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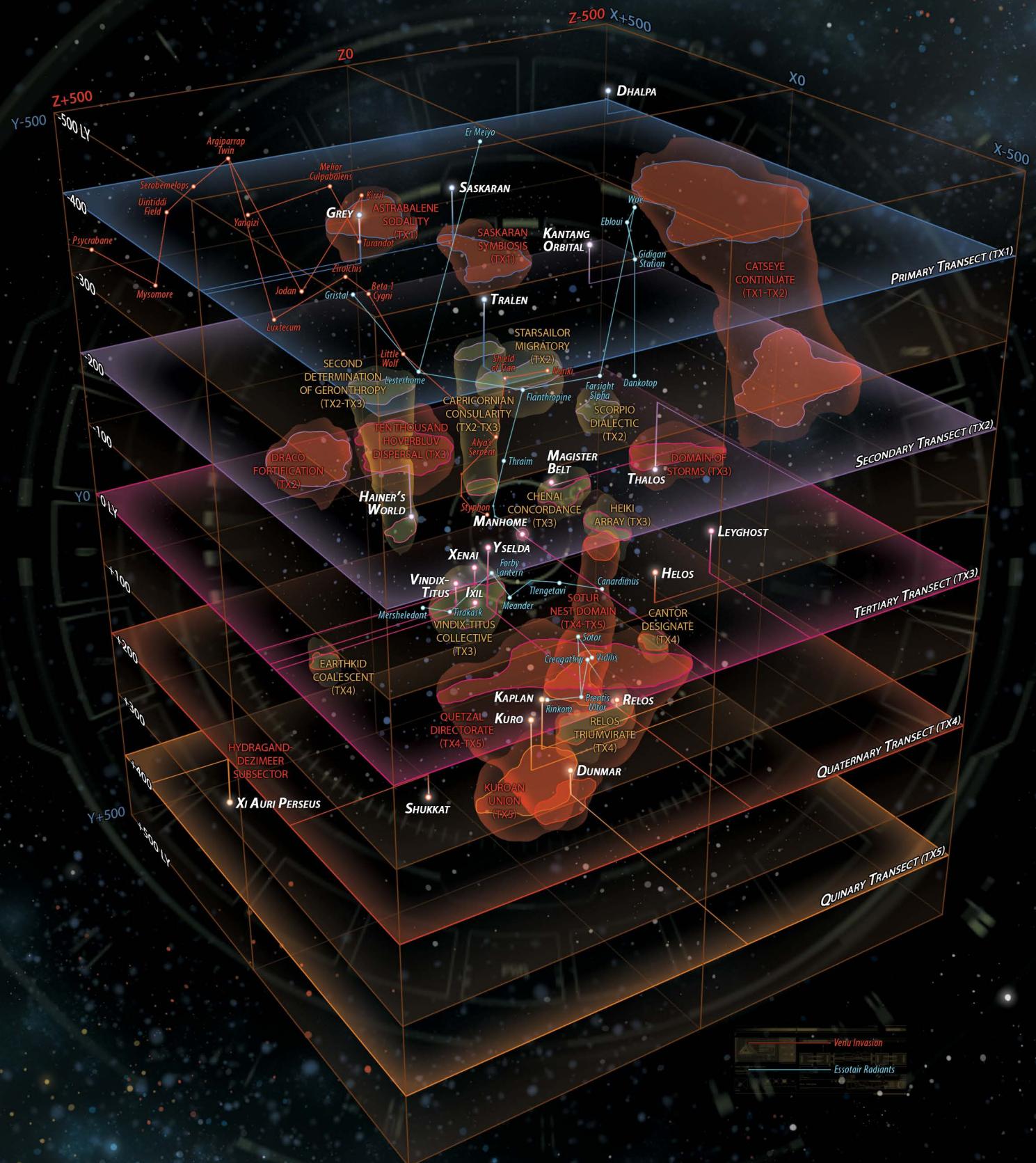
THE ROLEPLAYING GAME

THE CORE WORLDS

ADVENTURE IN THE HEART OF THE NEW COMMONALITY OF HUMANKIND
A MINDJAMMER SOURCEBOOK

by Sarah Newton, David Donachie,
Paul Mitchener & John Snead

The Core Worlds



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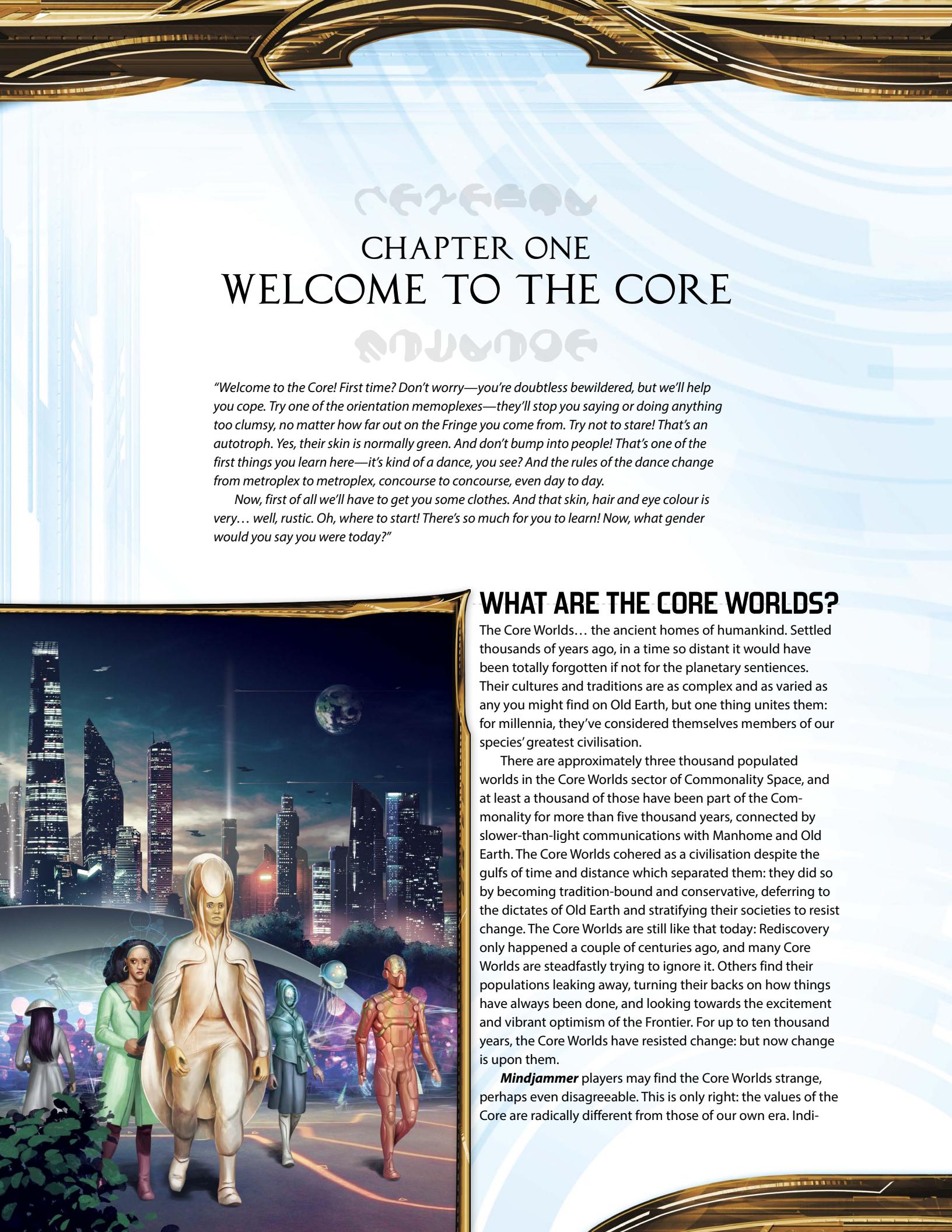
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CHAPTER ONE

WELCOME TO THE CORE

"Welcome to the Core! First time? Don't worry—you're doubtless bewildered, but we'll help you cope. Try one of the orientation memplexes—they'll stop you saying or doing anything too clumsy, no matter how far out on the Fringe you come from. Try not to stare! That's an autotroph. Yes, their skin is normally green. And don't bump into people! That's one of the first things you learn here—it's kind of a dance, you see? And the rules of the dance change from metroplex to metroplex, concourse to concourse, even day to day.

Now, first of all we'll have to get you some clothes. And that skin, hair and eye colour is very... well, rustic. Oh, where to start! There's so much for you to learn! Now, what gender would you say you were today?"

WHAT ARE THE CORE WORLDS?

The Core Worlds... the ancient homes of humankind. Settled thousands of years ago, in a time so distant it would have been totally forgotten if not for the planetary sentiences. Their cultures and traditions are as complex and as varied as any you might find on Old Earth, but one thing unites them: for millennia, they've considered themselves members of our species' greatest civilisation.

There are approximately three thousand populated worlds in the Core Worlds sector of Commonality Space, and at least a thousand of those have been part of the Commonality for more than five thousand years, connected by slower-than-light communications with Manhome and Old Earth. The Core Worlds cohered as a civilisation despite the gulfs of time and distance which separated them: they did so by becoming tradition-bound and conservative, deferring to the dictates of Old Earth and stratifying their societies to resist change. The Core Worlds are still like that today: Rediscovery only happened a couple of centuries ago, and many Core Worlds are steadfastly trying to ignore it. Others find their populations leaking away, turning their backs on how things have always been done, and looking towards the excitement and vibrant optimism of the Frontier. For up to ten thousand years, the Core Worlds have resisted change: but now change is upon them.

Mindjammer players may find the Core Worlds strange, perhaps even disagreeable. This is only right: the values of the Core are radically different from those of our own era. Indi-



vidualism is regarded as primitive and antisocial: what does an individual matter, in a society of trillions? Religion, news, and unlicensed sexual reproduction are all illegal: the social disruption they cause can't be tolerated by governments concerned with the long-term common weal of millions of people crammed together. Many people still opt to die when they reach 400 years old—it would be greedy and rude to expect more, not to mention the shame that would bring to your extended family pool of maybe a thousand people. And as for visitors from outside the Core Worlds—well, they can't help it! We all need to do our bit to help our less fortunate brethren to not make fools of themselves.

But there are virtues to be found in the Core Worlds, too. A marvellous sociability, a capacity to interest oneself profoundly in knowledge and the creative arts, to dedicate oneself to the perfection of mind and body—however your own Core World defines that. Core Worlders are educated, sociable, diplomatic, and unbelievably well-connected—and they've typically had several centuries to learn how not to be clumsy, both physically and socially. For a visiting Fringe Worlder, there are contacts and know-how to be gained here which could revolutionise a world which has just joined the Commonality—if only you can navigate its bewildering ways!

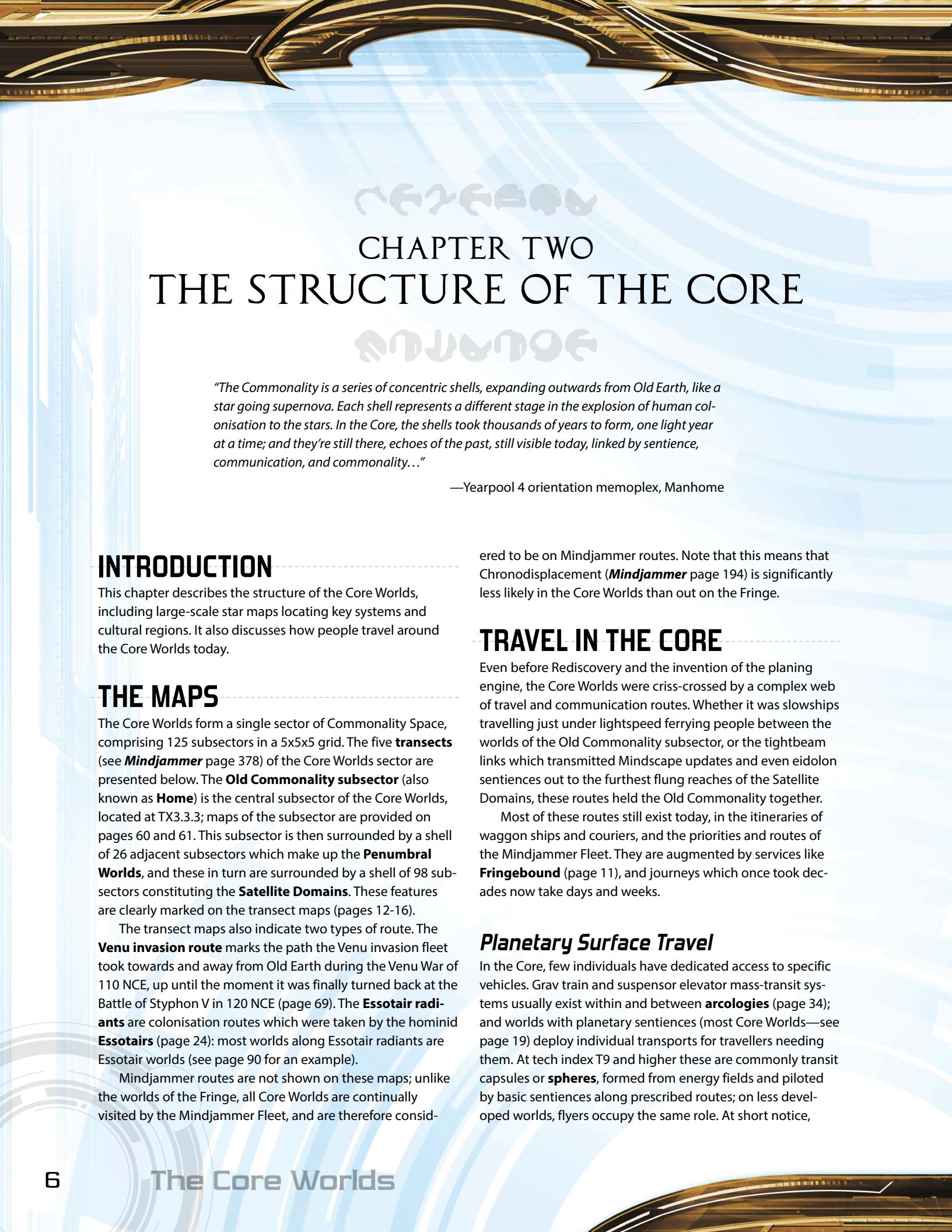
Nor is the Core homogenous. The Core Worlds sector falls into five broad regions. The first of these is Old Earth, the densely populated garden world which is the cradle of humankind. Then comes Manhome, the many populated worlds (natural and artificial) of the Solar System, settled for ten thousand years or more. Third comes the Old Commonality, the settled systems within 100 light years of Old Earth

which were in slower-than-light contact with Manhome for those same ten millennia. But humankind went further: the Penumbral Worlds are the fourth part of the Core, a shell of worlds 200 light years deep surrounding the Old Commonality. In regular but infrequent contact with Old Earth, they emulated Old Commonality society but often went their own way. Finally, fifth comes the Satellite Domains. These are a third shell of worlds at the outer reaches of the Core Worlds sector. Although they often diverged massively from the Old Commonality mainstream, they were aware of its existence and communicated with Old Earth as best they could.

Mix in ten millennia of history, densely populated societies, enhanced long-lived humans, xenomorphs, divergent hominids, ancient sentiences administrating whole worlds, and you begin to grasp something of the Core...

What's In This Book?

The Core Worlds is a sourcebook for playing your **Mind-jammer** games in the heart of the New Commonality of Humankind. It presents the structure and peoples of the Core—how to get about, what people are like, their often unusual customs—as well as its five regions: Old Earth, Manhome, the Old Commonality, the Penumbral Worlds, and the Satellite Domains, including maps, histories, and overviews, and detailed highlights here and there. There's material here for immediate play—worlds, locations, themes, genotypes, scenario hooks—and also inspiration to help you create your own worlds and regions of the Core.



CHAPTER TWO

THE STRUCTURE OF THE CORE

"The Commonality is a series of concentric shells, expanding outwards from Old Earth, like a star going supernova. Each shell represents a different stage in the explosion of human colonisation to the stars. In the Core, the shells took thousands of years to form, one light year at a time; and they're still there, echoes of the past, still visible today, linked by sentience, communication, and commonality..."

—Yearpool 4 orientation memoplex, Manhome

INTRODUCTION

This chapter describes the structure of the Core Worlds, including large-scale star maps locating key systems and cultural regions. It also discusses how people travel around the Core Worlds today.

THE MAPS

The Core Worlds form a single sector of Commonality Space, comprising 125 subsectors in a 5x5x5 grid. The five **transects** (see *Mindjammer* page 378) of the Core Worlds sector are presented below. The **Old Commonality subsector** (also known as **Home**) is the central subsector of the Core Worlds, located at TX3.3.3; maps of the subsector are provided on pages 60 and 61. This subsector is then surrounded by a shell of 26 adjacent subsectors which make up the **Penumbral Worlds**, and these in turn are surrounded by a shell of 98 sub-sectors constituting the **Satellite Domains**. These features are clearly marked on the transect maps (pages 12-16).

The transect maps also indicate two types of route. The **Venu invasion route** marks the path the Venu invasion fleet took towards and away from Old Earth during the Venu War of 110 NCE, up until the moment it was finally turned back at the Battle of Styphon V in 120 NCE (page 69). The **Essotair radiants** are colonisation routes which were taken by the hominid **Essotairs** (page 24): most worlds along Essotair radiants are Essotair worlds (see page 90 for an example).

Mindjammer routes are not shown on these maps; unlike the worlds of the Fringe, all Core Worlds are continually visited by the Mindjammer Fleet, and are therefore consid-

ered to be on Mindjammer routes. Note that this means that Chronodisplacement (*Mindjammer* page 194) is significantly less likely in the Core Worlds than out on the Fringe.

