

MINDJAMMER™

THE ROLEPLAYING GAME



BLUE

ADVENTURE IN THE RUINS OF AN ALIEN WORLD
A MINDJAMMER SCENARIO

by John Snead & Sarah Newton

JESSILA (JESSILA III)

Jessila III, commonly referred to simply as "Jessila", is a cool dry garden world with three large continents separated by narrow seas. The world is in a mild ice age; approximately a fifth of the planetary surface is covered in kilometre-thick ice sheets. The world underwent some terraforming early in its history, but now its human population has instead been genurgically adapted, and now comprises six discrete phenotypes or *phenes*.

Jessila has been inhabited for 7000 standard years. Its oldest settlement is Gathering City (pop 15 million), the site of a space elevator, and its largest city is Avinna, home to the world's main space port. Jessila also hosts an orbital loop known as the Arch, which connects the Gathering space elevator with a twin at Drulia's Triumph on the continent of Farland.

Jessila is today governed by a System Council in a political system known as the Voluntariat.

High Concept: Rediscovered Human World in an Ancient Alien Star System.

Aspects: Yellow-white F-class Main Sequence Star; Ancient Human Civilisation; Partly Terraformed; Population of Genurgically Adapted Phenotypes; T-Analogue Biosphere.

PLANETARY TYPE: INFERIOR GARDEN WORLD

Planetary Age: Mature (+0).

Orbit: Outer Habitable Zone (+1): 1.8AU.

Year Length: 854d.

Size: Standard (+1): 11700km.

Density: Standard (+0).

Surface Gravity: Standard (+0): 0.9G.

Day Length: Standard (+0): 23h.

Atmospheric Pressure: Standard (+0): 1.1 Old Earth.

Surface Temperature: Cool (-1) 10°C.

Surface Liquid: Average (+0): 50% water.

Seasonality: Low Standard (-1).

Satellites: 1 planetoid (+1) (Metler).

Habitability: Agreeable (+3).

Planetary Bodies: 6 (3 gas giants).

CIVILISATION TYPE: UNITED WORLD

Designation: Commonality Aligned (+0).

Population: High Standard (+1): 900 million human phenes (10% amphies, 20% arboes, 20% drylanders, 20% glacers, 5% quatics, 25% standers); minority population of 30,000 Blues.



Government Type: Representative (-2).

Societal Dev: Widespread Unintrusive Collective (+4).

Openness: Equivocal (-1).

Control Index: Property (-2).

Trade Index: Low Moderate (-1).

Embargo: No Embargo.

Tech Level: T7 (+2): First Age of Space.

Starport: Avinna, C-class starport (+3); Gathering City, C-class starport (+3).

Mandscape: Global (-1).

Culture: Fringe World culture in Stage 2: Normalisation.



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CREDITS

Mindjammer: Blue written and developed by John Snead and Sarah Newton

Jessila system and setting material by John Snead

Jessila rules material, Transparency campaign and additional writing by Sarah Newton

Cover Art by Jason Juta

Layout and Graphic Design by Jason Juta

Interior Art by Jason Juta, Eric Lofgren and Marc Gillespie

Graphic Design Elements by Josephe Vandel and Paul Bourne

Cartography by Jason Juta and Sarah Newton

Edited by Sarah Newton

Art Direction by Jason Juta

Proofreading by Sarah Newton and John Snead

Produced by Chris McWilliam and Sarah Newton

Enquiries: info@mindjammerpress.com

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DEDICATION BY JOHN SNEAD — To Andre Norton and Arthur C. Clarke, two amazing authors who taught me to dream and wonder about other worlds and the beings that inhabit them; and to my partners Becca and AJ for unending support and love.

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CHAPTER ONE INTRODUCTION



"An alien civilisation more advanced than anything the Commonality has ever known—and it just collapsed? What the hell happened here? What aren't we being told?"

—Arbrin Raze, Foliate Vine Emissary of the Dendryphon Protectorate

Blue is a scenario pack for the **Mindjammer** roleplaying game. It describes a unique lost colony which exists among the ashes of a fallen, near-transcendent alien civilisation.

Twenty-eight years ago, the New Commonality of Humankind rediscovered an unusual culture on the edges of the Outremer subsector (TX 2.3.3 of the Rim Sector). For most of the seven millennia since its foundation in 3570FA, the Jessila civilisation had survived in total isolation, prevented from sending signals to the Commonality by a mysterious and irresistible alien force, orders of magnitude more advanced than humankind, which inhabited the second of the star system's two garden worlds. To survive, the colony genurgically tailored itself to the exigencies of its system, developing phenotypes (or **phenes**—see page 11) which spread to all its environments.

The Phenes

Jessila's human population is divided among six phenotypes, or **phenes**, adapted to different environments: the amphies, arboes, drylanders, glacers, quatics, and standers. Full details are provided on page 11.

Six hundred years ago, the alien civilisation fell, and the barriers which had isolated the Jessila system collapsed. The Jessilan phenes found the approaches to the planet Blue finally clear, and landed to find a devastated world. A few

hundred alien survivors huddled in the ruins in primitive squalor, unable to remember anything about their civilisation or its collapse.

In the centuries which followed a hybrid culture has come into being, and the population of alien "Blues" has increased and stabilised again. But none of the survivors nor any of the Jessilan phenes have ever had any idea of what happened on Blue, nor ever understood the technological relics which litter that shattered world.

Until two years ago. Twenty-six years after Rediscovery, a Commonality sensor sweep detected a small, well-hidden enclave of survivors of the fallen alien civilisation deep below the surface of Blue. Now interest in the vanished hyper-advanced culture has soared; but not everyone, nor every Blue, is happy about the prospect of contact with a mysterious alien past.

Where Is Blue?

We've deliberately not fixed the location of Blue in Commonality Space. It's somewhere close to the Frontier, somewhere the Commonality only reached twenty-eight years ago. We've placed it notionally in the Outremer subsector of the Rim Sector (see the **Mindjammer Companion**), but you can place it anywhere appropriate to your campaign.

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CHAPTER TWO

HISTORY OF THE JESSILA COLONY

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"For the Blue, history and dream are one. The past is hypothesis, nothing more."

—The Transmissions of Croaker Verdigris, 194 NCE

Journey and Arrival

The Old Earth colony vessel *Complex Unity* entered the Jessila star system seven thousand years ago, with a manifest of six thousand five hundred colonists in stasis. Representatives of a subculture with a deep-seated belief in genurgic self-modification, the expedition aimed to find a new home where the culture could develop without hindrance. With an F-class main sequence star 1400 LY from Manhome, the target system had been selected as a prime colonisation candidate due to the presence of at least two garden worlds.

As the *Complex Unity* approached, an unprecedented event occurred. Every sentient being on the vessel received what appeared to be a thoughtcast; even those woken from stasis later remembered the short simple message in their own tongue. Its gist is preserved today:

"Travellers from the stars: welcome to the Transparency of Blue. If it is your purpose to pass through our system, then we wish you well on your journey. If you wish to stay, the third planet is yours. We inhabit the second; if you stay, you may make no landings there, nor make or receive transmissions there or to any location outside this system. The choice is yours. We will not communicate again."

Sensors indicated the presence of an energy field around the planet in the system's second orbit, and a cool but almost ideal garden world in its third. The *Complex Unity* elected to establish a colony, and deal with the implications of the message later, rather than strike out again into the unknown. They named their world "Jessila" after the first child born there, and retained the name "Blue" for the forbidden alien world.

The Barrier

The *Complex Unity* never attempted to breach the energy field, known as the **Barrier**, which surrounded the second planet. However, further observations quickly discovered



Table 1: A Timeline of the Jessila Colony

Jessilan Calendar (JC)*	Commonality Calendar	Years Ago	Event
1	3570 FA	-7124	Colony foundation.
2	3573 FA	-7121	Catastrophic proto-Mindscape failure.
85	3767 FA	-6927	Jessilan terraforming project begins.
182	3994 FA	-6700	Jessilan civilisation returns to space.
343	4372 FA	-6322	Jessilan terraforming project ends.
438	4595 FA	-6099	Yoden colony is established.
566	4894 FA	-5800	Jessilan colony rebuilds to T6.
700	5207 FA	-5487	Altstar supernova event. Jessilan civilisation collapses.
716	5244 FA	-5450	Yoden colony fails.
759	5344 FA	-5350	Establishment of the Jessilan Unanimity governmental system.
868	5599 FA	-5095	Jessila once again rebuilds to T6.
904	5684 FA	-5010	The Volcanic Period: Increased earthquakes and vulcanism cause planetary devastation.
962	5820 FA	-4874	The Bionomad Migrations
1059	6047 FA	-4647	The Unanimity is overthrown in violent revolution.
1121	6191 FA	-4503	Completion of the Hove Elterm space elevator.
1254	6503 FA	-4191	Founding of Drulia's Triumph.
1293	6595 FA	-4099	Discovery of the Prasong aerostat in the deep atmosphere of the gas giant, Unity.
1310	6634 FA	-4060	Discovery of the Promise artefact.
1319	6654 FA	-4040	Recolonisation of Yoden.
1343	6712 FA	-3982	Construction of the Arch orbital habitat begins.
1389	6818 FA	-3876	Establishment of Endurance Station on Harbour's (Jessila VI) innermost moon.
1476	7025 FA	-3669	Jessilan civilisation reaches T7.
1505	7090 FA	-3604	Lifespans are effectively unlimited.
1669	7474 FA	-3220	Discovery of the Greenstone asteroid and building paste.
2385	8948 FA	-1746	Establishment of the Jessilan Republic.
2789	10094 FA	-600	The Blue Collapse Event.
2802	10125 FA	-569	Barrier Fall.
2813	10151 FA	-543	Establishment of the Jessilan Voluntariat governmental system.
2830	10191 FA	-503	Jessila develops a basic gravity engine capability.
2832	10196 FA	-498	Discovery of the link portal on Blue.
3033	166 NCE	-28	Rediscovery of Jessila.
3044	192 NCE	-2	Discovery of the Sapphire Vault by the Commonality research vessel <i>Atem Boroden</i> .
3045	194 NCE	0	Present day.

*1 Jessilan year = 2.34 standard years

a second field, dubbed the **Wall** or **Outer Barrier**, in the furthest reaches of the star system (4.2 billion kilometres from the system primary), which distorted signals crossing it, making communication outside the system impossible.

As the Jessila colony stabilised and rebuilt its capability to send probes and humans into space, missions tested the prohibitions of the "Message from Blue" to find them still in place. Crewed vessels could approach no closer than 91000 kilometres from the planet Blue, nor travel further than 4.2 billion kilometres from the system primary, before briefly losing power and being brought to a stop. Uncrewed vessels were converted into clouds of glowing plasma. No source for these effects has ever been found. As Jessila reached T7 (the First Age of Space), "running the Barrier" became a rite of passage for pilots, although officially forbidden.

The distortion effect of the Outer Barrier had a pernicious influence on Jessilan civilisation. With observations of stars, galaxies, and other astronomical phenomena restricted to the low levels of precision of ground-based telescopes, advances in astronomy, astrophysics, and related sciences were seriously held back until the **Barrier Fall** event (page 8).

Colonisation

The six thousand five hundred human colonists of the *Complex Unity* had come from a thriving T7 society. After the Jessila colony's foundation in 3570 FA, the difficulties of maintaining advanced technology with a limited population resulted in a rapid drop in tech index to T6 and eventually T5. The colony's first and most enduring loss was space travel.

Before landing on Jessila, the *Complex Unity* conducted an exploratory survey of the system, and placed a satellite network around Jessila and relays around the system's other planets, including several outside the Barrier around Blue. Thereafter, no Jessilan ventured into space for four hundred standard years, until year 182 of the Jessilan calendar (JC), with its longer orbital year.

Instead, Jessila concentrated on building and expanding its infrastructure, and preserving its medical and genurgic capabilities. As ancient equipment failed, the small population stabilised at a T5 base with T6 meditech and genurgy, using genurgic modification to enable its population to develop into half a dozen phenotypes, adapted to thrive in the rigorous environments of ice age Jessila. A catastrophic proto-Mindscape failure three years after Foundation wiped out 10% of the colony's knowledge base, and the Outer Barrier meant that any knowledge lost was not replaced. In the absence of any "call home" from Jessila, the Old Commonality doubtless assumed the mission had failed, and no ships ventured into the system until the Rediscovery Era.

For nine hundred standard years (from 182 to 566 JC), the Jessila colony expanded and developed its technological capabilities. By 566 JC Jessila had regained T6, and its phenotypes had stabilised into the six phenes (interfertile

customisations of the human form) still in existence today. However, the return to T7 was destined to be more difficult.

In 700 JC, some five and a half thousand standard years ago, the massive star Omega 4 Reticuli (Altstar), 37 light years from Jessila, underwent catastrophic core collapse and exploded as a type II supernova. Astronomers today believe the Outer Barrier prevented the explosion from causing irrevocable damage to the Jessilan biosphere; contemporary records clearly show the barrier darkening on all wavelengths. Although Blue received additional protection from its own barrier, Jessila nevertheless suffered significant radiation damage to its biosphere, crops, and advanced technology. Half of its estimated 30 million population perished as a result of the supernova or its aftermath. Although the challenging evolutionary environment strengthened the phenes which survived, it nevertheless took Jessilan society four centuries to recover, regaining T6 only by 868 JC.

The advance to T7 took another 1400 standard years, due in large part to the widespread devastation caused by the increased vulcanism and earthquakes of the Volcanic Period which began in 904 JC, five hundred standard years after the Altstar supernova. Slowly, Jessilan civilisation recovered, achieving T7 in 1476 JC, with a population of half a billion, significant offworld industry in asteroid mining, and permanent monitoring stations on Blue's third moon.

Longevity and the Phenes

Jessilan civilisation has never collapsed into savagery, despite the difficulties which have assailed it. There are two reasons for this: first, the continuity of knowledge provided by enhanced longevity; and, second, the adaptations provided by the phenes. From the outset Jessila prioritised meditech and genurgy, and even after the Altstar supernova event that wiped out half its population, it worked swiftly to regain these capabilities. Even in Jessila's darkest hour, average lifespans never dropped below 100 standard years (43 Jessilan years), and for most of Jessila's first four millennia remained between 150 and 300 standard years (64 and 128 Jessilan years). The phenes survived in marginal environments, including the oceans for the amphies and quatics. Since approximately 1500 JC the phenes have been more or less stable, and lifespans have been effectively unlimited; while the average is currently around 400 standard years (171 Jessilan years), there are a few individuals who are more than 2000 standard years old (855 Jessilan years).

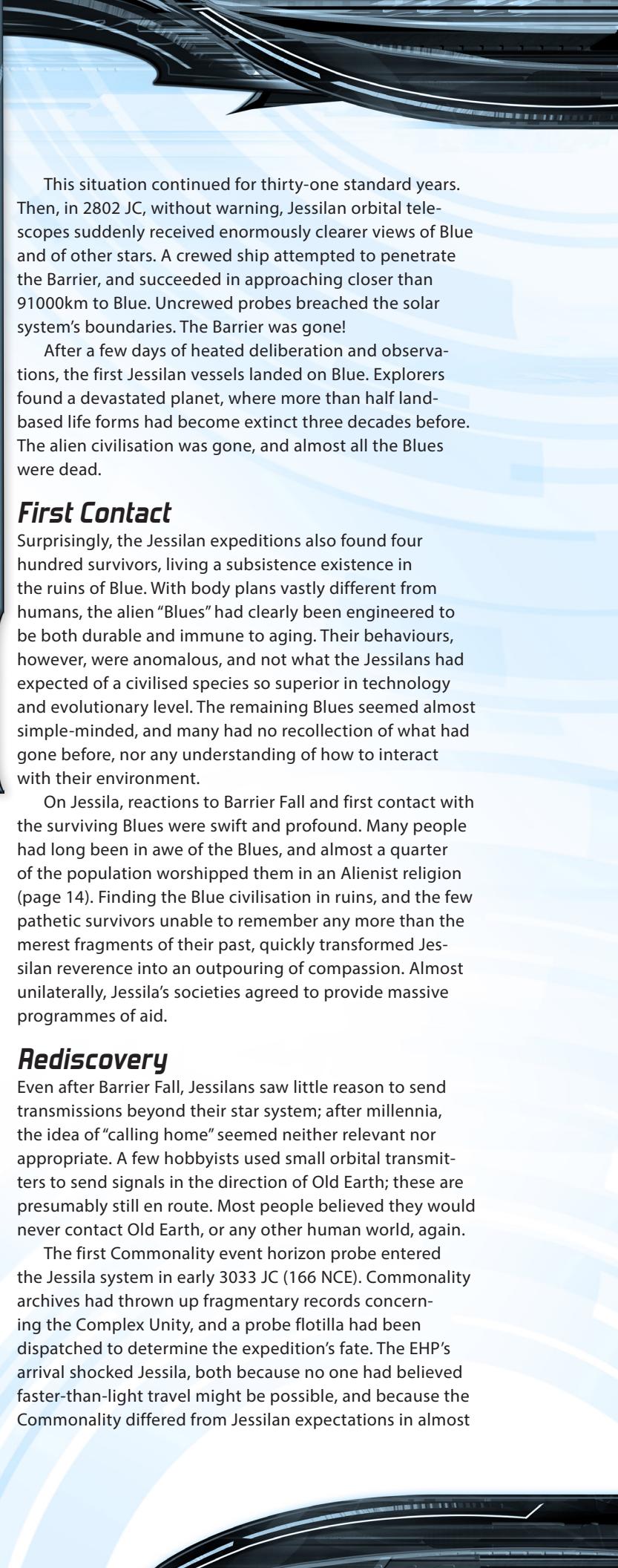


Thereafter, the pace of technological advance slowed, perhaps due to restrictions in observational astronomy caused by the Outer Barrier. The few items of Blue technology which had been discovered provided some impetus; although none were fully functional, some led to breakthroughs in materials and manufacturing technologies. Nevertheless, Jessila had reached T8 in only a few capabilities by the event now known as Barrier Fall (2789—2802 JC).

Barrier Fall

The alien Blues of the second planet had remained enigmatic and seemingly unchanged for six and a half millennia. Then, over the course of eleven days in 2789 JC, a little more than half the surface vegetation on Blue's islands turned sickly grey, artificial lights vanished over the entire planet, and huge wildfires engulfed portions of the land. Jessilan observation posts recorded the rapid disintegration of the envelope around Mystery, one of Blue's small moons, releasing its artificial atmosphere. In addition, three huge structures of unknown function on Blue collapsed in a matter of days, as did two thirds of the planet's extensive "bridge" network (page 28).

Messages to Blue continued to receive no reply, and probes continued to be stopped or destroyed. After several months with no further perceptible change, crewed ships tried to cross the Barrier and were prevented as before.



This situation continued for thirty-one standard years. Then, in 2802 JC, without warning, Jessilan orbital telescopes suddenly received enormously clearer views of Blue and of other stars. A crewed ship attempted to penetrate the Barrier, and succeeded in approaching closer than 91000km to Blue. Uncrewed probes breached the solar system's boundaries. The Barrier was gone!

After a few days of heated deliberation and observations, the first Jessilan vessels landed on Blue. Explorers found a devastated planet, where more than half land-based life forms had become extinct three decades before. The alien civilisation was gone, and almost all the Blues were dead.

First Contact

Surprisingly, the Jessilan expeditions also found four hundred survivors, living a subsistence existence in the ruins of Blue. With body plans vastly different from humans, the alien "Blues" had clearly been engineered to be both durable and immune to aging. Their behaviours, however, were anomalous, and not what the Jessilans had expected of a civilised species so superior in technology and evolutionary level. The remaining Blues seemed almost simple-minded, and many had no recollection of what had gone before, nor any understanding of how to interact with their environment.

On Jessila, reactions to Barrier Fall and first contact with the surviving Blues were swift and profound. Many people had long been in awe of the Blues, and almost a quarter of the population worshipped them in an Alienist religion (page 14). Finding the Blue civilisation in ruins, and the few pathetic survivors unable to remember any more than the merest fragments of their past, quickly transformed Jessilan reverence into an outpouring of compassion. Almost unilaterally, Jessila's societies agreed to provide massive programmes of aid.

Rediscovery

Even after Barrier Fall, Jessilans saw little reason to send transmissions beyond their star system; after millennia, the idea of "calling home" seemed neither relevant nor appropriate. A few hobbyists used small orbital transmitters to send signals in the direction of Old Earth; these are presumably still en route. Most people believed they would never contact Old Earth, or any other human world, again.

The first Commonality event horizon probe entered the Jessila system in early 3033 JC (166 NCE). Commonality archives had thrown up fragmentary records concerning the Complex Unity, and a probe flotilla had been dispatched to determine the expedition's fate. The EHP's arrival shocked Jessila, both because no one had believed faster-than-light travel might be possible, and because the Commonality differed from Jessilan expectations in almost

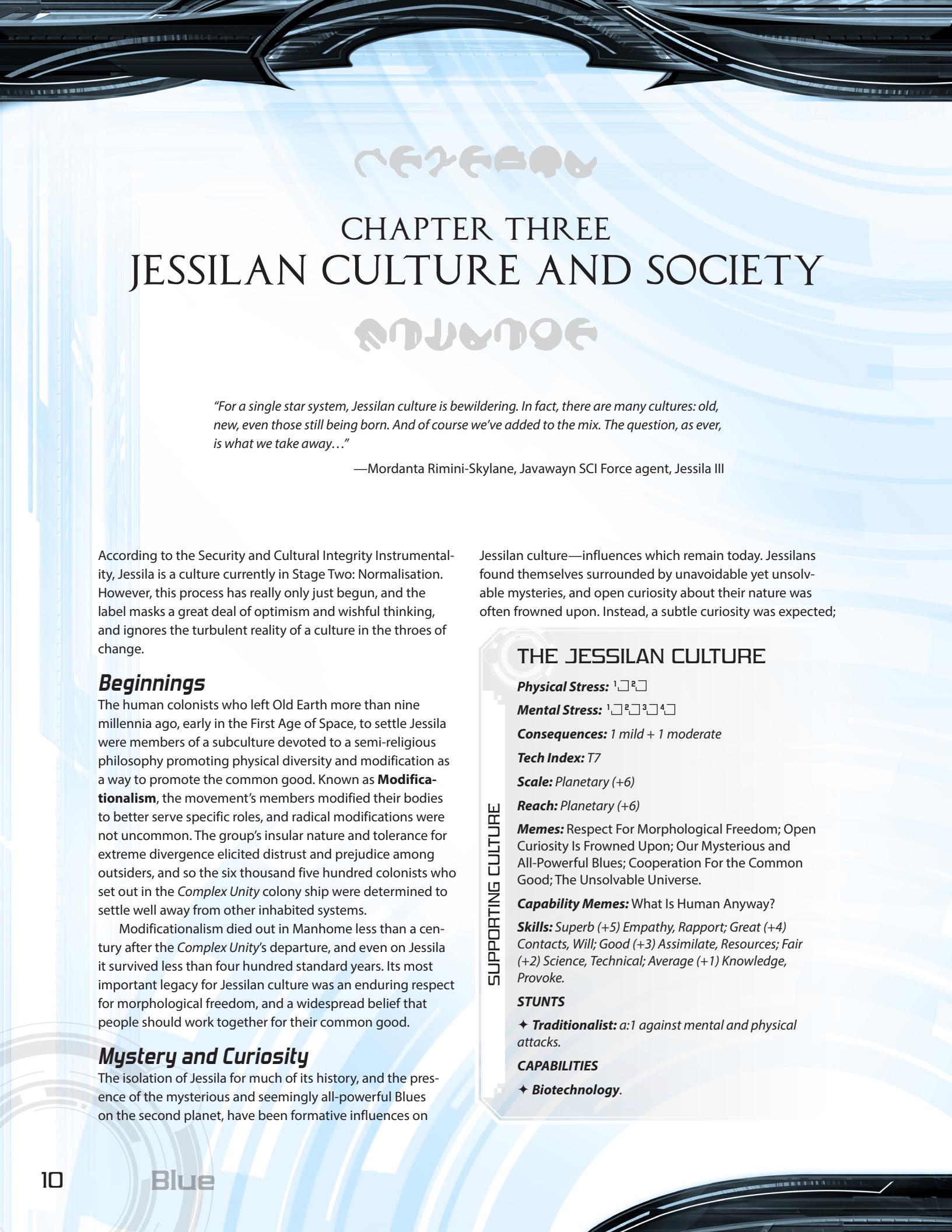
every respect. The sudden arrival of a vast and powerful civilisation of humans, xenomorphs, hominids, synthetics, and even alien species left a substantial minority of Jessilans reeling in culture shock.

Recent History

In the three decades since, some of the initial shock has faded. Indeed, many Jessilans have become disillusioned; while Commonality technology is more advanced than the T7—T8 tech that characterised Jessila before Rediscovery, it pales before the marvels once achieved by the now-fallen Blues. Many Jessilans regard the Commonality research teams as little more than scavengers, plundering the ancient Blue ruins for treasures they can steal—treasures which rightly belong to the Jessilans and the Blues. In particular, many Alienists believe Jessila's phenes to have been chosen by the Blues to safeguard their secrets, and regard outsiders coming to "study" the prelapsarian Blues as unwanted interlopers.

Commonality agents note that even Jessilans with no inclination towards Alienism hold the Blues in special reverence—including the recently discovered Sapphire Vault and its Hermetics (page 19). They regard the increased factionalisation in Jessilan society as a harbinger of imminent collapse if integration efforts are not managed very carefully indeed.





CHAPTER THREE

JESSILAN CULTURE AND SOCIETY



"For a single star system, Jessilan culture is bewildering. In fact, there are many cultures: old, new, even those still being born. And of course we've added to the mix. The question, as ever, is what we take away..."

—Mordanta Rimini-Skylane, Javawayn SCI Force agent, Jessila III

According to the Security and Cultural Integrity Instrumentality, Jessila is a culture currently in Stage Two: Normalisation. However, this process has really only just begun, and the label masks a great deal of optimism and wishful thinking, and ignores the turbulent reality of a culture in the throes of change.

Beginnings

The human colonists who left Old Earth more than nine millennia ago, early in the First Age of Space, to settle Jessila were members of a subculture devoted to a semi-religious philosophy promoting physical diversity and modification as a way to promote the common good. Known as **Modificationalism**, the movement's members modified their bodies to better serve specific roles, and radical modifications were not uncommon. The group's insular nature and tolerance for extreme divergence elicited distrust and prejudice among outsiders, and so the six thousand five hundred colonists who set out in the *Complex Unity* colony ship were determined to settle well away from other inhabited systems.

Modificationalism died out in Manhome less than a century after the *Complex Unity*'s departure, and even on Jessila it survived less than four hundred standard years. Its most important legacy for Jessilan culture was an enduring respect for morphological freedom, and a widespread belief that people should work together for their common good.

Mystery and Curiosity

The isolation of Jessila for much of its history, and the presence of the mysterious and seemingly all-powerful Blues on the second planet, have been formative influences on

Jessilan culture— influences which remain today. Jessilans found themselves surrounded by unavoidable yet unsolvable mysteries, and open curiosity about their nature was often frowned upon. Instead, a subtle curiosity was expected;

THE JESSILAN CULTURE

Physical Stress:

Mental Stress:

Consequences: 1 mild + 1 moderate

Tech Index: T7

Scale: Planetary (+6)

Reach: Planetary (+6)

Memes: Respect For Morphological Freedom; Open Curiosity Is Frowned Upon; Our Mysterious and All-Powerful Blues; Cooperation For the Common Good; The Unsolvable Universe.

Capability Memes: What Is Human Anyway?

Skills: Superb (+5) Empathy, Rapport; Great (+4) Contacts, Will; Good (+3) Assimilate, Resources; Fair (+2) Science, Technical; Average (+1) Knowledge, Provoke.

STUNTS

♦ **Traditionalist:** a:1 against mental and physical attacks.

CAPABILITIES

♦ **Biotechnology.**

careful observation instead of direct questioning; and an acceptance that highlighting a person's inability to provide answers in public was both inconsiderate and rude. Jessilans will often discreetly rifle through bags or drawers so as not to "bother" their owners, and commonly assume that owners won't mind their belongings being gone through as long as nothing is disturbed or taken.

Direct and open curiosity is more acceptable among Jessilans living off-world, and is one of the big cultural differences between Jessila and subculture communities on the Arch habitat, the moon Yoden, in the asteroid belt, or more recently on Blue. In fact, as if in compensation, Jessilans living off-world are often excessively curious, and will rigorously interrogate visitors and new immigrants. These cultural clashes are often the subject of numerous jokes and media dramas.

Diversity and Phenes

Prior to Commonality contact (page 8), the only sentient beings in the Jessila system were humans and Blues. Xenomorphs and synthetics were either rare or controversial, and the Complex Unity carried only human passengers. However, Jessila presented the colonists with an array of challenging environments, and throughout history Jessilans have enthusiastically embraced genurgic adaptation to thrive there.

Initial plans to terraform Jessila waned after the colony's tech index was compromised, and movements gained momentum to adapt colonists to the environment rather than vice versa. Late in Jessila's first millennium, in 962 JC, these movements reached their peak in the Bio-nomad Migrations, as substantial populations opted for genurgic alterations to incorporate bio-tools and other enhancements to better adapt them for lives of nomadic hunter-gathering in the Jessilan wilderness. These **bio-nomads** or **bions** quickly accounted for 10% of the population, and although widespread interest in the bion lifestyle and subculture faded within two or three standard centuries, the movement has had periodic resurgences throughout history. Currently almost 5% of Jessila's population identify as bions, including a sizable minority of vacuum-adapted individuals living and working in the asteroid belt.

These adaptationist movements—in some ways deriving from the Modificalism of the colony's founders (page 10)—eventually had far more wide-reaching implications for Jessila's population. Over the course of several millennia, six body types became standardised, and have remained so since. Known as phenes, they're essentially elective hominid genotypes. They are as follows:

AMPHIES

Mandatory spend: 1 aspect.

Humans with enlarged and adapted lungs who can dive and hold their breath as easily as cetaceans, but who otherwise

possess humanoid bodies. Most have thick, otter-like fur, but some have smooth, dolphin-like skin. The amphie phene accounts for approximately 10% of the system's human population (approximately 90 million individuals), almost all on Jessila, and is the largest phene group on Blue, with 115,000 individuals.

Mandatory Extras: Amphibious.

Typical Enhancements: Longevity.



Arboe

Drylander

ARBOES

Mandatory spend: 1 aspect.

Humans with prehensile feet and enhanced balance and jumping ability who live in forests and low-gravity environments. Some are furred, but most are not. Some arboes are adapted to hold their breath for long periods, and survive up to 30 minutes even in vacuum. Approximately 1 in 5 Jessilans belong to this phene, some 180 million individuals, including half of those people living and working on airless moons or asteroids such as the Belt (page 34).

Mandatory Extras: Adaptation (Forest Canopy or Vacuum or Low-Grav).

Typical Enhancements: Adaptation, Expert Climber, Jumper, Longevity.

DRYLANDERS

Mandatory spend: 1 aspect.

Humans adapted for life in deserts who need one quarter of the amount of water necessary for unmodified humans. Dry-

landers have small, lizard-like scales instead of skin. Just over 20% of Jessilans belong to this phene, 180 million people, mostly in the desert regions of Farland on Jessila.

Mandatory Extras: Adaptation (Desert Environment).

Typical Enhancements: Energy Resistant (Heat).

GLACERS

Mandatory spend: 1 aspect.

Humans with thick fur and blubber who can live in frigid environments; one in five Jessilans—180 million people—and most inhabitants of Yoden (page 36) belong to this phene.

Mandatory Extras: Adaptation (Glacial Environment).

Typical Enhancements: Energy Resistant (Cold), Longevity.

QUATICS

Mandatory spend: 1 aspect.

Humans with seal-like bodies and human-like arms who can breathe both air and water. This rarest phene accounts for only 5% of the Jessilan population (approximately 45 million individuals).

