complications

| Comp. Range | Description | Comp. Occur On... |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | Normal | 20 |
| 2 | Risky | 19 or 20 |
| 3 | Perilous | 18–20 |
| 4 | Precarious | 17–20 |
| 5 | Treacherous | 16–20 |

Complications result on a roll of 20 on any dice.

### Success at cost

A roll may be changed to a bare success if the character suffers a complication

# Determination (Players)

p.157

Determination may only be spent on a test where a Drive statement applies without conflict with the action. If a player opts to **challenge** or **comply** on a **test**, they may gain 1 Determination. Determination may be spent in the following ways, **each use costs 1 point**:

- **Automatic 1:** On a single die.
- **Re-roll:** Any or all dice.
- **Declaration:** Create a new trait or change or remove an existing one.
- **Extra Action:** Act again during a conflict.

# Challenging Drives

p.146-147

If the statement for the Drive being used **does not contradict the action** of the skill test, proceed as normal. The player may spend Determination on the test.

If the statement for the Drive being used **contradicts the action** of the skill test, a challenge has occurred. The gamemaster may offer the character a Determination point.

- If the player refuses the Determination point, they fail the skill test with no further consequences.
- If the player accepts the Determination point, they must **challenge** or **comply** with their Drive statement. In both cases they use the chosen Drive and make the skill test as normal, but afterwards...
  - If they **comply** they receive a complication.
  - If they **challenge** they must put a line through the Drive statement used and must change or recover it to use that Drive.

## Recovering a Drive

Between adventures or in a scene where the character can come to terms with their priorities:

- Reduce the Drive that has been crossed out by 1 (unless it is 4) and reinstate it.
- Increase the Drive it is now equal to by 1.
- Create a new Drive statement for any Drive rated 6 or more without one. It should relate to the action that caused the challenge.

# Adding to Threat

p.155

Players can add to the Threat pool in the following ways:

- **Buying d20s:** As Momentum (1–3 Threat/Die)
- **Ignore Complications:** (2 Threat/ complication)
- **Escalation:**: Some actions may 'escalate' a situation, giving the gamemaster 1 Threat. (1 Threat)

The gamemaster may add to Threat in the following ways:

- **Threatening Circumstances:** The environment or circumstances of a new scene may add to threat. (1 - 2 Threat)
- **Non-player Character Momentum:** Non-player character bonus successes add to the Threat pool, instead of Momentum. (Varies by success)

## Spending Threat (GM)

- Buying d20s (1–3 points/die)
  - The first die costs 1 Threat.
  - The second die costs 2 Threat.
  - The third die costs 3 Threat.
- **Increase Difficulty:** The gamemaster can choose to increase the Difficulty of a single skill test before the roll by one for every 2 Threat spent. (2 Threat)
- **Non-player Character Threat Spends:** When a player character's action would normally add points to Threat, a non-player characterperforming that same action, or making the same choice, must spend an equivalent number of points of Threat.
- **Buy off Non-player Character Complications:** The gamemaster may buy off a non-player characters' complication by spending 2 Threat. (2 Threat)
- **Traits:** The gamemaster may change, remove, or create a trait by spending 2 Threat. (2 Threat)
- **Environmental Effects and Narrative Changes:** The gamemaster may trigger or cause problems with the scene or environment by spending Threat. (Various)
- **Rival House Action:** The gamemaster may spend Threat to introduce a known enemy House to the situation. (1 Threat)
- **Determination:** Non-player characters can spend 3 Threat to effectively use a Determination point. If they gain a Determination point, they instead gain 3 Threat.

# Momentum Uses

p.151

- Buying d20s (1–3 points/die)
  - The first die costs 1 Momentum.
  - The second die costs 2 Momentum.
  - The third die costs 3 Momentum.
- Create a Trait (2 points)
  - This must relate to the action the character has just attempted, and it must be something that could reasonably result from that action.
- Obtain Information (1 Point/question)
  - Each point of Momentum the player spends allows them to ask the gamemaster one question about the current situation.

# Conflict

p.162-170

Types of Conflict:

- **Personal** – Dueling (corebook, p.171).
- **Skirmish** – Multiple opponents (corebook, p.174).
- **Warfare** – Large scale conflict (corebook, p.180).
- **Espionage** – Spying (corebook p.177).
- **Intrigue** – Social conflict (corebook, p.184).

## Moving Assets

To move an asset from one zone to the next requires a skill test (Difficulty 2).

You may spend 2 Momentum to move an additional zone.

- If you move an asset **subtly**, you reduce the cost to keep the initiative to 0 if you succeed.
- If you move an asset **boldly**, then you may move one of an opposing character's assets by one zone if you succeed.
- If you fail, you may not spend Momentum on additional movement, and one enemy may move a single asset one zone. You may not keep the initiative.

## Use of Assets

Common examples of ways to use an asset include:

- Attacking an opponent with the intent of harming or defeating them (see **Attack Sequence and Resisting Defeat**, opposite).
- Attempting to remove an opponent's asset from play.
- Attempting to create a new trait for the scene, or a new asset for yourself or an ally.
- Attempting to overcome an obstacle or hindrance in the environment.
- Attempting to gain information about the situation.
- Attempting to remove a trait or similar complication from an ally, or to aid a defeated ally.