TRAVEL IN THE CORE

Even before Rediscovery and the invention of the planing engine, the Core Worlds were criss-crossed by a complex web of travel and communication routes. Whether it was slowships travelling just under lightspeed ferrying people between the worlds of the Old Commonality subsector, or the tightbeam links which transmitted Mindscape updates and even eidolon sentiences out to the furthest flung reaches of the Satellite Domains, these routes held the Old Commonality together.

Most of these routes still exist today, in the itineraries of waggon ships and couriers, and the priorities and routes of the Mindjammer Fleet. They are augmented by services like **Fringebound** (page 11), and journeys which once took decades now take days and weeks.

Planetary Surface Travel

In the Core, few individuals have dedicated access to specific vehicles. Grav train and suspensor elevator mass-transit systems usually exist within and between **arcologies** (page 34); and worlds with planetary sentiences (most Core Worlds—see page 19) deploy individual transports for travellers needing them. At tech index T9 and higher these are commonly transit capsules or **spheres**, formed from energy fields and piloted by basic sentiences along prescribed routes; on less developed worlds, flyers occupy the same role. At short notice,

transport acquisition may require a Resources roll of Average (+1) to Good (+3) difficulty, depending on world and distance.

Interplanetary Travel

On Old Earth, surface to orbit interface travel is conducted via Earthport and Terra Tower (page 42); no space craft are permitted to land on the surface. Many Manhome worlds follow similar policies, as do Core Worlds with delicate ecosystems or high populations. Other Core Worlds (such as those of control index Surveilled (+2) and below) are more lenient, and allow space craft to operate to and from specific landing fields; few allow unrestricted flight within their atmospheres. Where flight is permitted (as on some plateeworlds), the vessel usually hands over control to a local pilot sentience. Even in these cases, docking is still at specific facilities; few worlds allow you to have a starship parked outside your home!

Interplanetary travel is via gravity engine, averaging 400G acceleration unless it's an emergency; most journeys are 2-10 hours in duration. Most systems operate regular public services between inhabited worlds, such as Manhome's **Interworld** (page 49). Individuals without access to dedicated vessels use these services to travel between starports; travel is usually regulated and requires advance approval. Travellers using their own vehicles are marginally less restricted, but vessels operating without authorisation risk destruction by system defences; since the Venu War, many Core Worlds system patrol boats are understandably edgy.

Interstellar Travel—2-Space

With the exception of **Fringebound** (see below), planeships travel for many reasons other than passenger transport, although they may take passengers at their discretion. In such cases, passengers must negotiate directly with ship sentiences or crewmembers (see "Transporting Passengers" on **Mindjammer** page 446).

PCs wishing to find passage on vessels travelling within the Core Worlds should make a Resources roll at the opposition given on Table 13-2: Planing Engine Jump Difficulties (**Mindjammer** page 225) for the distance to the desired destination. For example, finding a passage to a star system 25LY away requires a Fair (+2) Resources roll. On a success, the vessel will be ready to depart in a week; you may use your shifts of success to reduce that time by an equivalent number of steps on the Time Ladder (**Mindjammer** page 171). So, on a roll of Great (+4), a passage to cross 25LY will open up in a day. Conversely, a failure on the roll increases the steps by an equivalent amount; so a roll of Mediocre (+0) means the passage in question won't be available for a month. Note that a reroll may not be attempted until the time period has elapsed.

A few days travel by gravity engine (traffic control permitting—see pages 59, 73, and 81) takes you to the n/2 boundary,



followed by 1-2 weeks of 2-space travel. Interstellar travellers have long enough to get to know fellow passengers, and most starships willing to carry them will also wish to socialise. Personal time is at an individual's discretion, but many voyages may be a social whirl, and golden opportunities for visitors from the Fringe to commit outrageous social errors (see "Getting Things Done in the Core Worlds" on page 29).

Interstellar Travel—the Fargate Network

For a little over two decades, the Commonality has been constructing 3-space transport gates in major star systems. Gradually these huge and complex construction projects (see below) are weaving the Commonality together into a web of near-instantaneous communication and transportation links, revolutionising everyday life.

As of 193 NCE, there are forty-nine operational 3-space gates in Commonality Space, with 2-3 gates and 6-8 smaller **data gates** (see below) due to come online every year for the lifetime of the Fargate Project. The first two gates were built in Manhome (page 55) and Alfakken (page 62), since when gates have been constructed in twelve sector capitals, and in the central system of every cultural region (page 71) and

satellite domain (page 79). There are nineteen fargates in the Old Commonality subsector, including the shipyards of Chrysalid (page 64), the Styphon survivor world (page 69), and Von Neumann's World (page 69).

A fargate is huge, a ring 10km in diameter and 1km thick. Its east and west poles house high-yield ZIP plant and administrative and operational structures rising hundreds of metres into space, guides for approaching vessels, while its north and south poles sparkle with defences, 3SI control decks, and hyper-fast Mindscape shunts.

FARGATE OPERATIONS

"Slowly, the Far Gate came to life. One by one, six hundred zero point power plants began to charge their capacitors, illuminating the vast dark ring with a rich, auburn glow. Flickering at first, then pulsing, within seconds the enormous structure shone like a great fiery eye. Then—a split second, and the ZIP plants fired, discharging their capacitors into the heart of the gate. The fabric of space-time tore, opening a huge, jagged wound, which ripped outwards in a runaway chain reaction which threatened to overwhelm the bounding ring and then—stopped. Where previously there had been empty space, a mind-wrenching vortex of unfathomable energies now boiled and seethed. The gate was open!"

Fargate travel begins at a spaceport. Transport vessels, usually without planing engines in the Core Worlds, make regular runs to the system gate. All fargates have extensive traffic management systems, and also operate as components of the Commonality defence network.

Fargate travel is possible when two fargates connect to one another. Connections are made according to fargate schedules maintained by the 3-Space Instrumentality and publicly available via Mindscape. At a predetermined time, the **emergence gate** begins to wait for the **origin gate** to connect. Time dilation and relative motion makes fargate scheduling complex, managed by specialist sentiences: even then, connection windows are a full standard hour in duration.

Once connected, the fargate transit period begins. Fargate event horizons are 10km in diameter, so a very large number of vessels can transit simultaneously. Transit occurs at a rate of 1 light year every 31.55 seconds, approximately 114.16LY per hour; the transit period is therefore fixed (although constantly updated) based on the separation between the two systems. Once the transit period has elapsed, an additional hour is permitted for travel time anomalies, and then the two fargates disconnect and begin connecting with their next destinations.

Note that neither gate may make or receive connections to other gates during the transit period. With forty-nine fargates currently in operation (as of 193NCE), the minimum cycling time per destination is slightly over 3 hours, and the

Operational Fargates in 193 NCE

There are forty-nine operational fargates in 193 NCE. They are as follows.

- **The Manhome Gate (Fargate 1)**
- **18 other worlds in the Old Commonality subsector:** including Alfakken (Fargate 2), Chrysalid, Styphon, and Von Neumann's World.
- **12 Sector Capitals:** Arianus Alpha (Ariane), Cepheid Ultor (Cepheus), The Planetary Intelligence of Chembu (Chembu Autonomous Region), Cryptomery (Foliate Hierarchy), Trand (Gum Nebula), Strahlex (Lichtstrom), Shrine (Lowhigh Radiant), Peshawar (Mayapur Confederation), Tsentair (Rim), Kandistu (Sytar Province), Fabriss Combine (Volshengis), Jesedipere (Vul).
- **10 Penumbral Worlds:** Cantor (Cantor Designate), Chenai (Chenai Concordance), Earthkid (Earthkid Coalescent), Leyghost, New Capricorn (Capricornian Consularity), Nunki (Starsailor Migratory), Scorpionhead (Scorpio Dialectic), Shimokitazawa (Heiki Array), Telechak (Relos Triumvirate), Tython (Second Determination of Geronthropy).
- **8 Satellite Domains:** Akhaia (Domain of Storms), Cat's Eye (Catseye Continuate), Draco Fortification (Zeta Draconis), Fandverven (Ten Thousand Hoverbluv Dispersal), Gleam (Quetzal Directorate), Kantang Orbital, Saskaran, Xi Auri Perseus (Hydragand-Dezimeer)

maximum 27 hours, with a current average of 7 hours (most gates are within the Core Worlds sector). On average, a fargate will make three connections per day, covering all gates currently in existence over a 16-day period.

Determining the Next Transit

You can make a 4dF roll on Table 2: Time to Next Fargate Transit to determine when a fargate will next connect to a destination the PCs wish to travel to. Fate points may be used on this roll as usual.

Table 1: Fargate Passage Costs

Destination	Resource Roll Difficulty (Cost)
Manhome (Fargate 1)	Superb (+5)
Sector Capital	Great (+4)
Other Old Commonality World	Good (+3)

FARGATE

Physical Stress: 1□ 2□ 3□ 4□

Mental Stress: 1□ 2□ 3□ 4□ **Systems Stress:** 1□ 2□ 3□ 4□

Consequences: 3 + 2 Mild

Scale: Regional (+4)

Tech Index: T10

Aspects: Dazzling Dance of Ships and Energies; Abandon Control to the Gate Sentience; Endless Queues and Unexpected Delays.

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

STUNTS

♦ **Anomaly Scan:** Use Active Sensing instead of Empathy to defend against Deceive.

♦ **Docking Bay:** 1 Enormous (+3) construct, 10 Huge (+2) constructs, 100 Large (+1) constructs.

♦ **Domination:** Roll Will vs Will to control the target's actions.

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

♦ **Passenger Accommodations:** Accommodations for 4000 passengers.

♦ **Rugged Superstructure:** 1/session, pay 1 fate point to reduce a moderate consequence to mild, or remove a mild.

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

EXTRAS

★ **Armoured Hull:** Armour:3 rating.

★ **Extended Docking Bay:** 10 Enormous (+3) constructs, 100 Huge (+2) constructs, 1000 Large (+1) constructs.

★ **Extended Passenger Accommodations:** Accommodations for 40000 passengers.

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

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

★ **Torsion Field Projector:** w:5, range 1, spinal mount, double damage to Venu vessels.

Fargate Bumping

In cases of top urgency, fargate schedules can be "bumped". This is usually only done in military or cultural emergencies or in cases of natural disaster. It redesignates the next fargate transit to the destination of the bumper's choice, disrupting schedules usually by removing the next scheduled transits for the duration of the bump.

Characters who want to bump a fargate schedule must

make a Legendary (+8) Provoke, Rapport, or Resources roll against the 3SI organisation (Planetary (+6) scale). Consequences usually involve extensive credit stress damage, or even 3SI reprisals.

FARGATE CONSTRUCTION

Constructing a fargate isn't a trivial task. Not only are they vast structures, requiring construction in situ and taking several months, they also require an extensive setup period before coming on line. In order to connect to a given emergence gate, an origin gate must locate, expand, and recalibrate naturally occurring 3-space wormholes. During this period, neither gate may undertake any other 3-space activity. Because of temporal discrepancies, the 3-Space Instrumentality usually allocates a 1 week period for a pair of fargates to establish this initial connection; once made, the connection can then be remade easily as part of usual scheduled fargate operations.

Fargate connection operations are usually ongoing; a given fargate will begin operating as soon as it has a single destination (usually to Manhome), and then will establish 3-space connections to other fargates over time. With 49 other gates currently operational, a new gate will take over a year to connect to them all, assuming it undertakes normal

Table 2: Time to Next Fargate Transit

4dF	Time to Next Transit
-4	16 days
-3	14 days
-2	12 days
-1	10 days
+0	8 days
+1	6 days
+2	4 days
+3	2 days
+4	A few hours!

scheduled transits. Obviously, the more gates come online, the longer this setup period will take; again, scheduling this complex process is optimised by dedicated sentiences.

D-GATES

Recent research has proposed that fargate construction should be preceded by the construction of smaller gates capable of transferring Mindscape data. These **data gates** or **d-gates** are still experimental: one is shortly expected to become operational in orbit around Tyche (page 57). Assuming this works well, future d-gates will be rolled out in rapid order as the first part of fargate construction in any system.

Based on the Tyche d-gate prototype, d-gates are expected to be 100m in diameter, with no transit horizon available for physical objects: a single data beam (d-beam) is the only thing to transit a d-gate. It's anticipated that d-gates will be constructed in the **3-space depots** currently under construction (the one in Tyche orbit is already operational—see page 58), taking approximately one month per d-gate, and transported to their eventual locations by d-gate tenders, after which they begin conventional setup and calibration.

D-gate setup is expected to take the same amount of time as conventional fargate setup but, once operational, will cycle in only (transit time + 1hr), or once per 6 hours on average (4 times per standard day). Manhome and sector capitals are expected to eventually have multiple d-gates in operation.

D-gates will permit rapid Mindscape updates ahead of the frequency currently possible by Fargate. Additionally,

Building Your Own Fargates

Players running polities (including pansectorates, subsector and octant 3SI branches, and even planetary governments) wishing to construct fargates should make Resources rolls against the Planetary (+6) scale oppositions shown below.

Table 3: Fargate Construction Difficulties

Task	Time Required	Difficulty (Cost)
Commissioning a d-gate	A few months	Superb (+5)
Commissioning a fargate	Half a year	Epic (+7)
Configuring a gate	4dF + 6 weeks per destination under normal operation; 4dF + 5 if the gate is non-operational; 4dF + 4 if both gates are non-operational.	

Anomalous Destinations

Not all naturally occurring wormholes are appropriate for fargate use. Some incorporate temporal anomalies, connecting with their destination gates at radically (and even dangerously) different time periods; others—very rarely—even appear to lead to parallel universes. Fargate science is an extremely new field of research, and much of its findings are either incomprehensible to all but enhanced intelligences, or highly classified. The 3SI research arm is extremely secretive!

between fargate destinations which have d-gates already in place, it's hoped that initial fargate calibration can be reduced to 1 standard day per destination, instead of the current 1 standard week.

3-SPACE DEPOTS

These are currently under construction in many locations throughout Commonality Space. One—in orbit around Tyche, Sol's distant companion—is already operational. 3-space depots have several roles. Firstly, they are tasked with constructing the modular d-gates which will shortly begin to hook systems up to the 3-space Mindscape ahead of the roll-out of full physical transit fargates, as well as the d-gate tender planeships which will transport d-gates through 2-space to their destinations. Secondly, the depots are major research and development centres for 3-space technologies. Thirdly, the depots are major hubs for the 3-Space Instrumentality itself (page 21), providing training for its administrative and security personnel as well as its research and deployment arms.

FARGATE IMPLICATIONS

Needless to say, the Fargate Project is the single most important phenomenon in the Commonality's immediate future. It's a total game changer, a paradigm-shift on many levels. Not only will it essentially make chronodisplacement a thing of the past, it will also permit personal, economic, and political activity on an interstellar level like never before. The Mindscape will become near-instantaneous, relegating the Mindjammer Fleet to secondary or frontier roles; and it's expected that disperser and multiple posthumans will experience sudden and unpredictable evolution.

Perhaps most importantly in the near future, the project looks likely to place immense power in the hands of

the 3-Space Instrumentality, with an equivalent reduction in power for other branches of Commonality government. The Custodians appear to be sanguine about this, but the prospect is already making waves throughout the Core and its factions. Interesting times lie ahead.

Fringebound

Fringebound is a CORESPAN service for Commonality citizens travelling between worlds. Services operate between the worlds of the Core to the Fringe (the return trip is known as Corebound), and are often named after their galactic directions—Fringebound Up-and-Out, and so on. Fringebound services usually call at subsector capitals on their routes, and sometimes octant capitals if they're on the way, and are frequently stasis ships, or at least have an extensive stasis passenger contingent. Their usual destinations are sector capitals.

There are also Fringebound "express" services which travel via fargate from Old Earth direct to sector capitals, named after their target sectors and worlds, ie Fringebound Express—Rim Tsentair travels direct from Manhome via Fargate-1 to the capital of the Rim Sector.

Characters trying to find Fringebound passages make Resources rolls as usual (page 7), but gain an automatic +2 bonus. However, the only available destinations are octant capitals. Characters may choose to travel to only subsector capitals; in such cases, the Resources roll opposition is equal to Fair (+2), +1 per subsector crossed to the destination. Thus, travelling via Fringebound to a subsector capital three subsectors away is a Superb (+5) Resources roll. On average, Fringebound subsector passages are available in a month

Scenario Hook: Murder Mystery Party

Little did you expect, when you petitioned the planeship Fortune Teller for passage to the periphery, that you would find yourself sharing the journey with your worst rivals.

So far you've been able to avoid them by sticking to your cabin, but the Fortune Teller ship sentience has a taste for social occasions and archaic entertainments. It has arranged an elaborate murder mystery event in a carefully designed imposality—a replica of the 7th millennium Court of Unchanging Benevolence, when the Old Commonality tried to freeze and codify all interpersonal relationships between its worlds, in the face of widespread unrest. And you're expected to participate!

Can you survive the virtual banquet? Will you take the opportunity to show up your rival, or perhaps to kill them (at least virtually!)? Or will they do the same to you?

(which may be modified up or down by shifts of success or failure).

Characters wishing to travel by Fringebound to sector capitals only must roll against an opposition of Fair (+2), +2 per sector. You must start at a sector capital. Thus, to travel via Fringebound from Manhome to any other sector capital is a Great (+4) Resources roll. On average, Fringebound sector passages are available in a few months.