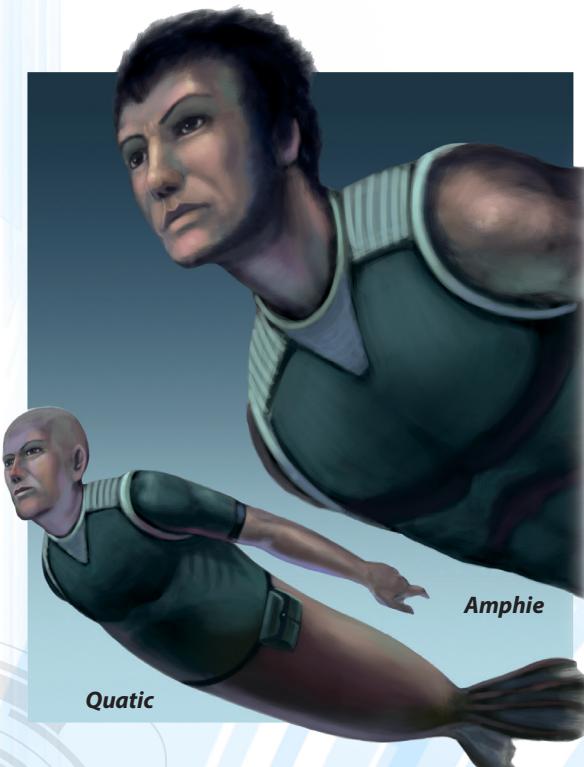
Mandatory Extras: Aquatic.

Typical Enhancements: Longevity.

STANDERS

Mandatory spend: None.

Humans with few overt modifications, other than the stand-



ard enhancements for longevity, resistance to disease and radiation, ability to metabolise the Jessilan biome, and voluntary fertility control common to all phenes. Roughly a quarter of Jessilans (225 million people) are standers.

Mandatory Extras: None.

Typical Enhancements: Longevity.

Note that phenes are neither absolute nor permanent. Jessilans are free to modify their bodies as they wish; most tend to fall into one of these six phenes. For practical reasons members of phenes tend to congregate together, but prejudice between and against phenes is rare, perhaps because of the fact that, even before Rediscovery, switching between phenes was a relatively trivial matter, requiring simple genurgic therapy and a few weeks of physical transition.

Government

Jessilan politics has of course changed many times since the colony was first founded, often drastically. The Modificationalist philosophy (page 10) of the original settlers was both communalist and relatively authoritarian, with leaders whose authority was almost absolute. The most long-lasting polity until the current Voluntariat system was established in 2813 JC was the Republic which preceded it, which lasted for twelve hundred standard years. Prior to that the most long-lasting system had been the famous Unanimity, the rigid, electronically-selected meritocracy which took control of Jessila shortly after the Altstar supernova event in 700 JC and only relinquished power some seven hundred standard years later, having shepherded Jessilan society through the

supernova recovery period and the Volcanic Period of 904 JC that severely damaged Gathering five standard centuries later. The Unanimity is still remembered today for its great effectiveness and efficiency, but also for its uncompromising authoritarianism; it was overthrown in Jessila's only known violent revolution. Since then a deep distrust for authoritarian government has been a cornerstone of Jessilan culture, and all polities have been both representative and highly responsive to the public will.

The current Voluntariat system arose as a result of public discontent with the Republic's dismal response to Barrier Fall and claims that it was doing little to aid the surviving Blues. The Voluntariat system is extremely but unobtrusively democratic; every adult citizen wishing to participate in government at any level (which over 90% of Jessilans appear to do) uses their Voluntariat implant, or a conventional Mindscape implant, or (for the few who refuse implants) polling wristband which monitors their physiological and neural responses. All participating citizens spend a few minutes every day studying current major issues, and their implants and wristbands monitor their reactions to automatically report their preferences, which the Jessilan Mindscape then codifies into policy. Decisions are implemented by the System Council, and public reactions to these decisions are again fed back into the system to help refine them. This also serves to monitor the effectiveness and success of individual council-members; if ratings fall too low, members are replaced rapidly. The system works at a more devolved local level also.

In the Voluntariat system, individuals are free to explore whatever issues, questions, and events interest them. All decisions are considered valid as long as at least 20% of participating citizens have registered an opinion on a topic. Occasionally the System Council requests citizens to examine particularly important and / or pressing issues.

Prior to Rediscovery, the Voluntariat Polling Network was part of the Jessilan proto-Mindscape (in fact it was its backbone). Since then, Mindscape engineers and SCI Force specialists have attempted to persuade the System Council to make the polling network part of the Jessilan Mindscape the Commonality installed several years after their arrival. However, while many Jessilans welcome the Mindscape, a sufficient minority of citizens distrust the Commonality and the Mindscape, and so for now the Voluntariat Polling Network remains entirely distinct. Nevertheless, a growing number of undecided citizens are becoming vexed with the existence of these two parallel networks, and predictions are that the two will unify within five years. SCI Force is keeping a close eye on developments as cultural damage may be substantial if this happens in the face of significant popular opposition.

The Jessilan Mindscape

Before Rediscovery, Jessila had a typical T7 proto-Mindscape which enabled rapid easy communication and a sharing of sensory experience, thoughtcasts, and remote control, but which lacked more sophisticated phenomena such as exomemories, memplexes, and thanograms.

As cultural integration got underway, the Commonality offered Jessila systemwide access to the full range of Mindscape tech, and was permitted to install Mindscape relays on a limited basis.

*Both Jessila and Blue have global Mindscape instances, and various asteroids and moons (including Yoden and Endurance) have local nodes. These have been in place for about twelve standard years. However, according to the Articles of Rediscovery, all Mindscape facilities in Jessila come with an option to restrict them to only those functions and services which were present in the original Jessilan proto-Mindscape. A few small cities (particularly in the offworlder exclusion zones known as **preservations**—see page 24) have even gone so far as to restrict Mindscape access so that residents cannot access any of the newly introduced features. These restrictions do not usually apply to visitors, including offworlders, but some of these settlements are considering restricting all Mindscape use to pre-Rediscovery levels.*

THE COMMONALITY PRESENCE IN THE JESSILA SYSTEM

The Commonality has a low-key presence in the Jessila system, managing Mindscape nodes and ship maintenance and repair facilities, but in general keeping out of the day-to-day administration of Jessilan society. Its instrumentalities have offices, and in particular SCI Force is fairly visible, as are research teams investigating both the Blues and the Hermetics.

The 3-Space Instrumentality

The presence of the 3-Space Instrumentality (3SI) in the Jessila system is known only to a few; it's not public knowledge, even to other Commonality instrumentalities. A mysterious and somewhat sinister branch of the Commonality government, it was only established over the past thirty years, and has always had a presence in the Jessila system. Its official function is to manage the Far Gate Project—the vast Commonality-wide endeavour to construct 3-space gates in all major systems and sector capitals.

Like all Commonality instrumentalities, 3SI members are extremely competent. They're also ruthless; their field of concern has many security implications, and they are absolutely not above all manner of skulduggery and deceit if it advances their agenda—to find out more about 3-space, what it is, how it can be used, and to maintain 3SI control over the interstellar network they're now constructing. As far as the 3-Space Instrumentality is concerned, tomorrow belongs to them.

What the 3SI are doing in Jessila is anybody's guess. Was it really a coincidence that Commonality 3-space breakthroughs occurred at pretty much exactly the moment the Commonality contacted the Blues? The 3SI are very interested in the aliens—both the fallen Blues but especially the mysterious Hermetics and their unfathomable technology (page 19). They have a base in Gathering City (page 23), in Hasan's Rescue (page 29), and also at the Sapphire Vault (page 64).

3SI personnel fall into two groups. The first comprises scientists: driven, passionate, but with a very flexible ethical code, these are people obsessed with 3-space travel, regardless of what it costs. The second group comprises security personnel: highly-trained and lethal, capable of both **equivocal** and **unequivocal measures** (see page 45) as necessity dictates. The 3SI even has a very secret team of annihilator synthetics, for those times when you can't afford to leave any traces...

See page 43 for more on the 3SI.

Social Factions

Jessila is a culture in the throes of profound change, and needless to say there are countless factions vying for hegemony, each with their own vision of what their future should look like.

ALIENISM

Throughout its history Jessila, like many colonies, developed a plethora of idiosyncratic faiths and philosophies which exist nowhere else. One that has proven enduring and unique is the religion known as **Alienism**. Its proponents worship the Blues—particularly those from before Barrier Fall—believing them to be semi-divine beings who have guided the lives and destinies of the human inhabitants of the Jessilan system for millennia. The most fervent even believe the Blues somehow induced the *Complex Unity* colony to come to Jessila in the first place; before Commonality contact and the introduction of planing technology, this belief was regarded as unscientific and impossible.

Most Alienists believe that once the Jessilan colony had been founded, the colonists by implication had accepted the terms of the "Message from Blue", and from that point forward the Blues had begun watching over them and helping guide them towards prosperity and spiritual perfection. They cite the fact that the Barrier saved the Jessila colony from extinction during the Altstar supernova event as clear

evidence of the Blues protecting humankind, and regard the Jessilan research team that unlocked the secret of building paste (page 18) as acting under the subtle guidance of the Blues.

Many non-believers consider Alienists to be irrational believers in impossible superstitions. However, more eloquent believers point out that nothing the Alienists believe is impossible *per se*, and that the claims they make about the Blues can be explained by a technology far in advance of human capabilities.

Barrier Fall and the discovery of the Sapphire Vault (page 64) sent shockwaves through the Alienist faith. After Barrier Fall, more than a third of the membership abandoned their beliefs, while those that remained determined some unforeseen catastrophe had occurred, requiring them to help the Blues, just as the Blues had previously helped save humankind.

The Sapphire Vault discovery has polarised Alienists. Some believe the surviving Blues on the surface were somehow impure, their civilisation destroyed because of its wickedness. Others contend that the Hermetic Blues in the buried enclave are the ones responsible for the collapse, and still represent a terrible danger. Tensions have been growing within the Alienist faith for several years, and it may be about to split into two. At present, 15% of Jessilan humans (approximately 135 million people) consider themselves Alienists.

While the Commonality prohibits religious belief in the Core, here on the Fringe it's more pragmatic. Nevertheless, it remains generally critical of the Alienist faith.

ALIENISM AND THE BLUES

In the six centuries since Barrier Fall, most surviving Blues have found Alienism disturbing. Despite their gratitude for humankind's aid, and their acknowledgement that the Alienists have been some of their most dedicated supporters, most Blues find the human desire to worship them baffling and intrusive. In particular, Blues on the planet Blue do not permit Alienists to discuss their beliefs unless invited to do so, although this situation rarely arises, as few Alienists wish to live on Blue: most find the world a sad and disturbing place, a vivid reminder of the mortality of a civilisation they believed to be effectively divine.

INTEGRATIONALISTS

A significant minority of Jessilans see contact with the Commonality as a liberation from millennia of isolation. These integrationists often wear clothing and ornament modelled on styles popular elsewhere in the Commonality, and purchase imported goods, especially personal devices and ornamentation that can be worn or carried. Avinna, Jessila's primary spaceport, the Arch orbital habitat, and the Jessila asteroid belt are the principle integrationist centres.

ANTI-COMMONALITY Factions

In general, Jessilans accept the necessity for contact with the rest of the galaxy, although a substantial minority want nothing to do with it beyond the technological uplift they gain from the Commonality. Most regard contact with the Hermetics as far more relevant—and perhaps they are right, even if it was the Commonality that discovered the Sapphire Vault in the first place. Many Jessilans are concerned their culture and way of life will be wiped out by the overwhelming power of the Commonality, and many, including the New Blue movement (below), actively work to oppose Commonality integration. Many move away from areas with regular Commonality contact, avoiding Avinna, the Arch, and the Jessila belt; in recent years they've been concentrating in areas known as **preservations**—effectively exclusion zones where non-Jessilans are not allowed without express permission. Government officials and culture agents alike worry that the preservations are the harbingers of huge cultural conflict to come.

THE NEW BLUES

Researchers studying the Blues since Barrier Fall have noticed that, in the absence of anything more than fragmentary memories about their past culture and nature, many Blues have looked to Jessilan human culture for inspiration and identity. Just as the mystery of the Blues and the Barrier has shaped Jessilan human cultures for millennia, so too has human culture been reshaping the Blues. Although the Blues reproduce slowly and are relatively few in number, many Commonality anthropologists and memetic engineers now see a shared human-Blue culture developing in the Jessila system, combining elements of both species' cultures. They believe that Jessilan culture will become increasingly tailored to both species as the number of these "New Blues" increases.

New Blue culture is especially obvious on Blue, where humans outnumber Blues by two to one. The Blues either welcome humans, or are at worst indifferent to them—in large part because their world is still so empty—although they do not accept open Alienism on the world. New Blues tend to oppose Commonality integration, largely because they're creating their own culture.

The discovery of the Sapphire Vault has had a profound effect on the New Blues. Most take the ongoing rejection by the Hermetics as validation of their views, and see the continued isolation of the Vault as proof that their previous civilisation was stagnating and bereft of intellectual curiosity.

RESTORATIONISTS

Many Blues, and indeed humans, have a profound interest in their fallen civilisation, and are actively engaged in finding ways to restore it, researching its culture and advanced technology both on an amateur and professional basis. These **Restorationists** are fascinated by the Commonality's recent

discovery of the Sapphire Vault (page 64), a lost enclave of prelapsarian Blues buried deep beneath the planet's surface. Indeed, they've become increasingly discontented and baffled that these pre-Barrier Fall Blues—commonly referred to as Hermetic Blues or simply **Hermetics**—categorically refuse to interact with them. Rumours are rife that Restorationist extremists are planning to infiltrate the Sapphire Vault, or even to kidnap one of the Hermetics.

THE BLUES

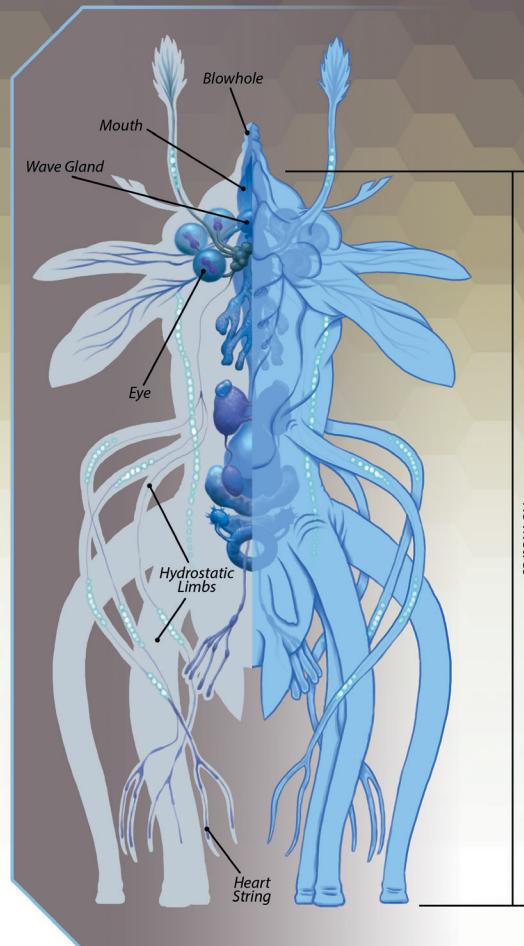
The Blues are a 12-limbed hermaphroditic amphibious invertebrate species, massing 50-90kg, with ovoid, bilaterally symmetrical bodies 1.2 metres long and 0.5 metres wide, carried on six tentacle-like "legs" to a height of 1.6 metres. Their bodies are supported by a hydrostatic "skeleton" allowing their limbs to become rigid or flexible at will. Their "legs" are attached a third the way up from the base of their bodies, and six similar but thinner "arms" are attached a third the way down from the top of their bodies, branching in two at the ends and used for manipulation.

Blues possess six bulging "eyes" placed equidistant around the circumference of their bodies, each with overlapping 100° fields of view providing excellent omnidirectional stereoscopic vision. A mouth is located in the top centre of the body, together with a complex blowhole with airways separate from the digestive tract. Blues are excellent swimmers and can hold their breaths for up to thirty minutes, but cannot breathe water. Many spend most or all of their time on land.

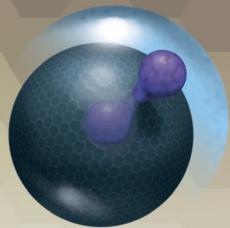
While most Blue technology was destroyed when their civilisation collapsed, Blue bodies show evidence of extensive genurgic engineering. They are resistant to disease and toxins, heal rapidly, and regenerate lost limbs and organs in 2-10 standard months. They appear to reproduce voluntarily, giving live birth to a fully viable individual 50% full-grown, which possesses a high degree of inherited "knowledge", including language. Modern Blues reproduce slowly—once every ten years or so—but it's theorised this may be elective.

The Blue nervous system / brain-analogue is distributed throughout their body, and comprises several discrete organs. One organ, capable of transmitting and receiving electromagnetic (radio) signals (dubbed the **wave gland**), is used to communicate at distances of up to 60km. Their senses run the whole EM spectrum, from gamma radiation right through to ultra low frequency waves. Additionally, the upper manipulating tentacles of Blues possess specialised nerve clusters enabling them to transmit and receive complex nerve signals by touch. This effectively allows them to communicate and perceive "emotions", including whether or not an individual is knowingly telling the truth; these **emotic transducers** are casually known as **heart strings** among Jessilans. Blues are consequently careful about touching one another, and even

Blue Physiology



Eye Anatomy



Wave Gland



the most casual uninvited touch is viewed as a serious invasion of privacy. Heart strings also detect sound waves, thereby functioning as a kind of Blue "ear".

Blues do not naturally "speak". However, their blowholes are capable of emitting modulated sounds, and so they're capable of human-style speaking in a "breathy, fluty" voice. Blues with experience of humans often prefer to communicate about complex subjects using their wave gland, broadcasting by "natural radio" directly to receiving devices. Even non-Hermetic Blues find the concept of human speech to be a hit-and-miss, somewhat comical affair; many have become avid collectors of very bad human jokes.

Blue Culture and Behaviour

Little is known about the culture and behaviour of the Blues before the collapse of their civilisation. Today their survivors and descendants are highly social creatures which congregate in communities of at least one hundred individuals (and preferably more). They are diurnal, with hours of darkness split into rest periods when wave gland activity drops to a minimum; family units often spend this time linked by their heart strings, apparently "dozing" or "asleep". Their communities appear to be a mostly flat hierarchy, with individuals assuming specialist and even representative roles in an ad hoc and little understood process. Larger-scale "leaders" are recognised, but as yet it's unclear how that status is achieved;

it's possible a "wave gland acclamation process" is involved.

BLUE NAMING CONVENTIONS

The Blue "language" is essentially a form of electromagnetic radiation "broadcast", ie similar in nature to naturally emitted radio waves. Blue names are an example of this; a pure tone, broadcast at a precise, unique frequency. Known as **spectroscopic naming**, no two Blue names are alike.

Needless to say, this isn't much use to humans. Instead, non-Blues "transliterate" Blue names into the human language equivalent of the approximate position on the electromagnetic spectrum their names correspond to, and then usually prefix or affix a nickname, often one relating to the transmission of sound, music, EM radiation, and so on. This results in names such as Aerial Indigo, Piper Xenon, Crumphorn Gamma, Strontium Chant, Skirl Protium, and so on.

Hermetic names differ, in that they don't use the affix, but instead specify the EM spectrum designation to a greater degree of detail, usually numerically. This leads to Hermetic names such as Lanthanum 924, meV 229, Muriatic Acid 1141, Cinerous 40, and so on.

The native Blue name for their own planet is in fact a falling scale covering the range of blue wavelengths emitted by the world. Many Blues have declared themselves appalled at the lack of euphony, beauty, and accuracy in the human language name.

EXOINTELLIGENCE BUILD: THE BLUE*

Life Form Concept: Sybaritic Amnesiac With a Blind-Spot For Physical Exploration.

Evolution Index: +1 (+4).

Exoscale: +1 (+4).

Exointelligence Concept: Large Group
Exointelligence Avoiding Isolation (Large Group
Exointelligence Directing Its Evolution to
Transcend Environmental Challenges).

Behaviours: Species Self-Identity; Transcends to
Avoid Challenges; Takes Its Environment With It.

Exointelligence Skills: Empathy +1 (+0), Investigate
+3 (+8), Knowledge +0 (+8), Notice +3 (+8), Science
+3 (+8), Will +0 (+8).

Manifestation: Sensorium: Radio Sense (Wave
Gland); Comms: Wave Gland and Heart Strings;
(Integral Part of Transcending Species Massmind);
(Voluntary Abdication From Temporal Flow).

Skills: Investigate, Notice, Science.

Stunts: Ghostless Shell, The Power of Deduction,
(Polymath), (Sensor Scan).

Natural Abilities: (Prescience Routines).

Attacks and Defences: Mental Blast (Use Provoke for
Physical Stress damage attacks).

*Entries in parenthesis are additional abilities for
Hermetics only.

BLUES AND THE MINDSCAPE

The Blue wave gland can naturally perceive the monitor band signal emitted by a Mindscape implant. Initially the signal is gibberish, but Blues with prolonged exposure have shown themselves capable of perceiving structure in the signal, and even of picking up on Mindscape communications specifically directed at them.

This is extremely approximate, and doesn't permit any detail; it's perhaps a little like humans trying to read binary. However, in extremis Blues and humans with Mindscape implants are able to engage in very rough, primitive communication—perhaps an Investigate or Notice roll to perceive a communication of up to three words in length.

It's theorised that Hermetics can naturally decode monitor band signals and interface directly with the Mindscape. This remains unconfirmed.

Blue Attitudes to their Past

The Blues are divided in their attitudes to their pre-Barrier Fall civilisation. Almost a third of them mourn its loss and

THE BLUE (NON-HERMETIC)

Physical Stress: 1 □ 2 □

Mental Stress: 1 □ 2 □

Consequences: 1 mild + 1 moderate.

Scale: Medium (+0).

Evolution Index: +1.

Exoscale: +1.

Life Form Concept: Sybaritic Amnesiac With a
Blind-Spot For Physical Exploration.

Exointelligence Concept: Large Group
Exointelligence Avoiding Isolation.

Trouble: Adrift in a Sea of Lost Memories.

Behaviours: Species Self-Identity; Transcends to
Avoid Challenges; Takes Its Environment With It.

Manifestations: Sensorium: Radio Sense (Wave
Gland); Comms: Wave Gland and Heart Strings.

Skills: Fantastic (+6) Science; Superb (+5) Investigate;
Great (+4) Notice; Good (+3) Provoke; Fair (+2)
Technical; Average (+1) Empathy.

STUNTS

♦ **Ghostless Shell:** +2 Stealth bonus to hide from
view, even to sensors and synthetic senses.

♦ **The Power of Deduction:** 1/scene, spend a fate
point to discover / create one aspect per shift on
target of Investigate roll; you get one free invoke.

EXTRAS

★ **Mental Blast:** Use Provoke to make attacks
causing physical stress damage.

seek to restore it, but the rest either regard the past as dead and gone, or are actively suspicious of their fallen civilisation's prior isolation and secrecy. Several hundred Blues have already voyaged beyond the Jessila system on Commonality vessels, and those Blues who disapprove of their previous civilisation are quick to point out that, were it not for Barrier Fall, their species would never have encountered the Commonality or have been able to travel between the stars.

Blue Occupations

Blues are perhaps best described as "unenthusiastic" workers. They may be initially very interested in a task, but this interest rapidly wanes, and they look for stimulation elsewhere. Jessilan researchers have described them as "natural potters"; xeno-anthropologists suggest that Blues are prey to an instinctive disinclination towards tasks which would be unfulfilling to their hyperadvanced forebears—a dilemma that seems insoluble.

Blue Technology

Until Barrier Fall the Blues appear to have confined themselves to their own planet, but explorations of the Jessilan system have revealed this was not always the case. Evidence exists of ancient visits to asteroids and other planets in the system, most of which date from roughly 50,000 years ago, an era when the Blue civilisation was clearly much less advanced. The most impressive and intact of these date from -30,000BP, when the Blues seemed to have been extremely active through the entire Jessilan system. While most artefacts seem non-functional or so advanced as to be meaningless, some have been found which have led to Jessilan technological breakthroughs.

CONTEMPORARY BLUE TECHNOLOGY

Since Barrier Fall, no surviving Blue has shown any aptitude for technical innovation. As a result, they use Jessilan technology, often with a high level of skill. Over the centuries since Barrier Fall, some Jessilan devices have been produced catering to Blue physiology, including bubble-like vehicles, bulbous hand tools, and even Blue-tailored vacuum suits. Availability of such Blue-oriented devices is almost entirely restricted to the planet Blue.

Any new discoveries of prelapsarian Blue tech legally belong to the Jessila system government, who customarily reward the finders very generously. Refusing to hand over discovered Blue tech in a timely fashion is a serious crime.

BUILDING PASTE

This most widely-used of Blue technologies has had a major impact on Jessilan society. In its "unfixed" form it's an ivory-coloured substance the consistency of warm modelling clay, which users can induce to "grow" into an exceptionally durable and self-repairing building.

The method of use is fairly simple. First, a user spreads a small amount of building paste in the shape of the desired foundation for the structure. Then, exposing the paste to a specific pattern of coloured lights causes it to grow, and can be used to direct that growth to form floors, openings for doors and windows, and other additions.

Building paste is a form of self-replicating nanotech that draws its required elements from the surrounding environment. Once placed and activated, it remains apparently dormant for ten hours while it sends out "roots" more than five metres below the surface, anchoring the structure and acting as conduits for collection and distribution of constituent elements. Then the structure grows upwards at a rate of 50 centimetres per day, with the new paste hardening into a material as durable as anything the Commonality can produce. Structures made from building paste continue to grow upwards at this rate until complete, a point again determined by the application of a particular pattern of lights. At that point the structure ceases to grow, but veins of unhardened



building paste permeate the structure and can replicate and flow to damaged areas, repairing it in a manner which removes any evidence of previous harm.

Building paste was first discovered in the Greenstone asteroid (below) in 1669 JC. Researchers worked for over a century to learn to replicate and reshape it. The unfixed paste is completely inert without the correct sequence of coloured lights and, as far as researchers have been able to determine, poses none of the dangers often posed by other forms of self-replicating nanotech. Using light sequences users have absolute control of a structure's shape, as well as the colour and texture of all surfaces.

GREENSTONE ASTEROID

Most Blue artefacts in the Jessilan Belt have been found in caverns or crevasses of asteroids, but most are simply small devices that appear to have been dropped or abandoned, or in a few rare cases ancient monitoring equipment. The asteroid known as Greenstone contained something very different, and so far unique: a luxurious "villa" or dwelling, and the origin of the building paste (above) that now forms the basis for many structures on Jessila.

Greenstone is 19 kilometres long and 14 wide, and contains a roughly cylindrical cavern 200 metres across, made entirely from brilliant emerald green building paste. It has a series of interior partitions, and the surprisingly regular axial rotation of the asteroid provides an effective gravity of 0.08G. This in itself was a clue; most asteroids are unable to tolerate even such mild rotational stress, and further analysis revealed the building paste was present in filaments throughout the asteroid, stabilising and reinforcing it.

The interior cavern walls are highly decorated with images and reliefs of building paste. When the "villa" was discovered these formed the first depictions of the Blue aliens and their lives ever seen. Even today the asteroid remains a major tourist attraction, especially for Commonality visitors, and a holy site for the Alienist faith, which has tried several times, unsuccessfully, to claim sole ownership. Greenstone is a protected site administered by the system government, which permits limited supervised visits by tourists and faithful alike.

LINK PORTALS

One of the most impressive Blue artefacts was discovered five hundred years ago, in 2832 JC, in ruins on Blue. An exploratory expedition uncovered a large ring structure of an unknown material, roughly 2.5 metres in diameter and 12 centimetres thick. Observations through the ring's aperture detected a distortion field similar to a heat shimmer, but otherwise the ring appeared to be solid and inert. However, anything passing through the ring immediately emerged from a second, identical ring, eventually discovered in a partially collapsed cavern on Mystery, Blue's second moon.

The two rings required no external power source, and today continue to operate as a two-way 3-space gate when one or both are moved anywhere in the Jessila system. Similarities with Commonality 3-space technology are obvious, and the timing of the Commonality's invention of 3-space gating is at least a remarkable coincidence, occurring at approximately the same time as Jessilan Rediscovery. Nevertheless, there are significant differences: Commonality 3-space gates are large, delicate, cease working if accelerated too rapidly, and cannot be used in planetary atmospheres or in gravity fields higher than 0.04G. The Jessilan link portals have none of these restrictions.

The Jessilan System Council has so far not permitted the Commonality to take either of the link portals outside the Jessilan system. Many people openly wonder why the Commonality permits such a situation, given the potential strategic gains if link portal technology were to become more widespread. Cynics suggest that secretly such exchanges are bound already to have been attempted; there are many theories—including some truly wild ones—about the results.

The Hermetics

Two years ago, in 3044 JC, the Commonality research vessel *Atem Boroden* conducted a deep scan of the planet Blue, and discovered a large, air-filled, and apparently artificial cavern buried half a kilometre beneath the ocean floor. Encompassing an area of over 350 square kilometres, the cavern was deemed to be of sufficient interest to warrant a more detailed study, which quickly located what appeared to be an airlock complex concealed in an unusual undersea rock formation.

The Commonality approached representatives of the Blue community and asked if they could shed any light on the structure complex, and if they would object to the research team investigating further. Even the oldest of the surviving Blues knew nothing about the find, and the Blue community were as curious as the researchers to find out what it was.

Negotiating the airlock required time and caution, but after several weeks the research team reported breaking through to a vast cavern system containing a thriving subsurface biome of brightly hued vegetation in blues, whites, and pale turquoises—apparently a replica of the planet's surface ecosystem before the Barrier Fall event. They also discovered

three separate settlements inhabited by thousands of Blues—over twenty thousand in all. Initial contact efforts however were disappointing; the aliens seemed largely indifferent to their visitors, barely acknowledging communication efforts and providing noncommittal and uninformative responses to the research team's overtures. Not only has this situation continued unchanged; it has even worsened, as the subsurface Blues have steadfastly refused to communicate with Blues from the surface, or to provide any reason for their disinterest.

The subsurface Blues were quickly dubbed **Hermetics**, a nod to their secretive and hidden existence beneath Blue. Despite continued efforts, Commonality researchers have been able to determine little else other than the fact that none of them has ever been outside their "Sapphire Vault", and that they have at least some access to their species' hyper-advanced prelapsarian technologies—theoretically far in advance of Commonality capabilities. This alone has guaranteed tight security and a continued Commonality presence at the Sapphire Vault. Nevertheless, it's equally clear that the Hermetics are entirely wrapped up in their own concerns, and have no interest in the outside world. Most researchers agree that they are cooperating on a single project they consider of vital importance.

HERMETIC TECHNOLOGY

The Hermetic Blues refuse to share their technology with outsiders, or to explain any of its principles. Many in the Commonality research teams believe the Hermetics do not actually understand their technology, and are attempting to conceal their ignorance; they contend the prelapsarian devices are self-replicating and self-maintaining, and that the Hermetics do not so much operate the devices as request their aid. Xenologists believe the Hermetics are connected to the Sapphire Vault devices on an unconscious level; rather than turning on a water dispenser, they simply think that they need water, and the dispenser automatically responds. The research team is split as to whether this method of operation was common to all prelapsarian technology, or whether it's something specific to the Sapphire Vault. The prevailing theory is that prelapsarian tech also incorporated a strong "conscious control" element; some researchers believe the Hermetics have access to such tech and regularly use it, but do not allow outsiders to see it.

THE HERMETIC EFFECT

The Hermetics have been a polarising force in Jessilan society, and among Alienists (page 14) in particular. Some Alienists believe that the Hermetics are "the pure", and that Blue society had in some way become impure and deserving of destruction. Others believe that the Blues of the Sapphire Vault are themselves a wicked force, who destroyed the Blue civilisation and now menace the survivors and indeed all inhabitants of the Jessila system.