# Attack Sequence

p.166

1. Choose your target and the asset you're using to attack.
2. Make a **Contest** skill test against your opponent. The attacker's final Difficulty increases by +1 for each defensive asset in the target's zone.
   a. If you win the contest, then you successfully attack the enemy.
   b. If you lose the contest, then your attack has failed, and the action ends. You may not keep the initiative after this.
3. If you successfully attacked, the results are as follows:
   a. If the enemy is a minor non-player character or minor supporting character, then they are **defeated** immediately.
   b. If the enemy is a notable or major non-player character, a notable supporting character, or a main player character, then defeating them is an **extended task**. Each character has an extended task track with a requirement equal to a relevant skill, which is used to track how close to defeat that character is. Each successful attack against a character scores points towards that extended task equal to 2 plus the attacking asset's Potency, and you may add +1 to this by spending 2 Momentum. A character is defeated when their track is full.
4. If you defeated an opponent, then you may spend 2 Momentum to inflict a **lasting defeat**.

## Resisting Defeat

All player characters, notable and major non-player/supporting characters may **resist defeat once per scene**.

- When they do, they are simply not defeated and may continue the conflict, but are not healed in any way.
- It costs 1 Momentum, or adds 1 to Threat, and causes you to suffer a complication.
- The amount of Momentum, or Threat spent to Resist Defeat increases by an amount equal to the Potency of the asset used to cause that defeat.

# Advancement Points

p.139

## Gaining Advancement Points

During an adventure, you can gain advancement points with:

- **Adversity:**
  - **Pain:** When you are defeated during conflict.
  - **Failure:** When you fail a test with a Difficulty of 3 or higher.
  - **Peril:** When the gamemaster spends 3 or more Threat at once.
- **Ambition:** For progressing in your ambition (1–3 points gained).
- **Impressing the Group:** For a good plan, roleplaying scene, or other noteworthy contribution (limit of 1 per session for any player).

## Spending Advancement Points

- **Skill:** 10+1/advance
- **Focus:** 1× total Focuses
- **Talent:** Total Talents ×3
- **Retrain:** You may advance a skill, focus, or talent by sacrificing an ability you already have. See p.139 for details. (Various).
- **Drives:** Can only be altered through play. See p146-147 & p.150.

p.137 & p.240

# Creating Non-player Characters

## Minor NPCs

- **Traits:** One trait as a basic description of their job or role, such as House Trooper, Servant, or Spy.
- **Drives:** Instead, use a single Quality rating, from 4–8, which is added instead of a Drive for any test. They have no Drive statements.
- **Skills:**
  - One skill ranked at 6 (the one most relevant to their job).
  - Two skills ranked at 5, and two at 4.
- **Focuses:** One focus for the skill ranked at 6.

## Notable NPCs

- **Traits:** One trait as a basic description of their job or role, such as Military Officer, Steward, Pilot, or Scholar. Some may also have a second trait, reflecting the character's reputation.
- **Drives:** Two Drives rated at 6 and 7. For all other Drives, they use a score of 5. They have a Drive statement for one or both of their higher-rated Drives.
- **Skills:**
  - One skill ranked at 7 (the one most relevant to their job).
  - One ranked at 6, two ranked at 5, and one at 4.
- **Focuses:** One Focus for any skill ranked at 6, and two Focuses for any skill ranked at 7.
- **Talents:** One talent, though some may have two (gamemaster's option).

## Major NPCs

- **Traits:** One trait each for their role and reputation. They may have a third faction trait if applicable.
- **Drives:** They have the full range of Drive scores, rated 8, 7, 6, 5, and 4, and a statement for each Drive rated at 6 or higher.
- **Skills:** Begin each skill at 4, and freely assign 11 more points. No skill may be rated at higher than 8.
- **Focuses:** Three to five focuses, as required by their concept.
- **Talents:** Two to four talents or equivalent special abilities.

### Non-player Character Special Abilities

Instead of picking a talent a major non-player character might have, you may choose one of the following:

- **Proficiency:** When using a specific skill in a certain way, the cost to buy the first bonus d20 is 0.
- **Threatening:** When using a specific skill, or acting in a certain way, and buying additional d20s with Threat, you may re-roll a single d20.
- **Guidance:** Whenever you assist an ally in a certain way, re-roll your d20.
- **Substitution:** When making a specific skill test you may use a specific skill regardless of the one usually required.
- **Familiarity:** Whenever you attempt to perform a specific skill test, you may reduce the Difficulty by 1, to a minimum of 0.
- **Additional Threat Option:** You can gain a specific or unique benefit by spending 1 or more Threat.

p.222

# Story Hook Generator

| Roll | Plot | Goal | Location | Hazard | Character |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **1–4** | Break in and steal or kidnap the... | Secret Data | Warehouse | Sardaukar Soldiers | Bashira, the head of a House Minor's security |
| **5–8** | Solve the mystery of the... | House Minor Heir | Manor House | Security Systems | Kaunos, the merchant |
| **9–12** | Investigate the murder or destruction of the... | Artifact | Sietch | Desert | Anca, the Fremen stillsuit seller |
| **13–16** | Cause the murder or destruction of the... | Illegal Technology | Smuggler's Base | Spacing Guild | Hegai, the smuggler |
| **17–20** | Rescue or recover the... | Secret Spice Stores | Desert | Smugglers | Akira, the ornithopter pilot |

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**Dedicated to Frank Herbert, author and creator of the Dune Universe, whose singular vision and imagination have inspired us all.**

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