THE CORE WORLDS

~PRIMARY TRANSECT~

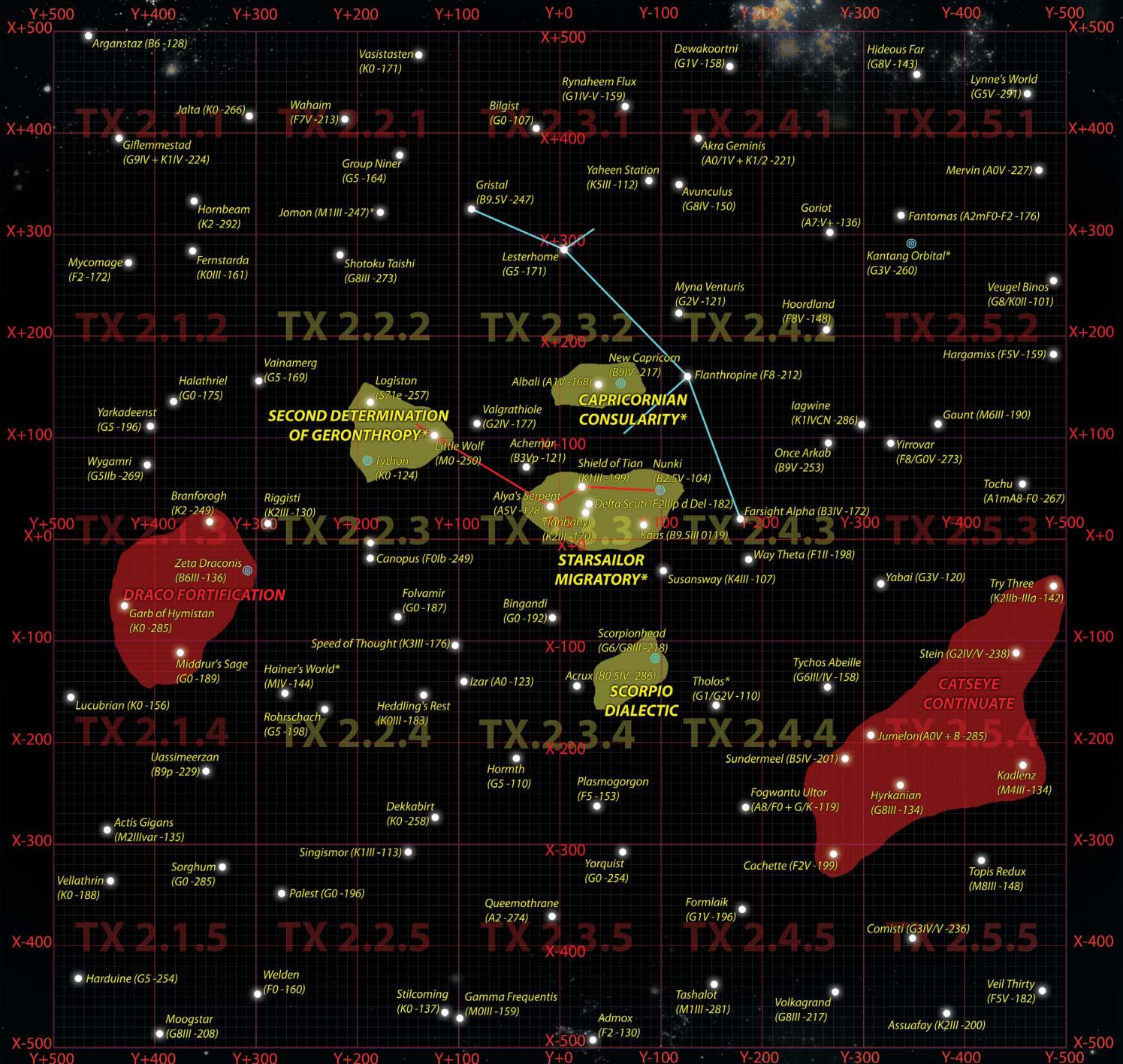


The Core Worlds Primary Transect comprises subsectors from the Satellite Domains, including the Astrabalene Sodality (page 80), the Catseye Continuate, and the Saskaran Symbiosis (page 88). It marks the entry point of the Venu invasion

fleet into Core Worlds space, and is the location of the Danko Path of Woe essotair radiant. It contains two fargates at Cat's Eye (TX1.2.3) and Saskaran (TX1.5.3).

THE CORE WORLDS

SECONDARY TRANSECT

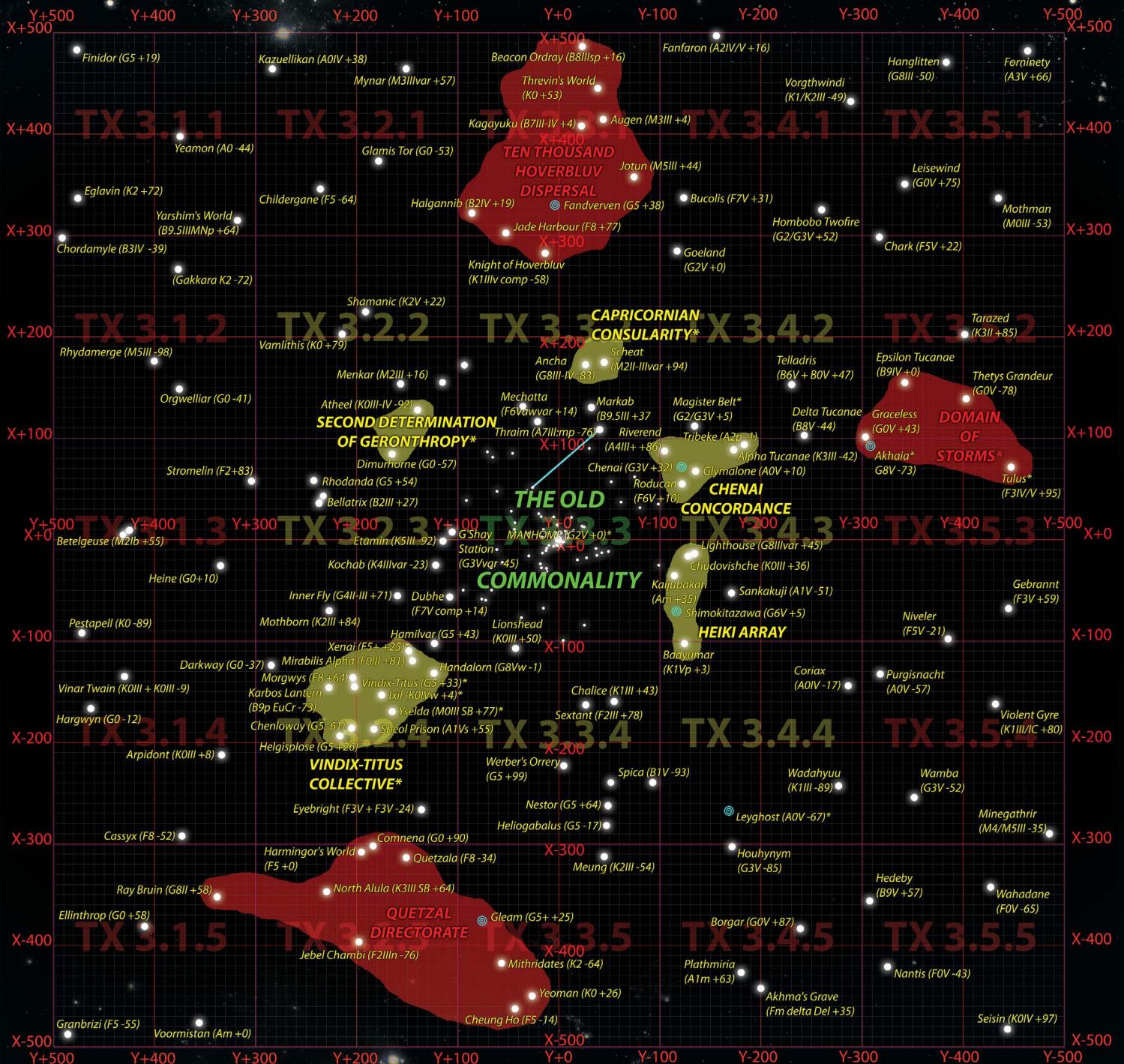


The Core Worlds Secondary Transect comprises subsectors from both the Penumbral Worlds and the Satellite Domains, including the Capricornian Consularity (page 72), the Catseye Continuate, the Draco Fortification, the Scorpio Dialectic, the Second Determination of Geronthropy (page 76), and the Starsailor Migratory (page 78). It marks the path of approach

of the Venu invasion fleet to the Old Commonality subsector and the Battle of Nunki, and is the location of the Gristal Distal essotair radiant. There are six fargates at Kantang Orbital (page 86), New Capricorn (page 72), Nunki, Scorpionhead, Tython (page 76), and Zeta Draconis.

THE CORE WORLDS

- TERTIARY TRANSECT -

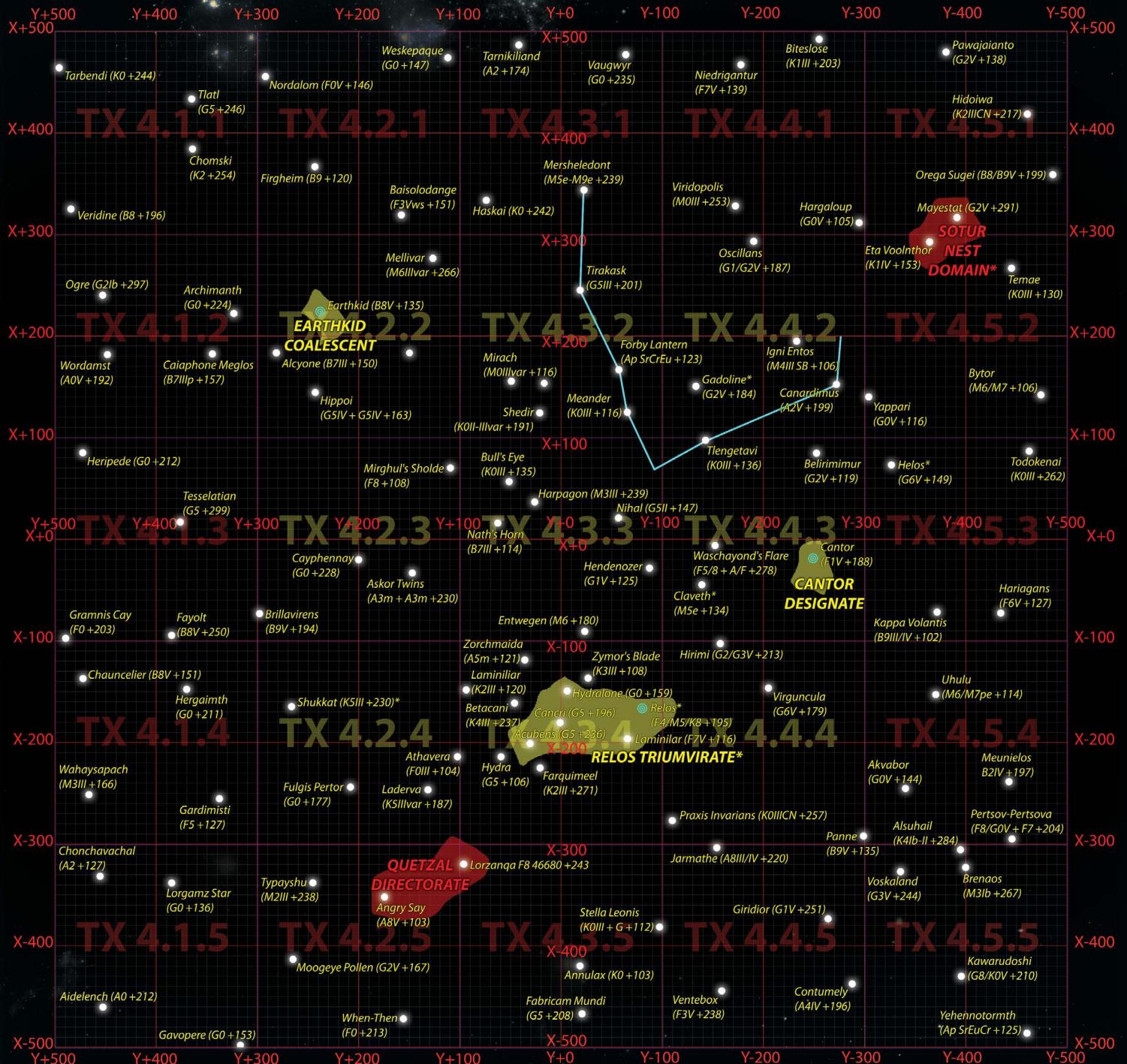


The Core Worlds Tertiary Transect comprises subsectors from the Penumbral Worlds, the Satellite Domains, and also the Old Commonality Subsector, including the Capricornian Consularity (page 72), the Chenai Concordance, the Domain of Storms (page 82), the Heiki Array, the Quetzal Directorate, the Second Determination of Geronthropy (page 76), Ten Thousand

Hoverbluv Dispersal, and the Vindix-Titus Collective (page 77), as well as the Old Commonality. It marks the beginning of the Sotur Nest Radiant. External to the Old Commonality, there are six fargates at Akhaia (page 82), Chenai, Fandverven, Gleam, Leyghost (page 73), and Shimokitazawa.

THE CORE WORLDS

QUATERNARY TRANSECT



The Core Worlds Quaternary Transect comprises subsectors from the Penumbral Worlds and Satellite Domains, including the Cantor Designate, the Earthkid Coalescent, the Quetzal Directorate, the Relos Triumvirate (page 74), and the Sotur

Nest Domain (page 90). It marks the bifurcation of the Sotur Nest Radiant into the Sotur and Mersheledont Lantern radiants. There are three fargates at Cantor, Earthkid, and Relos (page 74).

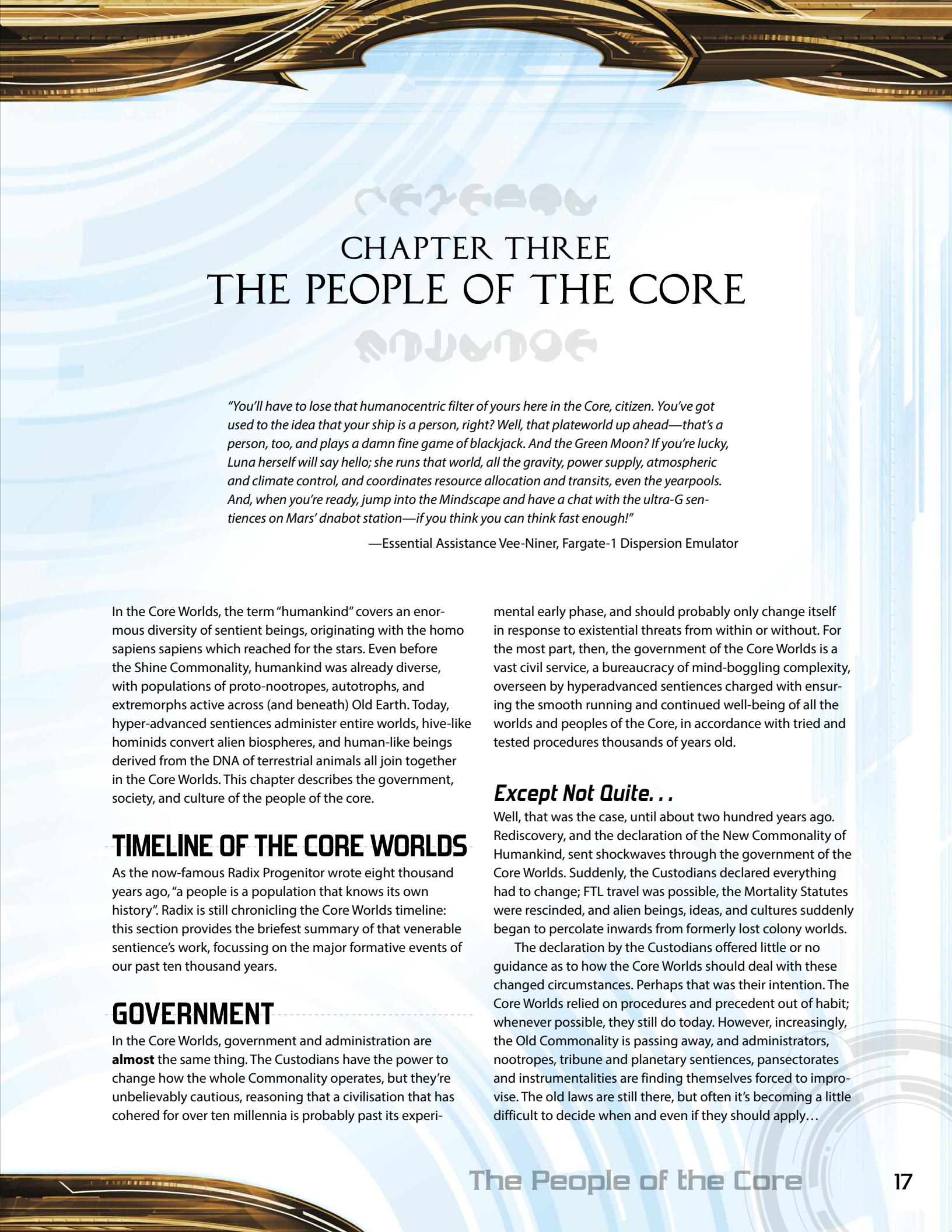
THE CORE WORLDS

- QUINARY TRANSECT -



The Core Worlds Quinary Transect comprises subsectors from the Satellite Domains, including the Kuroan Union (page 86) and the Sotur Nest Domain (page 90), as well as the Hydragand-Dezimeer Subsector (page 84). It marks the

end of the Sotur Nest Radiant. As of 193 NCE, there is only one fargate, at the Hydragand-Dezimeer homeworld of Xi Auri Perseus (page 84).



CHAPTER THREE

THE PEOPLE OF THE CORE

"You'll have to lose that humanocentric filter of yours here in the Core, citizen. You've got used to the idea that your ship is a person, right? Well, that plateworld up ahead—that's a person, too, and plays a damn fine game of blackjack. And the Green Moon? If you're lucky, Luna herself will say hello; she runs that world, all the gravity, power supply, atmospheric and climate control, and coordinates resource allocation and transits, even the yearpools. And, when you're ready, jump into the Mindscape and have a chat with the ultra-G sentiences on Mars' dnabot station—if you think you can think fast enough!"