THE HERMETIC BLUE

Physical Stress: 1 2 3 4

Mental Stress: 1 2 3 4

Consequences: 3 mild + 1 moderate.

Scale: Medium (+0).

Evolution Index: +4 (+3 difficulty to comprehend and perceive Commonality humans).

Exoscale: +4 (-6 penalty for Hermetics to perceive Commonality humans, +12 shifts on success; +6 bonus for Commonality humans to perceive Hermetics, -12 shifts on success).

Life Form Concept: Sybaritic Amnesiac With a Blind-Spot For Physical Exploration.

Exointelligence Concept: Large Group Exointelligence Directing Its Evolution to Transcend Environmental Challenges.

Trouble: Dedicated to an Unknown Deadline.

Behaviours: Species Self-Identity; Transcends to Avoid Challenges; Takes Its Environment With It.

Manifestations: Sensorium: Radio Sense (Wave Gland); Comms: Wave Gland and Heart Strings; Integral Part of

Transcending Species Massmind; Voluntary Abdication From Temporal Flow.

Skills: Transcendent (+11) Science; Posthuman (+10) Investigate; Transhuman (+9) Notice; Legendary (+8) Knowledge, Will; Epic (+7) Physique, Provoke.

STUNTS

♦ **Ghostless Shell:** +2 Stealth bonus to hide from view, even to sensors and synthetic senses.

♦ **The Power of Deduction:** 1/scene, spend a fate point to discover / create one aspect per shift on target of Investigate roll; you get one free invoke.

♦ **Polymath:** For a fate point, use Science in place of any other skill for one check or exchange.

♦ **Sensor Scan:** Use sensorview and Notice for passive sensing construct actions.

EXTRAS

★ **Mental Blast:** Use Provoke to make attacks causing physical stress damage.

★ **Prescience Routines:** For a fate point, make an Empathy, Investigate, Knowledge, Notice, Science, etc, create advantage roll to create a prediction.

THE FUTURE OF JESSILA: NEW BLUES OR COLLAPSE?

SCI Force reports that the Jessilan situation is highly unstable and unsustainable in the long run. Many factions threaten to pull Jessilan society apart, and yet the Commonality presence continues to catalyse these destructive forces rather than improving the situation. Perversely, the nascent New Blue culture, with its ability to unite the best of Blue and Jessilan societies, appears to hold out the greatest hope. The fact that the New Blues oppose Commonality interference would normally dictate the Commonality withdraw from the Jessilan system to permit more subtle manipulations to occur; however, the presence of Hermetic link portal technology and the machinations of the 3SI are ensuring, for now at least, that this does not take place.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE WORLD OF JESSILA

"It's a cold world, and dry, but so beautiful. To stand in the shadow of the towering blue-woods in the morning, watching the shellapods extruding limbs as they swing between the treetops, and hear their eerie dawn song... And to feel yourself strong in the low gravity, so alive."

—Glimpse of Numen Rim-600beta, event horizon probe responsible for Jessilan Rediscovery, at its lodge on Mt Landation.

Jessila III is commonly referred to simply as "Jessila", and for millennia (until very recently) was the almost exclusive focus of human activity in the system. It's a cool and somewhat dry garden world, with three large continents separated by narrow seas, and only half of its surface covered by oceans. The climate has warmed as a result of terraforming over the past seven millennia, and now approximately a fifth of the planet—mostly in the polar regions higher than 50 degrees north and south—is covered in kilometre-thick ice sheets, and one of the non-polar continents sports an inland sea where there was previously desert. The world is in a mild ice age, although much more verdant than before; the Jessilan government has long since scaled back its terraforming efforts to avoid further disruption to the ecosystem.

EARLY JESSILA

When humans arrived in 3570 FA, a third of the planet's surface was glaciated. Coastal regions had abundant life, but the interiors of the two largest continents were sandy desert, and the third polar continent had a vast ice sheet at its interior. The *Complex Unity* expedition rapidly colonised the coastal regions. Two standard centuries after foundation, in 85 JC, Jessila began a six-century period of terraforming, modifying the climate using orbital mirrors and gradually increasing atmospheric carbon dioxide levels. The result was to reduce the level of glaciation to roughly a fifth.



JESSILA (JESSILA III)

High Concept: Rediscovered Human World in an Ancient Alien Star System.

Aspects: Yellow-white F-class Main Sequence Star; Ancient Human Civilisation; Partly Terraformed; Population of Genurgically Adapted Phenex; T-Analogue Biosphere.

PLANETARY TYPE: INFERIOR GARDEN WORLD

Planetary Age: Mature (+0).

Orbit: Outer Habitable Zone (+1): 1.8AU.

Year Length: 854d.

Size: Standard (+1): 11700km.

Density: Standard (+0).

Surface Gravity: Standard (+0): 0.9G.

Day Length: Standard (+0): 23h.

Atmospheric Pressure: Standard (+0): 1.1 Old Earth.

Surface Temperature: Cool (-1) 10°C.

Surface Liquid: Average (+0): 50% water.

Seasonality: Low Standard (-1).

Satellites: 1 planetoid (+1) (Metler).

Habitability: Agreeable (+3).

Planetary Bodies: 6 (3 gas giants).

CIVILISATION TYPE: UNITED WORLD

Designation: Commonality Aligned (+0).

Population: High Standard (+1): 900 million human phenex (10% amphies, 20% arboes, 20% drylanders, 20% glacers, 5% quatics, 25% standers—see page 11); minority population of 30,000 Blues.

Government Type: Representative (-2).

Societal Dev: Widespread Unintrusive Collective (+4).

Openness: Equivocal (-1).

Control Index: Property (-2).



Trade Index: Low Moderate (-1).

Embargo: No Embargo.

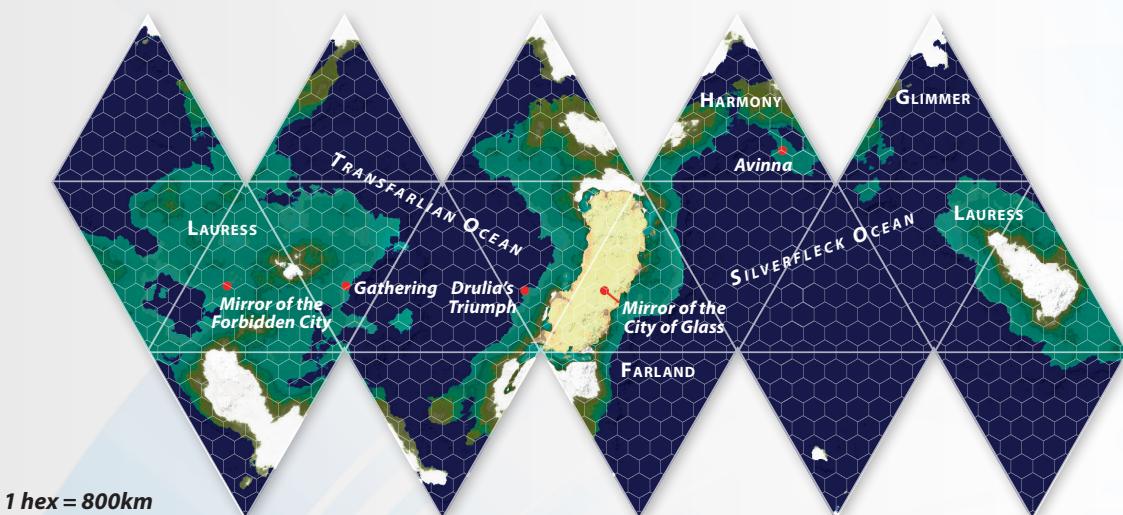
Tech Level: T7 (+2): First Age of Space.

Starport: Avinna, C-class starport (+3); Gathering City, C-class starport (+3).

Mindscape: Global (-1).

Culture: Fringe World culture in Stage 2: Normalisation.

Inferior Garden World / United World



Colonisation and Settlement

From initial coastal settlement, human expansion followed upon terraforming, occupying new verdant regions in areas previously dry and sparsely inhabited. Later, genurgic modification produced new human phenotypes—known as phenes—better adapted to Jessila's long (854 day) year, which thrived in Jessila's varied and challenging environments, reducing the need for further terraforming and minimising disruption to the local ecosystem. The six phenes comprise: amphies, arboes, drylanders, glacers, quatics, and standers. See page 11 for more.

Principal Jessilan settlements are as follows:

Gathering City

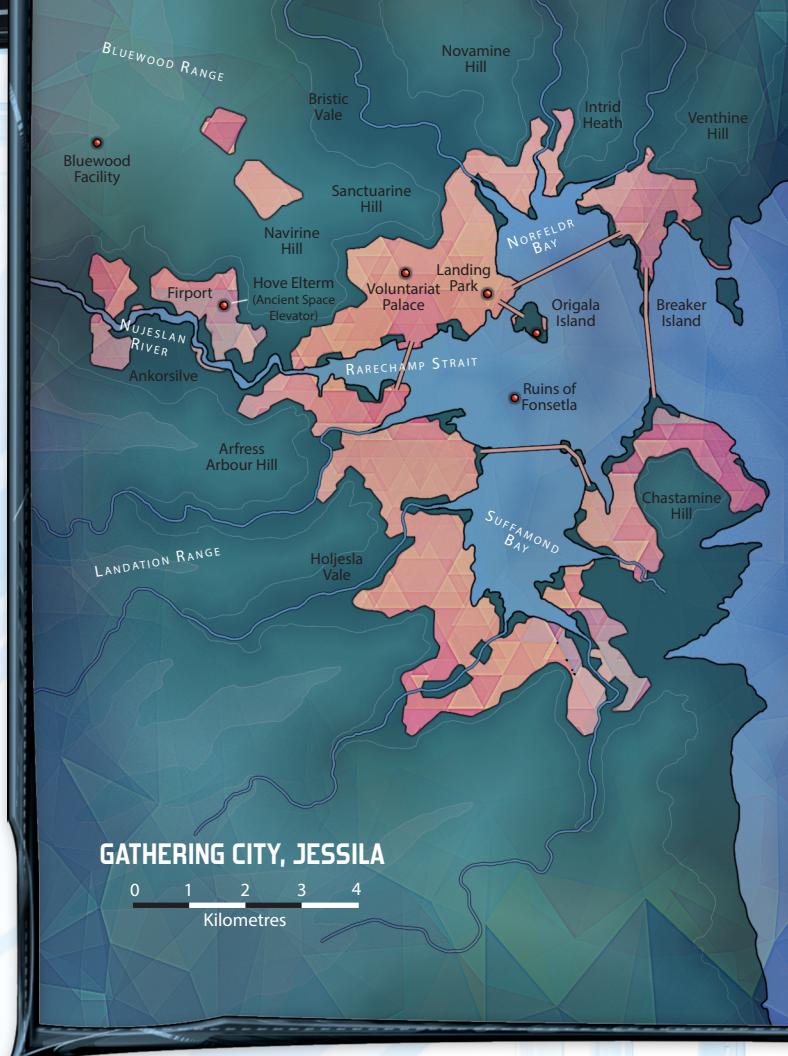
Jessila's largest settlement is located at the site where the first colony shuttles landed seven thousand standard years ago, on the continent of Lauress, named after the captain of the *Complex Unity*. Little more than traces of the first colony remain; one of the original shuttles used to be part of a sculptural ensemble in Landing Park in Gathering, but was destroyed in the tectonic upheavals of 904 JC: the current sculpture is a copy from that era, and has been restored multiple times. Landing Park remains the heart of Gathering and an important part of Jessilan culture; almost everyone in the system has visited at least once.

Today Gathering is Jessila's second largest city, with a population of 15 million, comprising mostly standers and arboes, with sizable minorities of amphies and quatics. There's also an enclave of 10,000 Blues, mostly concentrated in the shallows and along the coasts of Suffamond Bay.

Gathering is also home to Jessila's second spaceport. Its equatorial location was selected to permit construction of a low-tech space elevator, today called Hove Elterm, completed in 1121 JC. It still stands, 4km from Landing Park, at the former heart of the spaceport; although today most orbital interface traffic uses gravity engine vessels rather than the seventeen hours required for space elevator transit.

AREAS OF GATHERING CITY

- **Ankorsilve:** Terraformed forests of transplant flora, these are today a popular spot for day-trippers.
- **Arfress Arbour Hill:** One of the few terraformed mountains in western Gathering, this hill sports a modern Alienist chapel.
- **Bluewood Facility:** The Bluewood Maximum Security Research Facility is located some 2-3km outside Gathering City, and is completely off-limits to all but authorised personnel. See page 42 for more.
- **Bluewood Range:** The forests of the Bluewood Range mark the beginnings of the native Jessilan biome.
- **Breaker Island:** Breaker Hill was said to be the site of a



mysterious battle in Jessila's early history, though it's not clear who the combatants were. Today it hosts a semi-permanent archaeological dig.

- **Bristic Vale:** Terraformed pastures of modified transplant flora and fauna, extending deep into the native bluewoods.
- **Chastamine Hill:** A steep rise covered in bluewoods with excellent views of the whole city.
- **Firport:** The oldest spaceport on Jessila, and still in use today, although most traffic now passes through Avinna. Its skyline is dominated by Hove Elterm.
- **Holjesla Vale:** Terraformed farmlands planted with modified transplant flora.
- **Hove Elterm:** Ancient space elevator constructed in 1121 JC, it's still operational, although mostly used for low priority cheap transits and occasional tourism.
- **Intrid Heath:** Famous for its terrestrial transplant grasslands and peat bogs, although little else will grow here.
- **Landation Range:** These mountains were a native bluewood preserve even at the colony's founding, and are home to native fauna and modified transplant fauna.
- **Landing Park:** Generally held to be the landing site of the *Complex Unity* in 3570 FA. It's now the heart of urban Gathering, and a popular tourist destination.
- **Navirine Hill:** Extensive quarries were dug here in Jessila's early history, and many caves were used by fugitive Alien-

ists during the Second and Third Persecutions.

- **Norfeldr Bay:** These days a popular sports area, it used to be a fertile ground for harvesting native aquatic fauna.
- **Novamine Hill:** This rocky outcrop bears little good soil and was never terraformed. Once a year thousands of shieldfins emerge from Norfeldr Bay to spawn here.
- **Nujeslan River:** This river is tamed and dredged today, though in antiquity it was cold, turbulent, and prone to devastating and unpredictable floods.
- **Origala Island:** A prestigious luxury residential district with extensive parklands.
- **Rarechamp Strait:** Now a stretch of bay overlooked by prestigious dwellings. There are numerous archaeological sites on the sea bed.
- **Ruins of Fonsetla:** A very early colonial settlement has been found on the seabed here in the middle of the bay. There's a debate that it may even predate Landing Park.
- **Sanctuarine Hill:** More impenetrable and densely forested with the native bluewoods than Navirine Hill, this has been an Alienist place of pilgrimage for millennia.
- **Suffamond Bay:** Suffamond was once called the "Garden of Jessila", and its stones are still plated with a wealth of brightly flowering transplant flora. Many of Gathering's minority Blue population live in enclaves here.
- **Venthine Hill:** Overlooking the Transfarlian Ocean, Venthine Hill is bleak, stormswept, and a popular spot for romantics and lovers of tales of woe.
- **Voluntariat Palace:** Seat of the System Council.

Avinna

Jessila developed a basic gravity engine capability five hundred standard years ago, in 2830 JC, based on reconstructed theories from surviving elements of the original *Complex Unity* slowship, coupled with fragments of devices scavenged from Blue in the aftermath of the Barrier Fall event. While early transports were large and expensive, they soon replaced the space elevators as the preferred method of interface travel, and led to the construction of a second spaceport, Avinna, on the island continent of Harmony, far from Gathering City, where the risk of space elevator collision could be avoided. Today Avinna is Jessila's largest city, with a population of 21 million, and is considered more modern and outward-looking than Gathering. It also has a sizable glacer population (page 12).

In the past thirty years, Commonality contact has resulted in more efficient, cheaper, and more widely available grav suspensor vehicles, further emphasising Avinna's importance. Avinna Spaceport has been Jessila's main spaceport for seventeen standard years, and is the first destination for most visitors to the system. Its extrastellar district is home to immigrants from across Commonality Space and beyond. Integrationalism (page 14) is popular here.

Drulia's Triumph

Jessila's third largest city was founded in 1254 JC, and was the terminus of the planet's second space elevator. It's located on Farland, the second equatorial continent, and until the introduction of gravity engines five hundred standard years ago served as its primary spaceport and transport hub. It has a population of 12 million, including many drylanders from the continental interior, and 15,000 of Jessila's minority population of Blues.

The Arch

The Arch is Jessila's single orbital habitat. It's an orbital loop—a vast space station almost 30,000km long and 5km wide, sitting in geostationary orbit at an altitude of approximately 28,000km and sketching a graceful arc between Jessila's two space elevators. It was constructed in 1343 JC, long before the development of gravity engines, and was a monumental technological achievement that required five hundred standard years to complete. Although no longer as necessary as it once was, since interface travel is easy and the space elevators exist mostly for tourism and inexpensive bulk cargo, the Arch is still home to 30 million people, with a majority of arboes, and remains one of Jessila's main research and manufacturing centres. Integrationalism (page 14) is popular here.

The Mirrors

Even Jessila shows evidence of Blue activity, although there are no obvious ruins or artefacts. However, two large, flat, perfectly smooth areas each of more than 3 square kilometres are thought to be sites of previous Blue habitation that were "removed" shortly before the *Complex Unity* expedition arrived in the system. Known collectively as the Mirrors, and comprising the Mirror of the Forbidden City and the Mirror of the City of Glass, they are now weathered and somewhat uneven, but at the time of Jessila's initial colonisation they were mirror-smooth and highly polished.

The Preservations

There are areas on Jessila and elsewhere in the system which are actively resisting Commonality integration. These preservations are usually somewhat distant from major urban centres, and are effectively exclusion zones where non-Jessilians aren't allowed without express permission, usually in the form of travel permits. There are preservations across Jessila away from major settlements.

THE JESSILA ECOSYSTEM

Jessila's ecosystem shares many similarities with Blue. While a few biologists are convinced that the Blues are responsible for these similarities, most believe that natural meteorite

infall has been exchanging single-celled and bacterial life forms between the two planets for billions of years. Like Blue, Jessilan life forms lack rigid skeletons, instead relying on hydrostatic skeletons for support. However, Jessilan life forms frequently have durable shells covering most of their bodies, and plant analogues share wide-reaching "root anchors" permitting them to tower in excess of 150 metres above the ground. Additionally, the single biggest difference is that no native Jessilan life forms show signs of genurgic modification before the arrival of humans.

Like most life-bearing worlds, Jessila's ecosystem is t-analogue, meaning it cannot be metabolised by unmodified humans. Efforts in the early colonial era used orbital microwave arrays to sterilise regions which were then colonised and farmed with short-term stock. Later, the colony began engineering its crops and animals to be compatible with local life forms, and developed genurgic therapies to enable colonists and their descendants to metabolise the t-analogue biosphere.

THE JESSILA ECOSYSTEM

Biodiversity: Standard (+1).

Paradigm: T-Analogue.

Metabolic Bases: Photosynthesis, Flesh and Blood Analogues.

Body Plans: Primary Sessile: Bluewoods—Enormous (+3) Biradial Multibranched No Frame With No Segmentation; Primary Motile: Nacreoforms—Medium (+0) Bilateral 8 limbs No Frame With No Segmentation; Secondary Motile: Lentillids—Small (-1) Radial 8 limbs No Frame With No Segmentation.

Environmental Characteristics: In a Mild Ice Age; Severe Storms; Large Interior Deserts.

Key Parochials: Durable Shells, Root Anchors.

ECOSYSTEM



CHAPTER FIVE

THE PLANET BLUE



"The first view of Blue took my breath away. So bright, so vast. Ruined megastructures I couldn't comprehend towered kilometres above the clouds, generating their own weather systems; bizarre organic bridges ran for thousands of kilometres across the trackless sea; and here and there were the Blues—translucent-skinned semi-aquatics, almost like children, as lost and as bewildered as we. And yet once they had commanded worlds..."

—Genurgist Leem Kyzer, founder of the Chembu Ponics facility, Hasan's Rescue

Blue is a beautiful oceanworld, larger than Old Earth, with a higher gravity, and almost completely covered by water. Only 11% of the world is dry land, divided into two medium-sized continents named Jasmine and Lavender, and many dozens of islands in several archipelagos.

Blue Before Barrier Fall

Before the Barrier Fall event (page 8), direct observation of Blue was difficult. No external probe or vessel could approach closer than 91,000km, and the Barrier distorted all electromagnetic radiation, including sensors. Over the millennia since the foundation of the Jessila colony, initial probes in a far orbit of Blue were supplemented and replaced by increasingly sophisticated observation platforms, until by Barrier Fall no fewer than three hundred observation satellites and a single large orbital station on Blue's third moon, Citadel (orbital distance 115,000km), surveilled the world without cease.

Over the entire period up until Barrier Fall, observations remained highly consistent. The planet appeared to regularly undergo extensive modification, with the shape and size of many islands changing significantly over the course of a century or two. More than 10% of the land forms appeared to be floating structures, as they regularly moved, some following presumed ocean currents, others apparently under their own power. Although the mysterious Blues seemed to prefer living in relatively low density settlements, artificial lights could be seen on every landmass, even on islands less than 20km across.

The most obvious structures on the planet were a series of three enormous constructs—possibly buildings—one on each of the two continents, and the third on a large island. Each "building" was 8-12 km tall and 40-60km across. The traffic in and out of these structures suggested they were not cities, but rather had only limited habitation.

Jessilan observations also revealed extensive construction and heat signatures suggesting high energy use on the planet's second moon, Mystery. Despite its low gravity, Mystery appeared to have a breathable atmosphere similar in composition to that of Blue, although it was unknown how this was contained. Spacecraft of exotic design periodically travelled between Mystery and the surface of Blue, but their infrequency led observers to conclude that Blue possessed some other means of transporting its inhabitants and other objects.

One of Blue's most distinctive features were its so-called bridges (although their true function remains unknown even today). Both continents and approximately half of the islands more than 100km across were connected by an enormous network of these structures, the longest of which stretched more than 12,000km. Bridge width varied between 500 and 1000 metres, and orbital images indicated many were covered with structures.

Although accurate data were impossible to obtain, estimates were that the Blue population numbered between 200 and 500 million individuals. The aliens appeared to be roughly human-sized, but higher resolution images were

BLUE (JESSILA II)

High Concept: Bright Blue Waterworld with a Collapsed Alien Civilisation.

Aspects: Decadent Aliens in the Ruins of Hyperadvanced Greatness; A New Hybrid Culture; Unfathomable Technologies; Earth-Shattering Mysteries Hidden From View; Scavenger Culture; T-Analogue Biosphere.

PLANETARY TYPE: INFERIOR GARDEN WORLD

Planetary Age: Mature (+0).

Orbit: Inner Habitable Zone (-1): 0.84 AU.

Year Length: 285d.

Size: Large Standard (+1): 18,000km.

Density: Standard (+0).

Surface Gravity: High Standard (+1): 1.3G.

Day Length: Reduced (-1): 31h.

Atmospheric Pressure: High (+1): 1.4 Old Earth.

Surface Temperature: Warm (+1) 20°C.

Surface Liquid: Almost Total (+3): 90% water.

Seasonality: Low (-2).

Satellites: 4 planetoids (+1) (Primus, Mystery, Citadel, Rogue).

Habitability: Agreeable (+3).

CIVILISATION TYPE: UNITED WORLD

Designation: Commonality Aligned (+0).

Population: Low (-2): 350,000 human (115,000 amphies, 235,000 among other phenes); 150,000 Blues.

Government Type: Representative (-2).

Societal Dev: Consensus Redistribution Model (+1).

Openness: Guarded (+0).



Control Index: Property (-2).

Trade Index: Low Moderate (-1).

Embargo: No Embargo.

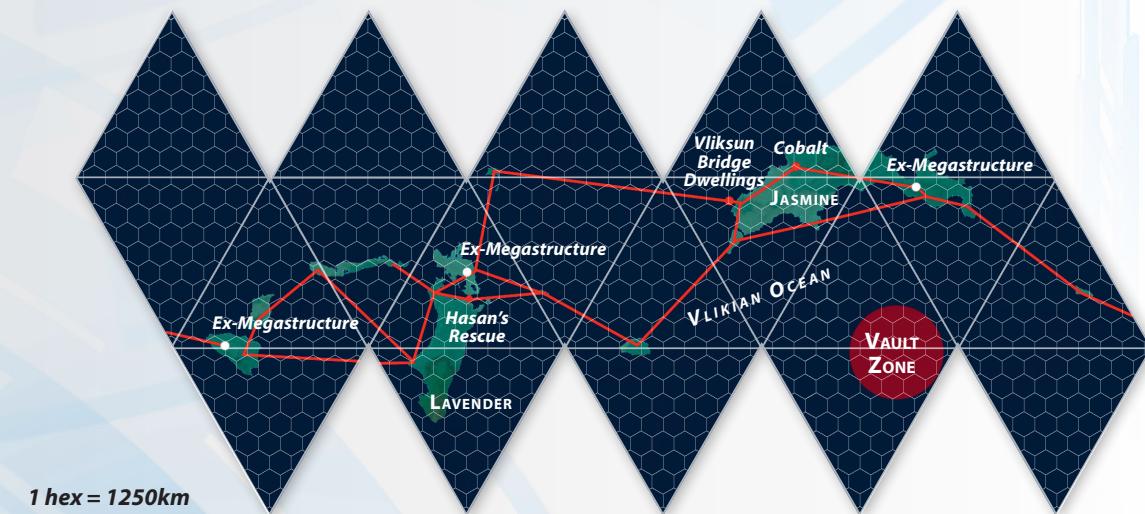
Tech Level: T7 (+2): First Age of Space.

Starport: Hasan's Rescue, D-class starport (+2).

Mindscape: Global (-2).

Culture: Fringe World culture in Stage 2: Normalisation.

Inferior Garden World / United World



unachievable due to the Barrier's distorting effect. Detailed representations only became possible after Barrier Fall (see page 8), although carvings found in the alien "villa" of the Greenstone asteroid (page 18) were, upon analysis of the dimensions of doorways and the structure of the few remaining furnishings, determined to be a faithful depiction of the Blue physiology—see page 15 for more.

Long-term observation suggested a maintained and well-balanced climate and ecosystem, although land areas could increase or decrease by as much as 10% over the course of 100 standard years.

Blue After Barrier Fall

The first Jessilan visitors to Blue after the Barrier Fall event of 2802 JC found a radically changed world. Almost half of the planet's land surface had been wiped clean of all life, right down to microorganisms in the soil, and almost all traces of the aliens' civilisation was gone. Many structures seemed to have simply melted into a form of paste or goo (page 18); others had been violently destroyed; and others still had simply vanished, replaced by flat, polished bedrock, similar to the "Mirrors" on Jessila (page 24). The few technological devices that were recovered no longer functioned, their nanoscale crystalline circuitry shattered.

The Jessilan explorers found a scattered handful of survivors among the ruins. This "first contact" was a pathetic affair: the Blues seemed reduced to a primitive existence, huddling in the shells of buildings for shelter, foraging for what little food they could find. First reports of the aliens described them as "stunned", "lost", and "dazed"; with time, it became clear that none of the few hundred surviving Blues had any more than fragmentary memories of their previous existences, and no idea of what had happened to them. None of them could make use of anything other than simple tools.

Subsequent research began to piece together tantalising clues about the fate of the Blue civilisation. Most of the larger alien settlements had been in locations which had been wiped clean of life. Any structures or devices which remained there crumbled rapidly to dust over the three years which followed, and the few survivors found there succumbed equally quickly, their bodies decaying with unusual rapidity.

Limited communication with the surviving Blues was eventually established. According to their reports, almost all of the Blue population had died immediately after their civilisation's collapse; most of the remainder fell into profound comas from which they could not be roused. The unconscious Blues initially ate by reflex when fed, but eventually even this reflex failed, and within two years almost the entire Blue species was extinct.

BLUE TODAY

In the six standard centuries since Barrier Fall, the planet has begun to recover. Almost two thirds of the formerly lifeless

regions have been reclaimed through the patient reintroduction of native micro-organisms genetically engineered by Jessilan scientists. Every damaged structure that could not be repaired has been demolished. Some structures dating from before Barrier Fall still remain, maintained by the self-repairing qualities of the mysterious substance known as building paste (page 18). These have been supplemented by new structures made from building paste, as well as some dwellings and other buildings constructed from other materials. Even today, many humans and even some Blues find the ruins of the prelapsarian Blue civilisation disconcerting.

The Bridge Network

While more than one third of the Blue bridges survived Barrier Fall, many were badly damaged and unable to self-repair. Today less than half of those remain, although those that do possess functioning self-repair systems and still provide basic facilities like fresh running water and small but comfortable shelters for travellers. As yet no one can adequately explain why a world with such easy and rapid transportation technology maintained such an extensive network.

The structures which had been observed on the bridge network turned into building paste during Barrier Fall. Nevertheless, 60,000 humans, including many amphies (page 11), and 30,000 Blues now make these bridges their homes—the so-called bridge dwellers.

Last year a team of Commonality archaeotechnologists identified what they believe to be part of a 3-space transportation device built into the structure of every bridge, including a crystalline "conduit" connecting a series of human-sized (or Blue-sized) niche halt alcoves built into the bridge superstructure precisely every 1200 metres. It's theorised that a Blue could enter any of these alcoves and pass through 3-space to any other alcove on any other bridge. The theory gels with the results of Blue redactive probe therapies which have retrieved memories from Blue subjects of "shifting" along or through the bridge network. Researchers believe that while duplicating the bridge transportation network is currently beyond Commonality capabilities, they are hoping to be able to restore functionality to at least part of the network in the coming years.

Settlement and Population

Blue remains sparsely settled, with a total population of only half a million. From an initial survivor base of just four hundred, there are now some 150,000 Blues in the Jessila system, the vast majority living on Blue. Researchers attribute this feat to the genetically enhanced robustness of the Blue stock. Despite the gaping holes in their memories, the Blue survivors and their offspring have proven to be intelligent beings with a keen interest in the universe around them. Today almost a quarter of all Blues live off-world (some 35,000 individuals), mostly on Jessila itself.

The small number of Jessilan humans living on Blue is partly due to the fact that, even after six hundred years, many phenes still regard Blue as strange. This, coupled with the planet's 1.3G surface gravity and t-analogue biosphere (requiring genurgic therapies to metabolise) continues to mitigate against immigration from offworld. Nevertheless there are dedicated researchers and people who are fascinated by the Blues living here, and tens of thousands of individuals who simply decided they wanted to live here. They are currently concentrated in four main settlements.

Cobalt

A shortening of the native Blue name (page 16), Cobalt is one of the two largest Blue "cities", located in a region which was not destroyed during Barrier Fall. It's one of only six locations where most of the prelapsarian settlement survived and did not require extensive reconstruction; fifty of the four hundred Blue survivors were found here, and several of them remembered its former name.

More than 30,000 Blues live in Cobalt. They have rebuilt some areas, and outfitted structures with devices which were destroyed or ceased functioning during Barrier Fall. Unusually for Blue, humans are not especially welcome in Cobalt. Although Jessilan law states that individuals may not be officially forbidden from living anywhere, almost all of Cobalt's Blues are Restorationists (page 15) whose ultimate goal is to rebuild their civilisation and restore the Barrier.

Those phenes who have attempted to live in Cobalt have found themselves largely ignored by the Blue population, and with the exception of a handful of researchers few even visit. However, the Blues welcome Commonality researchers, giving them full access to all prelapsarian artefacts in return for the results of their research. Cobalt's Blues dislike having to rely on outsiders, but realise that where Jessila has been unable to recover the secrets of prelapsarian Blue technology, the Commonality may succeed.

Hasan's Rescue

Researchers attempting to understand Blue technology settled upon Hasan's Rescue as an ideal location for a research station. It lies only 120km from one of the three megastructures destroyed during Barrier Fall, yet itself survived the cataclysm mostly intact. Yet none of the four hundred Blue survivors comes from here; the nearest was found almost 2000km away.

Today Hasan's Rescue is a thriving city. Most Blue structures are set aside for preservation and study, and inhabitants live in structures which have been built since Jessilan humans first arrived. The city has a population of 200,000 humans (90% phenes, and about 10% non-Jessilans) and 10,000 Blues; despite its location, it feels very much like a human city, with the prelapsarian structures concentrated in a "museum district" which forms one of the planet's two main tourist attractions.



HASAN'S RESCUE AREAS

- Blue Species and Cultural Institute (BSCI):** Also known as "Blue Sky", this institute collates and studies research on all aspects of Blue. Although Jessila-run, the Commonality has a strong presence here, particularly in the form of SCI Force (and indeed 3SI) teams (page 13).
- Chembu Ponics:** The Chembu Genurgy Corporacy tries to maintain a presence on most Commonality worlds. As a waterworld with a formerly hyper-advanced semi-aquatic exoculture, Blue was a high priority. Unlike many Chembu Genurgy branches, this one specialises in R&D, and undertakes relatively little genurgic modification.
- Deadland:** The depopulated wastes of remnant Blue debris which cover most of the bridges.
- Hume:** The large modern district of Hasan's Rescue, mostly comprising contemporary buildings and inhabited by Jessilan phenes and approximately 10% non-Jessilans, including Commonality citizens.
- Interponen Sea:** A small but landlocked sea more or less bounded by Blue bridges. Its coasts are cultivated and inhabited by a large Jessilan population.
- Melt:** This district contains semi-ruined Blue bridges in varying states of repair. Many are still in use. They have a "melted" look.
- Museum District:** The most developed part of the city districts known collectively as "Hasan-on-the-Bridge".



There are many prelapsarian Blue structures here, in good repair. Often their original purpose is unfathomable.

- **Museum District Waterpoint:** The waterpoint (see below) in the Museum District. See page 49.
- **Niche Halts:** These alcoves occur at 1200 metre intervals along every bridge on Blue. They're roughly 5 metres wide and 3 metres high, and contain a faucet providing clean drinking water when any object approaches within 0.5 metres.
- **Nublu:** A new district to the north of Hasan's Rescue, it's a strong point for the hybrid "New Blue" culture (page 15).
- **Prelapsarian:** A district of mostly new construction but with many areas of Blue archaeological merit.
- **Restoration Plantations:** Areas inhabited predominantly

Preservations on Blue

The "offworlder exclusion zones" which exist on Blue tend to be no-go areas in larger settlements, rather than settlements in their own right. The shantytowns and deadlands in Hasan's Rescue are generally regarded as preservations.

by Restorationists, these are essentially preservations (see the adjacent textbox). Commonality humans generally aren't welcome here.

- **Shantytown:** Inhabited by native Blues and various "nonconformists" of other species, these are impoverished and ramshackle areas beyond Jessilan or Commonality supervision.
- **Starport:** The ground facility of Blue's spaceport, with some very basic repair capability. Larger ships are handled in orbit.
- **Too Blue For You:** A Blue "bar"; see page 44.
- **West Vlikian Ocean:** The open ocean which comprises most of Blue's surface area. There are occasionally some terrific storms here.
- **Waterpoint:** Similar to the niche halts (above), these are water pools 10 metres in diameter, which continuously flow with fresh drinking water. Many have conduits transporting the water away, with varying degrees of sophistication.

1: Walgury's Tenement: See page 46.

2: Croaker Verdigris's Shanty: See page 48.

3: The Barrier Device Ruin: See page 49.

The Vliksun Bridge Dwellings

The most unusual settlement on Blue is the Vliksun Bridge Dwellings, some 50km off the coast of the continent of Jasmine. The bridge still provides dwellers with fresh water, and automatically irrigated strips of the bridge surface are used for limited farming. The Vliksun Bridge Dwellings settlement is unique in that it has humans and Blues in roughly equal numbers, with 60,000 humans (including about 20,000 amphies) and 40,000 Blues, mixed in a progressive "New Blue" culture (page 15).

Unlike Cobalt, where the Blues inhabit prelapsarian structures because they are trying to understand and restore their past, most Blues in the Vliksun Bridge Dwellings live there simply because they enjoy cohabiting with humans, and because the bridge provides a unique environment.

The settlement is also the headquarters of the Rapid Blue Transit research team, investigating the theorised transit mechanisms built into the bridge's "niche halt" superstructure (page 30). Many Vliksun Bridge Dwellers are already anticipating the research team succeeding, and are planning to distribute the settlement along the entire 9500km length of the bridge, at locations with especially striking views.

The Vault Zone

The exact location of the Sapphire Vault discovered two years ago (page 64) has never been made public. However, it's known to be somewhere in this area, which is strictly off-limits, its airspace closed, patrolled by Jessilan security forces.

THE BLUE ECOSYSTEM

Blue's ecosystem is still recovering from the collapse of the Blue civilisation. Several classes of large life form became extinct, and more than a fifth of the planet's land area is still

ECOSYSTEM

THE BLUE ECOSYSTEM

Biodiversity: Standard (-1) (recovering).

Paradigm: T-Analogue.

Metabolic Bases: Photosynthesis, Flesh and Blood Analogues.

Body Plans: Primary Sessile: *Flabelliforms*—Large (+1) Radial Multibranched No Frame With No Segmentation; Primary Motile: *Ceruliforms*—Medium (+0) Bilateral 12 limbs No Frame With No Segmentation; Secondary Motile: *Scuttles*—Small (-1) Radial 8 limbs Exoframe With 2-Part Segmentation.

Environmental Characteristics: Genurgically Engineered World; Recovering From Global Disaster; Most Land-Dwelling Life Is Amphibious.

Key Parochials: Amphibious; Hydrostatic Skeleton; Mentally Link By Touch.

barren and lifeless. The dominant exoflora are large, low, fan-shaped point producers that can cover an area up to 10 metres in diameter, but which stand only 1 metre high. Numerous small- to medium-sized exofauna depend upon these **flabelliforms** for food; similar exoflora also form large floating mats in the planet's seas.

Observations made since Barrier Fall indicate that the planet's biome was originally heavily genurgically engineered: all of the larger exoflora provide complex nutrition to Blues, and there are no exofauna which are dangerous to them. Moreover, Blues can use their heart strings (page 15) to discern and alter exofauna emotional states.

CHAPTER SIX

OTHER WORLDS OF THE JESSILA SYSTEM



"There's a strangeness to exploring the Jessilan solar system. For millennia none of them could leave, and there was little reason to explore the other planets. But they had the tech, for millennia, and tried several times to kickstart an interplanetary era. It seems the ancient Blues did likewise. So there are ruins and remains everywhere—and we're only finding them now."

—Orca By Moab, Constellation-class Space Force System Survey Vessel and cetacean eidolon, operating out of Endurance Station

In addition to Jessila and Blue, three other planets and an asteroid belt orbit the system's yellow-white F5 main sequence primary.

FORGE (JESSILA I)

High Concept: Small Hot Gas Giant of Interest Only to Scientists.

Population: 30 on Crucible, the gas giant's largest moon.

PLANETARY TYPE: GAS GIANT

Satellites: 5 small moons.

Year Length: 40d.

Surface Gravity: High Standard (+1):
1.2G.

Gas Giant



SYSTEM SCHEMATIC

SYSTEM NAME:	Jessila	CIVILISATION:	United World	DESIGNATION:	Commonality Aligned
STARPORT:	C-class	POPULATION:	High Standard	MINDSCAPE:	Global (Systemwide)

NAME	PLANETARY TYPE	ASPECTS
Harbour	Gas Giant	48 EXTREME OUTER (x40) OUTER (x10) OUTER (x5) OUTER (x1.5) Small Frigid Gas Giant With Beautiful Rings
Unity	Gas Giant	6 Jovian Gas Giant With an Exotic Ecosystem
Belt	Asteroid Belt	3.4 Miners of the Wild Frontier
Jessila	Inferior Garden World	1.8 HABITABLE ZONE OUTER (x1.5) HABITABLE ZONE (x1.0) HABITABLE ZONE INNER (x0.7) Rediscovered Human World in an Ancient Alien Star System
Blue	Inferior Garden World	0.84 INNER (x0.4) Bright Blue Waterworld With a Collapsed Alien Civilisation
Forge	Gas Giant	0.48 EXTREME INNER ORBIT (x0.1) Small Hot Gas Giant of Interest Only to Scientists

NAME	STELLAR BODY TYPE	ASPECTS
Jessila	F-class Main Sequence	PRIMARY Yellow-White F5-class Main Sequence Star

4dF	SYSTEM EVENTS	H-ZONE ORBITAL DISTANCE	TRADE INDEX	CONTROL INDEX
-4	Stellar Flare	1.2	Low Moderate (-1)	Property (-2)
-3	Gravitational Anomaly			
-2	Distress Signal	Blue		
-1	Starship Encounter		TRADE ASPECTS	
0	Administrative Interference	Ancient Unfathomable Alien Artefacts		
+1	Starship Encounter	Hungry For Makepoints		
+2	Mindscape Anomaly	Alien Mystery Tourist Trap		
+3	Magnetic Storm			
+4	Extraordinary Event			

JESSILA BELT (JESSILA IV)

A belt of asteroids and other planetesimals occupies the fourth orbit in the Jessilan system, between Jessila and Unity. It's almost twice as dense as the Manhome Belt, but because its orbit is smaller it contains roughly the same mass and number of bodies. Asteroid mining is common, popular with loners and individuals who enjoy risk. All bodies were mapped millennia ago, and there's little chance of sudden strikes. Nevertheless, there's still a romance to the profession, and on rare occasions miners still discover ancient Blue artefacts and installations.

The few Blue relics found on the surfaces of asteroids were discovered long ago, in poor condition due to repeated dust and debris impacts. However, miners have made more than five hundred separate discoveries inside asteroids, most inside small crevices or caverns, and almost all abandoned temporary structures or broken tech of little scientific interest. These discoveries have nevertheless

made their finders wealthy due to their value to collectors.

Ten percent of these relics have been found to be made of unknown materials, or to have contained fragments of technology which might be reverse-engineered. In all cases, these contributed to Jessilan technological advancement. Almost two dozen were in small artificial caverns; the most famous, the "alien villa" in the Greenstone asteroid, was the source of both building paste (page 18) and the first depictions of the Blues' appearance.

Today, useful Blue artefacts dating from before Barrier Fall are vanishingly rare, but miners still dream of finding caverns filled with wonders. In fact, miners have become more hopeful than ever since T9 sensors have become available from the Commonality; remapping efforts began three years ago, and have already discovered what seems to be a broken Blue sampling drill last used



31,000 years ago. Unfortunately, last year the remapping project was called into question when it claimed to have found a second artefact that was later revealed to have been a fake created by Commonality makepoint.

High Concept: Miners of the Wild Frontier.

PLANETARY TYPE: ASTEROID BELT

Population: Very Low (-3): 70,000 humans (35,000 arboes, 35,000 among other phenes).

UNITY (JESSILA V)

Unity is a large gas giant 60% the mass of Jupiter. It's warmer than Jupiter, with a sparse but vibrant ecosystem, where clouds of "air plankton" support enormous yet fragile filter feeders, in turn fed upon by sturdier carnivores. There's no evidence that Unity's biome has ever involved intelligent life; the most complex life forms are comparable in smartness to snakes or lizards. Eight thousand humans live on the Prasong aerostat in Unity's upper atmosphere (page 35).

High Concept: Jovian Gas Giant With an Exotic Ecosystem.

PLANETARY TYPE: GAS GIANT

Orbit: Outer (+2): 6 AU.

Surface Gravity: High Standard (+1): 1.5G.

Population: Low (-2): 900,000 humans on Prasong and Yoden.



THE PRASONG AEROSTAT

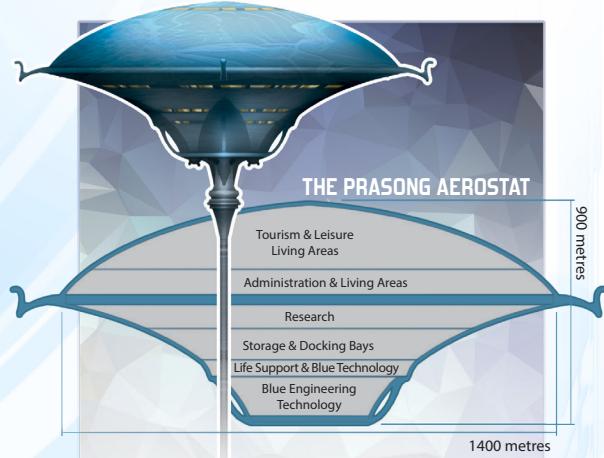
The largest and most intact Blue artefact in the Jessila system is named for the woman who discovered it some four thousand standard years ago in 1293 JC. It floats deep in the atmosphere of the gas giant, Unity, a flattened oval 1400 metres in diameter and 900 metres thick of a very high tensile hull metal-analogue with a nanoscale structure which may be a variant on building paste (page 18). Although deserted and stripped of advanced tech when discovered, its hull was intact, and even today contains a breathable atmosphere with pressure and composition identical to Jessila II (the planet Blue).

Researchers believe the structure was used for gas mining or atmospheric research; a 40-metre diameter pipe extends from the base of the aerostat some 21 kilometres into Unity's atmosphere. The temperature differential provides power for life support for a managed biome on the aerostat also transplanted from Blue.

Since its discovery the aerostat has been home to seven separate settlement efforts. One wished to conduct exhaustive studies of the structure; three used it as a base for atmospheric research; and three sought an exotic and self-sustaining home that provided an otherwise unattainable connection to the mysterious Blues. Today the aerostat has a population of 8000, and is a regular tourist destination.

Prasong Aerostat Areas

- **Tourism and Leisure Living Areas:** Originally a vast dome, this space has been divided with internal partitions to make it into a comfortable and even luxurious habitat.
- **Administration and Living Areas:** Originally part of the original dome, this space is less luxurious than the one above it, and contains facilities for aerostat administration and living quarters for its operators.
- **Research:** The first level "below the boom", this contains some Blue devices but by and large is filled with recent partitions and researchers analysing the workings and principles of the aerostat.



- **Storage and Docking Bays:** Comprising an "outer ring" of docking bays and an inner one for storage of both vital materials for day-to-day running of the aerostat, and also of materials and devices salvaged from the aerostat for analysis.
- **Life Support and Blue Technology:** A dense "garden" containing Blue flora and fauna tailored for long-term aerostat life support.
- **Blue Engineering Technology:** The most delicate and highly secured part of the aerostat, this is essentially a closed self-repairing system running on principles not even the Commonality fully understands. Its systems maintain the aerostat's internal integrity and environment, and also its position and viability in the Unity cloud layer. Although thousands of years old, it's still an estimated T11 tech index in complexity.

THE MOONS OF UNITY

Unity has over a dozen small moons and two large ones. The smaller moons are uninhabited, although most have automated research stations. The innermost of the larger moons is called Jumble because of its extreme tectonic activity and

internal tides; it always has at least several dozen active volcanoes, despite being only 2500km in diameter. The outermost of the larger moons is called Yoden.

YODEN

High Concept: Frozen World Religious Centre on a Gas Giant Moon.

Aspects: Iceball With Primitive Hydrothermal Vent Life; Spectacular Views; Artists, Musicians, and Believers; Polar Ice Temple.

PLANETARY TYPE: TERRESTRIAL PLANET GAS GIANT MOON

Planetary Age: Mature (+0).

Orbit: As Unity.

Year Length: 14.3 standard years.

Size: Small (-2): 6000km.

Density: Standard (+0).

Surface Gravity: Low (-2): 0.3G.

Day Length: Very Rapid (+3): 18 standard hours.

Atmospheric Pressure: Low (-2): 0.35atm (methane, nitrogen, carbon dioxide).

Surface Temperature: Cold (-2) -40°C to -80°C.

Surface Liquid: High (+1): 65% ice.

Seasonality: No Seasonality (-10).

Habitability: Inimical (-1).

CIVILISATION TYPE: AS JESSILA

Population: Low (-2): 892,000 humans (800,000 glacers; 92,000 other phenes).

Tech Level: T7 (+2): First Age of Space.



Starport: New Gathering, D-class starport (+2); Mirali's Enlightenment, E-class starport (+1).

Mindscape: Global (-1).

Terrestrial Planet Gas Giant Moon



Yoden

Unity's largest moon, Yoden, is effectively a small planet, with a low gravity and a thin atmosphere of methane, nitrogen, and carbon dioxide. Tidal heating from Unity maintains the temperature at a very cold -80°C to -40°C, and two-thirds of the surface are covered with ice sheets overlying shallow seas.

Yoden's buried oceans are home to simple single-celled life around hydrothermal vents.

Humans can walk on Yoden's surface wearing only warm clothing and a breathing mask, and until Barrier Fall it was the second most habitable location in the Jessila system. It was first colonised six millennia ago, in 438 JC, although that

colony failed six hundred standard years later after the Altstar supernova event.

Yoden was settled again in 1319 JC, this time by Alienists (page 14) wishing to live apart from the rest of humankind. The colony thrived, and Alienists still account for a third of Yoden's population. Most live in the settlement of Mirali's Enlightenment (population 300,000), which most Jessilans today regard as the spiritual centre of Alienism. With its spectacular views of Unity, Yoden is also home to a significant artistic community: New Gathering (population 500,000) is a major art and music centre for the entire Jessilan system, and home to the Rachan Institute, which thousands of artists and musicians apply to join every year.

Yoden's greatest attraction is the Polar Ice Temple at the moon's north pole. An edifice 400 metres high and covering three hectares, constructed principally of solid ice (a durable material at frigid temperatures), its central area (approximately one quarter of the total) is pressurised with a breathable atmosphere, although maintained at ambient temperature to prevent melting. It stands outside the habitation domes, and houses a Blue artefact of major importance, discovered here in

ALIENIST CARETAKER

Physical Stress: $1\square^2\square^3\square$

Mental Stress: $1\square^2\square$

Consequences: 1 *mild* + 1 *moderate*

Scale: Medium (+0)

Aspects: Dedicated Glacer Guardians; Protect the Temple; Keep the Promise; We Defer to the Blues; Endless Reinforcements; What's Hidden Beneath Those Holo-Robes?

Skills: Great (+4) Knowledge, Notice; Good (+3) Provoke, Unarmed Combat; Fair (+2) Physique, Ranged Combat; Average (+1) Athletics, Stealth.

STUNTS

♦ **Grappler:** +2 create an advantage Physique bonus when wrestling or grappling.

♦ **Holy Dread:** +2 Provoke attack bonus against believers.

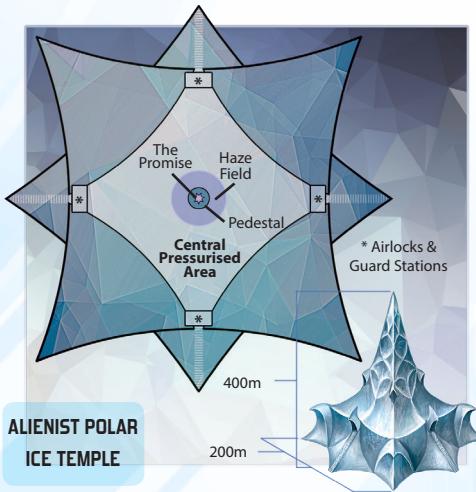
♦ **Keen Hearing:** +2 Notice bonus to detect sounds.

EXTRAS

★ **Commonality Grav Pack:** Use Athletics as Pilot; move and attack up to 2 zones away.

★ **Haze Field:** +1 defend bonus and basic ray shielding.

★ **Stun Pistol:** Causes mental stress damage with the Ranged Combat skill; range 1.

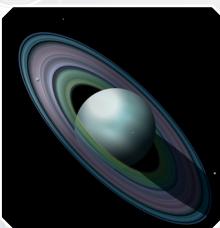


1310 JC and known by Alienists as **the Promise**. Resembling a smooth piece of polished branching coral, violet in colour, it floats in the temple's exact centre, 1.2 metres above a raised circular platform, and has the distinction of being the first operational Blue artefact ever discovered. When touched by any living thing, the Promise glows as bright as day. Both it and its pedestal are protected by a haze field and sophisticated anti-theft system, and guarded by a contingent of thirty "caretakers" who live several hundred metres away in a concealed hillside settlement. Visitors may petition for special permission to touch the Promise; this requires a background check, and an escort of four armed caretakers to guard against theft. For more information on the Promise, see page 55.

ALIENIST POLAR ICE TEMPLE AREAS

- **Airlock and Guard Station:** While the temple interior has a maintained environment, its approach is via the hostile Yoden surface. There are four airlocks at the cardinal points: elaborate, monumental affairs, each guarded by a single caretaker, or two in times of emergency.
- **Central Pressurised Area:** The interior of the temple is like a vast cold ice cave, with freezing but breathable air, hauntingly lit. There are usually four priests (page 57) active at any one time, and two caretakers.
- **Haze Field:** An Average (+1) haze field surrounds the Promise. It can be forced through slowly, but running into it is like being struck.
- **Pedestal:** The pedestal is a round circular platform, 5 metres across and 1 metre high. It contains grav suspensors and a haze field generator, as well as Superb (+5) full spectrum sensor and surveillance equipment tracking anyone approaching.
- **The Promise:** The Promise stands here, floating in a suspensor field 1.2 metres above the pedestal. It resembles an elaborately branched piece of translucent violet coral—see page 60 for more.

HARBOUR (JESSILA VI)



Gas Giant

Harbour is the most distant planetary body in the Jessilan system and a typical small, frigid gas giant, with little to distinguish it except for a spectacularly large and colourful ring system. It's the only ringed planet in the system, and ever since

reaching T7 Jessila has maintained a base here, on Endurance, the innermost of Harbour's moons.

High Concept: Small Frigid Gas Giant With Beautiful Ring System.

PLANETARY TYPE: GAS GIANT

Orbit: Extreme Outer (+4): 48 AU.

Year Length: 328.9 standard years.

Surface Gravity: High (+2): 2G.

Population: Sparse (-4): 6000 humans on the moon Endurance.

ENDURANCE



Iceball

High Concept: Diplomatic Haven on an Isolated Iceball Moon.

PLANETARY TYPE: ICEBALL

Size: Small (-2): 1900km.

Surface Gravity: Low (-2): 0.4G.

Day Length: Rapid (+2): 20h.

from outside distractions and limits intrusion attempts, and as a result the station famously has recently become the venue for high-level negotiations between the Jessilan system government and the Commonality. Although espionage is rarer than Mindscape dramas would suggest, feeds of exceptionally sensitive negotiations have been made available by parties unknown to considerable official embarrassment. Arrests and re-education of spies at Endurance Station have been made sufficiently high-profile to persuade potential lawbreakers that most attempts aren't worth the effort.

Endurance Station today is a careful balance of luxury resort, high security diplomatic facility, and a paranoid hive of overreaching privacy measures. It hosts four hostels (or

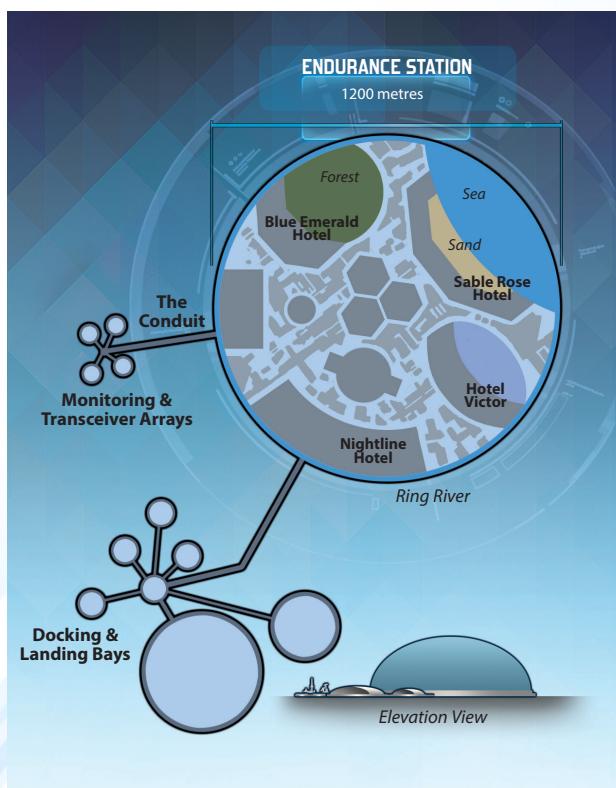
ENDURANCE

Endurance orbits Harbour at an inclination of 30° to the plane of the gas giant's rings, providing anyone on the planet-facing side of this tidally-locked moon with *Spectacular Views*. Endurance Station was established in 1389 JC as a small astronomical monitoring station, but quickly grew to include a large luxury resort. Even now it's largely the preserve of the wealthy or well-connected, although it's grown substantially since Commonality contact. It can accommodate 6600 people.

Endurance Station comprises an almost perfectly transparent dome 1200 metres across and 400 metres high; accommodations, private meeting rooms, and so on are in enclosed structures, but almost every other facility has an unobstructed view of the rings.

The stunning views and the station's concern for the privacy of its visitors makes Endurance Station a popular place for deals and negotiations. Mindscape access is noticeably impaired due to the many restrictions required to defeat intrusion attempts. The dome is shielded against EM radiation outside the visible range, and sensors automatically monitor and jam any signals which use visible light. Permitted comms (Mindscape or otherwise) must pass through a single exceptionally secure transceiver, constantly monitored by Enduring Confidentiality, the station sentience.

The remoteness of Endurance Station imposes a significant time lag on communications; it takes 6 1/4 hours for a signal to reach here from Jessila or Blue. This frees residents



"hotels"), each with 1000 rooms, and each has its own entertainment and carousing facility, referred to as the "casino", with its own ambiance, clientele, and specialist games of chance.

ENDURANCE STATION AREAS

- **Blue Emerald Hotel:** With the vibe of a luxurious tropical safari lodge. *Sounds of Tropical Wildlife; Nights of the Iguana; Romantic Rainforest Rendezvous.*
- **Casino Tropicale:** Often hot and heady, and tempers may fray. *Roulette; Random Halo.*
- **Conduit:** A high security access tunnel and comms link for the single monitoring and transceiver array for the entire station.
- **Docking and Landing Bays:** Acts as a D-class starport.
- **Hotel Victor:** A bright club-house atmosphere. *Playing the Field.*
- **Casino Inferno:** With a splendid terrace and enclosure overlooking the racing track, where a variety of personal and animal races are run. *Racecourse.*
- **Monitoring and Transceiver Arrays:** These are dishes, observatories, antennas, and dipole arrays, coordinated

The Universal Appeal of Games of Chance

No matter how intelligent sentients become, it seems that humour and gambling are the two passions they continue to share with humankind. The "casinos" of Endurance Station are perfect examples of these passions being harnessed to create an environment where cultures, intelligences, and even species of very different levels of complexity and evolution can coexist and interact constructively. The "games" on offer take many forms, and indeed go through fads, fashions, and phases (although there are always old favourites).

You can invent games of chance on the fly; it's also a great chance to let your players improvise details. In addition to historical games, here are some ideas for less traditional ones:

- **Exoblack:** Each player receives a random exomemory. Each then has to decide whether a subsequent exomemory will reinforce or contradict it.
- **Random Halo:** The game decides on a random question or parameter (there are various "genres" of this game...), and the player establishes their answer in their own halo. All other players then do the same, and one is selected at random to go up against the player. The "better" parameter wins.
- **Technosnap:** Each player has to use Technopsi to predict the result of a series of random events. The latest correct prediction wins; or the latest incorrect prediction, in the event there are no correct predictions...

by the Enduring Confidentiality sentience and guarded by numerous sentinels, drones, and mechanicals.

- **Nightline Hotel:** A night-time venue for those who prefer to carouse under cover of darkness. *Starlight Skyscraper Romance; Top Floor Cocktails and Music; Speakeasy.*
- **Casino Nox:** In the Nightline Hotel. *Blackjack; Exoblack; Tonight Is Forever; Anonymous Sophistication.*
- **Ring River:** A circular watercourse kept in constant motion, flowing into and out of the Sable Rose "sea". *Take a Flowboat Around the Rim.*
- **Sable Rose Hotel:** An open air, sea and beach feel. *Sun, Sea, and Sand.*
- **Casino Lux:** *Technosnap.*

ENDURANCE STATION

Physical Stress:

Systems Stress:

Mental Stress:

Consequences: 3 mild + 1 moderate

Scale: Enormous (+3)

Aspects: Diplomatic Haven on an Iceball Moon; Paranoid Den of Spies and Intrigue; "Enduring Confidentiality" Station Sentience; Bristling With Defences; Deliberate Comms Blackspot.

Skills: Fantastic (+6) Contacts, Systems; Superb (+5) Active Sensing, EW; Great (+4) Deceive, Passive Sensing; Good (+3) Hull Strength, Will; Fair (+2) Bureaucracy, Resources; Average (+1) Close Combat, Ranged Combat.

STUNTS

♦ **Docking Bay:** 1 Huge (+2) construct, 10 Large (+1) constructs, etc.

♦ **Passenger Accommodations:** Accommodations for 600 passengers.

♦ **Top Urgency:** +2 to Passive Sensing when on top urgency alert.

EXTRAS

★ **ECM Array:** +2 defend bonus vs EW and Mindscape attacks.

★ **Extended Docking Bay:** 10 Huge (+2) constructs, 100 Large (+1) constructs, etc.

★ **Extended Passenger Accommodation:** Accommodations for 6000 passengers.

★ **Mindscape Instance:** Enables technopsi and local Mindscape connectivity.

★ **Repulsor Shield:** +2 defend bonus against physical attacks.



ADVENTURE: TRANSPARENCY



"Law enforcement on Blue was confusing at the best of times. A whole population of aliens who had no idea what they were doing there, and then humans—and others—who either wanted to study, worship, or rob them. All that added up to the weirdest of mayhem. But this was different. When I got to the flapping tents of the bar, the blood was everywhere. Human blood, Blue blood. Then someone said a Hermetic had done this. Thank god it had 'surrendered'—no one knew if we could even stop these guys if they put their minds to it."

—Rajel Symnester-3, ISI RimSec Agent seconded to Hasan's Rescue.

OVERVIEW

Transparency is a deep, action-packed, and high stakes campaign adventure which can easily extend over multiple sessions of play. It introduces the players to the environment of the Jessilan system and the mysterious Blues, and involves them in events which could change the course of Commonality history entirely. There's a lot to lose in this adventure—careless PCs could easily find themselves destroyed—but also an enormous amount to gain. What was the secret of the Blues?

Who Are the PCs?

There are many ways to get involved with the events of **Transparency**, often depending on who the PCs are and what they're doing in the Jessilan system. Here are some ideas.

ISI AGENTS

The Internal Security Instrumentality has been working with the Jessilan security services over the past few years—the complex situation is a great proving ground for agents. The PCs basically play police force agents from the Commonality or Jessila, investigating the Hermetic murders.

SCI FORCE AGENTS

The ever-popular “culture agent campaign” is also a definite

option in **Transparency**. The PCs play agents of SCI Force, the Security and Cultural Integrity Instrumentality, which has a presence in the Jessilan system. Their task is to monitor Jessila's ongoing cultural stability, and to ensure both the human and Blue elements integrate smoothly into the Commonality mainstream.

FREE AGENTS

The PCs could be new traders, mercenaries, tourists, or just “travelers” in the Outremer subsector, passing through the Jessilan system for any number of reasons. In this case, they may be actually in the *Too Blue For You* when Fluorantimony Hex attacks, and get swept up into subsequent events.

RESEARCHERS AND SCIENTISTS

Scientific characters abound in Jessila—contact specialists studying the Blues, archaeologists researching the prelapsarian Blue civilization, scientists from corporacies and even the secretive 3-Space Instrumentality (page 13) investigating the bewilderingly high technology possessed by the Blues before Barrier Fall, and arguably still extant in the largely off-limits Sapphire Vault. In this case, they may be directly called in to the “interrogation” of Fluorantimony Hex (page 42).