—Essential Assistance Vee-Niner, Fargate-1 Dispersion Emulator

In the Core Worlds, the term "humankind" covers an enormous diversity of sentient beings, originating with the homo sapiens sapiens which reached for the stars. Even before the Shine Commonality, humankind was already diverse, with populations of proto-nootropes, autotrophs, and extremorphs active across (and beneath) Old Earth. Today, hyper-advanced sentiences administer entire worlds, hive-like hominids convert alien biospheres, and human-like beings derived from the DNA of terrestrial animals all join together in the Core Worlds. This chapter describes the government, society, and culture of the people of the core.

TIMELINE OF THE CORE WORLDS

As the now-famous Radix Progenitor wrote eight thousand years ago, "a people is a population that knows its own history". Radix is still chronicling the Core Worlds timeline: this section provides the briefest summary of that venerable sentience's work, focussing on the major formative events of our past ten thousand years.

GOVERNMENT

In the Core Worlds, government and administration are **almost** the same thing. The Custodians have the power to change how the whole Commonality operates, but they're unbelievably cautious, reasoning that a civilisation that has cohered for over ten millennia is probably past its experi-

mental early phase, and should probably only change itself in response to existential threats from within or without. For the most part, then, the government of the Core Worlds is a vast civil service, a bureaucracy of mind-boggling complexity, overseen by hyperadvanced sentiences charged with ensuring the smooth running and continued well-being of all the worlds and peoples of the Core, in accordance with tried and tested procedures thousands of years old.

Except Not Quite...

Well, that was the case, until about two hundred years ago. Rediscovery, and the declaration of the New Commonality of Humankind, sent shockwaves through the government of the Core Worlds. Suddenly, the Custodians declared everything had to change; FTL travel was possible, the Mortality Statutes were rescinded, and alien beings, ideas, and cultures suddenly began to percolate inwards from formerly lost colony worlds.

The declaration by the Custodians offered little or no guidance as to how the Core Worlds should deal with these changed circumstances. Perhaps that was their intention. The Core Worlds relied on procedures and precedent out of habit; whenever possible, they still do today. However, increasingly, the Old Commonality is passing away, and administrators, nootropes, tribune and planetary sentiences, pansectorates and instrumentalities are finding themselves forced to improvise. The old laws are still there, but often it's becoming a little difficult to decide when and even if they should apply...

Table 4: Timeline of the Core Worlds

Date	Event
First century FA	Colonisation of the Solar System. The regions of Old Earth also send small-scale generation ship expeditions under the aegis of Shine, later called the Shine Commonality, then just the Commonality of Humankind. Many fail horribly, leading to the search for stasis berth technology.
100-500 FA	The Manhome regions mount stasis ship colony expeditions. This is the beginning of the Great Diaspora.
600-1500 FA	The Commonality now includes the 50-100LY sphere of colonies. Special interest groups leave to settle new worlds.
1000 FA	Longevity begins to spreads to the Commonality worlds.
1100 FA	Xenomorphs are developed as cheap and adaptable labour.
1500 FA	An intensive period of colonisation begins, a 1500-year period known as the Apogee.
1700 FA	The Mortality Statutes are established to prevent catastrophic overpopulation.
2000 FA	Mature Mindscape technologies (T8) permit the development of true synthetic intelligence.
2200 FA	Sentiences are broadcast between the stars—the Tribunes (page 27). They receive memory updates.
3000 FA	The Apogee of colonisation wanes. Worlds diverge from Old Earth culture, or become hyper-conservative. Fears grow for keeping the Commonality together.
3100 FA	The extremely conservative 100LY radius sphere around Old Earth is increasingly referred to as “the Old Commonality”.
3500 FA	The Commonality makes contact with its lost Orion expedition.
5000 FA	The end of exploration; the Great Diaspora slows.
6500 FA	The Commonality makes second contact with the Orion colony.
9000 FA	Stagnation: the Commonality begins to contract, centred on the worlds of the Old Commonality. Religion and news are declared illegal.
9500 FA	The third contact is made with the Orion colony.
10501 FA (1 NCE)	The Expansionary Era. Planing technology is invented and the New Commonality is declared. Humankind embarks upon its mission of Rediscovery.
10510 FA (10 NCE)	The Mortality Statutes are rescinded.
10570 FA (70 NCE)	The Commonality reaches the lost Orion colony and discovers the Venu Empire.
10610 FA (110 NCE)	Outbreak of the Venu War.
10620 FA (120 NCE)	The Battle of Nunki: The Venu fleet fights hard on its approach to Old Earth. The Battle of Styphon V: The Venu fleet is fought to a standstill and then begins to retreat. End of the Venu War. The Successor States are born along the turbulent Venu-Commonality frontier.
10650 FA (150 NCE)	The Stop-Start War: Tensions are constant as the Venu-Commonality frontier stabilises.
10660 FA (160 NCE)	The Xeno Migrations: Oppressed Core World xenomorphs leave to fight in the Xeno Wars out beyond the Commonality Frontier.
10671 FA (171 NCE)	The Sentient Alliance, a xenomorph-dominated Commonality client state, is formed on the border with the Venu.
10693 FA (193 NCE)	The present-day.

Hyperintelligent Administration

Administration of the Core became too complex for unenhanced humans to manage millennia ago. These days, its highest hierarchies are administered by highly advanced synthetic sentiences.

Many of these are very old—some were instantiated as long ago as 2000 FA, so could now be 8500 years old or more.

Sentiences of great age are usually many times more intelligent than standard humans.

They also tend to be quite static. Some still house their core corpuses in ships, but most tend to be in complex orbital or ground-based facilities: running worlds and star systems in the complex interlocking societies and cultures of the Core is about the only thing these **hyperintelligences** find rewarding.

PLANETARY SENTIENCES

Also known as **governor sentiences**, these are synthetic hyperintelligences charged with the administration of an entire planet (and often its associated star system). Almost all Old Commonality worlds (page 59) of T8 or higher have a planetary sentience.

They're a lot like CEOs (Chief Executive Officers) of large corporacies (who are often sentiences anyway)—they have lots of people working for them, but they're hyperintelligent and coordinate the admin activities of their whole world. Planetary sentiences usually house their core corpuses in their capital and, depending on their culture and personality, may make extensive (and often extreme) use of avatars.

THE TRANSENTIENCES

Some hyperintelligences nevertheless go into **retreat**; over time, even running multiple worlds isn't challenging enough, and they opt out of Commonality society and begin to concentrate on their own further evolution, transcending conventional understanding. These **transsentiences** usually inhabit populated systems, but are off-limits: they may even have their own "transient nodes". They spend their time communicating with other transsentiences, and "thinking"—although about

what is very hard to say. Just about the only thing to hold a transsentience's attention for even a short period is 3-space theory, and the activities of the 3SI. The custodians are said to regularly be in contact with the transsentiences, and one is even rumoured to **be** a transsentience.

CORESPAN

When viewed as a whole, the government of the Core Worlds is known as CORESPAN—the Core Worlds Pansectorate. It's the aggregate of Commonality ministries in charge of administering the entire sector. For ten millennia, it exercised more authority than the instrumentalities, which were effectively subordinate to it. Although that balance of power has shifted in the Commonality, in the Core Worlds CORESPAN holds onto its prerogatives jealously, often coming into conflict with the instrumentalities over issues of precedence: CORESPAN still very much acts as if the instrumentalities work for it.

CORESEC

Although a branch of the Internal Security Instrumentality (*Mindjammer* page 285), CORESEC is effectively the ruthlessly efficient and overbearing enforcement arm of CORESPAN.





Its mandate is to protect the security and cultural integrity of the whole of the Core Worlds sector. The exact nature of its activities depends upon whether it's operating in the Old Commonality (page 59), the Penumbral Worlds (page 71), or the Satellite Domains (page 79). Its agents work to maintain often baroque social structures and behavioural regimes, suppressing opposition, dissent, and aberrant thought or behaviour where such things are deemed a concern.

The Instrumentalities in the Core

Because of the nature of the Core Worlds, the activities of the Commonality instrumentalities are somewhat different.

THE ARMED FORCES INSTRUMENTALITY (AFI)

AFI sentiences coordinate the existing armed forces on Core Worlds at subsector level. In most cases, this has become a question of organising planetary defence forces; there is a custodial mandate to field subsector-level divisions of planetary regiments, but the extremely tradition-bound nature of Core Worlds militaries has made it difficult to find common ground for cooperation. This has been significantly easier on those worlds flanking the Venu invasion route (page 6), and the Ministry of Broadcast Propaganda is currently publicising these exemplary cases.

THE INTERNAL SECURITY INSTRUMENTALITY (ISI)

Most Core Worlds make little distinction between the ISI and CORESEC (page 19). Indeed, when it comes to sector-wide activity, CORESEC is pretty much it. The other half of the ISI in the Core Worlds comprises a loose association of local law enforcement agencies, often devolved to planetary level and even lower. Some Penumbral Worlds and Satellite Domains may organise their law enforcement activities at higher levels—often covering the whole polity—and where they do there is often an intense rivalry (and even conflict) with CORESEC.

SPACE FORCE

Much of the activity of interstellar vessels in the Core Worlds is still the purview of the Ministry of Movement, including Fringebound (page 11) and Interworld (page 49). Space Force is restricted almost entirely to its military role; it maintains depots in each subsector, from which it conducts regular patrols. Although the lessons of the Venu War have not been forgotten, Space Force activity in the Core Worlds is more low-key than it is on the Fringe.

THE COMMUNICATIONS INSTRUMENTALITY (COMINST)

ComInst is very much concerned with management of the Mindscape in the Core Worlds, including a significant liaison with the new 3-Space Instrumentality (below) with regard to Mindscape transmission through the fargate network, expected to expand massively when the new and experimental **d-gates** (page 10) come online. Much of the diplomatic activity of ComInst in the Core Worlds is usurped by the nootropes of CORESPAN; out in the Penumbral Worlds, and especially the Satellite Domains, where the more diplomatic approach of ComInst may be preferred over nootrope arrogance and presumptuousness, there is often friction.

THE SECURITY AND CULTURAL INTEGRITY INSTRUMENTALITY (SCI FORCE)

Much of SCI Force's activity is out on the Fringe, managing the rediscovery and integration of lost colony cultures. In the Core Worlds, it finds itself mostly confined to passively monitoring societies for the emergence of toxic memes via its Monitor Bureau (generally referred to as the Behaviour Police). In doing this, it often finds itself working alongside, or even at odds with, CORESEC. When an individual breaks laws or social or behavioural taboos in the Core, it's CORESEC that's responsible for responding, taking into custody, judging and “punishing” offenders (often by re-education—see page 28); whereas it's SCI Force that's responsible for monitoring and manipulating cultural memes to ensure those offenses either don't occur in the first place, or have limited

The Ministry of Memetic Engineering

Midway through a crucial mission, the characters are interrupted by a group of Commonality agents claiming to work for the “Ministry of Memetic Engineering”, who declare that what the characters are about to do requires Ministry permission. The agents propose to submit the characters' plans to a committee that might take years to come to a decision.

The problem is, no one has ever heard of the Ministry of Memetic Engineering before. It's not even in the local Mindscape, nor have SCI Force any record of it. And yet, the agents seem to have all the authority they require. Are they an unknown enemy? The covert minions of an unknown custodian? A shadowy element of CORESPAN? A decoy created to derail the characters' mission? Or just an archaic element of the Old Commonality bureaucracy that just happens to be in the way?

cultural impact, or don't occur again. Needless to say, there's plenty of scope for head-to-head conflict, turf wars, and no end of ill-feeling here!

THE 3-SPACE INSTRUMENTALITY (3SI)

The 3-Space Instrumentality is a young and mysterious body tasked with the research, development, and management of the Commonality's expanding fargate network. It effectively sits outside the existing Core Worlds government apparatus (indeed, that of the whole Commonality), which crystallised long before the 3SI was ever thought of, and there aren't really any established ways for dealing with it. It seems to have its own security bureau, armed forces, and even shipyards, and in many ways is a law unto itself. CORESEC admires its penchant for secrecy and ruthlessness, but that doesn't stop the sparks flying.

Currently the 3-Space Instrumentality comprises five arms:

- **Admin:** This is the 3SI bureaucracy, charged with the day-to-day running of the instrumentality and its interface with other branches of Commonality government.
- **Deployment:** Working hand-in-hand with research and operations, Deployment is in charge of physically constructing and installing all of the hardware required for 3SI operations, including d-gate tenders and the gates

themselves (page 10).

- **Operations:** Constantly growing and developing, this branch represents the staff who actually run the fargates.
- **Research:** This is the scientific branch of 3SI, charged with investigating 3-space phenomena and improving and developing 3-space technologies.
- **Security:** This is the somewhat terrifying arm charged with protecting the 3SI from internal and external threats. It collects intelligence, brainstorms strategy, and executes plans. Despite its aura of secrecy, it has a reputation for extreme ruthlessness.

On a day-to-day basis, PCs are only likely to come into contact with the 3SI when they attempt to use fargates: that's who they have to talk to in order to acquire passage (page 8), to bump the gate (page 9), or even to land at any of a fargate's facilities, for any reason. Treat the 3SI as a pretty disagreeable bunch of apparatchiks: suspicious, unfriendly, and officious. Make the PCs realise that they really don't want any trouble with these guys.

Core World Factions

There are many factions in the Commonality: interest groups, organisations, agendas which cut across instrumentalities, ministries, pansectorates. Some have already been introduced

THE 3-SPACE INSTRUMENTALITY

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

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

Consequences: 3

Scale: Planetary (+6)

Tech Index: T10

Aspects: High Concept: Sinister and Secretive Instrumentality. Trouble: Dealing With Mind-Bending Cutting Edge Technologies. Other Aspects: Cloaked In Deadly Silence; The White Heat of Concentrated Power; The Future Is In Our Hands.

Skills: Superb (+5): Deceive; Great (+4): Science, Stealth, Will; Good (+3): Provoke, Resources, Technical; Fair (+2): Bureaucracy, Intrusion, Knowledge, Security; Average (+1): Assimilate, Contacts, Investigate, Manoeuvre, Notice.

STUNTS

◆ **Extreme Sanction:** Make Security actions against characters.

◆ **Innovator:** +2 overcome bonus when making a breakthrough with Science.

◆ **Public Relations:** +2 create an advantage Deceive bonus.

◆ **Shadow Management:** +2 create an advantage bonus when using clandestine methods.

◆ **Specialist (3-Space):** +2 bonus to rolls relating to 3-Space research and technology.

◆ **Witch Hunt:** Use Provoke against characters.

HALO

◆ **Gestalt Communication: Gestalt Combat:** +2 bonus to attack and defend actions in mental conflicts.

◆ **Gestalt Communication: Stage II Gestalt:** Create gestalts on the fly; +4 bonus on all gestalt language actions (persuade, intimidate, provoke, elicit emotional responses).

◆ **Mindscape Connections:** Make mental attacks on other organisations using Will.

EXTRAS

★ **Inquisitors:** Team of Inquisitor Synthetics; double bonus when burning mental stress for extra effort.

★ **Strike Force:** Make Security attacks up to 2-zone range.

in previous *Mindjammer* supplements (in particular, see the adventure *Hearts and Minds*); the following are some of the main factions in the Core Worlds.

CONSOLIDATORS

Many Core Worlds citizens tend to move from being Integrators to Consolidators as they age. Consolidators believe that Expansion has gone far enough, and that Commonality efforts should now focus on integrating the existing Fringe Worlds into the Core.

DIALOGICS

Dialogics believe in the cohesion of Commonality civilisation and the primacy of Old Earth and the Core, but equally believe the Commonality has no automatic right to expand into the Fringe, integrating its worlds. Instead, diplomatic efforts should be focussed on developing relationships of mutual respect with the polities of the Fringe, joining in the New Commonality project on an equal footing.

DISSOLUTIONISTS

There's a strong current in Core Worlds cultures that believes the New Commonality is a "project" that should be abandoned. Instead, the old status quo of the Old Commonality, the Penumbral Worlds, and the Satellite Domains should be reinstated, with selected Fringe World polities being allowed to apply for associate status as new Satellite Domains. Often called Old Wayists or simply Wayists.

EMANCIPATIONISTS

Emancipationists support the giving of full citizen rights to all xenomorphs, Commonality-wide. This would cause considerable upheaval in the Core Worlds.

INTEGRATORS

In the Core, this approach to the Commonality is the norm, so much so that it is rarely recognised as a faction. It asserts the primacy of Old Earth and the Core Worlds, and their manifest destiny to bring the light of the Commonality civilisation to all the worlds of the Fringe.

POLYVOXES

In the Core Worlds, Polyvoxes are often called **Abolitionists**, and are actively persecuted by CORESEC; they're considered antisocial at best and terrorists at worst. They believe that CORESPAN should be disbanded and a new pansectorate created along Fringe World lines, and that Old Earth and the

Old Commonality have no business being treated as the heart of a highly centralised Commonality.

REDUCTIONISTS

Reductionists are an extreme version of Consolidators; they believe that the Commonality should pull back from the more troublesome areas of the Fringe, and focus on a reduced number of systems to explore the ramifications of the New Commonality Era.

THREESPACERS

Threespacers see the Fargate Project in a utopian light, finally promising a true interstellar society, a massively more powerful Mindscape, and huge economic synergies. With the fargates, want, misunderstanding, and cultural conflict will be things of the past. The Threespacer faction feels like it's in the ascendant, but still is often actively trying to discredit the Two-Space League.

TWO-SPACE LEAGUE (TSL)

The Fargate Project is revolutionary, and highly destructive; it threatens to bring the Core Worlds culture into a star system instantaneously, overturning local cultures in ways that make current cultural conflicts look like nothing. Many worlds oppose the social, economic, and cultural dislocation which the arrival of a fargate portends, and resist, often violently.

CONSERVATISM

Civilisation in the Core Worlds is ancient and eccentric: some planets have been inhabited for so long that they have no record of ever having been colonised (indeed, the *Legend of Micron Down* is one of several folk tales casting doubt on Old Earth's primacy as the cradle of humankind). In the centuries leading up to the Second Age of Space, Core Worlds civilisation was ossified and dying. In those times, which are still in living memory, it was taken for granted that human progress had not just halted, but that no more could be done; no more scientific progress was possible, and apart from trivia all scientific theories were both complete and taken as far as they could be technologically. Even in terms of art, over the millennia of history of Old Earth, everything had been tried before.