OTHERS

You can play many other characters in **Transparency**, including integrating it into your own campaign. As ever, try to

establish hooks for your PCs into Jessila and the events of the adventure—try and give your players a personal stake in the adventure so later events will truly matter to them.

Once you've decided upon who the PCs are and how they come to be involved in the events of *Transparency*, pick one of the scenes below to begin with. By default we assume you begin with **Episode One Scene 1: The Hermetic Killer**, but other starting points are certainly possible.

The Default Plot Thread

By the beginning of play, the events of *Transparency* are already underway. This section loosely describes what happens if the PCs do nothing at all to affect the outcome of events. Knowing players, this won't happen, and your game will rapidly diverge from the default timeline described below. However, we present this **default plot thread** as a rough sketch for you to bear in mind and fall back on when running your game.

There are many theories about why the civilisation of the Blues fell. In order to understand the events of *Transparency*, it's necessary to reveal some secrets. GMs should bear in mind that the information below is not known definitively by anyone—although some may certainly be on the right track. Take care to preserve an element of mystery, and only reveal secrets to the players when the actions of the PCs merit it.

Six hundred standard years ago, when the ancient hyper-advanced civilisation of the Blues was destroyed, the Blues were engaged in an ambitious feat of self-directed evolutionary engineering: to finally transcend the physical world, to "go post", and transform themselves into a life form existing in the quantum flux between the branes that separate the many universes of the "manifold"—the higher structure of the cosmos. Some of them believed their approach was flawed, and opted out, locking themselves away in a "Sapphire Vault" to work on an alternate process.

The attempt to go post was a catastrophe. Resonant energies of an utterly unknown nature tore forth from the breach in space-time necessary for the Blues' transformation and, in order to avoid even greater destruction, the Blues aborted their attempt and destroyed themselves—or perhaps the secretive "Hermetics" from the Sapphire Vault destroyed them, in an act of terrible genocide.

The Hermetics locked themselves away, trying to work out what had gone wrong, and to try again. Now, six centuries later, they're close to their second attempt. They're on the verge of restoring their advanced Mindscape-analogue, the planetary exomemory called **Transparency**.

However, there are forces which don't want the Hermetics to succeed. **Rejectionist** Blues allied with humans attempt to sabotage the Hermetic efforts, but are themselves attacked and wiped out by a Hermetic assassin. The Hermetics, allied with the **Restorationist** faction of the Blues and the Machiavellian 3-Space Instrumentality from the Commonality, perform initial tests, causing all Blues to experience a brief moment of "mental contact" when they "zone out".

Then, a week before Transparency comes fully online, the Barrier around Blue and the Jessila system, which fell six hundred years ago, "flickers" for less than a tenth of a second. This registers on instruments throughout the Jessilan system, causing huge consternation. Are the Jessilan worlds going to be cut off from outside contact again?

A week later, Transparency comes back online, and the Hermetics once again attempt to "go post", initiating a process of transcendence known as **the Brightening**. This takes 30 hours and, this time, avoids the 3-space "resonance" which destroyed the Hermetic civilisation six hundred standard years ago. It succeeds, and the entire planet of Blue vanishes from the universe, together with all of its inhabitants and its technological secrets.

Unless, of course, the PCs can stop it...

Structure of the Adventure

Transparency is structured in a sequence of four episodes, each comprising one or more scenes, followed by an epilogue. Everything here is provided by way of example only, closely tied to the default plot thread above. The episodes and scenes present possible locations, adversaries, allies, and events which are likely to crop up in your game, depending on your players' decisions. Feel free to use or ignore what follows depending on your needs; our aim is to support your game by providing the things you need, and not to dictate what should or should not happen.

EPISODE ONE: BLUE MURDER

One of Jessila's alien Blues has run amok in the Blue capital of Hasan's Rescue, killing many humans and native Blues. When apprehended it turns out to be one of the strange and hyperadvanced Hermetics—the first ever seen outside their mysterious Sapphire Vault!

In this episode, the PCs first come into contact with the events of **Transparency**. They don't have a lot of idea what's going on, but are rapidly swept up into the mystery of a murderous alien on the rampage on the strange world of Blue (page 26).

Scene 1: The Hermetic Killer

In this scene, the PCs have their first encounter with one of the ancestral Blue survivors, the murderous Hermetic known as Fluorantimony Hex.

Location: Bluewood maximum security research facility, Gathering City, Jessila (page 23)

THE HOOK

A Blue has been apprehended by Jessilan security forces after going on a murderous rampage in the settlement of Hasan's Rescue, the "capital" of the planet Blue, in which it

killed 35 individuals—15 humans, and 20 of the alien Blues. Rumours are rife that the Blue is actually a **Hermetic**, one of the advanced ancestral survivors from the top secret **Sapphire Vault** (page 64) located somewhere on Blue—the first time one has ever been seen in the outside world since its discovery two years ago! Its name, appropriately enough, resolves to the chemical signature of a powerfully corrosive acid (see page 16 for Blue naming conventions), and it's been nicknamed **Fluorantimony Hex** for short. It's currently being held in the Bluewood maximum security research facility just outside Gathering City on the planet Jessila (page 23).

What was the reason for this seemingly senseless attack? And what is a Hermetic doing outside the Sapphire Vault?

MEETING THE HERMETIC

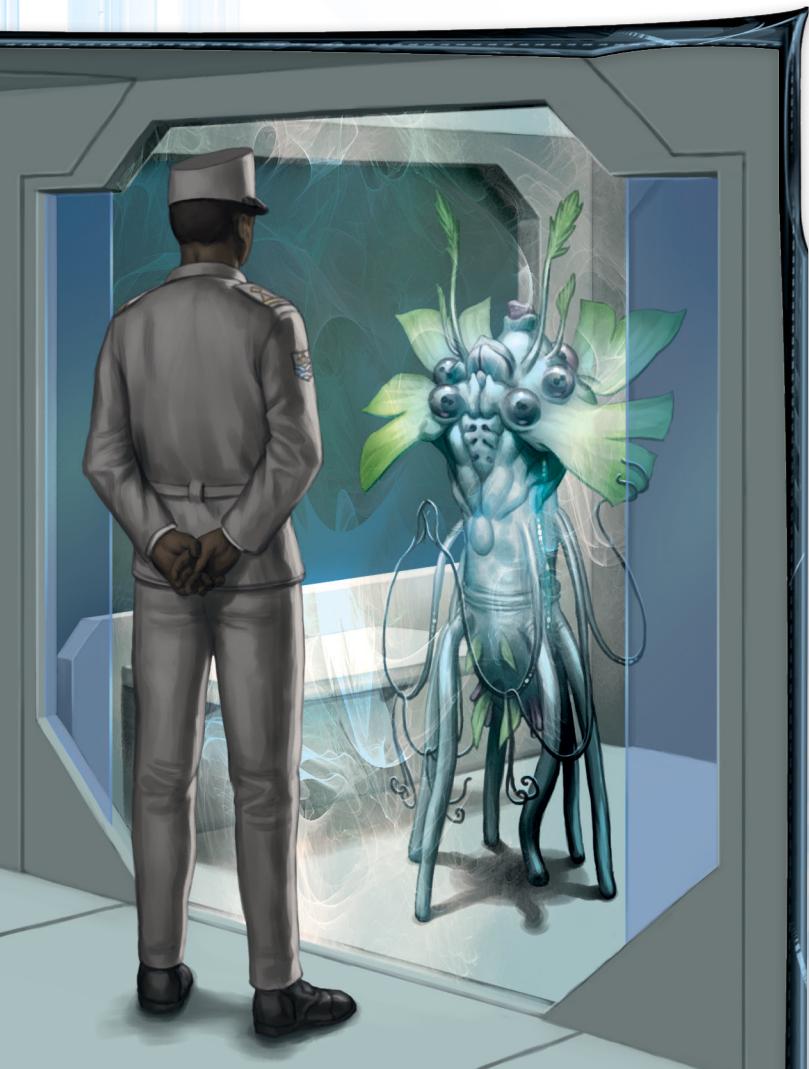
There are many ways the PCs could come into contact with the Hermetic known as Fluorantimony Hex, depending on their origins (see "Who Are the PCs?" above). For the Jessilan authorities, however, apprehending the Hermetic is a hugely important event. Security is incredibly tight, the best specialists in the system have been drafted in to participate in the "interrogation", and the Commonality itself is sending observers from SCI Force and the little-known and mysterious 3-Space Instrumentality (see page 13). Some of these may even be the PCs.

Present this scene in such a way that the PCs themselves are key decision-makers in the investigation; this shouldn't be a scene where they're just observers. If this doesn't fit with the characters' story, then skip the scene, and present its findings to the PCs in other ways.

Fluorantimony Hex is a genuine alien—far stranger than any hominid or xenomorph ever can be. It's even stranger than the somewhat helpless Blues, fallen from their greatness; it's an order of magnitude (at least!) more evolved than any human: more intelligent, advanced, and with massively different motivations. It probably doesn't even see the PCs and other characters as sentient beings.

Let the PCs conduct whatever analyses or interrogations they see fit. Empathy, Investigate, Provoke, and Science are all great skills, as are stunts such as **Xeno-Empath**, **The Power of Deduction**, **Okay Fine!** and **Specialist**. Additionally, the "First Contact" procedures from **Mindjammer** page 412 are also appropriate. Let the players come up with their own investigative methods; they know how these things play out!

Bear in mind the Hermetic's **evolution index** and **exoscale** in any actions, which tend to make investigations more difficult (see **Mindjammer** page 408). The PCs should have access to any reasonable equipment or specialist knowledge they need for the job at hand. If you like, have a *Cold Serious Science* situation aspect for emphasising just how high-pressure this first scene is.



FLUORANTIMONY HEX, THE RAMPAGING HERMETIC

Physical Stress: $1\square 2\square 3\square 4\square$

Mental Stress: $1\square 2\square 3\square 4\square$

Consequences: 3 mild + 1 moderate.

Scale: Medium (+0).

Evolution Index: +4 (+3 difficulty to comprehend and perceive Commonality humans).

Exoscale: +4 (-6 penalty for Hermetics to perceive Commonality humans, +12 shifts on success; +6 bonus for Commonality humans to perceive Hermetics, -12 shifts on success).

Aspects: Hyperintelligent Alien Mass-Murderer With Unfathomable Motivations; Doesn't Perceive Humans As Sentient Beings; Weird Radio Senses Cause Glitches Everywhere; Natural Mindscape Overload; Hair Trigger Force of Mass Destruction; High Stakes Diplomatic Disaster.

Manifestations: Sensorium: Radio Sense (Wave Gland); Comms: Wave Gland and Heart Strings; Integral Part of Transcending Species Massmind; Voluntary Abdication From Temporal Flow.

SINISTER SURVEILLANCE

There are some shady looking Commonality folks keeping an eye on the investigation. They won't directly engage with the PCs, and will deflect attempts to quiz them. Unless the PCs are directly involved with them (see "Who Are the PCs?" above), an appropriate skill check (perhaps Investigate, Knowledge, Provoke, etc) is needed to even find out that they're agents from the mysterious and secretive 3-Space Instrumentality (page 13).

Their presence in the Jessila system may come as a surprise to the PCs; in fact they've been here for years, researching the Blue **link portal** technology (page 19).

The 3SI team is lead by scientist **Gel-Gul Faraqisti** (overleaf). He's several hundred years old, ruthless, obsessed with 3-space travel, and knows much more than he lets on, both about 3-space and the lost technology of the Blues. He has a dozen personnel as his personal staff: 3 assistants and 10 security officers (including 4 annihilator synthetics) for both equivocal and unequivocal measures (see "The Sanctity-of-Life Principle" on page 45).

Faraqisti's team are pro-Restorationist (page 15), in as much as they want to see what the Hermetics are capable of. They're playing a dangerous game, effectively poking the Hermetics with a stick to see what happens. They're currently wondering if the Hermetics are going to pull some high-tech "gating" or "transfer" of the captive Hermetic from the security facility. When they don't, they'll wonder why—and if that

Skills: Transcendent (+11) Science; Posthuman (+10) Investigate; Transhuman (+9) Notice; Legendary (+8) Knowledge, Will; Epic (+7) Physique, Provoke.

STUNTS

♦ **Ghostless Shell:** +2 Stealth bonus to hide from view, even to sensors and synthetic senses.

♦ **Polymath:** For a fate point, use Science in place of any other skill for one check or exchange.

♦ **The Power of Deduction:** 1/scene, spend a fate point to discover / create one aspect per shift on target of Investigate roll; you get one free invoke.

♦ **Sensor Scan:** Use sensorview and Notice for passive sensing construct actions.

EXTRAS

★ **Mental Blast:** Use Provoke to make attacks causing physical stress damage.

★ **Prescience Routines:** For a fate point, make an Empathy, Investigate, Knowledge, Notice, Science, etc, create advantage roll to create a prediction.

refusal is evidence of something else (it is, but these are early days...). It's likely that the PCs' approach in the interrogation will be diametrically opposed by the 3SI.

Faraqisti's agenda is complex. He's trying to find out more about the link portals (page 19) and related Hermetic technology, and to understand why the Hermetics no longer use it. He won't hesitate to act directly if the PCs get in his way or threaten his work. There's no love lost between the 3SI and pretty much any other agency in the Commonality, and Faraqisti will act as if he thinks he has carte blanche.

RELEASE DEMAND

While the PCs are investigating the Hermetic, the security facility personnel around them suddenly become even more agitated. Communiques have been received from the Hermetics of the Sapphire Vault, demanding the immediate release of Fluorantimony Hex! The demands are quite insistent; they're not yet threats, but both Commonality and Jessilan personnel are jittery: the defensive capabilities of the Hermetics are simply unknown, but likely to be far beyond what the Commonality is capable of. The Bluewood personnel begin putting pressure on the PCs to wrap up their investigation.

Allow each PC one more action to finish up the interrogation.

The 3SI will want to push for more time—almost as if they want to see what the Hermetics will do. They'll win the day unless the PCs shout them down—a contest of Deceive,

GEL-GUL FARAOISTI

Physical Stress: 1□2□

Mental Stress: 1□2□3□4□

Credit Stress: 1□2□3□4□

Consequences: 1 mild + 1 moderate

Scale: Medium (+0)

Aspects: Machiavellian 3SI Controller; Utterly Obsessed With 3-Space; Creepy Slow Movements; Don't Get In My Way; One Day It'll Be Payback For Thaddeus Clay!

Skills: Fantastic (+6) Science, Technical; Superb (+5) Deceive, Provoke; Great (+4) Contacts, Will; Good (+3) Investigate, Resources; Fair (+2) Bureaucracy, Knowledge; Average (+1) Empathy, Ranged Combat.

STUNTS

- ◆ **Far Gate Engineer:** +2 Technical bonus when working on Far Gates or with related technology.
- ◆ **Mindburn:** Use Will for mental attacks using the Mindscape.
- ◆ **Mind Games:** Use Deceive to make mental attack actions..
- ◆ **Okay, Fine!** Use Provoke instead of Empathy to learn aspects.
- ◆ **Probe:** +2 create an advantage Will bonus to discern surface thoughts.

Provokes, Rapport, etc, between Faraqisti and the PCs. If the PCs win, the interrogation ends without event; if they lose, the Hermetics immediately erect a powerful Great (+4) Huge (+2) scale force field around the exit of the CCC (Contact Command and Control) facility in the Sapphire Vault (page 64), effectively preventing the Commonality and Jessilan authorities from accessing the Vault without using subterfuge or force. At the same time, the Jessilan culture will incur a *Tensions With the Hermetics* situation aspect (page 10).

WHERE NEXT?

It's up to the PCs what they do next. An obvious point of investigation is to visit the "scene of the crime"—see **Scene 2: Too Blue for You** below. If the PCs prefer to remain passive, then you can move straight to **Episode Two Scene 2: A Moment of Transparency**.

Scene 2: Too Blue for You

In this scene, the PCs visit the location of the murders committed by Fluorantimony Hex, trying to understand what happened.

Location: The *Too Blue For You* "bar" on the edge of the Museum District, Hasan's Rescue, Blue.

◆ Specialisation

(3-Space): +2 Science bonus for 3-space related rolls.

HALO

★ Neurosynthetic

Extensors: +2 bonus on Knowledge, Science, or Technical rolls where reasoning power is determinant; also invoke / compel.



★ **Special Ops Mindscape Implant:** Local Mindscape connectivity and special ops technopsi.

OTHER EXTRAS

★ **3-Space Instrumentality:** Organisation Extra: Good (+3) Intrusion, Security.

★ **Longevity:** Longevity aspect, +5 skill points, and a hundred years older.

★ **Nanocells:** Control Mindscape-enabled devices via physical contact without Mindscape connectivity.

★ **P-Suit: Armour:** 1 damage reduction, +1 defence bonus; Vac Sealed.

THE HOOK

Too Blue for You is a "bar" on the edge of the Museum District in Hasan's Rescue, the "capital city" of the strange alien world of Blue (page 29). It's also the "scene of the crime" where Fluorantimony Hex committed 35 seemingly senseless murders. It's currently under lockdown, cordoned off by the security services; it hasn't been touched since the killings. Usually the place has a mixed clientele of humans and Blues—and in fact a greater proportion of Blues than you'd normally expect, probably because of the Museum District's proximity.

GETTING TO BLUE

Although you can just jump to the chase and declare the PCs arrive on Blue without event, you can also make a deal of getting there if you like; Blue is probably unlike any world the PCs have ever visited. See page 26 for details, but stress that it's the location of a fallen alien civilisation which had a technology far in advance even of the Commonality, and the site of countless mysteries—including why today it's little more than a primitive water world of shacks, shantytowns, and a weird hybrid culture existing in the ruins of an ancient near-trans-

cendent greatness. Remind the PCs a force field once closed off the entire planet—and indeed the entire star system—and no one has yet managed to work out why it switched off.

Let the PCs make create advantage rolls if they like; there are always things to learn, things to observe, which may come in useful later. On successful rolls, let your players improvise their own details if they feel comfortable doing so—otherwise you can reveal tantalising snippets about the world which may come in useful later.

RAJI'S PLACE

Too Blue for You is owned by Raji, a Jessilan woman who considers Blue her home. She and her staff of one Blue, Slide Indigo, and one human, Isayn, are the only people in the otherwise abandoned bar. The PCs can quiz any of the three about the attack, as well as conducting their own analyses.

By its nature *Too Blue for You* is maybe not quite what the players would expect of a "bar". It has elements of a desert oasis kasbah, a beach hut, a tent, even a public baths or sauna. It's also a fairly typical example of the hybrid "New



The Sanctity-of-Life Principle

The hyper-advanced technology of the Commonality reaches terrifying levels in the field of conflict. The ability of a weapons system to completely, totally, and irreversibly annihilate a target is not a matter of chance, but of choice. It's been this way for thousands of years. If the Commonality wants an individual dead, there's very little that individual can do about it; in fact, it's very unlikely he'll ever see his annihilation coming.

In a civilisation where irresistible annihilating force can be brought to bear almost casually, factors other than the destructive power of weaponry hold sway. For millennia, the Commonality has treated violence as a tool in its arsenal; usually one to be resorted to when a situation has already spiralled down into failure and imminent disaster, but equally one to be employed with surgical precision.

*When people may live centuries—perhaps even millennia—if accident does not destroy them, life is precious. Consequently, the Commonality only sets out to kill an individual when it really, **really** has to. When approving the use of violence to resolve a situation, any Commonality controller has three levels of **measures** which he or she can deploy:*

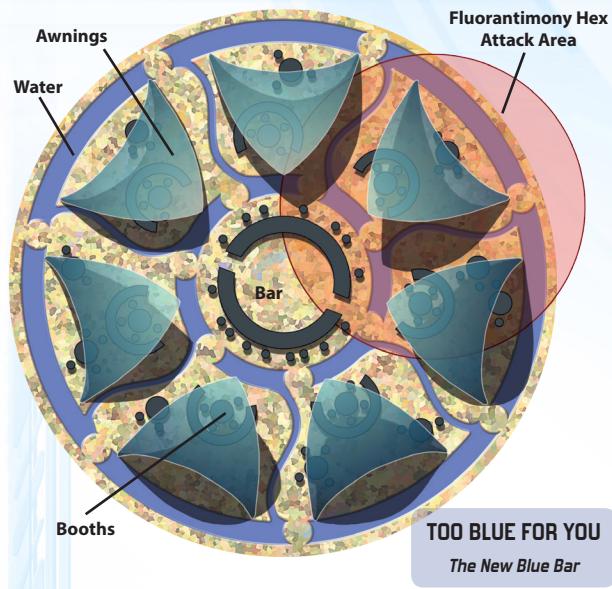
Dissuasive Measures: *In most cases, non-lethal but highly effective strikes are sufficient to resolve a situation. Any opposing personnel or personnel obstacles are neutralised without injury and removed from the immediate field of*

action. Dissuasive weaponry includes stun guns, knockout gases, confusion fields, etc.

Equivocal Measures: *This is the most common set of measures employed in time of war. The goal of the conflict is not to destroy opposing personnel, but to achieve other strategic or military targets to which opposing personnel are merely hindrances. When using equivocal measures, the Commonality doesn't really care whether opposing personnel are injured or even killed; it would rather they were not, but in using strikes to rapidly achieve strategic goals, collateral damage is often inevitable. Equivocal measures weaponry includes conventional arms such as null weapons, kino weapons, blasters, and so on.*

Unequivocal Measures: *Sometimes the goal of a strike is to very specifically terminate one or more individuals. In such cases, the Commonality employs overwhelming force to that end, with the one proviso that collateral damage is to be avoided. Usually the target has no chance to survive an encounter with unequivocal measures. Unequivocal measures weaponry includes disassemblers, disintegrators, micro-nukes, field separation units, haze folds, and more. Often **annihilator synthetics** and **mechanical assassins** are the specialists used in unequivocal measures actions.*

*More information on the Sanctity-of-Life Principle and its associated measures can be found in the **Mindjammer Companion**.*



"Blue" culture evolving in the Jessilan system, especially here on Blue.

Fluorantimony Hex killed 20 Blues here, and 15 humans. On an appropriate roll (Provoke, Rapport, etc, perhaps aided by Empathy, or even using Domination or Probe), the PCs can discover that just under half of the dead—humans and Blues alike—belonged to a faction in Jessilan society known as the **Restorationists** (page 15). They often met here, talking about the great things they'd do when the Hermetics returned Blue to its former glory. One of the group—a Chembu hominid from the Commonality named **Walgury**—wasn't with them that day, and quite by accident survived.

WHERE NEXT?

This scene can lead in any number of directions, depending on the success of the PCs investigations and the questions they ask. You can present Walgury as a direct link to **Scene 3: Out on the Bridge**, either on a successful investigation roll, or as a success at a cost, in which case he'll have been tipped off and on the alert (see below); you can even provide a lead to **Scene 4: The Rejectionist**, or even **Episode Two Scene 1: The Device Chamber**. Alternatively, you can move directly to **Episode Two Scene 2: A Moment of Transparency**.

Scene 3: Out on the Bridge

In this scene, the PCs encounter a survivor of the Hermetic attack, out in the Confornat shantytown on the Blue Bridge megastructure.

Location: The shantytown on the Confornat Bridge, Hasan's Rescue, inhabited by muddle-headed Blues and dropout humans.

THE HOOK

Walgury is a mercenary-minded Chembu Alienist who lives

in the Confornat shantytown in Hasan's Rescue. He's the sole survivor of the Restorationist group which met in the *Too Blue For You*, murdered by Fluorantimony Hex. Exotic and alien, he's also desperate and poor, hiding out in the ramshackle tenements of the shantytown in fear for his life.

GETTING HOLD OF WALGURY

Walgury is terrified, sure that whoever killed his comrades is still out to get him. He's more than paranoid, and is likely to think the PCs are working for the killers.

Walgury is lying low in shabby digs on the second floor of a dry and dusty tumbledown tenement block in the Confornat shantytown. If he has been tipped off (see "Where Next?", above) or is otherwise ill-disposed to the PCs, he'll have activated the booby-traps protecting his home. Otherwise, they'll only be activated if the PCs fail a Stealth roll on their approach.

Walgury has several small improvised ceiling-mounted explosive devices which use a modified form of **Blue building paste** (page 18), provided by his mysterious patron, Croaker Verdigris (page 48). Simply put, each of the devices sprays

CEILING-MOUNTED BUILDING PASTE I.E.D.

Physical Stress: 1□ 2□

Systems Stress: 1□ 2□

Consequences: 1 mild

Scale: Small (-1)

Aspects: Wide-Angle Area of Effect; Just Out of Reach.

Skills: Great (+4) Intensity; Fair (+2) Magnitude

ACTIONS

★ **Action 1:** Roll Notice vs Great (+4) to spot the IED hidden in the ceiling.

★ **Action 2:** Roll Intrusion vs Great (+4) to disarm the booby trap before it can activate.

★ **Action 3:** Roll Athletics vs Fair (+2) Magnitude to avoid being spattered by building paste. Affects all in the zone.

★ **Action 4:** Hazard attacks with Great (+4) Intensity vs Physique in exchange 1, Superb (+5) in exchange 2, etc, doing physical stress damage, to a maximum of Legendary (+8). Armour and fields protect. Continues until targets are 3 zones from IED lights, or lights are deactivated.

★ **Action 5:** Roll Intrusion or Technical vs Fair (+2) each exchange to deactivate the lights.

CHALLENGE HAZARD

WALGURY, THE CHEMBU SURVIVOR

Physical Stress: 1□ 2□

Mental Stress: 1□ 2□ 3□ 4□

Credit Stress: 1□ 2□

Consequences: 1 mild + 1 moderate; currently suffering moderate consequence They Killed Everyone!

Scale: Medium (+0)

Aspects: Lapsed Restorationist With New Blue Sympathies; Ex-Team Systems Imagist of Chembu Ponics; The Other Side of Human; This Is A Whole New Way of Life We're Building! They're Out to Get Me!

Skills: Great (+4) Deceive, Technical; Good (+3) Investigate, Will; Fair (+2) Athletics, Contacts; Average (+1) Ranged Combat, Unarmed Combat.

its immediate zone with a fine spatter of building paste, and then immediately flashes a sequence of lights which triggers a building paste growth program which penetrates any soft target. Growth continues until the lights are doused.

If Walgury is alerted, he'll leap out of the back of his shack while the booby trap goes off at the front, unless the PCs are clever and position themselves to head him off (a contest of Athletics, Physique, etc, against his Athletics). Depending on the situation, he may even attack the PCs if he believes his life is in danger.

Walgury is open to persuasion, although a lot depends on how the PCs approach him. Figure a Rapport or Provoke roll opposed by his Good (+3) Will; Walgury may have aspects to invoke if the PCs have been particularly aggressive or threatening.

TALKING TO WALGURY

At some point it's likely the PCs will end up talking to Walgury—though whether that's a warm alliance, frank exchange of views, or brutal round of interrogation depends very much on their actions. Use Rapport, Provoke, Deceive, or other appropriate skills to get the following information from him.

Regardless of result, the PCs will realise that Walgury is no longer an enthusiastic Restorationist: something has changed his mind, and he's now very much more in favour of the status quo and the developing "New Blue" culture (page 15) in the Jessila system.

On a success, they'll discover the reason for this change: he has "seen things" in ancient Blue ruins beneath Hasan's Rescue—things which the Restorationists had discovered—which have made him believe that a future coexisting with the Blues is better than a restored Hermetic world. There's some kind of powerful technology down there: "things way

STUNTS

♦ **Blue Tech:** +2 bonus to Technical overcome rolls when trying to work out what something does.

EXTRAS

★ **Aquatic:** As aspect.

★ **Mindscape Implant:** Enables technopsi and Mindscape connectivity.



beyond our understanding. Who knows what it all does?" A Knowledge roll or search of the Mindscape will reveal this is news to everyone—no one has ever even heard of ruins beneath Hasan's Rescue before!

On a success with style when talking to Walgury, the PCs will discover that he was contacted by a mysterious non-Hermetic Blue named Croaker Verdigris, who asked him to **sabotage** the alien machinery beneath Hasan's Rescue. Walgury now believes all his team was contacted—and that was why they were attacked by the Hermetic assassin. The Hermetics didn't want the alien machinery sabotaged—but his mysterious Blue sponsor did.

WHERE NEXT?

If the PCs have wrung the information about Croaker Verdigris from Walgury, they can also follow his instructions to where he lives; see **Scene 4: The Rejectionist**. They may also follow Walgury's directions to the mysterious ruins below Hasan's Rescue; see **Episode Two Scene 1: The Device Chamber**. Alternatively, they may take other actions, or even wait; see **Episode Two Scene 2: A Moment of Transparency**.

SCENE 4: THE REJECTIONIST

In this scene, the PCs encounter a non-Hermetic Blue who is adamantly—even violently—opposed to the Hermetic agenda.

Location: The deadlands beyond the Confornat shantytown, further out on the Confornat Bridge.

THE HOOK

Out beyond the shantytowns which cluster around Hasan's Rescue, the Blue Bridge megastructures give way to depopulated salt-swept wastes, cluttered with debris and jetsam, and inhabited by a sparse population of wanderers, misfits,

CROAKER VERDIGRIS, THE MYSTICAL BLUE HISTORIAN

Physical Stress: 1□ 2□

Mental Stress: 1□ 2□ 3□ 4□

Consequences: 2 mild + 1 moderate

Scale: Medium (+0)

Aspects: Rejectionist Historian; Mystical World View; Opposes Restoration; Telling the Lost History of Blue; Collector of Exceptionally Bad Human Jokes.

Skills: Superb (+5) Knowledge, Will; Great (+4) Empathy, Rapport; Good (+3) Science, Stealth; Fair (+2) Investigate, Notice.

STUNTS

♦ **Ghostless Shell:** +2 Stealth bonus to hide from view, even to sensors and synthetic senses.



♦ The Power of Deduction:

1/scene, spend a fate point to discover / create one aspect per shift on target of Investigate roll; you get one free invoke.

♦ Survival:

+2 overcome and create advantage Knowledge bonus for surviving in hostile environments.

EXTRAS

★ **Mental Blast:** Use Provoke to make attacks causing physical stress damage.

and ne'er-do-wells eking out an existence on the native Blue biome and the Bridge sustenance systems which operate even today.

One such misfit is Croaker Verdigris, a non-Hermetic Blue who is the mysterious patron of Walgury the Chembu and his now-dead group of Restorationists.

CROAKER VERDIGRIS'S SHANTY

The shanty is a lean-to of reclaimed debris, including misshapen hunks of building paste, slats and prefab components brought by Jessilan colonists, and even home-made pieces of fabric and weave made from seaweeds from Blue's oceans. It's picturesque and crazy—and genuinely looks like the sort of place a magician, wise man, or hedge wizard would choose to live. All manner of gew-gaws decorate the walls or hang from weirdly-angled eaves and gables.

Croaker Verdigris may be at home, or if not he'll be less than an hour away.

GAINING CROAKER VERDIGRIS'S TRUST

Croaker Verdigris is less unstable than Walgury. Although he's aware of the danger from the Hermetics, he also realises that if the PCs wanted him dead, they wouldn't be talking. However, he'll also be conscious that the PCs may have inadvertently given away his location to others (see "Clandestine Surveillance" below).

Let the PCs encounter Cloaker Verdigris in the conditions they want. This may be their first proper encounter with a non-Hermetic Blue—see page 15 for more. Although the Blues are fallen from their once near-transcendent state, Cloaker Verdigris is nevertheless as intelligent as a brilliant human, deeply insightful and knowledgeable about the state

of his world. If the PCs wish to pull the wool over his eyes, they've have to overcome his Empathy, Knowledge, Science or Will; otherwise they can use Rapport or other appropriate skills to create friendly advantages.

WHAT THE PCs CAN LEARN

Croaker Verdigris has thoughts about what the Hermetics are up to. He believes they're involved in a project: perhaps a re-run of their attempt 600 standard years ago (he'll say 256 years ago, using Jessilan years) to "go post"; perhaps an attempt to drive the humans or even the Commonality off Blue, and maybe even out of the system; or perhaps something else entirely. He has also guessed the agenda of the 3-Space Instrumentality (page 13). He'll share his opinions with the PCs if he believes it's in his interests; the PCs can use Deceive, Provoke, Rapport, etc, to encourage him to do so.