Thanks to a combination of high technology and xenomorph labour, struggling to survive was a thing of the past. In politics, there was nothing left to debate: any departure from traditional ways could only be for the worse. Disruptive activities and philosophies, such as religion and certain radical social movements, were illegal.

The Second Age of Space did not just energise the Commonality; it brought it to life again. It made possible new worlds, new sciences, new forms of art, and gave back to humanity its curiosity and interest in life. That said, in much of the Core Worlds, more than a trace of the old attitudes remain. After all, people live for centuries, and such longevity does not lead to society changing quickly.

Society in the Core Worlds is not divided into classes as such, but there is nonetheless an order of precedence. Advanced synthetics, practically immortal and more intelligent than any human, are overtly respected, but perhaps also (even if only subconsciously) envied. People also look up to their elders; one who is centuries old expects and usually receives deference from those younger, and positions of authority are occupied by elder statespersons.

Accepted forms of art are abstract and geometric. A thousand years ago, the Core Worlds' greatest composer, Jin Lahn, wrote the algorithms which still govern aesthetics in music, and departing from these is seen as folly. In education in the Core Worlds, which as in the rest of the Commonality takes decades, the emphasis is on knowing the correct ways of doing things, and studying the works of the great minds of the past. Innovation and experimentation are discouraged.

These days, it's probably no surprise that many "youths"—those under a century old—leave the Core Worlds, either impatient with the stifling nature of society or feeling like they're living pointless lives in a gilded cage. But the Core Worlds conservatives look down on people from further afield in the Commonality—the further from Manhome, the less they're respected. Outsiders simply can't understand that the Core Worlder way of doing things is the result of millennia of unbroken tradition; nor do they understand the fashions, even the ways of speaking, that people have in the Core.

Those most looked down upon are the xenomorphs, originally created as intelligent beasts of burden or cheap labour. Not even considered citizens on Old Earth, they're animals, with certain legal protections, but essentially property—see page 27. On Old Earth, the human form is a matter of tradition, and departing from it is considered crass and unethical, although modifications which do not change the human shape are both accepted and expected. Even the most junior members of Old Earth society enjoy their sense of superiority over the not-quite-human, and organic visitors who depart from the human form may be confused with xenomorphs.

ARTIFICIAL BIRTH

Uncontrolled population growth caused terrible hardship and suffering in Commonality prehistory, and even today unlicensed reproduction is illegal. In fact, most gestations are *in vitro*, brought to term in highly organised breeding facilities known as **genpools** or (more popularly) **yearpools**.



Genpool facilities are found in all arcologies; they produce annual batches of human young called **yearpools**, in numbers exactly equal to the natural wastage (number of deaths) in the arcology population. In an arcology of ten million individuals, this used to equate to 16000-17000 newborn each year, usually in separate yearpools of one hundred individuals. Genpool quarters in arcologies incorporate facilities for raising and educating the young up to age 50, gradually integrating them into the arcology's general population. Since the repeal of the Mortality Statutes, the genpools are unsure about replacement numbers; currently, voluntary euthanasia is still quite common, especially in Manhome and on Old Earth, and yearpool numbers are about half of their pre-repeal numbers.

Genpools organise the first fifty years of a Core Worlder's life as follows:

- Age 1-3: Yearpool nursery.
- 4-6: Socialisation with other yearpools.
- 7-10: Basic skills.
- 11-16: Broad skill base.
- 17-21: Mindscape (initial implant and training).

- 21-25: Primary education and correctives, often on day-release outside the genpool quarter.
- 26-30: Longevity augmentation acclimation.
- 31-35: Life skills and correctives, often on day-release in the general population.
- 36-40: Mentoring, contributory education, and additional augmentations, often in the genpool quarter.
- 41-50: Specialisation selection, supervised but in the general population.

Xenopools

Registered Core Worlds xenomorphs are bred and raised in **xenopools**, which are essentially stripped down versions of genpools. Traditionally, xenomorphs are released into the workforce between the ages of 10 and 21 (depending on skill requirements), although these days, since Rediscovery, even more variation is creeping into the system; fewer xenomorphs are being produced, and many of those that are often sign up for Fringebound transport (page 11) to the Sentient Alliance as soon as they can. Xenopools are generally more perfunctory than full genpools, and less "humane".

Parenting

Although the Core Worlds consider genpools to be the norm, parenting by individuals is also possible, under carefully controlled conditions. For a variety of reasons, Core World citizens may wish to raise a juvenile human in their living quarters. This is considered to be a specialist endeavour, requiring a particular skillset, and requires a license; prior success in one's chosen field of endeavour helps one's application. Juveniles raised in such "family units" are termed **familials**. They will forever be slightly different from most citizens, but genpool facilities are constantly available to ensure a familial does not miss out on the benefits of a full Core Worlds education.

Unlicensed (and usually sexual) reproduction and raising does happen, most commonly in the **substrate** undercities found beneath arcologies and much of Old Earth's surface (page 32). **Strates** are granted Core Worlds citizenship by qualification; it's not automatic. They're given Mindscape implants if they qualify, and are expected to attend genpool education facilities to permit them to join the Core World's society mainstream. Most strate communities in the Core Worlds never reach this point; in fact they're ignored, "falling between the gaps" of Core Worlds society, and dealing with them is often deemed too problematic to be worthwhile. The bulk of the Core Worlds xenomorph population is found in the substrates.

CULTURAL REGIONS AND SUBCULTURES

All differential bioforms described in the **Mindjammer** core book are present in the Core Worlds. Many are hominids; others simply count as radically engineered humans. There are also many others. Some form their own subcultures, particularly in the Penumbral Worlds; others are integral parts of society. This section presents some of the major bioform elements found in the Core Worlds.

Essotairs

Essotair hominid colonies spread though the Core Worlds in "radians". They're a form of massmind without a tribune (see below) and indeed without technological support, relying instead on a complex exchange of pheromones and other genurgic signalling to cohere. They are small, gracile hominids with pale skins, with either large eyes or no eyes (depending on their nest worlds), living packed together in high population communities, often underground; they're able to cope with low O₂ levels and high CO₂. Essotairs have the ability to affect humans and other hominids with their pheromone secretions, and en masse can suborn strangers into joining their nests, often revitalising their gene pools. Contact with Essotair nests is therefore tricky. These days, Essotair radi-



The Essotair Genotype

Mandatory spend: 2 aspects, 1 stunt.

Chronological Age: 25-40.

Apparent Age: Mature adult.

Typical Occupations: Colonist, Scavenger, Zealot.

Typical Enhancements: Mindscape Implant.

Mandatory Extras: Pheromone Cloud.

Genotype Aspects: You must take the Essotair Hive genotype aspect.

ESSOTAIR HIVE

You belong in the packed underground warrens of the Essotair, surrounded by the press and the smell of pale warm bodies. You barely have to talk to communicate, and you want everyone to feel this.

Invoke: To feel at home in huge crowds; to smell someone's emotions, or to transmit your own; to make someone else feel like they want to join your people.

Compel: To feel depressed or panicked when aboveground or alone.

ations are fairly rare, and tend to target worlds which the Commonality considers suboptimal. Their nest-ships are slower-than-light, packed, and disturbingly low-tech.

Essotairs are thought to have originated in Old Earth substrates which somehow managed to mount colony expeditions. An example of an Essotair colony is the Sotur Nest Domain on page 90.

Holocene Virtualities

Holocene virtualities are highly stratified Core World societies where most interpersonal interaction is via virtuality, usually because of adverse environments which have not been terraformed (for whatever reason). Some holocene worlds have developed elaborate symbolical overlays where daily physical drudge work is experienced as exotic and wondrous activity. As a solution to extreme colonisation difficulties, they're encountered with surprising frequency. Alchiba (page 61) and Gadoline (page 72) are examples of holocene virtuality worlds.

Minder Arrays

Minder arrays are colonies of very small mechanicals usually charged with operating and maintaining repair and main-

tenance systems on plateworlds, habs, Mindscape relays, and so on. Minders are like little glittering crabs with very variable configurations; individually sentient, they operate in extended work-teams, and are highly social, suffering when separated from others.

Minder arrays resemble communities of small bejewelled crabs, and spend their entire lives linked together through the Mindscape. They are mechanical rather than biological, and can change their configurations according to the task at hand. Minder arrays maintain and repair complex mechanical systems, such as the gravity machines of Green Moon.

Few worlds are inhabited mostly or solely by minder arrays; one such is Astharoth's Gem (page 62). Instead, megastructures in high tech index systems tend to be run by minder arrays.

MINDER ARRAYS

Physical Stress: 1□ 2□ **Mental Stress:** 1□ 2□ 3□ 4□

Credit Stress: 1□ 2□ 3□

Consequences: 1 mild + 1 moderate

Scale: Medium (+0)

Aspects: Aggregate Swarm of Small Mechanicals Operating As a Single Entity; Shapeshifting to the Task at Hand; Only the Job Matters!

Skills: Fantastic (+6) Technical; Superb (+5) Athletics, Provoke; Great (+4) Investigate, Unarmed Combat; Good (+3) Notice, Will; Fair (+2) Intrusion, Resources; Average (+1) Ranged Combat, Stealth.

STUNTS

♦ **Always Making Useful Things:** Always have the proper tools for a job.

♦ **Better Than New:** When repairing on success with style, get a free situation aspect instead of a boost reflecting your improvements.

HALO

♦ **Direct Interface:** Control equipment by touch interface.

♦ **Effectors:** Technopsi telekinesis at 1 zone range.

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

EXTRAS

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

★ **Technical Toolkit:** +2 Technical overcome bonus on repair actions.

Nootropes

Nootropes are an integral and vital part of the Core Worlds population. They are a genurgically-created subspecies of administrators common throughout Manhome and the Old Commonality, and also in Commonality facilities (especially embassies) in the Penumbral Worlds and Satellite Domains. They're the organic machinery which kept the Old Commonality running for 10,000 years, and they still have a lot of power today. Nootropes account for as much as 5% of the Core Worlds population; they're not necessarily present as

The Nootrope Genotype

Mandatory spend: 2 aspects.

Chronological Age: 100-400.

Apparent Age: Mature adult.

Typical Occupations: Administrator, CORESPAN Operative, Negotiator.

Typical Enhancements: Autotrophic Enhancement, Cosmetic Enhancer, Neurosynthetic Extensors, Nootropic Gland.

Mandatory Extras: Mindscape Implant.

Genotype Aspects: You must take the Sexually Neuter genotype aspect. You may take the Reinforced Intelligence aspect.

REINFORCED INTELLIGENCE

In your home environment your thoughts, decisions, and behaviour are all backed up by a Mindscape-enabled synergy which makes each nootrope a manifestation of the intellect of the whole.

Invoke: To be brilliantly deductive or knowledgeable; to be capable of thought processes, calculations, and mental activity far in excess of human norms.

Compel: To be dumbfounded and unable to decide when out of contact with your home environment; to come across as inhumanly smart, a cold intellect; to be miles away, communing with your fellows.

SEXUALLY NEUTER

Sexual differences have long ceased to have meaning for your people. With atavistic distractions removed, you're free to concentrate on your vital work of keeping the machinery of the Commonality running.

Invoke: To behave in a non-gendered or gendered way when appropriate; to shrug off attempts at sexual persuasion or seduction.

Compel: To behave incorrectly in a gendered situation; to experience confusing atavistic emotions.

minority populations on all Core worlds, but most worlds will at least have a nootrope delegation representing CORESPAN, and some worlds (especially plateworlds) have populations entirely of nootropes.

Some rich Core World humans have nootrope servants, though this practice is falling out of fashion. Tribune sentiences (below), far more intelligent than unmodified humans, often emerge from groups of nootropes.

Quints

Quints are short and accelerated hominids, often genurgically created when rapid construction or other work is required. Many quints these days are almost entirely mechanical, working on ship construction, plateworld and Mindscape infrastructure maintenance, and so on. They operate at at least twice human speed; those without access to longevity have short life spans.

Quints grow rapidly to maturity and functionality, and are designed for rapid construction work, often before any humans or beings of higher sentience get involved. Sometimes sterile Quints are bred for a particular project, and are allowed to die out as the project nears completion.

A typical Quint world is the shipyard of Chrysalid (page 64); see also Sixbeak (page 69).

QUINTS

Physical Stress: 1□ 2□ 3□ 4□

Mental Stress: 1□ 2□ 3□ **Credit Stress:** 1□ 2□

Consequences: 1 mild + 1 moderate

Scale: Medium (+0)

Aspects: Operating at Twice Human Speed (1 exchange is a few seconds); Half Human Size; Mix of Flesh and Metal.

Skills: Great (+4) Technical; Good (+3) Physique; Fair (+2) Investigate; Average (+1) Will.

STUNTS

♦ **Starship Engineer:** Use Technical for construct actions, including recovery actions.

HALO

♦ **Energy Fold (Electricity):** Control electricity (+2 create advantage bonus) plus Electricity Control aspect.

♦ **Technical Skill Chip:** +1 bonus to Technical skill.

EXTRAS

★ **Small:** +2 Stealth bonus for small size.

Supporting NPC

Standervire

Standervires are a genurgic strategy for colonising low energy worlds, in which humans are genurgically modified to operate at lower temporalities. Some Standervires are like sloths; others operate so slowly it's impractical to interact with them. There are many Standervire worlds, usually red dwarfs or below; Hainer's World (page 73) is a typical example.

Survivor Worlds

Survivor worlds are those which were attacked and / or occupied by the Venu during their invasion of the Core Worlds in 110-120 NCE, and which survived sufficiently to be able to be rebuilt. They share significant cultural scarring, and usually see substantial SCI Force cultural redaction activity and CORESEC policing, and some may even be quarantined (extremely unusual for the Core Worlds). Styphon (page 69) is a survivor world.

Tribune Sentiences

Tribune sentiences are the governing sentiences of **tribune worlds**, systems originally populated by **nooprobe seeder** (the ancestor of today's event horizon probes and nano-seeders—see *Mindjammer* page 351), many of which now house plateworlds. They were originally broadcast from Old Earth and instantiated at their destinations, which they have administered ever since. They are highly intelligent and often extremely old, and quite alien even to Core Worlds citizens inexperienced in nootrope communities.

Tribune Worlds

Tribune worlds are nootrope worlds administered by tribune sentiences, usually broadcast by tightbeam from Old Earth from 2200 FA onwards. Tribune worlds are the precursors of the modern-day seed colonies of the Fringe (see *Mindjammer* page 351). Von Neumann's World is an example (see page 69).

Xenomorphs

Within the Manhome system, xenomorphs were originally uplifted animals, created with varying degrees of intelligence to fulfil menial roles. They were bred as pets, servants, and cheap labour. Many xenomorph labourers have low intelligence, and even today many people in the Core view them as little more than biological machinery. Even xenomorphs of standard human intelligence and even above are considered inferior to humans in Manhome, though matters can be different further afield, even within the Core.

Outsiders often view xenomorph labour in the Core Worlds as a kind of slavery, ignoring those who insist most



xenomorph labourers are only partially sentient. After all, even partial sentients deserve good treatment, and "most" is by no means all. Emancipationist movements (page 22) have punctured the conservative politics of the Core, and are viewed as a threat by those who rely on xenomorph labour for their prosperity. They have so far barely affected Manhome, but even there protests are increasing.

Xenomorphs vary in size and shape, depending on their purpose. One thing most have in common is a short life expectancy, though some are prolific breeders. See *Mindjammer* page 40 for much more on xenomorphs.

LIFE IN THE CORE

Life in the Core is highly structured, and in most cases communal. Core Worlds tend to be densely populated and layered with social protocols. There is no room for selfish individualism, in both physical space and in the Mindscape, where an insufficiently restrained halo can cause as much annoyance to neighbours as loud music might in our own time. Group living, and group minds, make dealing with the press of population easier.



Social rules vary across the Core. In some places (such as Shine), they demand emotional restraint and elaborate politeness; in others (such as Tyche), conspicuous dedication to communal effort is more important. Places such as Yarp and Old Mars consider history and its re-enactment of singular significance. Individuals moving from world to world must rely on public exomemories and even memplexes to quickly assimilate unfamiliar customs, as allowances are rarely made for outsiders.

The Core supplies almost limitless informational and physical resources to its citizens. Gross physical objects are trivially produced by makepoint or painlessly supplied by resource allocation (page 29), while more rarefied resources can be accessed through sensorview and remote control. Travel is freely available (so long as a reason can be provided) through the use of transit spheres and sentient vessels and a variety of tailored services such as Fringebound (page 11) and Interworld (page 49).

There is no need for involuntary labour: education in the Core is structured to identify what individuals **want** to do with their lives, then providing them with the skills, tools, and resources to do it. It's recognised that citizens may want to undertake a range of activities during their long lives, and an individual's interaction with the education system is expected to be lifelong and ongoing; labour and task allocation by hyperintelligent administrators means that individuals can follow their ambitions and an outlet for their energies will be found to meet their desires. Even when activities are physically arduous or mentally taxing, opportunities for relaxation are abundant. Few people get bored, or do things they don't enjoy.

This goes for activities most citizens would consider unpalatable—actual “jobs”. Synthetic sentiences can **always** enjoy what they're doing, even down to mechanical rote labourers and sanitation synthetics. Historically, xenomorphs have been the exception and, together with the outcast **subs** of the undercity substrates (page 35), are probably the only people in the Core Worlds forced routinely to do things they don't want to.

There are exceptions. Some worlds have different cultural values, especially the quarantined and more damaged survivor worlds, and some penumbral worlds and satellite domains. In the rare cases boredom or indolence rear their heads, however, the Core abounds in distractions, from drugs to virtualities, to cater for the most jaded appetites. Where all else fails and a true malaise sets in, re-education resorts can usually help.

A popular activity with a history longer than the Commonality itself is **politics**. Although few Core Worlds have governments in the traditional sense, they have countless layers of bureaucracy, byzantine tangles of regulation, numberless internecine rivalries, and infinite distinctions of precedence or nuances of hierarchy. While nootropes and

governor sentiences handle much of the day-to-day administration of arcologies and plateworlds, there are countless positions to take within the instrumentalities and the CORESPAN bureaucracy for those who enjoy such lives.

The past few centuries have seen greater upheavals in the Core than the preceding eight millennia. Scientific and artistic progress have become meaningful again. Dangerous memes and philosophies are filtering in from the Fringe Worlds, and the Venu invasion has shown that life-and-death excitement is once again a possibility for those who crave physical challenge. The first generations of citizens are now being born who do not regard the Core as finished, complete, and unchanging. However, the Core remains resistant to innovation, and even the fervour of the Second Age of Space is regulated on many worlds.

The Mortality Statutes

For millennia, life spans in the Old Commonality were fixed at 500 years, after which citizens were expected to submit to an instantaneous and non-distressing euthanasia. This was regarded as common sense and also the height of dignified behaviour; with finite resources and dense populations, it was only right that individuals should voluntarily make way to give others a chance at life and to allow the human gene pool to evolve in a natural way.

Although the New Commonality rescinded the Mortality Statutes in response to the increased dangers of life in the Rediscovery Era, attitudes have not changed very much in the Core Worlds. While there are increasing instabilities and perhaps even dangers, people still lead largely peaceful lives. As a result, population pressures have been slowly mounting. The older generation may still apply for euthanasia, but many have chosen not to do so, especially among the younger yearpools (page 23), and as a result yearpool numbers have been falling in response to a reduced requirement to replace population wastage. CORESPAN uses the Ministry of Broadcast Propaganda to encourage outward migration via Fringebound, easing population pressures and the increased appetite for “adventure”.

Re-education Resorts

Despite the Commonality's best efforts, not every citizen can be happy all the time. Commonality society is complex and vast, and life is long; sometimes people simply become lost, or despondent, beset by feelings of impotence or insignificance. There are many ways to address these concerns within the framework of everyday life—counselling, redaction therapy, drugs, and even memplexes—but, when all else fails, there are the **re-education resorts**. Ranging from city-sized enclosures to habs, plateworlds, and even entire worlds, these are engineered sub-cultures midway between holiday

camps and psychiatric facilities. Their goal is the humane rehabilitation of those who cannot cope with Commonality society. Treatments are significant—the very act of going to a re-education resort means you already have a serious problem—involving tweaks to memories to excise psychological complexes, and in extreme cases the breakdown of personality matrices, engram wipes, and the instantiation of a new individual. Some resort guests may be under compulsion, as a result of anti-social acts and even crimes, under close surveillance or confined to high-security resorts.

Getting Things Done in the Core Worlds

There's a protocol for everything in the Core Worlds, from approaching a superior or a friend for advice or assistance, to getting landing permission or travel authorisation on a world, to interacting with resource allocation to acquire equipment.

The Core Worlds Resource Allocation Network (CORERAN) is an ever-present Mindscape service of helper routines and hyperintelligences which anticipates and meets every citizen's material needs. Most items are mysteriously available when needed; for more unusual items, citizens must still go through protocol, but the item is still usually provided. A good success at cost is to increase the delay on the time ladder by the shifts of failure before the item arrives.

Characters from the Fringe visiting the Core may find CORERAN to be a nightmare. Their economic clout means less, and ignorance of protocol makes finding an item a bewildering maze of red tape.

When trying to acquire equipment or "get things done" during play, increase the opposition of appropriate Resources or interpersonal skill rolls by +1. Core Worlders may invoke appropriate cultural aspects, while non-Core Worlders face an automatic *Stranger to the Core Worlds*-type aspect which may be invoked or compelled against them.

THE CORE WORLDS CULTURE

Physical Stress: 1□ 2□ 3□ 4□

Mental Stress: 1□ 2□ 3□ 4□ **Credit Stress:** 1□ 2□ 3□ 4□

Consequences: 3 + 3 mild + 2 moderate

Scale: Interstellar (+8)

Reach: Interstellar (+8)

Tech Index: T10

MEMES

Dominant Meme: A Light for the Many Worlds of Space.

Trouble: Humankind is Transcending.

Other Memes: How Mutable Is Our Body Form? Our Manifest Destiny Is to Spread to the Stars; We Preserve Humankind's Greatest Civilisation.

Major Subculture

SKILLS

Epic (+7): Provoke, Structure, Will

Fantastic (+6): Bureaucracy, Contacts, Resources.

Superb (+5): Deceive, Intrusion, Technical

Great (+4): Knowledge, Rapport, Science, Stealth

STUNTS

♦ **Propaganda Campaign:** +2 bonus to Provoke attack, defend, and create an advantage actions.

♦ **Shock and Awe:** Make meme attacks on any part of a culture in a zone currently under organisation Security attack.

♦ **Traditionalist (x3):** Armour:3 rating against mental and physical attacks.



CORESPAN - THE CORE WORLDS PANSECTORATE

Physical Stress: 1□ 2□ 3□ 4□

Mental Stress: 1□ 2□ 3□ 4□ **Credit Stress:** 1□ 2□ 3□ 4□

Consequences: 3

Scale: Interplanetary (+7)

Reach: Interstellar (+8)

Tech Index: T10

ASPECTS

High Concept: Monolithic Organ of the Core Worlds Ministries.

Trouble: Manhome-centric.

Other Aspects: CORESEC Attack Dogs; Second-Guessing the Custodians; The Instrumentalities Work for Us!

SKILLS

Fantastic (+6): Assimilate, Resources, Security.

Superb (+5): Deceive, Provoke, Will.

Great (+4): Bureaucracy, Stealth, Structure.

Good (+3): Contacts, Investigate, Manoeuvre.

Fair (+2): Knowledge, Notice, Rapport.

THE TERRAGROND

Physical Stress: 1□ 2□ **Mental Stress:** 1□ 2□ 3□ 4□

Credit Stress: 1□ 2□ 3□ 4□

Consequences: 1 mild + 1 moderate

Scale: Regional (+4)

Reach: Interplanetary (+7)

Aspects: Secretive Custodians of Old Earth; As Above So Below; Splendid Isolation.

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

STUNTS

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

♦ **Extreme Sanction:** Make Security actions against characters.

STUNTS

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

♦ **Extreme Sanction:** Make Security actions against characters.

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

♦ **Organogrammaton:** +2 bonus to Bureaucracy overcome and create an advantage actions.

HALO

Mandscape Connections: Make mental attacks on other organisations using Will.

EXTRAS

★ **Auditors:** Good (+3) Bureaucracy attacks up to range 2.

★ **Convoy:** 1/session, make any Resources action up to range 2.

★ **Diplomatic Team:** Special Diplomatic Envoy with Good (+3) Rapport.

★ **Inquisitors:** Team of Inquisitor Synthetics; double bonus when burning mental stress for extra effort.

★ **Strike Force:** Make Security attacks up to 2-zone range.

♦ **Gestalt Combat:** +2 bonus to attack and defend actions in gestalt language mental conflicts.

♦ **Gestalt Propagation:** On a successful gestalt language attack, spend a fate point to force a consequence or affect an entire zone.

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

♦ **The Ties That Bind:** +2 bonus to Contacts create an advantage actions.

EXTRAS

★ **Consultants:** 1/session when making extra effort and stressing mental stress track, automatically create Eye on the Ball advantage for the rest of the session.

★ **Couriers:** +2 bonus when rapid communication is the goal.

★ **Gestalt Communications:** Gestalt Communication aspect; one or more Gestalt Communication stunts.

★ **Mandscape Connections:** Make mental attacks on other organisations using Will.



CHAPTER FOUR OLD EARTH



"Before Kade's feet yawned a drop of hundreds of kilometres, of rarefied air kissed by the rays of the rising sun.

Old Earth had never looked more beautiful. The peaks of Yarp slumbered in darkness, the golden tracery of cities like spider-webs strung with dew, catching the glory of Sol blazing on the horizon, a blush of clouds breathing coastlines in their breaks. Kade fancied he saw the Long Walls of Shine, the Shin Tai Shan arcologies like mountains. Even the spectrum of the sunlight felt right, as if his genes were telling him this was home.

There was no window. His senses screamed he was on the edge of a precipice, and his stomach lurched in fight or flight. The Earthport ascensor had slowed to a crawl, and he waited in the assembly of breathless supplicants for his feet at last to touch Old Earth..."

INTRODUCTION

Terra. Mother Earth. The Jewel of the Commonality. Old Earth is a beautiful blue-green garden world, the cradle of humankind. Despite its population of 100 billion, it's a planet of open spaces, manicured parklands groomed by Global Climate Control. The environmental damage of prehistory has been mostly undone, although sea levels are much higher than our era, and there are no ice caps. Blasted **glasslands** remain as memorials to the destruction humankind once wrought, so that it might never happen again.

This chapter describes the Old Earth of the New Commonality Era.

A WORLD GROWN STRANGE WITH TIME

As much time separates our 21st century from the New Commonality Era as that which separates us from the end of the Old Stone Age, before the advent of agriculture and around the time of the earliest human settlements. It's a vast gulf of time, and there's little reason to expect anything to survive of the behaviours, artefacts, and values of our time.

Little reason—but not none. The invention of writing and ever more sophisticated data storage technologies have

made it possible for ideas and information to survive like never before. The Commonality knows very little about the pre-Glaciation Era which preceded the Shine Commonality, but ruins and artefacts survive from the Prehistoric Age of Space, and artefacts like Henge and the Orion Mounds are even older.

But so much has changed! Old Earth is divided into the seven **heartlands** of Shine, Yoosa, Yarp, Zan-Yan, Strylia,

Global Climate Control

The Global Climate Control megaproject was launched by Shine and involved many polities of the late Glaciation Era. It led directly to the establishment of the Commonality. Its early form was crude, aimed at reversing the ice age which still gripped much of the planet's surface. Today its capabilities are greater, and much of Old Earth enjoys a pleasant climate, with temperatures between 15°C and 35°C. It's the reason the polar heartland of Danasi is habitable at all, and it regulates weather and climate everywhere except Strylia (page 38).

OLD EARTH

High Concept: Heart of the Commonality and Cradle of Humankind.

Aspects: Dazzling Arcologies Reaching Among the Clouds; Planet-sized Protected Parkland; Teeming Societies of the Heartlands; Unseen Undercity Substrates.

PLANETARY TYPE: SUPERIOR GARDEN WORLD

Planetary Age: Mature (+0).

Orbit: Habitable Zone (+0): 1.0 AU.

Year Length: 365 standard days.

Size: Standard (+0): 12,800km.

Density: Standard (+0).

Gravity: Standard (+0): 1G.

Day Length: Standard (+0): 24 standard hours.

Atmospheric Pressure: Standard (+0).

Surface Temperature: Standard (+0): 20°C.

Surface Liquid: High (+1): 75%.

Seasonality: Standard (+0).

Satellites: 1 Small.

Planetary Bodies: 17+; also Tyche subsystem (5).

Habitability: Benign (+4).

CIVILISATION TYPE: COMMONALITY AND CORE WORLD CAPITAL

Designation: Commonality Member (+4).

Population: Dense (+4): 100 billion.

Government Type: Commonality-controlled (+4).

Societal Dev: Sentience Coordinated Collective (+5).

Openness: Self-centred (-2).

Control Index: Restricted (+3).



Trade Index: Extensive (+2).

Embargo: None.

Tech Index: T10 (+5).

Starport: Manhome Terminus (+9): A5-class starport.

Mindscape: Mindscape Nexus (+4).

Culture: Core Worlds.

Talis-Qualis (Old South America) and Danasi—a whole new continent. Most citizens (officially, at least) live in the **arcologies** whose tops rise through the clouds, housing tens of millions; many even live under the sea. Countless others eke out their lives between the cracks of Commonality society, in the **substrates** beneath the arcologies, and even beneath what today appears to be pristine wilderness, dating back millennia.

Daily Life on Old Earth

For almost all Old Earthers, daily life means life in the arcologies. Cultural differences exist between heartlands (see below), but arcology life remains constant. Arcologies are huge, essentially single structures up to 10km across at their base and rising up to 10km into and above the atmosphere. Profiles vary, but most are hyperboloids, with an upper width of 8km and a middle width of 6km. Much of the outer structure is chameleon-coated, managed by the arcology sentience to regulate insolation. With average populations of 25 million, arcologies dot the surface and continental shelves of Old Earth.

Arcologies have up to 1000 levels, divided into garden districts, yearpools, domiciliaries, administrative sections, and more. They are equipped with makepoint manufactories, and pedway transport systems for most journeys, or spheres (page 6) if required.

Arcology citizens live full yet leisurely lives. Festivals, commemorations, and celebrations are common; “birthdays”

are opportunities for yearpool reunions, and for passing time with friends. Sexual, love, and platonic unions are common, and have many different forms, often long-lasting. Travel is a possible pastime, although virtuality simulators are more popular.

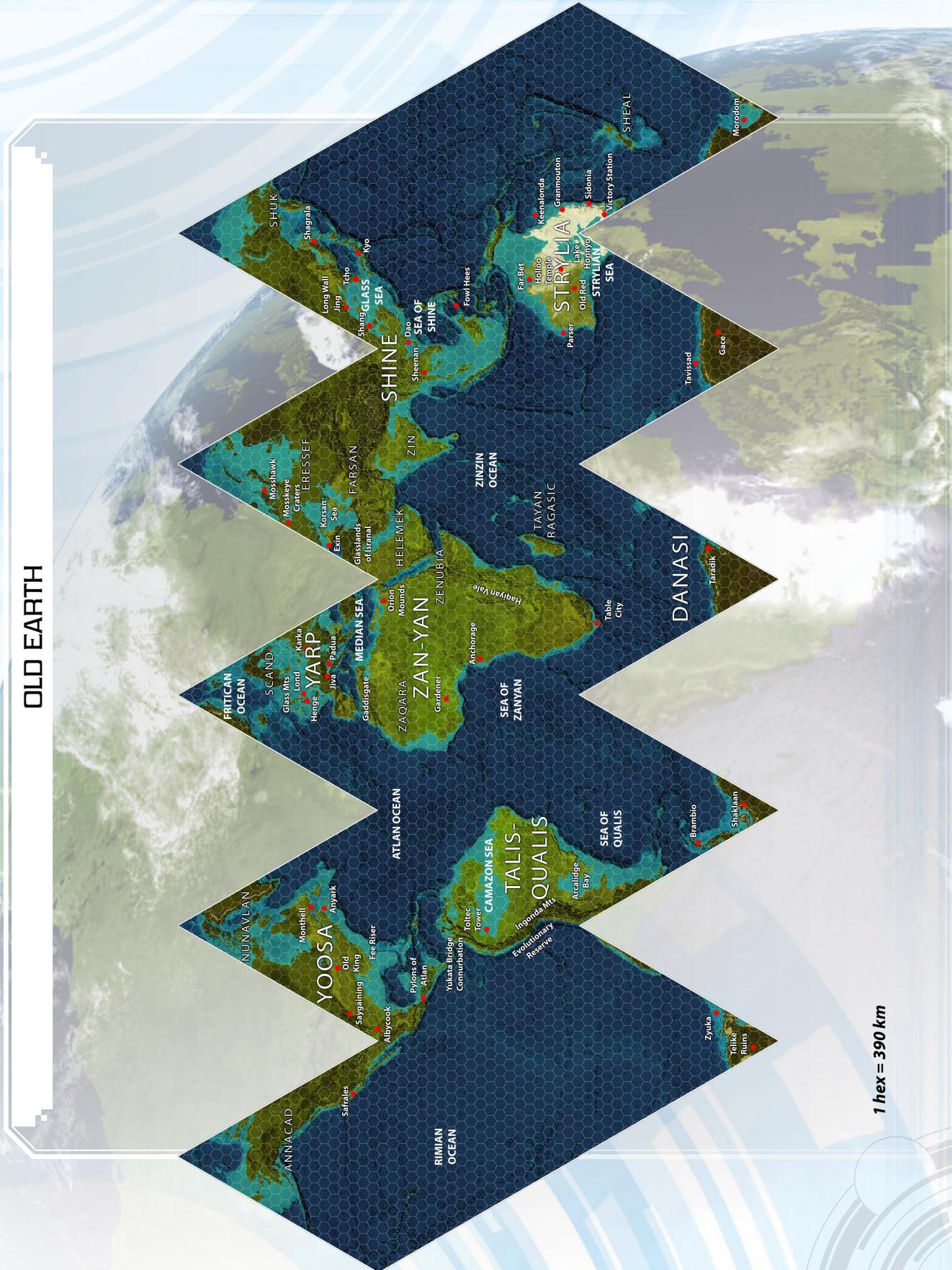
“Workdays” are short and often indistinguishable from leisure. Citizens undertake “work” activities for 4-6 hours; three or four days in a row is normal, followed by a couple of days “off”.