In addition, the PCs may learn the following:

- It's obvious that Croaker Verdigris himself isn't a Restorationist. Clearly not all Blues are.
- He doesn't trust the Hermetics at all. In fact, he doesn't even behave as though they're part of his species: he believes they're out to destroy him and his people, and the New Blue culture they're building.
- Croaker Verdigris also knows the location of the **device chamber** ruins beneath Hasan's Rescue (page 29).
- Croaker Verdigris is **old**—he remembers fragments of his life before Barrier Fall, although he knows he was far more intelligent then, with his memories part of a store similar to the Mindscape. On a success with style, the PCs may even extract a name for this memory store: **Transparency**.

CLANDESTINE SURVEILLANCE

The 3-Space instrumentality is taking a very close interest in the events surrounding the *Too Blue For You*. If the PCs have been alert, they may be aware of this: Mindscape Notice, Investigate, or other sensing / sensorview rolls may pick up telltale traces of surveillance which a Superb (+5) Hacker roll can trace.

If the PCs aren't **very** stealthy, the 3SI are tracking them. They'll first need to declare they're trying to avoid surveillance, and then make a Superb (+5) Stealth roll, and a second appropriate skill or stunt roll in the Mindscape (such as **Ghost in the Machine**) to avoid the 3SI locating them. If the 3SI are already onto them (for example, if they've been following them since the Bluewood facility, page 23), they may also need monitor band cloaks (**Mindjammer** page 136).

Note that, if the 3SI succeed in their surveillance attempts (whether the PCs realise this or not), they'll attack Croaker Verdigris and the PCs as soon as they have the location of the Blue Field Device (page 51)—see **Episode Two Scene 1: The Device Chamber**. It's possible that shrewd PCs who are aware of the 3SI surveillance may be able to misdirect their attentions...

WHERE NEXT?

It's very likely the PCs will now be heading towards the ruins beneath Hasan's Rescue, and **Episode Two Scene 1: The Device Chamber**. If they prefer to delay, you can move to **Episode Two Scene 2: A Moment of Transparency**, or—if you prefer to send in the ninjas!—you can have the 3SI attack the PCs directly at Croaker Verdigris's shanty in the deadlands.

EPISODE TWO: THE BLUE FIELD DEVICE

Something mysterious has been discovered in unknown ruins beneath the Blue capital of Hasan's Rescue. People have already died for it—and now some very lethal factions are converging on its location, each intent on controlling it for themselves!

In this episode, the PCs come into direct contact with the Hermetics' plan for their species to once again attempt to "go post". At the start it isn't obvious that this is what's happening; instead, a weird force is affecting the minds of all the Blues, and it looks like the mysterious "Barrier" which once isolated the Jessilan system—and which "fell" 600 standard years ago—is once again on the verge of rising. Little by little, the PCs realise something big is happening—something which may yet end in a desperate race against the clock!

Scene 1: The Device Chamber

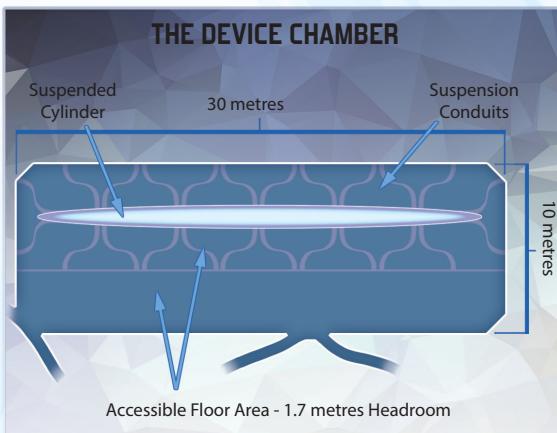
In this scene, the PCs enter the hitherto unknown ruin beneath Hasan's Rescue, and find a team of specialists hard at work on an alien Blue device!

Location: Ancient Blue mechanisms in strange tunnels deep beneath the Museum District waterpoint in Hasan's Rescue.

THE HOOK

The PCs, possibly in the company of Walgury (page 47), Croaker Verdigris (page 48), or both, travel to the "waterpoint" reservoir on the northwest edge of Hasan's Rescue's Museum District. There, ancient Blue technology bubbles up fresh water, desalinated from the surrounding ocean, from where it's fed to residences throughout the city. There are ancient Blue buildings from before Barrier Fall east and south of the waterpoint, and recent New Blue builds to the north and west, including some reclaimed from ancient debris. One of these buildings—otherwise non-descript—contains a spiral ramp in its basement which leads down to a hitherto unknown network of tunnels dating from before the Barrier Fall. Many bubble-like chambers "bud off" from the tunnels, including a 10 metre diameter cylinder some 30 metres long, which contains a strange, spiral, fluted, almost glass-like assembly of apparatus with a completely unknown purpose.





A group of two dozen or so Blues are busying themselves with unfathomable tasks about the apparatus.

DEVICE CHAMBER AREAS

- **Prelapsarian Tunnels:** These smooth featureless tunnels are 1.7 metres in diameter, with a circular cross-section.
- **Suspended Conduits:** These vanish into the floors, walls, and ceiling. They are translucent violet, coral-like; similar to the Promise (page 37).
- **Suspended Cylinder:** This is the device itself, approximately 2m in diameter. Suspended 1.7m above the floor, it's possible to walk beneath it. It contains a spiralling glass-like apparatus assembly. Milky and translucent, it appears to contain a medium which will refract a light beam.

THE 3SI ATTACK

If the PCs haven't been stealthy (see "Clandestine Surveillance", above), before they can do anything they'll be attacked by a 3SI "combined measures" group which has pursued them searching for precisely this location. It's more than likely the PCs will have no idea who's attacking them—except that they're **lethal**.

The 3SI combined measures group "CMG-4" has a clear mandate: **unequivocal measures** (page 45) are authorised for both Walgury and Croaker Verdigris. For the PCs, it depends who they are: if they belong to SCI Force or another official body of the Commonality or the Jessilan government, then CMG-4 will use **equivocal measures**—they won't specifically try to kill them, just make sure they're neutralised so they can get on with their job (they don't want the hassle higher up the chain of command). If the PCs don't have a weighty official status—if they're new traders, travellers, even tourists or itinerant mercenaries—then they'll also be the target of **unequivocal measures**, as CMG-4 tries to annihilate them as cleanly and with as little fuss as possible.

CMG-4 comprises a single annihilator synthetic and a group of 3 human equivocal measures specialists.

THE ANNIHILATOR SYNTHETIC

Physical Stress: 1 2 3 4

Mental Stress: 1 2 3 4

Consequences: 1 mild + 1 moderate

Scale: Medium (+0)

Aspects: Unequivocal Measures Specialist; Quick Clean Efficient Kill; Terrifyingly Lethal Weaponry; Lightning Fast Movements; Strength of Steel and Servos.

Skills: Fantastic (+6) Melee Combat, Ranged Combat; Superb (+5) Athletics, Provoke; Great (+4) Physique, Will; Good (+3) Deceive, Notice.

STUNTS

• **Killing Stroke:** 1/scene, pay 1 fate point to increase a physical consequence you inflict by 1 step.

EXTRAS

★ **Disassembler Field Projector:** Weapon: 6 rating, range 1; any consequence represents lost body mass which can only be recovered by regeneration; Instakill Attack.

★ **Hyperdense Exoskeleton:** Armour: 3 rating.

★ **Monofil:** +6 Melee Combat damage; Cuts Anything, Hazardous In Use.

★ **Null Pistol:** Default Ranged Combat weapon; Recoiless.

★ **Repulor Field:** +3 defend bonus against physical attacks; Visually Distorting.

THE EQUIVOCAL MEASURES SPECIALISTS

Stress: 1 2 3 4 5 6

Scale: Medium (+0)

Aspects: Killing is Secondary to the Mission

Skills: Good (+3) Ranged Combat; Fair (+2) Provoke; Average (+1) Athletics, Melee Combat (+2 teamwork bonus).

GROUP OF 3 EQUIVOCAL MEASURES SPECIALISTS
(+3) MINOR NPCs

CMG-4 have arrived at the Museum District waterpoint in an *Armadillo*-class grav APC (*Mindjammer* page 253). Figure that the annihilator synthetic will kill Croaker Verdigris in the first exchange, and Walgury in the second, before turning its attention to the PCs if necessary; it will switch the weapon it uses against the PCs, **even if it means that it loses**: at this stage, the 3SI isn't willing to attract unnecessary attention to itself, at least until it knows what's going on (compare this to Episode Four later, when the success of the Hermetic project is at stake).

TALKING TO THE RESTORATIONISTS

The two dozen Blues in the device chamber are led by a Blue technician by the name of **Shroud Excimer**. Their attitude to the PCs depends on how they've arrived; if they turn up in a hail of gunfire and proceed to slaughter their way through the 3SI combined measures group, they may find the Blues more than reluctant to talk openly. In any case, the Blues will be close-mouthed around strangers, and the PCs will have to deal with Shroud Excimer to get anything from them.

The Blues are **Restorationists** (page 15). They're embarked upon a sizable endeavour—since the device chamber was discovered the project has grown in scale, and now

half of the group are new members who may be a security leak, and who are *Much Easier to Pump For Information* if separated from Shroud Excimer's surveillance.

ANALYSING THE DEVICE

The Blues won't naturally let the PCs analyse the Blue field device. They'll have to use persuasion, violence, or threats of violence to do so. Treat this as a physical or mental stress conflict against Shroud Excimer.

The device itself is initially pretty unfathomable. It comprises an intricate assembly of coils and threads, ranging in size from fist-sized to microscopic, in a repeating, almost fractal pattern. Analyses using Science, Technical, Active or Passive Sensing, or sensorview Investigate automatically reveal dimensional components which suggest the Heisenberg minima found in zero point power cells (*Mindjammer* page 115), as well as components apparently fulfilling mass/energy conversion purposes. A successful analysis expands this to include conduits somehow funnelling effects from the device deep into the bedrock—extending ten kilometres or more before turning out into the ocean. In fact the device is linked to the *Tectonic Extruder* technology the prelapsarian Blues used to modify the size of their island continents prior to Barrier Fall; it's up to the GM whether the PCs are able to deduce this.

A success with style on the analysis will reveal a **second** device hidden within the main device. It uses the same power supply, but appears to be a form of field generation module, capable of projecting a field of extremely high power at a range of tens of thousands of kilometres from the device. It's inoperative at the moment, but there is a signal loop hidden deep within the device which is detectable in sensorview (or using the Blue wave gland) which a further analysis roll may reveal to be some kind of **countdown**. To what? Astute characters may link this with the "Barrier" which cut off Blue from the rest of the Jessilan system before Barrier Fall; if not, a Knowledge roll or Mindscape search can confirm this.

This is the first time an apparent component of the Barrier has been found—and understandably the authorities will insist that the Blues stop their tinkering once they know what it is, especially if news of the "countdown" leaks out. However—and the PCs may be unable to figure this out at this point—the activities in the device chamber are also part of an effort by the Hermetics and Restorationists to re-establish **Transparency**, the Hermetic Blue exomemory / Mindscape analogue which is a pre-requisite for their second attempt at going post (see **Scene 2: A Moment of Transparency**). If the PCs don't handle this very carefully, they may have a major diplomatic crisis on their hands.

WHERE NEXT?

It's up to the PCs what they do with the information they gather. Let them travel wherever they like in the system and

SHROUD EXCIMER, THE BLUE TECHNICIAN

Physical Stress: 1□2□

Mental Stress: 1□2□3□

Consequences: 1 *mild* + 1 *moderate*

Scale: Medium (+0)

Aspects: Leader of the Blues; Ludicrous Punster; You've Got To Go Through Me First; Orders From On High; Secret Agenda.

Skills: Fantastic (+6) Technical; Superb (+5) Investigate; Great (+4) Provoke, Rapport; Good (+3) Empathy, Knowledge; Fair (+2) Notice, Will.

STUNTS

♦ **Blue Tech:** +2 bonus to Technical overcome rolls when trying to work out what something does.

♦ **Overseer:** 1/scene, make an overcome action to generate a pool of shift points you can redistribute.

EXTRAS

★ **Curious Vari-Tool:** +2 Investigate and Technical create advantage bonus with Blue or Hermetic devices; Unfathomable Hermetic Design.

★ **Mental Blast:** Use Provoke to make attacks causing physical stress damage.

use the information however they see fit. It's sufficiently important to open doors for them, and even secure resources and propel them to the head of their own ops teams if needs be. They may even be able to gain access to the Sapphire Vault; see **Episode Four Scene 2: Getting Into the Vault**.

Then, when you're ready (and if it's still appropriate), move to **Scene 2: A Moment of Transparency**, and / or **Scene 3: The Device Awakens**.

Scene 2: A Moment of Transparency

In this scene, the PCs encounter an incomprehensible alien phenomenon of vast scope and power, as every member of the Blue species appears to experience a mental fugue state!

Location: Anywhere in the Jessilan system.

THE HOOK

Ideally this scene should occur immediately after the PCs have found a clue about what the Hermetic Blues are up to, such as analysing the Blue field device in **Scene 1: The Device Chamber** above. Although the "Transparency" event is itself something the PCs are witnessing and which is ultimately beyond their control, it's important to convey a sense of player agency here: the PCs aren't simply passive observers, but they're investigative participants in a historic event. They should feel **empowered**—they stand to learn some seriously important stuff.

At the start of this scene, the following happens. Everywhere throughout the Jessilan system, at **exactly** the same moment, every single Blue experiences a *Moment of Transparency*. Each stops what they're doing and "stares into space".

This "zoning out" lasts for thirty seconds. Then, just as suddenly as it began, it ends; each Blue goes back to normal, carrying out what they were doing before the moment began. None of them have any recollection of what just happened. Needless to say, this freaks out a lot of the humans watching—and probably freaks the Blues out too.

IMMEDIATE ANALYSIS

During the *Moment of Transparency*, the Blues are utterly unresponsive. Any analysis automatically reveals elevated neural activity throughout the Blue's distributed brain / nervous system; a successful sensorview or even Mindscape connectivity analysis will show massive activity in the Blue **wave gland** (page 15). On a success with style, the character can make an intuitive leap that this may be analogous to a Mindscape handshake.

AFTER THE FACT

It's more difficult to analyse the *Moment of Transparency* once it's over. Limited public areas in Hasan's Rescue and across Jessila have DP feeds the PCs can dip into using sensorview, and Investigate rolls with PSAs, hand scanners, etc, can attempt to pick up residual traces, perhaps directly analysing the nervous

systems of selected Blues. Such analyses should be at least Great (+4) difficulty, and perhaps Fantastic (+6), increasing by +1 for every hour or so that passes.

On a success, analysis reveals space-time disturbances which suggest jump wake disturbances or even Heisenberg minima, as though some kind of 2-space emergence took place. A success with style reveals these traces are detectable at any location which was occupied by a Blue at the moment of transparency.

TALKING TO BLUES

Talking directly to Blues is instructive. Just before and just after the moment, each Blue experienced a sensation "as if everything was suddenly becoming more and more transparent. It all became to clear; I could see through everything..."

DREAMS OF BLUE

Following the moment of transparency, every Blue which survived Barrier Fall (ie excluding those which have been born since that time) experiences strange and vivid "dreams" of "before the Fall" during their rest periods.

PCs talking to Blues a day or more after the moment may learn this automatically; otherwise the information is available on a casual Knowledge roll sift through the Mindscape.

WHERE NEXT?

Let the PCs pretty much decide where to go from here. Depending on the extent of their contacts, the next scene may be **Scene 3: The Device Awakens**, **Scene 4: The Barrier Flickers**, or even the events of **Episode Three: The Promise** or **Episode Four: The Brightening**.

Scene 3: The Device Awakens

In this scene, the Blue field device beneath Hasan's Rescue begins to activate—and it may not be the only one. Factions throughout the system start to close in, and the PCs risk getting shut out!

Location: The Blue field device chamber deep beneath the Museum District waterpoint in Hasan's Rescue.

THE HOOK

The PCs may witness this directly, especially if they've been investigating the device chamber (page 49). Alternatively, a Fair (+2) Knowledge or Notice roll may pick up traces of chatter in the Mindscape; a subsequent Great (+4) Hacker or other appropriate skill roll reveals that the Blue field device beneath Hasan's Rescue has begun to activate. Indeed, similar energy traces are appearing all over Blue, at every waterpoint and niche halt. Something is happening!

DEVELOPING A THEORY

The PCs may try to develop a theory about what's happening. This is a contest against the Superb (+5) complexity of the Blue field device activation event. If the event wins the

contest, the PCs are foaxed, unable to come up with a theory. If they win, they come up with a theory.

In each exchange, every PC **may** make a roll for the contest; however, only the highest single result counts in each exchange. PCs may **also** try to create advantages as usual; note that if a PC tries to create an advantage for himself and fails, then his contest roll does not count for this exchange.

The winner in each exchange generates victories as usual; additionally, they get to declare one fact about the event. This is in addition to any situation aspects.

If the PCs are victorious in the contest, they may create a theory which explains the Blue field device activation event; it should take into account any situation aspects created previously.

Also, in keeping with the *Mindjammer* rules, if the PCs successfully come up with a theory, that theory should be true. As GM, you may want to reveal certain facts in the form of the situation aspects the players create to ensure their theory doesn't contradict some of the assumptions behind the default plot thread (page 41) and make sure the adventure continues to make sense. You don't have to do this, of course; you can happily let your PCs come up with utterly original facts, and let your story tell its own truth about what's happening in Transparency. But we're assuming you want to keep things roughly consistent; in such a case, you can reveal the following situation aspects, or ensure that the aspects the PCs come up with don't contradict them:

- *A Network of Secondary Devices*: There's a network of secondary devices across Blue, and potentially throughout the Jessilan system.
- *The Device Chamber Blues Activated the Network*: The Blues in the device chamber are at least one group whose actions have caused the network to activate.
- *Mandscape or ZIP-like Emissions*: The emissions from the Blue field device and other energy traces display similarities to both zero-point energy signatures and the Mindscape monitor band. They're intermittent, certainly to begin with, but increasingly strong and stable.

In fact (see below), the Blue field devices are about to re-establish the prelapsarian Blue exomemory known as **Transparency**, and also surround the planet Blue and all Blue natives with a powerful energy field. This all becomes evident in **Episode Four: The Brightening**, but the seeds of it are here—if the PCs make the hypothesis.

INFORMATION AND EXOMEMORY CONTROL

As soon as the PCs begin to investigate the Blue field device activation event, they'll begin to notice that they're not the only ones. Agencies such as SCI Force, the 3SI, and even the Jessilan administration want to not only get as much information as they can about what's happening, but also to prevent this information from falling into the wrong hands or being disseminated in an uncontrolled and potentially destabilising way.

Creating Theories in *Mindjammer*

*There are many ways to generate theories in *Mindjammer*; this is just one suggestion. However, you can use the procedure detailed here more widely, in any context where the characters are facing an unfathomable situation and must try to understand and explain what's happening.*

In such a case, the first step is to identify the problem. In this example, that's a given: the PCs are trying to answer the question: "what's happening in the Blue field device activation event?". When you try to come up with a theory to tackle a different situation, be sure to phrase the question you're trying to answer in a similar way. Examples include:

- *How did this alien species come to live here?*
- *Why did the star's spectral class suddenly change so drastically?*
- *Why did our attempt to communicate result in our being attacked?*

"Information control" is one of the principal jobs of government, and the Commonality is an expert at it. Indeed, if the PCs are working for SCI Force or a similar organisation, it may be up to them how they restrict or release the information about what's happening.

In any case, the 3-Space Instrumentality (or SCI Force, if the PCs are 3SI agents themselves) are already trying to take control of the information about this event. They are creating **restricted content zones** (*Mindjammer* page 191) around information in the Jessilan Mindscape; the PCs may end up being locked out—even from their own exomemories!

You can introduce this at an appropriate moment when any PC attempts to act upon his or her knowledge of the Blue field device: see the box "How Can I Get Locked Out of My Own Memories?" (overleaf) for the concepts and rules involved. For the corresponding skill levels, use those of Gel-Gul Faraqisti on page 44.

KEEPING IN THE LOOP

As well as being locked out of the Mindscape, the PCs will increasingly find themselves sidelined by the Jessilan government and military, as forces such as 3SI or SCI Force use their influence to exclude the PCs from further activities and investigations.

In order for the PCs to keep in the loop, they'll have to make an appropriate organisation action against the Jessilan government or organisation in question.

How Can I Get Locked Out of My Own Memories?

If, like most PCs, you're a Mindscape user, then you routinely use the Mindscape to store direct perception feeds, data result sets, thoughtcasts, and so on, relating to events you've experienced. The more important the event is to you personally, and the more involved you've been in it, the more likely this is.

Together, these data, as well as the direct engrams of the memories you may choose to upload / thoughtcast, are termed exomemories, and are stored in your halo in the Mindscape.

It's possible for powerful forces—legal or not, such as SCI Force—to hack and even classify those exomemories. See **Mindjammer** page 188 for how to access exomemories, including restricted content. You can restrict content you haven't created yourself on an appropriate Will or Technical roll with a special ops or black chip. If you have a special ops or black chip, you can create fictionals (including changing and falsifying exomemories) using Deceive, or using the Hacker or Mindscape Engineer stunt (see **Mindjammer** page 193).

In such cases, when you try to remember an event, the metadata and subsidiary data around the memory, and possibly even the Mindscape copy of the memory engram itself, may all differ from the memory in your own mind. The natural temptation is for your mind to alter itself to accommodate. It takes a considerable effort of will to avoid this (see "The Trouble With Fictionals", **Mindjammer** page 192).

Note that in order to successfully interact with an organisation, a character either requires specific stunts or an organisation extra. Characters without either may find themselves unable to avoid being kept out of the loop by the machinations of the organisations in the Jessilan system, and may no longer be able to access the device chamber or other similar facilities in a legal way.

AGENTS

Gel-Gul Faraqisti's 3SI team assumes control of the device chamber. The only way to dislodge them is by embarking upon an organisation conflict with the 3SI in the Jessilan system or the Jessilan government itself (see above), or by engaging in physical or mental conflict with the team directly. Note that openly attacking the 3SI team with weapons will have serious repercussions; doing so with threats, bravado,

THE JESSILAN GOVERNMENT

Physical Stress: 1 2 3 4

Mental Stress: 1 2 3 4

Credit Stress: 1 2 3

Consequences: 1 mild + 1 moderate

Scale: Planetary (+6)

Reach: Planetary (+6)

Aspects: Centralised Government Headquartered On Jessila; The System Council Decides; Ambivalent Relationship With the Commonality; Used to Ruling the System Worlds By Decree; Benevolent Approach.

Skills: Great (+4) Bureaucracy, Investigate, Rapport; Good (+3) Security, Structure, Will; Fair (+2) Resources, Science, Technical; Average (+1) Contacts, Knowledge, Notice, Provoke.

STUNTS

→ **Aid Package:** Use Resources for moderate and severe physical recovery actions for organisations.

→ **Known Knowns:** +2 defend bonus against Deceive.

→ **Only Connect:** Use Investigate instead of Knowledge to deduce facts from observation.

SUPPORTING ORGANISATION

persuasion, and coercion (a mental stress conflict) will be equally effective but without the repercussions—although it'll probably be a little less long-lasting.

WHERE NEXT?

At this point events are taking on a life of their own, and the PCs have a lot of options. Shortly after this scene, the barrier will flicker as described in **Scene 4: The Barrier Flickers**. Alternatively the PCs may get wind of the theft of the Promise in **Episode Three: The Promise**, or you can just skip straight to the beginning of the Brightening in **Episode Four: The Brightening**.

Scene 4: The Barrier Flickers

In this scene, the ancient Blue Barrier reappears—just for an instant. It once cut the planet of Blue and the entire Jessilan system off from the rest of the universe, until it fell six hundred standard years ago. Why did it just come back, however briefly? And will it happen again?

Location: Anywhere in the Jessila system.

THE HOOK

Just for a tenth of a second—almost indetectable in human terms—the ancient Blue energy barrier, which once isolated

the world of Blue and the entire Jessilan system, reappears. It hasn't done this for six centuries. There are reports of minor damage here and there—but the real damage is the panic which ripples through the system. Is the barrier coming back up? Will Blue and the whole Jessilan system be cut off again?

SPACE TIME FLUCTUATIONS

The PCs may detect the Barrier flicker, or hear about it, anywhere in the Jessilan system. Attempts to find analytical information in the Mindscape will face a Fantastic (+6) difficulty due to information control and being out of the loop (see above), unless the PCs are themselves responsible for that control and still in the loop. It's much easier to conduct your own analysis: Active or Passive Sensing, or sensorview Investigate attempts, are Fair (+2) difficulty.

Success registers an increasing number of incidents where the fabric of space time in the vicinity of Blue fluctuates in minor but incomprehensible ways. A success with style reveals the readings begin to trace out "entanglement paths" in the space-time "quantum foam" traversing the Jessilan system.

TRACING THE ENTANGLEMENT PATHS

Characters may attempt to "map" or "trace" these entanglement paths. These are create advantage actions resulting in situation aspects linking locations throughout the Jessilan system with points in the Sapphire Vault on Blue (page 64). As GM or player you can make up your own examples, but the main two are:

- *The Promise to the Sapphire Vault*: This entanglement path connects the Alienist Polar Ice Temple (actually specifically the relic known as the Promise—page 37) on the frozen world of Yoden with the Sapphire Vault on Blue.
- *Beacon to the Sapphire Vault*: This path connects a hitherto unremarkable asteroid to the Sapphire Vault—see **Scene 5: The Link Portals**.

WHERE NEXT?

The PCs have an open choice of where to go from here. See **Episode Three: The Promise** if they decide to check out the Alienist Polar Ice Temple on Yoden, and **Episode Four Scene 2: Getting Into the Vault** if they decide to try and enter the Sapphire Vault. They may also check out the entanglement path beginning in the asteroid in the Jessila Belt: see **Scene 5: The Link Portals** below.

Scene 5: The Link Portals

The PCs follow the entanglement path to an asteroid in the Jessila Belt, where they discover a powerful Hermetic artefact.

Location: A new asteroid in the Jessila Belt, dubbed **Beacon**.

THE HOOK

This is a simple scene. The PCs travel to a hitherto unremarkable asteroid in the Jessila Belt dubbed Beacon which turns out to have a facility very similar to the Greenstone asteroid (page 18). The asteroid—some ten kilometres in length—is rotating on its axis, and has a cylindrical area at its heart some 200 metres long which is riddled with tunnels, carvings and reliefs, and structures of building paste, all in vacuum or ancient stale atmosphere. It requires some tunnelling to get to, but there's a shaft which is blocked only ten metres from the surface which can provide direct access.

THE ARTEFACT

A search in the Beacon tunnels automatically locates a clearly technological artefact which appears to emit a "space-time resonance"; a ring structure some 2.5 metres in diameter, similar in appearance to a 3-space gate, known as a **link portal** (page 19). It connects directly to Secundacule Gamma (C) in the Sapphire Vault (page 64).

WHERE NEXT?

In all likelihood, if the PCs have got to this point, they're probably going to follow the link portal to Secundacule Gamma in the Sapphire Vault—see **Episode Four Scene 3: Exploring the Sapphire Vault**. In this case, we recommend you choose a suitable moment shortly after their arrival and when they've begun exploring to begin the Brightening (page 61).

They don't have to traverse the link portal, of course. They may instead choose to try and move the portal, or even use the news of its location as a powerful bargaining chip with the authorities to improve their standing and access to events (potentially getting "back in the loop"—see page 53 above). In this case, you could move to **Episode Three Scene 1: The Theft of the Promise** or **Episode Four Scene 1: The Brightening Begins**.

EPISODE THREE: THE PROMISE

Something profoundly significant is happening in the Jessilan system, and panic is spreading. The PCs have the power to shape the destiny of a civilisation. What will they choose to do?

In this episode, the adventure enters the realms of conspiracy, intrigue, and political machinations, where the PCs may find out who the stakeholders are in the Jessila system, and what they hope to achieve. The PCs may come out of this with increased power, prestige, or contacts. If this isn't your style of play, and you'd rather concentrate on the events directly concerned with the Hermetic attempts to "go post", then go directly to **Episode Four: The Brightening** instead.

Scene 1: The Theft of the Promise

In this scene, the PCs investigate a suspiciously coincidental "theft" of an ancient Blue artefact on the icy moon of Yoden, centre of the Alienist faith.

Location: The Alienist Polar Ice Temple, Yoden.

THE HOOK

In the chaos following the Moment of Transparency and the ancient Barrier flickering briefly to life, rumours fly around the Jessila system and Mindscape that the legendary **Promise**, the ancient Blue artefact which is a sacred relic for the Alienist religion, has gone missing from its sanctuary on the icy moon of Yoden (page 36). Some are saying it's been spirited away by the Alienists for safe-keeping; others that it's been stolen by mysterious agents; and others still that as a powerful Hermetic artefact it's somehow playing a role in the mysterious events currently unfolding.

Perhaps answers lie on Yoden itself.

SITE INVESTIGATION IN THE POLAR ICE TEMPLE

Although Yoden is sparsely populated, and with a high proportion of Alienist worshippers, there are no restrictions to going there. It's even possible to visit the rather awe-inspiring Polar Ice Temple—although normally you'd have to make a rendezvous in advance to get access to the interior.

Things are a little more chaotic right now. Since the apparent theft of the Promise, Jessilan security forces are quizzing everyone at the ice temple, and trying to keep casual visitors away. Enterprising PCs making appropriate rolls (such as Rapport, Resources, Deceive, Contacts, Provoke, and so on) should be able to find a way in. If they're sufficiently stealthy, they may even be able to do so without people knowing (although the 3SI may still have tabs on them—see page 43).

Once they've gained access, the PCs may conduct an initial investigation with whatever tools and access levels they have; or talk to the Alienist clergy in the temple (see below).

The pressurised interior of the Polar Ice Temple is being treated as a crime scene—see page 37 for map and location descriptions. The Promise artefact is missing from its dais, but it's not immediately obvious what happened.

A Notice or Active Sensing roll using sensorview reveals that the thieves gained access via the 400 metre high temple spire, which is hollow to its apex. A success with style identifies deformations in the ice crystal structure at the top of the spire, revealing the thieves melted their way in, probably using an emergency variform airlock (see the adjacent box), which was subsequently taken away after the theft. They then descended vertically to the pedestal, possibly using anti-grav, and bypassed the haze field (page 37). All surveillance equipment and DP feeds were disabled during the theft.

A deduction roll using Investigate, Knowledge, or an appropriate forensic stunt, reveals equipment of at least T9 would have been required for the theft to be this unno-

Equipment: Emergency Variform Airlock

Tech Index 9. Costs 2 stunts

Initially a dome-shaped circular package 50cm in diameter and weighing 15kg, this may be carried or slaved to follow on its own grav suspensors. It contains a very short range thermal lance (w:4, Armour Piercing) and a series of variform constructors to penetrate surfaces up to hull metal in strength and create a basic but durable airlock capable of cycling one person at a time.

iceable; somehow the temple's internal security systems have been circumvented, and the temple clergy caretakers rendered unconscious without killing them (there are thirty of these in total—half on duty at any one time).

HACKING THE OFFICIAL INVESTIGATION

This same information can be found by hacking the current Jessilan security force investigation. This is a Superb (+5) contest; on a failure, the PCs are tracked down by the security forces and will face pursuit by a 3SI combined measures team (page 50) based in Mirali's Enlightenment.

A hacking success will also reveal indications of an n-space departure from the Polar Ice Temple shortly after the theft, which has been deleted from the official record. The destination of the *Erstwhile Probit* in-system transport (an STL craft) was the outer solar system—probably the gas giant of Harbour.

TALKING TO THE ALIENISTS

The temple clergy, including almost all of the caretakers, are devout Alienists (ie **not** Schismatics—see **Scene 2: Talking to the Schismatics** below) and supporters of the Hermetics. The current head of the Polar Ice Temple is **Fenda Carmushale**, a human Alienist priest.

Unless the PCs can prove their bona fides with the Hermetics or the 3-Space Instrumentality, Fenda will be extremely suspicious, and try to tell the PCs as little as possible, instead feeding them with disinformation. Like many Alienists, she believes an extreme faction in the Alienist ranks known as **the Facilitators** has stolen the Promise. The Facilitators have the support of a clandestine group in the Commonality at least partially represented by the 3-Space Instrumentality; she knows that there's shortly to be an important meeting on the high security luxury resort of Endurance Station in the outer solar system.

FENDA CARMUSHALE, HUMAN ALIENIST PRIEST

Physical Stress: $1\square 2\square$

Mental Stress: $1\square 2\square 3\square$

Credit Stress: $1\square 2\square 3\square$

Consequences: 1 mild + 1 moderate

Scale: Medium (+0)

Aspects: Unthinking Devotee of the Alienist Way; We Are Nothing Before Hermetic Greatness; Ageless Glacer Priestess; Jealous Gatekeeper; Gel-Gul Faraqisti Saved My Soul!

Skills: Great (+4) Bureaucracy, Deceive; Good (+3) Contacts, Knowledge; Fair (+2) Provoke, Rapport; Average (+1) Empathy, Resources, Will.

STUNTS

- ♦ **Cog In the Machine:** Use Bureaucracy to take organisation actions.
- ♦ **Cool Customer:** +2 Deceive bonus when bluffing.
- ♦ **Specialist (Alienist Philosophy):** +2 bonus to related rolls.

EXTRAS

- ★ **Adaptation (Glacial Environment):** As aspect.
- ★ **Haze Field:** +1 defend bonus and basic ray shielding.
- ★ **Mindscape Implant:** Enables technopsi and Mindscape connectivity.

WHERE NEXT?

In addition to the clergy staffing the Polar Ice Temple, there are other staff among the caretakers and indeed back in Mirali's Enlightenment who aren't as ardent supporters of the Hermetics. See **Scene 2: Talking to the Schismatics**. The PCs may also want to check out Endurance Station in the outer solar system, to follow up the faint traces of the route the thieves took after leaving the planet. See **Scene 3: Intrigue at Endurance Station**. Additionally, it's also quite possible now just to move straight to **Episode Four Scene 1: The Brightening Begins**.



The Cultural Impact of 3SI Involvement in the Theft

Although cultural conflict isn't an overt component of **Transparency**, some of its events have profound cultural implications which you can use in your game if you like. If news of the 3SI / Commonality involvement in the theft of the Promise breaks, the Facilitators have a plan to use that information to simultaneously discredit the Commonality, weakening its influence in the Jessilan system, while simultaneously strengthening that of the 3-Space Instrumentality as the secret force behind the Facilitators.

This takes the form of a meme attack (**Mindjammer** page 304) against the Commonality culture. The Facilitators want to see the Hermetics succeed, and grab any tech increases they can from their observations. They'll use any advantages they can get from the meme attack to move Jessila toward becoming a 3SI fief, ostensibly run by the Facilitator faction.

Scene 2: Talking to the Schismatics

In this scene, the PCs talk to Alienists who don't support the Hermetic agenda, and are worried about what the Hermetics may be planning to do.

Location: The Polar Ice Temple, Yoden; or Schismatic districts in Mirali's Enlightenment.

THE HOOK

The **Schismatics** were originally a fairly minor group of Alienists who rejected the Restorationist agenda. They count Blues among their number, although they're mostly human; they essentially want things to stay as they are.

Since the Moment of Transparency and the recent flickering of the Barrier, the Schismatics have suddenly become more vocal, opposing pro-Hermetic factions throughout the system. The apparent theft of the Promise from the Polar Ice Temple on Yoden has them particularly excited.

SCHISMATIC ENCOUNTERS

The PCs may find Schismatics in several places. Some of the caretakers at the Polar Ice Temple are Schismatics, and may even approach the PCs if they overhear or simply see them. There's also a fairly sizable Schismatic community in the Yumini Dome quarter of the Alienist city of Mirali's Enlightenment. Finally, there are pockets of Schismatics on Jessila and Blue. All of these are also contactable via the Jessilan Mindscape.

Talking to the Schismatics is easier than talking to other Alienists, and especially Facilitators. Usually a Rapport (or Deceive) roll is all that's required to establish trust, and then the PCs can ask whichever questions they like. The PCs can find out the following:

- The Schismatics haven't taken the Promise.
- They've recently started to find the Hermetics disturbing; there have been signs in the Alienist church that the Hermetics may have an agenda which does not take their worshippers' interests into account at all. This opinion is shared equally by Schismatic Blues, who have become increasingly frightened by their hyper-advanced and alien forefathers.
- The Schismatics believe the thieves had some kind of help from the Commonality—or even that the Commonality stole the Promise.
- Some Schismatics blame other Alienist splinter groups. In particular, the Facilitator faction is mentioned—a secretive group of radical Restorationists which is believed to have Commonality backing.
- The high security luxury resort of Endurance Station in the outer solar system is said to be a notorious meeting place for Facilitators—and a den of spies.

WHERE NEXT?

There are many clues from talking to the Schismatics that point to **Scene 3: Intrigue at Endurance Station**. Equally, though, you may wish to just straight into **Episode Four**

Scene 1: The Brightening Begins if the players believe they now have enough information.

Scene 3: Intrigue at Endurance Station

In this scene, the PCs end up in a Jessilan nest of spies, on the trail of the Promise and the shady forces arrayed around it.

Location: Endurance Station, on Endurance, the moon of the cold gas giant Harbour (Jessila VI).

THE HOOK

There are many leads pointing to Endurance Station, the high-security luxury "diplomatic resort" (and nest of spies...) on the distant frigid moon of the gas giant Harbour. Said to be a meeting place for forces from all across the Commonality, and factions from throughout the Jessilan system, the radical Restorationist group known as the **Facilitators** may well have brought the stolen Hermetic artefact known as the Promise here. But why?

TRAVEL TO ENDURANCE STATION

You can treat the interplanetary voyage to Endurance Station with as much or as little detail as you like. Harbour occupies an outer system orbit, so journeys may take anything from a couple of hours to half a day or more. It's even possible you may want to run this as a chase as the PCs pursue the thieves of the Facilitator faction who stole the Promise (page 56).

SPIES AND CONSPIRACIES

Endurance Station positions itself as a "neutral ground" on the edge of the Jessilan System where factions and representatives from all across the Jessilan system and Commonality Space can meet in confidence. Obviously that makes it a den of spies, too; the PCs will find that all manner of people are immediately interested in knowing their business, some of them not so subtly. Equally, information brokers are everywhere, offering to tell the PCs what they want to know—for a price. Can you trust them? Well...

See page 38 for more details on Endurance Station.

OCULUS FORTE, THE COMINT NEGOTIATOR

Regardless of where the PCs base themselves in Endurance Station, everywhere is abuzz with talk of the latest arrival—a mysterious yet powerful figure apparently from high up in the Commonality. This figure has recently arrived on a sleek and cutting edge T10 Hyperwing-class Very Fast Courier *Spark Candescent*, which is in Endurance Station's Docking Bay 4C, refusing to give interviews or appear for DP shoots.

The figure's identity is restricted, unavailable on casual searching and requiring at least a Superb (+5) roll of Hacker

OCULUS FORTE, THE COMINT NEGOTIATOR

Physical Stress: $1\Box 2\Box$

Mental Stress: $1\Box 2\Box 3\Box 4\Box$

Credit Stress: $1\Box 2\Box 3\Box 4\Box$

Consequences: 1 mild + 1 moderate

Scale: Medium (+0)

Aspects: Native of the Harper Domain; Hyperintelligent Core Worlder; Exotically Ageless and Elfin Handsome; Ruthless Diplomat; Doesn't Suffer Fools.

Skills: Superb (+5) Deceive, Provoke; Great (+4) Empathy, Will; Good (+3) Rapport, Resources; Fair (+2) Bureaucracy, Contacts, Knowledge; Average (+1) Investigate, Notice, Stealth.

STUNTS

- ♦ **Best Foot Forward:** 2/session, turn a Rapport roll boost into a situation aspect with a free invoke.
- ♦ **Fortress of the Will:** +2 Will bonus to defend vs Provoke and Will damage / control attacks.
- ♦ **Mindburn:** Use Will for mental attacks using the Mindscape.

or other appropriate skills. His name is **Oculus Forte**, a “negotiator-without-portfolio” from the Commonality’s Communications Instrumentality.

Let the PCs take whatever actions they like in Endurance Station, but each time they do something which may bring them into contact with Forte, the 3SI, or the Facilitators, then have them make a Great (+4) Stealth roll, Fantastic (+6) if the PCs are already known to any of these three factions. On a failure, they gain a *We’re Tracking Your Every Move* aspect which may be invoked and compelled at awkward moments.

At some point the PCs may notice Forte being approached by a delegation. If they’ve met Gel-Gul Faraqisti or any of the Facilitator team which stole the Promise, they’ll recognise them in the delegation; otherwise it’s a Great (+4) Knowledge or Investigate roll to place them using the Mindscape. Under normal circumstances in Endurance Station this meeting will take place in actuality; if there’s a security concern, Forte may decide to shift it to an exotic, Blue-inspired, restricted access **imposality** instead (*Mindjammer* page 191).

The Facilitator delegation don’t have the Promise with them. However, they discuss it with ComInt Forte, requesting guidance—what would the Commonality like the Facilitators to do with it? Both Forte and the Facilitators seem to tacitly accept that the Promise is important in the Hermetics’ plans, and particular in what’s happening in the Jessilan system right now.

Use this meeting to convey any information you need

♦ **Negotiator:** Use Rapport for organisation actions.

♦ **Probe:** +2 create an advantage Will bonus to discern surface thoughts.

EXTRAS

★ **The Communications Instrumentality:** Organisation Extra: Good (+3) Intrusion, Security; Extreme Sanction.

★ **Cosmetic Enhancer:** As aspect to customise physical appearance.

★ **Longevity:** Longevity aspect, +5 skill points, and a hundred years older.

★ **Neurosynthetic Extensors:** +2 bonus on Knowledge, Science, or Technical rolls where reasoning power is determinant; also invoke / compel.

★ **Pheromone Synthesis:** +2 Rapport overcome and create advantage bonus against susceptible targets in same zone; also as aspect.

★ **Special Ops Mindscape Implant:** Local Mindscape connectivity and special ops technopsi.

to the PCs. You can let the players go wild improvising, too, if they’re happy doing so. For example, what is Forte’s recommendation—what does the Commonality suggest the Facilitators do with the Promise? Well, we’d suggest the Commonality would probably want the Facilitators to do whatever they can to assist the Hermetics to complete their project, while remaining at a distance to observe and report. However, you can also let your players improvise this detail, and run with it in your game.

Here are some other pieces of information you can convey to the players at this point:

- The 3SI representatives among the Facilitators believe the Hermetics have made a major 3-space breakthrough which the 3SI could use.
- The Facilitators as a whole believe that the Hermetics may be somehow entering 3-space as part of their “going post”.

WHERE NEXT?

From here the PCs may try to track the Facilitators back to where they’ve hidden the Promise: see **Scene 4: Retrieving the Promise**. Alternatively, they may begin to receive information from the rest of the system that something astounding is happening on Blue. See **Episode Four Scene 1: The Brightening Begins**.

Scene 4: Retrieving the Promise

In this scene, the PCs attempt to take possession of the Blue artefact known as the Promise from the Facilitators—at any cost!

Location: A safe house or accommodation suite in one of the hotels or districts in Endurance Station (page 38).

THE HOOK

The Facilitators have brought the Promise to Endurance Station, and the PCs have tracked them back to where they have it hidden. However, the Facilitators aren't going to let them take it without a fight.

THE CONFRONTATION

Although the Facilitator delegation aren't obvious combat specialists, they have a 3SI annihilator synthetic guarding the Promise at all times. Depending on how well the PCs organise their retrieval operation, the annihilator synthetic may be accompanied by one or all of the following: 1 3SI supporting NPC, 1 Restorationist supporting NPC, then 1 group of 4 3SI and 1 group of 4 Restorationists.

The actual process of getting to the Promise is a roll of Athletics or Ranged Combat, etc, trying not to do damage specifically but to push through the “block” created by the hail of covering fire. It's also very likely the PCs will have to disable the annihilator to seize the Promise.

Stats for the annihilator synthetic and for the 3SI minor NPC group are provided on page 50. Other NPCs are shown below.

WHAT DOES THE PROMISE DO?

The Promise is very alien. It resembles a smooth piece of polished branching coral, violet in colour and two metres in length, its translucent limbs intertwined. In a certain light a microscopic network of fibres seems to run through it, like veins or circuits. When touched by any living thing, the Promise lights up with a purple flare, shedding a light as bright as day into adjacent zones.

The Promise has changed in recent days. Since the Moment of Transparency, it has brightened when oriented in certain directions, and has even sent out “tracers” of fluorescent filaments up to ten metres in length. These align with the **entanglement paths** discussed in **Episode Two Scene 4: The Barrier Flickers**.

In game terms, the Promise has two aspects. The first is *Flare Gate to the Sapphire Vault Link Portal*, which can be invoked upon navigation rolls to locate or travel to Secundacule Gamma (C) in the Sapphire Vault (page 64). It can be used in traversing the link portal itself, including locating the **Beacon** asteroid in Jessila's Belt (page 55); and, for a fate point, it can be used to open a simultaneous link portal from any niche halt on Blue's Bridges (page 28), again directly into the Sapphire Vault.

Its second aspect is *Interface to Transparency*, which can be used to connect with the Blue exomemory (page 62) once the Brightening begins.

WHERE NEXT?

At this point the PCs are perfectly positioned for the climax of the adventure; see **Episode Four Scene 1: The Brightening Begins**.

SECURITY OFFICER BO KUMADEK

Physical Stress:

Mental Stress:

Credit Stress:

Consequences: 2 mild + 1 moderate

Scale: Medium (+0)

Aspects: Leader of the 3SI Facilitator Delegation; High-GD Ursoid Xenomorph; Built Like a Brick Fresher; Unexpectedly Subtle; Hunkily Handsome.

Skills: Superb (+5) Ranged Combat, Will; Great (+4) Physique, Provoke; Good (+3) Deceive, Rapport; Fair (+2) Notice, Stealth; Average (+1) Athletics, Resources.

STUNTS

♦ **Illusion:** +2 Will bonus for Technopsi create advantage actions to create images in target's mind or optic nerve.

♦ **Mindburn:** Use Will for mental attacks using the Mindscape.

SUPPORTING NPC

♦ **Overseer:** 1/scene, make an overcome action to generate a pool of shift points you can redistribute.

♦ **Probe:** +2 create an advantage Will bonus to discern surface thoughts.

EXTRAS

★ **Biomed Array:** Fair (+2) Technical skill for overcoming mild consequence recovery obstacles.

★ **Large:** +2 Provoke bonus, plus aspect.

★ **PSA:** Fair (+2) Investigate and Notice skills for sensorview actions; and/or +2 bonus to sensorview actions.

★ **P-Suit:** Armour:1 damage reduction, +1 defence bonus; Vac Sealed.

★ **Special Ops Mindscape Implant:** Local Mindscape connectivity and special ops technopsi.

★ **Subdermal Null Beamer:** +2 Ranged Combat attack bonus; weapon:2 rating.

NOX NOCTIS, THE GADGET BLUE

Physical Stress: 1□ 2□ 3□ 4□

Mental Stress: 1□ 2□ 3□ 4□

Credit Stress: 1□ 2□ 3□

Consequences: 3 mild + 1 moderate

Scale: Medium (+0)

Aspects: Bizarre Blue Cyborg; Natural Traitor; Fascinated by Human Pain; Flurry of Flashing Blue Limbs; The Bloody Right Hand of Bo Kumadek.

Skills: Superb (+5) Provoke, Will; Great (+4) Athletics, Physique; Good (+3) Deceive, Notice; Fair (+2) Investigate, Science; Average (+1) Resources, Unarmed Combat

STUNTS

♦ **Grappler:** +2 create an advantage Physique bonus when wrestling or grappling.

♦ **Tough As Nails:** 1/session, pay a fate point to reduce moderate physical consequence to mild, or erase a mild.

EXTRAS

★ **Mental Blast:** Use Provoke to make attacks causing physical stress damage.

★ **Transdermal Reinforcement:** You can take an additional mild consequence.

★ **Wave Gland Amplification Fold:** Allows the mental blast to make "full auto"-type attacks (an area effect).

EPISODE FOUR: THE BRIGHTENING

After unprecedented system-wide events harking back to the era of prelapsarian Blue, a sudden energy surge surrounds the planet Blue with a gradually intensifying glow. At the same time, contact is reported throughout the system between Blues and a form of non-localised exomemory store—perhaps an intelligence in its own right!

In this episode, the Jessila system is affected by an "apocalyptic" event, as a mysterious and intensifying energy field surrounds the planet Blue. It's predicted that in less than 30 hours the energy field will exceed theoretical maximum power, after which "singularity" no one knows what will happen. This is the climax to the adventure, and may spell destruction for the PCs; a major event that may have repercussions throughout the Commonality.

GROUP OF 4 AVERAGE
(+1) MINOR NPCs

RESTORATIONIST FACTIONISTS

Stress: □ □ □ □

Scale: Medium (+0)

Aspects: There to Make Up the Numbers.

Skills: Average (+1) Ranged Combat (+3 teamwork bonus).

Plot Stress

In this episode, the PCs are "on the clock", as the intensifying "Brightening" appears to be leading up to an apocalyptic event. We're using Plot Stress (*Mindjammer* page 432) to track this countdown.

PLOT STRESS ACTIONS

Action	Plot Stress Inflicted
The PCs travel between planets in the Jessila system.	1 point
The PCs stop for an in-depth investigation or analysis period.	1 point
The PCs attempt to enlist the assistance of outside forces (SCI Force, the Jessilan military, etc).	1 point
The PCs engage in a physical or mental conflict.	1 point

PLOT STRESS CONSEQUENCES

The Brightening Countdown to Singularity: 1□ 2□

Consequence	Description
Mild (-2)	Unrest: As the Brightening is increasing, people throughout the system panic at the unfathomable events. PCs approaching official facilities or population centres are subject to spontaneous attacks by groups of panicking civilians (figure a 4-person group of Average (+1) minor NPCs per PC).
Moderate (-4)	Blue Fugue: The Brightening becomes A Dazzling Visual Distraction, and Blues everywhere suffer from Periodic Bouts of a Fugue State lasting up to several minutes at a time. This is similar to the Moment of Transparency (page 52).
Severe (-6)	Time Is Running Out! As the 30 hours approach their end, the glow surrounding the planet Blue is twice as bright as the brightest sun Jessila or Blue have ever seen.
Taken Out	Transparency Achieved! See Epilogue: The Chaos of Blue Vanishing (page 70) for more.



Scene 1: The Brightening Begins

Without warning, the very air on the world of Blue begins to glow—an effect that's visible from space!

Location: Anywhere in the Jessila system.

THE HOOK

Despite attempts to suppress it, news breaks throughout the Jessilan system that an astounding event is unfolding on the planet Blue. There, the whole planet has begun to glow faintly. The reason is unknown. The glow appears to follow certain "lines" criss-crossing the planet, and already it's starting to intensify, gradually becoming brighter.

WHAT IS THE 3SI DOING?

During this scene, regardless of the PCs actions, the 3SI are reacting rapidly to the developing situation, trying to gather information and work out how long they have until transparency is achieved. At this point they're in a similar situation to the PCs.

TRYING TO ANALYSE THE GLOW

The PCs may try to analyse the glow. As above, conducting an analysis incurs one point of plot stress.

First, the PCs must gather data, requiring equipment such as starship sensors (from orbit), or a PSA, hand scanner, or other sensorview-enabled gear from the planet's surface.

Second, they must analyse the data. This is a Fair (+2) roll of Science.

- Analysis automatically reveals the glow is following the path of the waterpoints and niche halts on the bridges of Blue.
- On a successful roll, the PCs discover the magnitude of the "Brightening" is increasing exponentially, and will reach a "singularity" in less than 30 hours.
- On a success with style, the PCs discover the data are similar to a little-studied set of signals detected on Blue immediately prior to the "die off" of the planetary biome before Barrier Fall six hundred standard years ago (page 8).

Blue Fugue: The Contact With Transparency

*At some point during this episode the players will incur sufficient plot stress to unlock the moderate (-4) consequence **Blue Fugue**. Alternatively, as GM you may simply declare that point to be reached.*

*Thereafter, anyone in the Jessila system may make occasional spasmodic contact with a "Blue exomemory store"—a "planetary exomemory" which the Blues will call **Transparency**. It's the same as the phenomenon contacted in the "Moment of Transparency" (page 52).*

*It's possible to attempt to communicate with or even query Transparency using the Mindscape and sensorview. However, unlike the Mindscape, Transparency appears to be in some way **conscious**—although completely beyond any human capacity to understand. In game terms, Transparency has a higher Evolutionary Index than even the Hermetic Blues: Posthuman (+5), indicating a +5 obstacle to mutual comprehension and perception between it and the PCs.*

Treat communicating with Transparency as a Superb (+5) mindburn attack against a character's Will. If the PC wins, he comes away from the communication, awed and impressed, but with some information. If not, he suffers an appropriate amount of mental stress.

On a success, the PC understands that Transparency is somehow opening "conduits" in the fabric of space-time to communicate, almost as if it's a ZIP cell or currently travelling in 2-space; sensorview will even detect signals similar to a tachyon distortion field (a 2-space wake).

On a success with style, the PC will experience a contact with a vast and superior intelligence: Transparency itself. There is some kind of mind there!

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Blue

WHERE NEXT?

The PCs have free rein. If they're aware of the Sapphire Vault, they may try to locate and enter it: see **Scene 2: Getting Into the Vault**. Alternatively, they may travel within the Jessilan system: see **Scene 4: Against a Background of Evacuation**.

Scene 2: Getting Into the Vault

In this scene, the PCs attempt to enter the secret "Sapphire Vault" of the Hermetic Blues—despite the security measures arrayed against them!

Location: Either the Vault Zone on Blue, or any link portal in the Jessila system.

THE HOOK

Numerous clues have been pointing to the Sapphire Vault on Blue as a focus for the current incomprehensible yet worrying Hermetic activity in the Jessila system—and perhaps even its key. The PCs may attempt to locate the entrance to the Vault and force their way in; or they may use a link portal (page 19) to "gate" directly in.

FORCING YOUR WAY INTO THE VAULT

Locating the Vault is a task in itself. Even approaching the Vault Zone will result in the PCs being warned off by *Blue Planet Command*, an airborne defence force run by the Jessilan system government. It's a Great (+4) contest of Active Sensing or Passive Sensing to locate the Vault on the ocean floor; on a failure, the PCs are attacked by a BPC *Orbital Defender* (use the stats for the System Patrol Boat on **Mind-jammer** page 241). The characters may have contacts, etc, they can draw on for advantages in the contest.

Once the PCs have located the Vault entrance, they'll have to descend to the ocean floor and enter the airlock of **Contact Command and Control (CCC)** (page 64), at which point they'll be engaged by the 3SI forces situated at the entrance to the Vault to deter intruders. This will be a difficult fight, but with thought, good tactics, and a little luck, the PCs can prevail.

At this point, figure that the 3SI force will comprise all of the remaining personnel in Gel-Gul Faraqisti's team, plus an additional annihilator synthetic (page 50) and one group of 3 equivocal measures specialists (page 50). Note that this could be up to 5 annihilator synthetics and two groups of 3 EM specialists, though it'll likely be less. They'll attack using unequivocal measures; this is no longer a political confrontation, but a desperate attempt by the 3SI to wipe out any opposition before they can disrupt the Hermetics' plan.

Once the 3SI forces are neutralised, the PCs can enter the Vault.

USING A PORTAL TO GET INTO THE VAULT

So far there is only one set of link portals in the Jessila system (page 19). However, it's possible that one of the "entangle-

CONTACT COMMAND AND CONTROL

Physical Stress:

1	2	3	4
---	---	---	---

Systems Stress:

1	2	3
---	---	---

Consequences: 1 mild + 1 moderate

Scale: Huge (+2)

Aspects: Commonality Strong Point on the Edge of the Alien Unknown; The Only Way Is Up Or Down; Let's Make Sure We Don't Start A War; The Illusion of Control; Reactive Policy.

Skills: Great (+4) Knowledge, Passive Sensing; Good (+3) Hull Strength, Intrusion; Fair (+2) Systems, Technical; Average (+1) Active Sensing, Close Combat, Ranged Combat.

STUNTS

♦ **Beat Them At Their Own Game:** +2 Intrusion overcome and create advantage bonus to enter zone closed to constructs.

♦ **Passenger Accommodation:** Accommodations for 20 crew.

♦ **Top Urgency:** +2 to Passive Sensing when on top urgency alert.

EXTRAS

★ **ECM Array:** +2 defend bonus vs EW and Mindscape attacks.

★ **Makepoint:** Produce basic materials and small items of equipment.

ment paths" in **Episode Two Scene 4: The Barrier Flickers** above will point to a terminus in the **Beacon** asteroid. Also (see page 60), the Promise may be used to activate a Blue bridge niche halt as a portal into the Vault.

Passing through a link portal is a similar experience to using a 3-space far gate, except in this case you're on foot, not inside a reinforced craft, and therefore likely feel rather exposed. Passing through appears instantaneous (there's actually a slight delay, depending on how close you are to the Vault), and takes the character directly to Secundacule Gamma (C) (page 64).

WHERE NEXT?

If the PCs do manage to enter the Sapphire Vault, then you'll probably want to use **Scene 3: Exploring the Sapphire Vault** next.

Scene 3: Exploring the Sapphire Vault

In this scene, the PCs penetrate the mysterious Sapphire Vault of the Hermetic Blues.

Location: Inside the bizarre and incomprehensible Sapphire Vault of the Hermetic Blues.

THE HOOK

The PCs have entered the Sapphire Vault, and are now exploring, either more or less at random, or looking for a way of understanding or even managing the Brightening.

THE SAPPHIRE VAULT

The Sapphire Vault is a vast artificial cavern system lying 500 metres beneath the ocean floor of the planet Blue. Comprising three main caverns, the complex is approximately 19km wide by 18km long, a total of some 350 square kilometres.

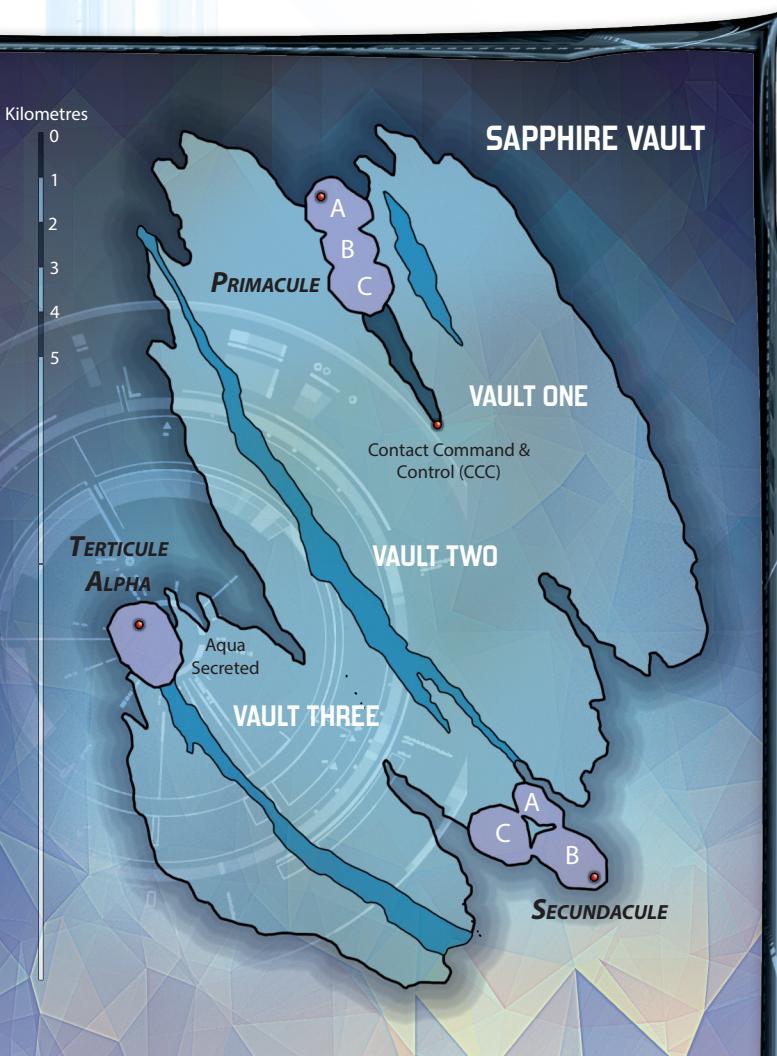
The Vault is highly coloured in blues, whites, and pale turquoises. The ceiling, far above, goes through a luminosity cycle in tandem with the day-night cycle of the planet above. The caverns themselves contain a complete biome of prelapsarian Blue life forms, all of which appear to be specifically tailored to help the Hermetic Blues, and many of which blur the lines between life form and artefact. Examples include the *Feeder Breeders* and *The Clean Up Crew*. Many of these are dangerous to intruders such as humans and even non-Hermetic Blues.

There are artefacts in the Sapphire Vault which are clearly not life forms, and which appear to be self-maintaining prelapsarian devices. These appear to respond to unconscious controls from the Hermetics, and perhaps also conscious commands.

Some 20,000 Hermetics live in the Sapphire Vault, concentrated mostly in three main settlements. All are engaged in unfathomable activities which in fact are a re-run of their failed attempt to go post some six hundred standard years ago. They've spent the intervening period attempting to understand what went wrong; this time, they believe they've got it right.

SAPPHIRE VAULT AREAS

- Aqua Secreted:** This is the most mysterious of the Hermetic settlements. Almost all of us is underwater; flooded, but possibly deliberately so. A dazzling column of light which emerges from the water marks the location of "Brightening Control" (page 68).
- Contact Command & Control (CCC):** SCI Force and the 3SI have a presence here; they're bitter rivals. Teams are engaged in observation of the whole Sapphire Vault remotely: they try to avoid entering the Vault in person as it can be very dangerous, from both Hermetic patrols and the life form / artefacts of the Vault biome.
- Primacule:** The Primacule settlement comprises three hemispherical **settlement craters**, with strange Hermetic structures which may serve as dwellings for as many as six thousand Hermetic Blues. Most are concentrated about the Codex Spire at Primacule Alpha's northern end.
- Secundacule:** The Secundacule settlement has a triangular structure, with each settlement crater connected to the other two. There are some four thousand Hermetic Blues here, and much of the settlement crater area is covered with biome flora. Secundacule Gamma (c) is unremarkable except for the fact that it's the destination of link portal transits into the Sapphire Vault.
- Terticule Alpha:** There is only one settlement crater in Terticule, and it's flooded right up to the brim. Beneath the waters is the submerged settlement of Aqua Secreted and its dazzling column of light.
- Vault One:** The dimmest of the three vaults, lit only by the varying ambient light from the cavern ceiling. The biome here is relatively slow moving.
- Vault Two:** The median vault, bisected by a long narrow "lake" of water 250 metres wide at its narrowest point, and up to 1km deep. The biome here is similar to that on the surface of Blue, if more diverse.
- Vault Three:** The brightest of the third vault is lit by the great pillar of light emanating from the submerged settlement of Aqua Secreted.



FIGHTING BETWEEN THE BLUES

Once the PCs have penetrated the Sapphire Vault, they'll be fair game for the Hermetics' lethal defences, which will immediately start tracking them down. Each time the PCs move between locations in the Sapphire Vault (see the adjacent map), have them make a Stealth roll against the Epic (+7) detection abilities of the Hermetics. If they fail, then a Hermetic **excision team** (below) will descend from the "sky" on grav suspensors to wipe them out.