Food on Old Earth is an obsession. Most is prepared by makepoints, but automated farms in the arcology penumbrae supplement the mass-produced **synthegens** with natural

Scenario Hook: Freelance Lawbringers

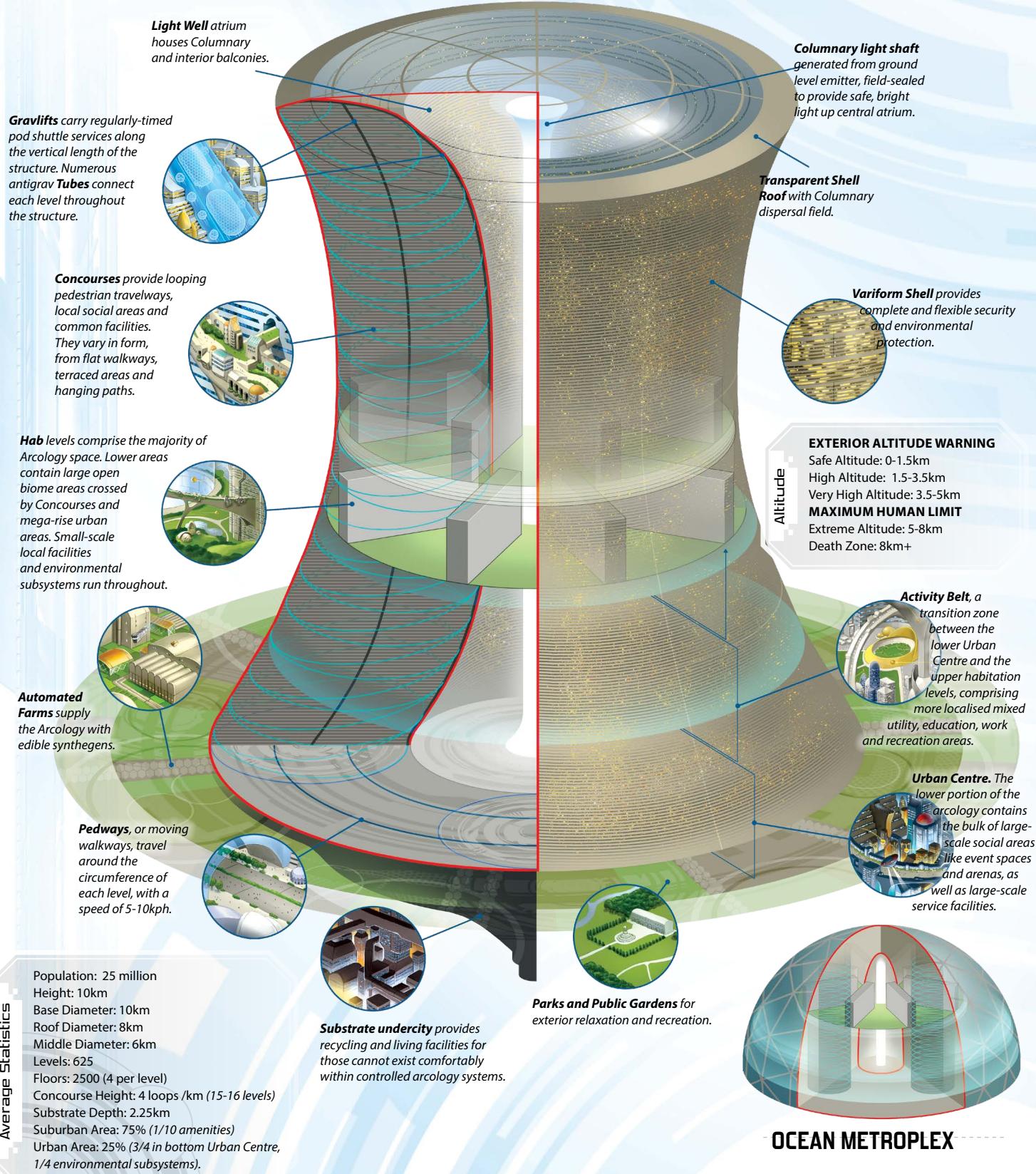
Some citizens—particularly synthetics, for some reason—find the precariousness of life in the substrates intolerable, and often venture into their depths to bring law, order, and justice to their hapless inhabitants. These vigilante lawbringers are without Commonality sanction, but as the substrates exist in legal limbo, they have free rein to dispense justice as they see fit—regardless of whether it's welcome or appropriate.

OLD EARTH



$$1 \text{ hex} = 390 \text{ km}$$

ARCOLOGY SCHEMATIC



specialities. While many synthegens are meat-like, no live-stock farming occurs on Old Earth: it was long ago deemed an inefficient use of agricultural land, and eating living things is now looked on with horror by most citizens. Synthegens vary hugely, with vintages and deliberate instabilities catering to demanding palates. Each arcology considers its own cuisine to be the height of sophistication, although eateries specialising in those of other heartland arcologies are very popular in urbanised districts.

Life in the Ocean Metropoles

A third of the inhabitants of the ocean metropoles are aquatics, freely roaming the gardens and plantations of the metropole zone surrounding each ocean arcology. The rest are standard humans, living almost entirely in the arcology complex above and below sea level.

The ocean metropoles are similar in function and layout to the land-based arcologies, except that their substrates extend below the ocean floor, and that their main structure has a sizable underwater section, usually less than 250m high as most ocean metropoles are built on the continental shelf. The seas around the ocean metropoles are extensively exploited, not just in the metropole region, but also in the wider vicinity, where ocean fish farms, sea floor kelp and aquatic vegetable

The Commonality Calendar

The Commonality calendar is still based on Old Earth's ancient calendar, despite pressures to reform since Rediscovery. A standard year is 365 days of 24 standard hours, divided into 12 30-day months, with a five-day intercalary festival at the end / beginning of each year. Months are divided into four 7-day weeks, with a 2-day intermensual holiday (officially it's one day at the end and one day at the beginning).

Months, weeks, days, and festivals have different names based on culture, region, and so on. The Commonality uses a standard naming convention, based on the ancient Shinean calendar, as follows:

- **Months:** Onemonth, Twomonth, Threemonth...
- **Days:** Oneday, Twoday, Threeday, Fourday, Fiveday, Sixday, Sevenday.
- **Intemensual:** Startmonth ("Start-twomonth"), Endmonth ("End-twomonth").
- **Intercalary:** Endyear 1, Endyear 2, Yearchange, Newyear 1, Newyear 2.

The Terragronde Custodians

*Old Earth is unique in the Commonality by having five Custodians (see **Mindjammer** page 289). They are the **Terragronde**: the Old Earth Custodial Council. Probably originating in regional leaderships of the early Commonality period or before, today they hail from any of Old Earth's heartlands. Throughout this chapter, we introduce the Custodians of Old Earth.*

Custodians are vast and powerful individuals, ancient and augmented to superhuman levels: giving them statistics is almost a redundant exercise. That said, we've attempted to do so, firstly to give you an idea of what these mysterious individuals are like, and secondly to provide a baseline if your characters ever encounter them. The stat blocks given here don't limit the Custodians' powers, but rather give a flavour of what they can do...

beds, and other facilities support arcology life. Most are mechanised and managed by minder arrays (page 25) and a population of enthusiastic and devoted synthetics.

Life in the Substrates

The substrates—Old Earth's vast undercities—are not even supposed to exist. There's a theory that they fall under the aegis of at least one of the Terragronde custodians (possibly Teofilo or Zoraster), based on the idea that not everyone is emotionally suited for life in Old Earth's carefully managed societies, and some provision must be made for those who

Travelling Around Old Earth

*Travel between Old Earth's arcologies is infrequent. Hypersonic tubeways offer regular services averaging 1000-2000 kph. For more urgent journeys, suborbital **spheres** may be allocated (page 6). Travel into the park-like countryside around arcologies is more common; people take their leisure time there, in outdoor and cultural pursuits, or (more rarely) choose to live there for certain periods. Surface tubeways (for the view...) radiate outwards from each arcology to terminals where spheres connect to remoter areas.*

Events

Mindjammer page 319 provides template encounter tables to use when visiting star systems. Throughout this book, we present suggested **civilisation events** which you can use when called for on those tables, or whenever you consider them fun or necessary. You can treat these as aspects, and even unpack them into scenario hooks during play.

need to live outside their protections and controls. There must be many millions, hidden in teeming shanties beneath Old Earth's placid surface. Perhaps they farm their own food—a filthy and primitive practise, to be sure!—or perhaps they survive on the refuse and cast-offs of the arcologies. They certainly don't participate in the *in vitro genpools* (page 23), meaning that these strates must resort to messy and random sexual reproduction to replenish their numbers—something

which more squeamish Old Earthers would prefer not to imagine happening beneath their feet...

SHINE

Shine is a heartland crushed by the weight of history. Layers of culture encase it physically and in the Mindscape, and every action taken here has been taken a thousand times before. Tradition is a palpable force.

Shine emerged from the Glaciation as the three densely populated bunker communities of Jing, Dao, and Shang. They encompassed an area bounded by mountain ranges to the north, and dominated by two large river systems, the Brown and the Yellow, emptying into the same enclosed sea. Early conflicts eventually spawned a unified polity under the command of an entity remembered as Citizen Blue. Shine records that it achieved Commonality while the rest of Manhome still wallowed in barbarism, a fact of which it still constantly reminds everyone. Relics of the period when it was the only heartland abound, and its rituals are conducted with a reverence that borders on religiosity.

Even in Shine, details of the first Commonality are sparse. Comprehensive records began with the **Five Guiding**

Wisdoms, synthetic sentiences entrusted with Shine control in 2300 FA (known as the Zero Year of Wisdom). Parts of the Core decry the millennia of stagnation that followed, but most citizens of Shine believe a perfect, enduring culture was created at this time, to which all later changes have been mere embellishment.

Shine still believes that the rest of the Commonality is merely an extension of it. Novelties are not permitted to disturb the established order, to which everything and everyone is obliged to conform. Significant problems are submitted to the Five Guiding Wisdoms for adjudication, and it is poor manners to complain.

Shineans dress in conservative tones, often brown, ochre and grey. They affect elaborate politeness and elliptical forms

The Five Guiding Wisdoms

The Five Guiding Wisdoms are the Shine heartland's governing sentiences. They are present in all arcologies. Their popular names are as follows:

- *Wisdom of Beguiling Modesty*
- *Wisdom of Cheerful Temperance*
- *Wisdom of Considerate Honesty*
- *Wisdom of Insightful Submission to the Group*
- *Wisdom of Self-Effacing Industriousness*

Scenario Hook: Ancient Faith Memories

A Shinean archaeological dig has uncovered evidence of a secret cult in the upper administration during an era when religion was outlawed. Given the respect many have for ancient Shine, exposure of this hypocrisy could reshape public opinion. More troubling, the evidence is an early form of memplex, exceptionally effective at instilling belief in anyone who studies it—including the head of the archaeological team. Are the records real or fake? And will the beliefs spread?

of speech, value emotional stability over passionate response, and insist on formal approaches to problem-solving. They're colourful only when re-enacting ancient ceremonies. Most of the population lives in elegant arcologies, separated by immaculately maintained countryside. Distinct fashions demarcate its cultural regions: the people of Shang, in the south, wear their hair short and black; those of Dao display animated symbologies in their halos; and the northern Jing have standardised their appearance to twenty phenotypes, each of which emulates an aspect of the Guiding Wisdoms.

Shine Events

- Cultural Impasse.
- Local Festival.
- Outbreak of Guiding Wisdom Hysteria.
- Population Movement.
- Spontaneous Demonstration.

YOOSA

Yoosans are proud of their heartland's past. Devastated at the end of the Prehistoric Age of Space, it emerged from its sparsely populated tribal period to become one of the most

Table 5: Yoosan Arcology Cultural Values

Arcology	Cultural Value (Aspect)
Albycook	<i>Big Red River Land</i>
Anyark	<i>The Tide Rushes In</i>
Atlan	<i>Tomorrow Stretches Away Like Yesterday</i>
Fee-Riser	<i>Truth Boat, Gambling Boat</i>
Monthell	<i>Yarp Away From Yarp</i>
Old King	<i>Stands Against the Wind</i>
Safrales	<i>Surf's Up</i>
Saygaining	<i>The Big Country</i>

The Long Walls

Shine is historically obsessed with walls: to keep people in, or out, or to keep natural phenomena like winds, tides, earthquakes, and floods at bay. Some say Global Climate Control is the ultimate Shinean wall.

The Long Walls are ancient physical structures designed to impede or direct population movement or environmental change. There are 20,000km of such walls, roughly encircling Shine; many are densely populated, and several arcologies dot their lengths. The most recent part of the Walls dates to the Wasteland Reclamation Period and is made of plasteel in places over a kilometre high, designed to restrict and finally roll back the progress of glaciers.

energetic and innovative parts of the first Commonality. Today its arcologies stand on sites of extremely ancient population centres, each with very different characters, although they all extol the virtues of *Yoosan Independence* and *Rugged Individualism*. Yoosans from different arcologies also have cultural values derived from that arcology.

Although Yoosans are said to be the most outward-looking of the heartlands, this shouldn't be exaggerated: Yoosan obsessions are still mostly about Yoosa, even if generally about what other outward-looking, rugged, individualistic Yoosans are doing.

Yoosan Events

- Ancient Engine
- Animal Attack
- Individuation Manifestation
- Social Group Decision Overrules the Individual
- Tribal Conflict

YARP

Situated to the northwest of Shine, Yarp is a sprawling archipelago of low-lying land masses and shallow seas. The densely populated arcologies of Lond, Jiva, Moss-hawk, Karka, and Padua, each with 100 million people, form a loose cultural coalition, separated by lightly-populated wilderness.

Yarp was once a collection of tributary states to Old Shine. After the Yarp states united into their own heartland, they were keen to show that their own past had just as much antiquity as Shine's, dating back beyond the Glaciation. Archaeology became an abiding passion, and today dig sites

The Glasslands of Izranal

*Ancient wars and other destructions have left monuments, memorials, and reminders of humankind's folly. **Glasslands** are blasted areas of mostly exposed bedrock which has been vitrified after exposure to extreme temperatures. In some places vegetation has returned but many are kept deliberately barren. The Glasslands of Izranal is the location of the perfectly circular field dome of the still-glowing Monument to War, at the heart of the Cratered Plain. The Ahelot people are Stone Age and mostly human, and an ancient law predating the Commonality prohibits people from entering the glasslands and them from ever leaving—although people may come and join the Ahelots from outside, which a surprising number do.*

litter the countryside and continental shelf, and speculative virtualities absorb the time of millions.

Yarpeen culture is heterogeneous. Styles of dress, speech, and behaviour differ from region to region. Novelty is encouraged, as long as it consists of adopting some aspect of the past currently out of favour; Yarp's fashions are a constant cycle of revival and abandonment, and innovation not linked to archaeological discovery is discouraged. Fads are identified by their original style and period: "Karka is in 4020FA Processionism this year".

Jiva is the home of the Council of Humankind, where the heads of the pansectorates and the instrumentalities meet in constant session, and the location of the Whispering City, the actual and virtual meeting place of the custodians. It comprises seven arcologies surrounded by a dense metropolex and warm seas. Xaldamar Imobilis, the Core Worlds custodian (page 63) is based here; the five Terra-grond custodians are based in Cola Station in orbit.

Aquatic Lond, to the north, sits on the sea bed, a separate arcology since distant antiquity. Karka and Mosshawk lie to the east, in the Urat Forest natural reserve; Karka is a forest of giant trees, each a separate arcology, and Padua is a single needle of archaic chrome on two thousand levels, overlooking a landscape of dolomite hills.

Yarp Events

- Archaeological Revelation
- Freakish Food
- Linguistic Dilemma
- Local Festival Conflict
- Substrate Emergence Extravaganza

ZAN-YAN

The "Garden of Old Earth" is where the human species first evolved. It escaped the Glaciation and Dark Age with minimal damage, and is nowadays tended by **Gardener** communities, including many xenomorphs. People with "Zan-Yan hands" can make anything grow.

Zan-Yan has some of the oldest archaeological sites in the Commonality, including the Orion Mounds (a protectorate of the Mounder People), the undersea ruins in the lee of the Table City arcology, and the fossil strata of the Haqiyah Vale. The Field Bridge at Gaddisgate connects Zan-Yan to Yarp, and is a famous tourist spot.

Zan-Yan is also the location of the Anchorage metropolex, where Terra Tower connects to Earthport in orbit above. It's one of the few arcologies to have an extensive dispersion net (another is Toltec Tower—see page 40) capable of rapidly transferring travellers arriving from Earthport around the globe. Entry control on the downward journey is handled at Earthport, with exit control handled here at Tower Control..

Zan-Yan Events

- Anchorage Dispersion Net Lockdown
- Animal Migration
- Aquatic Festival
- Gardener Festival
- Mounder People Gathering
- Xenomorph Migration

STRYLIA

Strylia is Old Earth's last true wilderness; even its climate is unmanaged by Global Climate Control. Shining arcologies and verdant pastures line its coasts and continental shelves, including ancient Sidonia and the Wooma Glassland; the Parser ocean metropolex and its sentient genurgy beds; the beautiful Lake Honnyo and the giant livestock of the Gran-mouton Ranchlands. Further inland, wilderness gives way to parched ochre wastelands in the **Outback**, which record some of the hottest temperatures on the planet. Hooloo Temple is an ancient place of pilgrimage with a mysterious and semi-genurgic proto-Mindscape, to which citizens of the arid yet spectacular Old Red desert arcology travel—on foot—at least once a century throughout their lives.

Strylians love their heartland. Most sport deeply tanned skins, often with arid climate adaptations, and are renowned for their wilderness survival skill memplexes and willpower. A surprising number feel the need to leave their heartland for an extended period of travel, often to Old Mars or Ceres and the Belt, or even further afield. The pull of the Old Country eventually draws them home.

TERRAGROND CUSTODIAN: CHOLLIN STRATEGIAN

Chollin's specialist field is warfare and security. Of human appearance and wearing a modified Commonality Space Force dress uniform, he is stern, disciplined, and analytically minded, a supreme tactician who takes a special interest in the defence plans of Old Earth, Manhome, and the Old Commonality. Long ago, before Rediscovery, he was a senior member of CORESEC. He is sometimes known simply as Strategian.

Physical Stress: 1□ 2□ 3□ 4□

Mental Stress: 1□ 2□ 3□ 4□ **Credit Stress:** 1□ 2□ 3□ 4□

Consequences: 4 mild + 2 moderate

Scale: Medium (+0)

Aspects: Omnipotent Terragrond Custodian; Warfare and Security Hobbyist; Supreme Tactician; Every Inch the Space Force Admiral; CORESEC Inculcation Fallback.

Skills: Legendary (+8) Deceive, Investigate, Provoke; Epic (+7) Bureaucracy, Contacts, Will; Fantastic (+6) Empathy, Knowledge, Rapport, Resources.