This will be a desperate struggle: the Hermetics have made unequivocal measures into a fine art, and the PCs are trespassing on their innermost control centres at a critical moment in their species' evolution. If you want to have mercy on the PCs, have the excision team target any non-PCs on their side first, and be generous when adjudicating PC concessions. It's perfectly likely that the PCs will keep getting driven off by excision teams until they finally manage to sneak through to their destination (see "The Nature of the Brightening" below).

Each excision team comprises at least one Hermetic exciser and one squad of Hermetic exterminators. You can beef this up if your PCs are armed for bear, but we recom-

mend having no more than two excisers. Note also that if the 3SI are still at large they may well team up with the excision team!

THE NATURE OF THE BRIGHTENING

Wherever the PCs are in the Sapphire Vault, their surroundings will be illuminated by a bright and rapidly shimmering glow emanating from Vault Three. Specifically this is a blin-

A SQUAD OF HERMETIC EXTERMINATORS

GROUP OF 5 GOOD MINOR NPC	3	Stress: 1□2□□ 1□2□□ 1□2□□ 1□2□□ 1□2□□
		Scale: Medium (+0)
		Aspects: Wiping Out the Primitive Life Form Infestation

Skills: Good (+3) Ranged Combat; Fair (+2) Notice; Average (+1) Athletics, Provoke (+4 teamwork bonus).

HERMETIC EXCISER

Physical Stress: 1□2□3□4□

Mental Stress: 1□2□3□4□

Consequences: 3 mild + 1 moderate.

Scale: Medium (+0).

Evolution Index: +4 (+3 difficulty to comprehend and perceive Commonality humans).

Exoscale: +4 (-6 penalty for Hermetics to perceive Commonality humans, +12 shifts on success; +6 bonus for Commonality humans to perceive Hermetics, -12 shifts on success).

Aspects: Coldly Alien Destroyer; Difficulty Perceiving Primitive Humans; Indomitable Pursuit; Total Awareness of the Sapphire Vault; The Project Is the Only Goal.

Manifestations: Sensorium: Radio Sense (Wave Gland); Comms: Wave Gland and Heart Strings; Integral Part of Transcending Species Massmind; Voluntary Abdication From Temporal Flow.

Skills: Transcendent (+11) Science; Posthuman (+10) Investigate; Transhuman (+9) Notice; Legendary (+8) Knowledge, Will; Epic (+7) Physique, Ranged Combat; Fantastic (+6) Athletics, Provoke.

STUNTS

♦ **Ghostless Shell:** +2 Stealth bonus to hide from view, even to sensors and synthetic senses.

SUPPORTING NPC

♦ **The Power of Deduction:** 1/scene, spend a fate point to discover / create one aspect per shift on target of Investigate roll; you get one free invoke.

♦ **Sensor Scan:** Use sensorview and Notice for passive sensing construct actions.

EXTRAS

★ **Damper Field:** Any shifts of physical damage hitting the exciser must roll to beat Superb (+5), or no damage is done.

★ **Excision Field Projector:** Causes a 1m sphere of matter to disappear in a blinding flash of heat and light. Weapon : 6, range 2 ; any consequences represent matter which is simply **gone**, and must be regenerated. Physical armour has no effect, but energy shields do. If used in 2-space, this causes a cataclysmic explosion, destroying the ship and precipitating the debris back into n-space; Globe of Annihilation.

★ **Grav Suspensors:** Use Athletics as Pilot; move and attack up to 2 zones away.

★ **Mental Blast:** Use Provoke to make attacks causing physical stress damage.

★ **Prescience Routines:** For a fate point, make an Empathy, Investigate, Knowledge, Notice, Science, etc, create advantage roll to create a **prediction**

dingly bright column of energy which is emerging from the centre of the Aqua Secreted Hermetic settlement in Terticule Alpha (page 64). Fair (+2) analysis rolls will liken this energy column to the 2-space lattice which covers a planeship shortly before it translates into 2-space. It's rising from the heart of Aqua Secreted; it's about 50 metres in diameter, and rises straight up and through the cavernous ceiling of the Vault.

If the PCs make it through to Aqua Secreted, they'll encounter no opposition until they attempt to enter **Brightening Control**, the complex and intricately-fluted facility at the heart of the city. At that point, see "Destroying Brightening Control" on page 68 below.

WHAT IS THE 3SI DOING?

If there are any survivors of Gel-Gul Faraqisti's team (page 50), they'll now be at large in the Sapphire Vault, perhaps even cooperating with the Hermetics and attempting to hunt down and wipe out the PCs. Whenever the PCs attempt to move between locations in the Vault, they must make a Stealth roll against the 3SI team's Superb (+5) detection abilities to avoid being tracked down and attacked.

WHERE NEXT?

If the PCs make an attempt on the Brightening energy beam, see **Scene 5: Stopping the Brightening (Destroying Brightening Control)**. If they retreat from the Sapphire Vault back out into the Jessila system, see **Scene 4: Against a Background of Evacuation**.

Scene 4: Against a Background of Evacuation

In this scene, the PCs are undertaking other actions in the Jessila system, while around them rages the panic caused by the Brightening!

Location: Anywhere in the Jessila system.

THE HOOK

The PCs are attempting other actions elsewhere in the Jessila system during the Brightening. There's a lot of panicking, and political chaos, and the security situation is deteriorating rapidly.

PANIC

The Commonality and factions in the Jessilan government are attempting to evacuate Blue, and some are even readying to leave the system. Preparations are underway everywhere. As people see these preparations, they start to panic, and some are already getting hurt.

If the PCs attempt any actions on a planet at this point, this is the first thing they'll come across. They may attempt to intervene, trying to calm people down, seize the initiative, and lead them to safety.

Calming the panicking mobs is a Great (+4) contest of Rapport, or any other appropriate skill. On any failure, the PCs

incur an *Out of Control Crowds* aspect, and the PC which made the roll incurs physical stress equal to the negative shifts; armour or force fields have no effect.

If the PCs lose the contest, they find themselves attacked by the panicking crowds: see "Fighting" below.

On a success, the PCs lead victims of the panic to safety, and gain a *Calmed and Controlled Civilians* aspect.

FIGHTING

The PCs find themselves under attack from panicking crowds! They are likely to be stirred up by talk of Hermetics and Restorationists, and of course by the weird light beams illuminating Blue and locations throughout the system.

Whenever the PCs find themselves under attack this way, figure each is attacked by 4 Average (+1) minor NPCs.

THE PANICKING MOB LASHES OUT

GROUP OF 4 AVERAGE (+1) MINOR NPCs

Stress:

Scale: Medium (+0)

Aspects: Terrifying Mindless Mob Driven By Hysterical Fear.

Skills: Average (+1) Unarmed Combat (+3 teamwork bonus).

OBSERVERS

A successful Fair (+2) Notice or Passive Sensing roll while travelling the Jessila system will notice that, just as vessels and people are preparing themselves to flee or take shelter, just as equally other forces are readying themselves to stay put and take measurements, observing the progression of the Blue event.

Who are these people? It's obvious at first glance they're from the Commonality. A Fair (+2) Investigate roll using the Mindscape reveals they've been preparing for some time; the PCs may identify members of SCI Force, 3SI and other instrumentalities and ministries; but there are other figures here, too.

On a success with style, the PCs track the observers to a special monitoring post, either on planet or in space, where a large array of detection and observation equipment, monitors, recorders, and drones has been set up to observe the planet Blue and other locations in-system. Characters making Stealth rolls may get close to the observation equipment, and a successful Investigation or Science roll reveals that the procedures being followed are more those one would expect of a first contact mission rather than an astronomical event.

WHERE NEXT?

If the PCs try to thwart the Brightening, go to **Scene 5: Stopping the Brightening**. Otherwise, go to **Epilogue: Transparency Achieved (The Chaos of Blue Vanishing)**.

Scene 5: Stopping the Brightening

The PCs finally work out a way to potentially stop the Brightening! Will they succeed, and what will the consequences be?

Location: Inside or near the Sapphire Vault; or even attacking it from orbit, via the link portals, etc.

THE HOOK

As the clock is ticking away and the Brightening approaching singularity, the PCs may try to stop it. There are several ways to approach this (see “Other Ways of Stopping the Brightening” below), but principally in this scene we’re looking at the PCs creating a devastating and disruptive explosion. In game terms, this is a **challenge** (*Mindjammer* page 147).

ANALYSING THE PROBLEM

Once again, the PCs are going to try and create a theory (see page 53), this time to answer the question “How can we disrupt the Brightening?” It’s a Fair (+2) contest of Science or another appropriate skill; the PCs may have aspects remaining from analysing the Blue field device activation event (page 52) which may be invoked. Each exchange of this contest causes 1 point of plot stress (see page 61), applied either piecemeal or in total (it’s the player’s choice).

On a failure, the PCs are stumped, and must try something else (although they may succeed at a cost). On a success, the PCs may come up with an explanation of a way to disrupt the Brightening, in the form of an aspect. This may be anything which makes logical sense; for the purposes of this scene, we’re going to declare that the Brightening is being powered by the Hermetic connection to Transparency, and that connection may be disrupted by a “3-space pulse” detonated just at the moment of singularity: *A 3-Space Pulse Will Disrupt the Transparency Singularity!*

The PCs need to build a “3-space torpedo”!

CREATING THE 3-SPACE TORPEDO

If working out how to disrupt the Brightening was a Science roll, actually constructing a “3-space torpedo” is a Technical roll. Let the PCs declare what they need: we suggest some pretty heavy duty gear: probably a set of planing engines, with optional situation aspects provided by the Promise, a link portal, and / or a torsion field projector.

The Technical roll is against a Superb (+5) opposition. Failure isn’t a failure to create the torpedo, but rather a success at a cost; its detonation is going to damage the PCs or their vessel. On a success, the PCs may once again create an appropriate aspect, such as *This Torpedo Will Send Shockwaves Through 3-Space!*

DETONATING THE TORPEDO

The third part of the challenge is actually detonating the torpedo at the right place at just the right moment. When the Brightening reaches its exponential singularity, the fabric of space-time will begin to unravel, creating a breach—and that’s exactly where the PCs need to focus their disruption.

Now, there’s no doubt about the torpedo actually detonating, but the PCs are going to make a Ranged Combat roll to target it precisely at one of the space-time interstices being opened.

This can be done anywhere in the Jessila system; there are interstices opening everywhere, like threads of lightning. It’s probably most dramatic closer to Blue, where the “lightning threads” are converging.

Targeting the 3-space torpedo is a Superb (+5) Ranged Combat roll. The PCs may invoke aspects from creating the torpedo, as well as any other aspects.

On a success, the torpedo explodes with a brilliant flash, disrupting the Brightening and sending tsunami of stupendously powerful space-time disturbance tearing throughout the Jessilan system. Stress how incredible these forces are: there are earthquakes on all the system’s planets in the system, and a series of coronal mass ejections which immediately begin to disrupt communications in the system—the **star storm**.

The torpedo stops the Brightening in its tracks!



On a failure, either the torpedo explodes but doesn't stop the Brightening (see **The Chaos of Blue Vanishing** on page 70), or the PCs select a success at a cost. In this case, make sure the cost is commensurate; damaging or wrecking the ship, hideously mutating one of the PCs bodies with bizarre space-time re-alignments, and so on, are appropriate.

BUT WAIT—WHAT'S THIS? A PULSE DRAGON PHENOMENON!

Disrupting the Brightening by means of a "3-space disturbance" has a major twist: it causes an instance of the Pulse Dragon Phenomenon (*Mindjammer* page 92)! The space-time breaches throughout the Jessilan system disrupted by the 3-space torpedo become "doorways" for strange sinuous belts of writhing space-time fabric, which a Knowledge roll or other appropriate roll quite unbelievably determines are pulse dragons!

This is an unprecedented chance to analyse this rare yet lethal phenomenon. And yet it wreaks havoc: any nearby craft are destroyed; in the case of any serious costs being incurred, this may mean the PCs' craft, too. The only real defence is to run away.

The pulse dragon phenomenon appears in orbit around Blue, and descends towards the Sapphire Vault. There are earthquakes, huge tsunamis. The Sapphire Vault is completely wiped out.

If the PCs want to retrieve anything, or make close observations of the phenomenon, a Fantastic (+6) Pilot roll is required. On a failure, the PCs' vessel incurs consequences equal to the negative shifts. See **The Chaos of the Pulse Dragon Phenomenon** for the aftermath, including observations.

OTHER WAYS OF STOPPING THE BRIGHTENING

The 3-space torpedo isn't the only way of stopping the Brightening—although it may be the most obvious. You should allow pretty much any decent idea the PCs come up with to have a reasonable chance of success, as long as it all sounds suitably scientific, risky, and at least vaguely like it makes sense. In addition to the "disruption" solution, you may find the PCs' ideas may also end up as variants on the following two solutions:

DESTROYING BRIGHTENING CONTROL

This is extremely difficult. It's an attack on the Brightening Control in the Aqua Secreted settlement in Terticule Alpha, in the Sapphire Vault (page 64). Assuming the PCs can physically get to Brightening Control (see **Scene 3: Exploring the Sapphire Vault**, above), they must then take out the facility by mustering as much firepower as they can. The stats below portray Brightening Control as a Huge (+2) construct; note that scale effects (*Mindjammer* page 174) apply, making it difficult for the PCs to do sufficient damage unless they have highly destructive weaponry.

If the PCs destroy Brightening Control, it will stop the Brightening in its tracks. However, this time there won't be a pulse dragon phenomenon; instead, see **The Chaos of Transparency Denied** in the **Epilogue**, below.

SUPPORTING CONSTRUCT

BRIGHTENING CONTROL

Physical Stress: 1 2

Systems Stress: 1 2 3

Consequences: 1 mild + 1 moderate

Scale: Huge (+2)

Aspects: Uncanny Translucent Hermetic Structure; The Heart of the Labyrinthine Terticule Assembly; Incomprehensible Structures; Coordinated Blues; Terrifying Energies.

Skills: Great (+4) Close Combat, Ranged Combat; Good (+3) Active Sensing, EW; Fair (+2) Passive Sensing, Systems.

STUNTS

♦ **Direct Denial Attack:** +2 EW create an advantage bonus to cow the opposition.

♦ **Distributed Systems:** +2 Systems defend bonus against attempts to overwhelm your systems.

MANIPULATING THE COSMIC MANIFOLD

In this case, the PCs' theory about how to disrupt the Brightening focuses on what the Brightening is actually doing. It's a Fair (+2) contest of Science or another appropriate roll, and the PCs may have aspects to invoke. Each exchange of the contest causes 1 point of plot stress (see page 61), piecemeal or totalled.

On a failure, the PCs are stumped, and must try something else (although they may succeed at a cost). On a success, they come up with an explanation of what the Brightening is doing, and how to stop it, in the form of an aspect. This time, in our explanation (and remember—your game may decide differently!), we're going to declare that the Hermetics are trying to move their entire species and indeed their whole planet into the "inter-brane flux" which exists between the membranes of the manifold universe—a transcendence which will take them outside space-time itself! To stop this, the PCs will somehow have to "displace" the inter-brane flux, "sliding it to one side" so that the destination of the Brightening is no longer the flux, but instead an alternate universe! *Displacing the Inter-Brane Flux Will Prevent the Hermetics From Taking Blue Out of Space-Time!*

The PCs follow a similar process to creating the 3-space torpedo. Next, they must come up with a technical solution for displacing the inter-brane flux! Again let them declare what they need: probably planing engines again, maybe 3-space knowledge, a link portal, even the Promise, a set of gravity cannon, and so on. It's a Superb (+5) Technical roll again, with failure resulting in success at a cost. On a success, let the PCs come up with an appropriate aspect such as *We Are About to Manipulate the Cosmic Manifold!*

Finally, have the PCs make a Superb (+5) Ranged Combat (or possibly Technical) roll at the moment of Brightening singularity to properly “displace” the cosmic manifold and redirect the Hermetics’ attempt from the inter-brane flux.

On a success, the Brightening fails, but without disturbing 3-space! The Hermetics’ attempt at transcendence is thrown back on its beginnings, and they’ll have to work out what went wrong—again! See **The Chaos of Transparency Denied** in the **Epilogue**. But before that happens...

A PARALLEL UNIVERSE...

As a reward for the PCs’ ingenuity, before the membrane interstices close, they gain a brief glimpse into an alternate universe. Make a big deal of this: right in front of them, on their sensors, sending readings completely off the scale, is an alternate, parallel universe. The laws of physics as we know them no longer hold. Awesome vistas spread out before them; maybe there are no stars, but weirdly fluctuating clouds of actinic light. Maybe there are hints of huge cosmic topography, unfathomable structures hundreds and thousands of light years long. Flickering coruscations blink across their field of vision, flashing organised patterns tantalisingly suggestive of life of an entirely different nature...

Treat this as a **special advancement milestone**. Any PC can change an aspect or stunt (including buying new ones if they have sufficient refresh) to represent the fantastic and esoteric knowledge they’re gaining from this. Let your players go to town; have they invented a prototype interdimensional drive? Communicated with a cosmic intelligence? Acquired a view on life and the universe which gives them almost messianic inspirations? This is the sort of experience which will one day take the Commonality to tech index 11 and beyond, so enjoy yourself...

And, of course, the PCs will end up on the radar of the 3SI—*Hounded For Information By the 3SI!*

WHERE NEXT?

Go to the Epilogue!



EPILOGUE: TRANSPARENCY ACHIEVED?

At this point the **Transparency** scenario is over. All that remains is to tie up loose ends; to reaffirm what on earth just happened, and determine what the benefits—and consequences—were, both to the PCs and the Commonality as a whole.

The Chaos of Blue Vanishing

If the PCs fail to stop the Brightening, its glow finally becomes impossibly bright as it reaches its exponential singularity. The Blues on the planet Blue become euphoric, ecstatic, then cease interacting with the outside world, entering some kind of trance-like communion. The glow flares to unbearable levels, and the whole planet disappears! A huge gravity quake tears through the Jessila star system—destructive to nearby vessels, moons, etc, but even causing quakes on Jessila. The PCs must make a Superb (+5) Pilot roll or suffer consequences equal to the shifts of failure.

The PCs have witnessed some kind of transcendence—an entire species “going post”! There are Blue survivors—those who weren’t on the planet Blue—who briefly remember the experience of Transparency before the planet vanished. Beyond a feeling of breathless enlightenment, all they now know is that they’re no longer intelligent enough to understand or explain the experience.

Where did the Blues go? All analyses point to some kind of transference into interstices between the membranes of the cosmic manifold—“dimensions” parallel to all points in space-time, but outside of it. Human comprehension begins to fail, but hyperintelligences and gestalt linguists will be exploring the ramifications for years to come.

The Chaos of the Pulse Dragon Phenomenon

If the PCs stop the Brightening by explosively disrupting the fabric of 3-space, this also causes a near-cataclysmic pulse dragon phenomenon.

The Hermetics of the Sapphire Vault are probably all destroyed, as is the Vault itself, and likely the greater part of the 3SI contingent in the system. Everyone is freaking out that the Pulse Dragon Phenomenon manifested itself **inside** the gravity well of a star system—the first ever recorded in almost 200 years of observations—completely independent of the operation of planing machines. But it was clearly the Phenomenon—so what happened? Is the whole Commonality in danger from this new development?

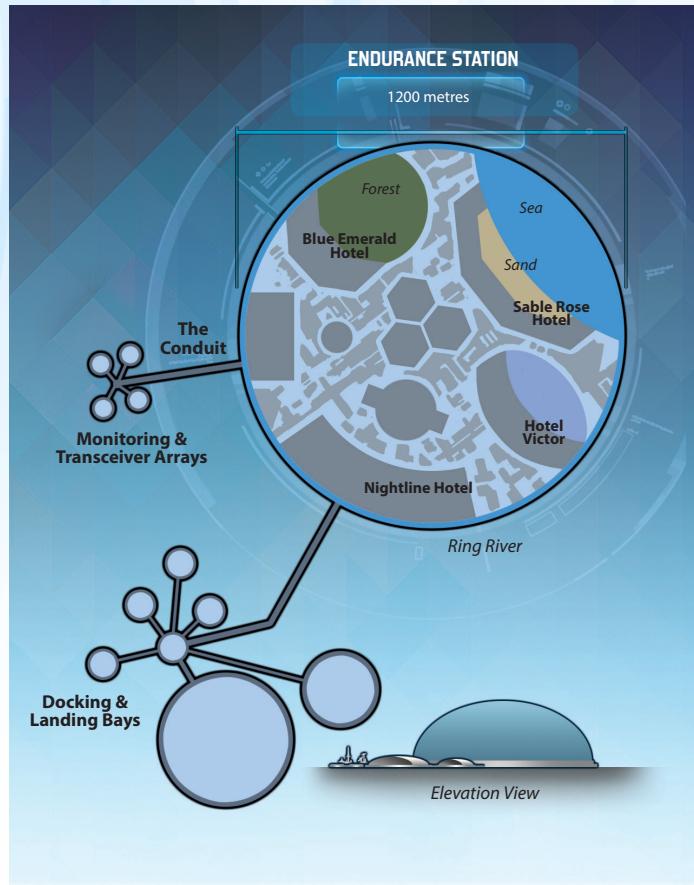
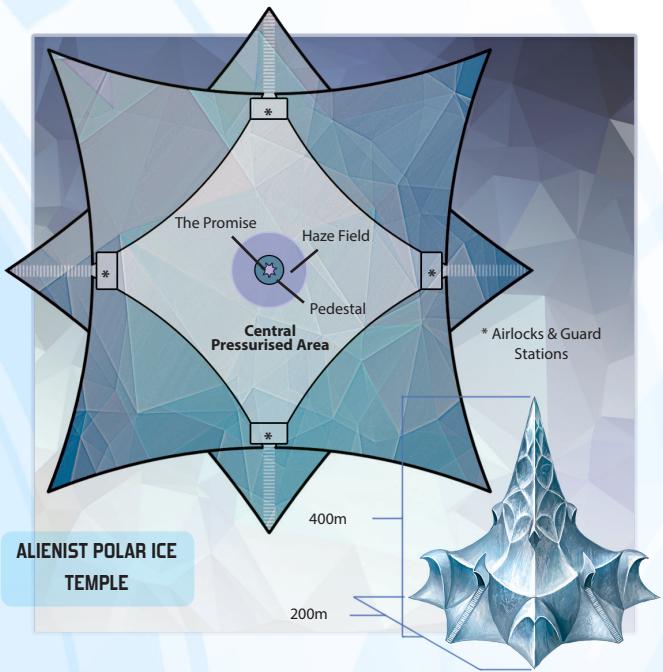
Theories abound, and many opportunities for learning. Let the PCs come up with new theories if they like (page 53). Perhaps it was the 3-space disruption caused by the 3-space torpedo’s energy pulse that caused the pulse dragon phenomenon to occur? Or was it merely a by-product? Does the phenomenon somehow power itself from 3-space energy? Or was it trying to shut down the 3-space pulse, or even prevent further uses of the 3-space torpedo?

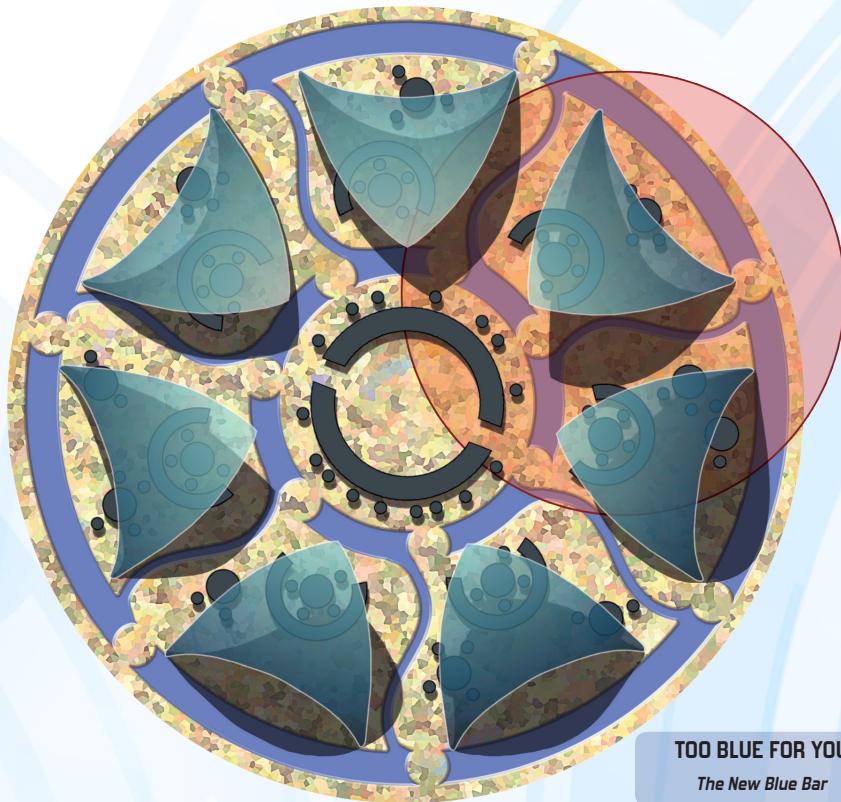
In the ensuing chaos, regardless of any theories, the surviving members of the 3SI immediately leave the Jessilan system, bound for the Core Worlds.

The Chaos of Transparency Denied

If the PCs stop the Brightening without precipitating a Pulse Dragon Phenomenon (ie by destroying Brightening Control or manipulating the cosmic manifold), the Hermetics may well still be at large—although tensions may be extremely high if they even suspect that they’ve been deliberately thwarted.

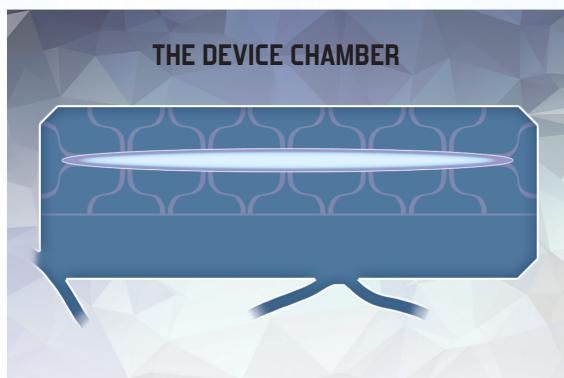
However, there are now major technological advances to be looked into: the possibilities of interdimensional travel, 3-space manipulation, even 3-space gating directly onto planetary surfaces. Let the PCs make theories and conduct research as above, if they like. If they’re successful, they may be responsible for a tech capability boost (**Mindjammer** page 297) for the entire Commonality. This will give them enormous kudos in Commonality circles—and they get to name their theories and the phenomena they’ve discovered after themselves, if they like.





TOO BLUE FOR YOU

The New Blue Bar



SAPPHIRE VAULT

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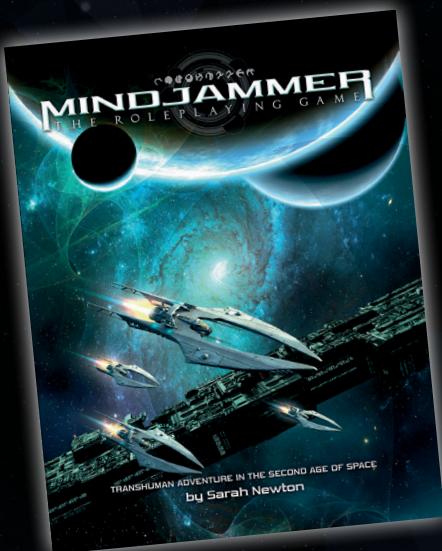
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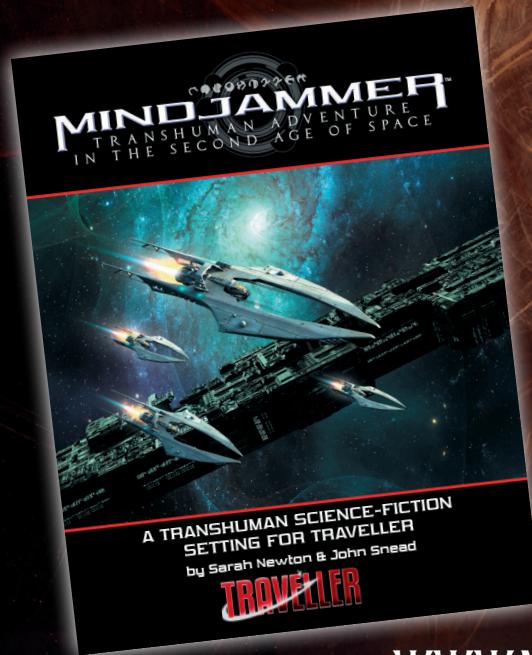
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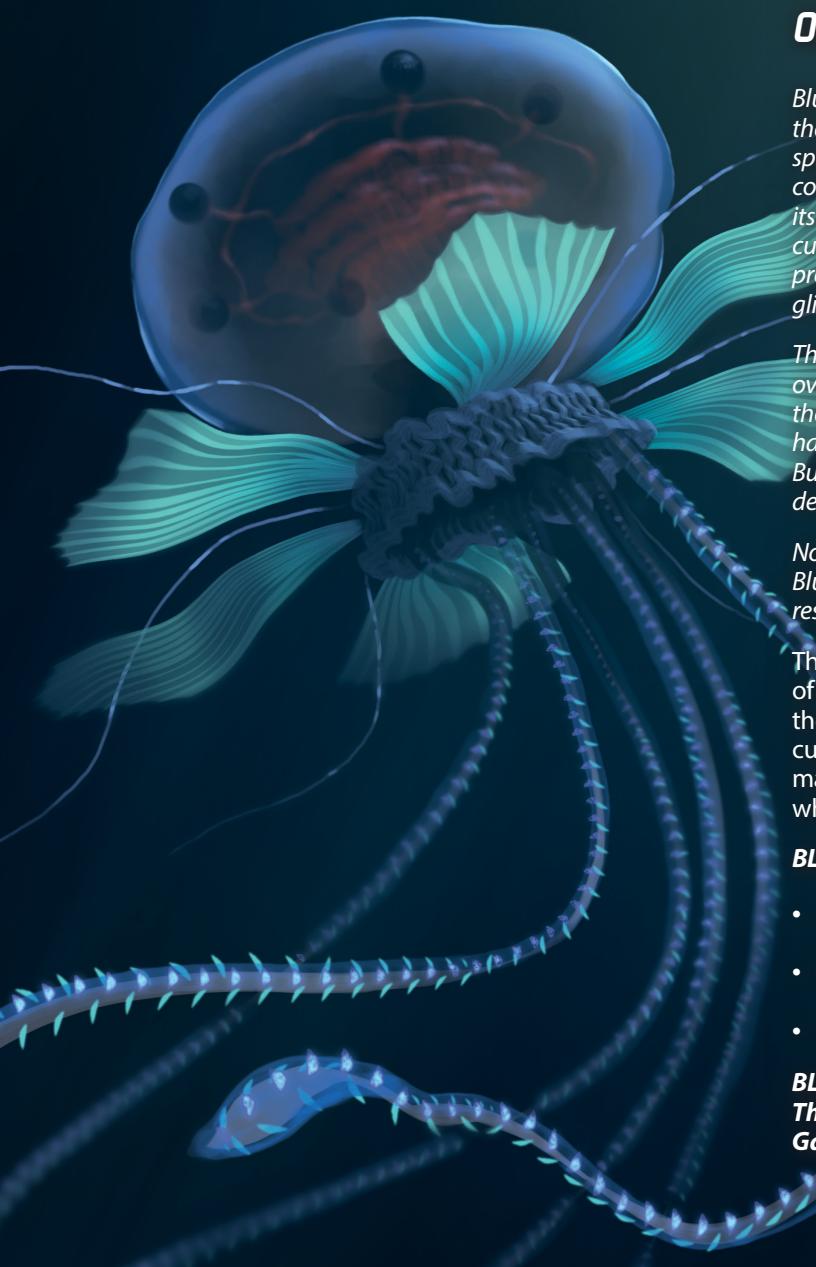
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