STUNTS

- ◆ **Commander-in-Chief:** Use Rapport for organisation actions for armies, fleets, and unit mass combat actions.
- ◆ **Commonality Resource Allocation:** 2/session, gain a boost representing increased resource availability.
- ◆ **Cultural Redaction:** Use Empathy for culture actions.
- ◆ **Domination:** Roll Will vs Will to control the target's actions.
- ◆ **Hi-Threat Manoeuvre:** Use Provoke against constructs as long as you're piloting a construct.
- ◆ **Mindburn:** Use Will for mental attacks using the Mindscape.
- ◆ **Specialist (Space Force Tactics):** +2 bonus to rolls for specialised field.

HALO

Extended Lifespan: Strategian is at least 300 years old, and possibly much older.

Supporting NPC



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

◆ **Synaptic Enhancer:** Increase skill cap to Epic (+7) or Legendary (+8).

OTHER EXTRAS

★ **Bioelectric Field Enhancement:** +3 defend bonus, absorbs 1 mild, 1 moderate, and 1 severe consequence; Draining.

★ **Organisation: CORESEC:** Fantastic (+6) Security; Extreme Sanction.

★ **Organisation: CORESPAN:** Superb (+5) Assimilate; Good (+3) Contacts; Auditors, Inquisitors.

★ **Organisation: Terragrond:** Average (+1) Knowledge, Stealth; Known Knowns.

Strylian Events

- Freakish Animal Encounter
- Bizarre Weather Event
- Proto-Mindscape Intrusion and Summons
- Stranded!
- Wanderlust

TALIS-QUALIS

The inhabitants of Talis-Qualis are taught to never forget the terrible things that were done here during the Commonality's earliest days, and every settlement has a monument to the fallen. The worst was a continent-wide civil war that made abundant use of autonomous **gashador** war machines, some of which roamed wilderness areas for more than a millennium after the war ended, growing ever smarter and stranger.

The most famous metroplex is the Yukata Bridge Conurbation, a series of nineteen arcologies between four and eight kilometres high, arranged along 3500km of the bridge route connecting Talis-Qualis to the southern edge of the Yoosan archipelago. The conurbation also extends another 2000km to the south, along the Inganda mountain range on the western coast. Each arcology is connected to the next by an enclosed kilometre-wide bridge two kilometres above the ground, forming an extension of the city. Hypersonic field pods allow residents to travel between the furthest two towers in a little over an hour. A space elevator called Toltec Tower still links one of the southernmost arcologies to the Pashamish orbital habitat, although Earthport remains the only point of entry from offworld. Arcologies once extended further along the southern Inganda range, but most were destroyed in the Atzcalish War 1600 years ago. The ruins remain popular with tourists and historians.

The narrow strip of harsh coastal land to the west of the Inganda Mountains is off-limits and home to the **Evolutionary Reserve**, created more than 8000 years ago when a rogue generation of early synthetics escaped their research facility. By treaty (and some impressive defences), these still-evolving non-eidolon sentiences are restricted to this region, now a sprawling inhuman hive. Legends say that the oldest and smartest gashador war machines were stripped of their weapons and drive to kill and imprisoned here.

So much of Talis-Qualis's history has been lost that the heartland has a reputation for mysteries, and has inspired generations of poets and philosophers. In the 8th millennium, Rentgeneca, its most famous, called it "the Conscience of Humankind"; her thanogram is now the basis of the choreographer sentience of the Camazon Sea Festival of Mnemonic Lights, which takes place during the intercalary holiday every year.

Talis-Qualis Events

- Evolutionary Reserve Integration Faction Demonstration
- Gashador Masque Tourney
- Mnemonic Improvisation War
- Mnemonic Light Phenomenon
- Tourist Disappearance

DANASI

The polar region of Danasi is a "new world" formed when the ice caps retreated ten millennia ago after the establishment of Global Climate Control (page 31). Conflict broke out between the vestigial polities of Talis-Qualis and the Commonality as Shine, hungry for land and resources, attempted to impose sole control. Spilling over into Talis-Qualis, it sparked a destructive civil war, ironically preventing the immediate damaging settlement of the new continent. Danasi became a resource to be nurtured, untamed land with sorely needed resources and a place to grow food to feed a world struggling to reunite and expand.

Like Strylia, Danasi has a settled coastline and a wild interior of mountains and forests. The Telike "ruins" in the Parsifal mountain range have an unusually high metal content, and their geometric shape suggests they may be artificial: so far no signs of ancient civilisation have been found, but the structures, which have been declared a Commonality Wilderness Preserve, go deep into the Earth's crust and are not fully explored. They are at least a million years old.

The flora and fauna of Danasi are adapted to months-long day and night cycles. Several species are genurgic reconstructions of extinct life forms native to the continent. By night, vegetation appears dead and many plants wither away, and animals hibernate. During its long dusk, Danasi is active and dangerous, as predators eat anything organic to store energy for the coming months.

Some of Denasi's wildness has rubbed off on its people, who have a truculent mistrust of authority rare on Old Earth. Although the coast is settled, with several ocean floor arcologies, there are no large cities in the interior, leaving an opportunity—rare on Old Earth—to be truly alone. Denasians are isolated further by genurgic environmental adaptations: wide cat-like eyes, providing low light vision, and the ability to hibernate for periods during the long night, with little sleep needed in the long day. Coastal humans have webbed hands and feet and a vast lung capacity, an amphibious (and occasionally fully aquatic) people ideally suited to the underwater bounty of the seafarms, which provide a significant proportion of Old Earth's natural (non-makepoint) food.

TERRAGROND CUSTODIAN TEOFILO ESSENSOR

Teofilo Essensor has a naturally human appearance, with no obvious enhancements. He wears tasteful but unostentatious Old Earth clothing in contemporary fashions, and cultivates a thoughtful yet discreet demeanour. His specialist field is xenoarchaeology, and he is deeply involved in studies of the Protectorate (page 56) and Cetacea (page 52). He is profoundly disturbed by recent developments in the Astrabalone Sodality (page 80).

Teofilo's primary concern is humankind's increasing dependence on adaptations and genury. His fear is that the Commonality may be unable to evolve to meet a genuine alien threat which he has no doubt will one day come. Secretly he's believed to be working against other custodians, thwarting their uplift and enhancement programs in favour of promoting and strengthening natural adaptations and adaptability. He has extensive contacts and great influence within CORESEC.

Teofilo is 85 years old, with the appearance of a mature adult. He has had no longevity treatments, and is the youngest of the Custodians, relying on the Commonality's advanced medical technology to keep him hale and hearty; he relishes the feeling of mortality as an essential part of being human.

Physical Stress: 1□ 2□ **Mental Stress:** 1□ 2□ 3□ 4□

Credit Stress: 1□ 2□ 3□ 4□

Consequences: 2 mild + 1 moderate

Scale: Medium (+0)

Aspects: The Most Human Terragrond Custodian; Specialist in Humankind's Survival; Clandestine Operations; Alert For Alien Influences; Unenhanced and Unextended.

Skills: Epic (+7) Bureaucracy, Empathy, Investigate, Knowledge; Fantastic (+6) Contacts, Deceive, Provoke, Rapport, Resources; Superb (+5) Intrusion, Notice, Science, Technical, Will.

STUNTS

♦ **Cog In the Machine:** Use Bureaucracy to take organisation actions.

♦ **Executive Officer:** +1 bonus to any organisation action where you act directly.

♦ **Fortress of the Will:** +2 Will bonus to defend vs Provoke and Will damage / control attacks.



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

♦ **Specialist (Xenoarchaeology):** +2 bonus to Knowledge, Science, and Technical rolls relating to xenoarchaeology.

HALO

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

OTHER EXTRAS

★ **Haze + Assault Field:** Continual +1 defend bonus, Unobtrusive; switchable to +3 and 2 cons, Airtight, Distorting, Noisy.

★ **Organisation: CORESEC:** Fantastic (+6) Contacts, Security; Superb (+5) Assimilate, Intrusion, Stealth; Great (+4) Deceive, Investigate, Provoke; Counterintelligence, Divide and Conquer, Extreme Sanction, Saboteurs.

★ **Organisation : Terragrond:** Great (+4) Resources; Fair (+2) Rapport.

How to Get Onto Old Earth

Like everything else in the Core Worlds, there's a protocol. Vessels approaching Old Earth are instructed to wait in the L4 LaGrange point (in the same Old Earth orbit as Green Moon), and those leaving in the L5 point (a third the way round the orbit on Green Moon's opposite side). Approaches may be scheduled for docking at Earthport on a Fair (+2) Resources roll, with an average wait of several days.

Once docked, travellers wishing to descend to Old Earth must pass a Fair (+2) security check using Bureaucracy to schedule a descent via Terra Tower; this may also take several days. In all, from approaching the L4 point to arriving at Anchorage, descending to the surface of humankind's homeworld can easily take a week.

Anyone descending to the surface automatically gains a **monitor**, a dedicated Mindscape sentinel which observes and reports on the traveller's activities. These monitors have a high degree of autonomy.

might expect. After all, this is the gateway to Old Earth, and security is tight. Nevertheless, Earthport likes to think of itself as a place of romance and adventure, despite the robust security and surveillance presence, and tries to present itself that way. But no blasters!

Earthport Events

- CORESEC Mistaken Identity
- Core World Conservatives Freak Out
- Fringe Worlder Tourist Liaison Security Event
- Manhome Revellers
- Unreconstructed Old Earther Ceremonial

COLA STATION

Cola Station is an ancient orbital less than a kilometre long, a gleaming cylinder of red, white, and silver. It's said to date from the Prehistoric Age of Space. Very little else is known about it; it's visible from Old Earth's surface, where it appears to spell out a name or a group of words in an ancient tongue. It's said to have no governing eidolon sentience, and in fact houses only highly restricted basic sentiences. No vessels at all are allowed to approach; those that stray within the 50km exclusion perimeter are immediately overridden and redirected (a Legendary (+8) Domination attempt at millisecond speeds) and redirected or, failing that, destroyed.

Cola Station is the palatial home of the Terragrond, the council of Old Earth's five custodians. Although they may come and go, via unscheduled, rapid, and very well-defended shuttle, they are usually here if not visiting the planet below. Very occasionally, selected visitors are permitted aboard, transferred by dedicated craft.

Cola Station Events

- Emergency Defence Field Erected.
- Terragrond Custodian Dispersal—Flights Grounded.
- Terragrond Proclamation.
- Remote Domination and Bioform Requisitioning.

THE ORBITAL HABS

Manhome has tens of thousands of artificial structures in space, some as ancient as the Shine Commonality or even humankind's first presence in space, important archaeological relics in their own right. Densest in Old Earth orbit, they cluster at the Lagrange points, and care is needed in navigation. Many are self-contained, and most are part of Manhome's hubbub of activity. Some habs, however, have even been lost, and would be of great historical interest if discovered.

Most **habbers** are human, though generally administered and maintained by nootropes; almost all habs have governor

Danasi Events

- Body Adaptation Misunderstanding
- Festival of the Long Day / Long Night
- Global Climate Control "Hiccup"
- Megafauna Event

EARTHPORT AND TERRA TOWER

There's only one way to get onto Old Earth, and that's via the tethered orbital of Earthport and a descent via the Terra Tower space elevator. All other approaches get you reduced to a fine plasma mist by the planet's generously endowed orbital defences.

Earthport was once an asteroid, although today that's only visible by its vaguely oval shape; every square metre of its surface is packed with machinery, domiciliaries, docking facilities, admin, and defences. More than ten million people live on Earthport, and another twenty million may be waiting here at any one time, either to get onto Old Earth's surface, or to leave orbit for elsewhere in Manhome or beyond. Earthport is 15km long and about 5km wide; it orbits approximately 36000km directly above the Anchorage metropolex in Zan-Yan (page 38), to which it's tethered by Terra Tower, a space elevator 50m in diameter, with ten separate conduits for transits up and down, each of which takes several hours.

Earthport is cosmopolitan for sure, but perhaps not as wild and woolly as travellers who frequent starport bars

TERRAGROND CUSTODIAN ZORASTER

Custodian Zoraster's specialist field is the civilisation and society of humankind—our species consensus and its social evolution. Zoraster is a synthetic and a former heartland sentience from Talis-Qualis, and the author of several seminal verse sequences. It's several thousand years old. Its native form is a 4-metre tall grey-skinned androgynous human with orange hair and eyes, although it frequently uses avatars. Zoraster has been on the cusp of the High Human evolution index for at least several centuries, but has been deliberately keeping itself from advancing in order to better understand humankind's society and civilisation.

Physical Stress: 1□ 2□ 3□ 4□

Mental Stress: 1□ 2□ 3□ 4□ **Credit Stress:** 1□ 2□ 3□ 4□

Consequences: 3 mild + 3 moderate

Scale: Large (+1)

Aspects: Terragrond Custodian of Commonality Society and Civilisation; 4-metre tall Grey Skinned Androgyne Synthetic; There Are Only So Many Types of People; Deliberately Holding Back Its Own Evolution.

Skills: Transhuman (+9) Empathy, Rapport; Legendary (+8) Investigation, Knowledge; Epic (+7) Science, Technical; Fantastic (+6) Provoke, Resources; Superb (+5) Physique, Will; Great (+4) Contacts, Deceive.

STUNTS

- ♦ **Cultural Liaison:** Use Rapport for culture actions.
- ♦ **Cultural Redaction:** Use Empathy for culture actions.
- ♦ **Memetic Engineer:** Use Technical for culture actions.
- ♦ **Money Is Power:** Use Resources for organisation actions.
- ♦ **Specialist (Sociodynamics):** +2 bonus for Knowledge and Science rolls relating to sociodynamics.
- ♦ **Virtualisation:** For a fate point, make create advantage actions to edit / rewrite the Mindscape environment.

HALO

Humanoid Avatar: Superb (+5) Athletics, Ranged Combat, Stealth, Unarmed Combat.



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

Special Ops Chip: Local Mindscape connectivity and special ops technopsi.

Synaptic Enhancer: Increase skill cap to Epic (+7) or Legendary (+8).

OTHER EXTRAS

- ★ **Culture: Core Worlds:** Fantastic (+6) Provoke; Superb (+5) Intrusion.
- ★ **Extended Lifespan:** Zoraster is several thousand years old.
- ★ **Organisation: Terragrond:** Great (+4) Security; Extreme Sanction.

Scenario Hook: Eyes in the Jungle

Pro-democracy radicals from the Nanoyok orbital hab have joined forces with Old Wayists (page 22) to stockpile weapons to "liberate" Manhome from Commonality control. The conspiracy comes to light when the characters are tasked to investigate the jungles of Youngshy on Green Moon, an area which has become opaque to Luna's senses. The radicals have packed a shielded base with stockpiled weapons, including ancient **gashador** war machines salvaged from Talis-Qualis, making the mission unexpectedly lethal, even if the Old Wayists are few.

Orbital Hab Events

- Broken Habber Taboo.
- Distress Signal From an Otherwise Unknown Hab.
- Mito Mindmass Invitation.
- Nanoyok Lockdown and Escape Rumour.

GREEN MOON

Green Moon was terraformed early in the First Age of Space, and is still one of the wonders of Manhome. Its gravity engines give it the gravity of Old Earth, and its ecosystem was imported from its parent world. Some species found on Green Moon are extinct elsewhere. Despite having seen the rise and fall of empires in its long history, and two planet-wide wars for independence from Old Earth, most of Green Moon today appears verdant and unspoiled. It exports food to Old Earth, in particular naturally-grown luxuries.

In spite of its natural appearance, much is going on beneath Green Moon's surface. Crab-like minder arrays maintain the gravity engines vital to the world's survival, coordinated by a sentience of great antiquity, Luna. Luna manifests with an avatar (usually virtual or holographic) in the form of an old wise woman, and wanders Green Moon interacting with its inhabitants and dispensing advice; she's effectively the Lunar custodian, although officially Green Moon falls under the aegis of the Terragrnd. She is curious, and will sometimes manifest to converse with interesting visitors. The people of Green Moon are fond of Luna, and consider a visitor especially honoured if they get to meet her.

The near side of Green Moon, centred upon the Ocean of Storms and the seas of Rains, Tranquillity, and Fertility, are the most advanced and densely populated, and effectively Old Earth's "Eighth Heartland". People here congregate in arcologies, but also make extensive use of its wilderness areas. They have a reputation for being more "ancient worldly" than citizens of Old Earth; not as much as Old Mars, perhaps, but the traditions of antiquity remain important here.

On the far side of Green Moon, facing away from Old Earth, the forests are dense, moist, and unchecked, like the rain forests of the old world. Many of those who live here have rejected hypertech, embracing a primitive lifestyle in communion with nature. They took up this lifestyle in protest, after Green Moon lost its Second War of Independence in 8900 FA; there are lost cities here, and even (it is rumoured) powerful weapons hidden in the jungle. The inhabitants of the Far Side—Kamble, Youngshy, Gakarry, Plokorel, and Lorellan—don't just respect Luna; they worship her.

Green Moon's principal city is Tranquillity, on the borders of Hemia and Nectas, which serves as both

sentiences, some with the oldest contiguous memories of any person in the Commonality, rivalling those of the Five Guiding Wisdoms (page 36). Some habbers are modified for a low-G environment; the older habs were never designed for Earthlike gravity. One such is the Javawayn star city **Ur-Shell 24**, six thousand years old and today the primary provider of hab maintenance in Old Earth orbit. It has a population of 4 million Javawayn hominids and up to 2 million non-Javawayn; gravity is maintained at 0.25G.

The most notorious hab is **Nanoyok**, with a population of 25 million. By ancient precedent, Nanoyok is not technically part of the Commonality: here, even in Manhome, illegal philosophies and religions flourish. The Commonality permits Nanoyok to exist both as a safety valve and a place to monitor the effects of dangerous ideas. Visas are required both to enter and leave Nanoyok.

Mito habitat is exclusive; visitors are permitted, but domiciliary rights are highly restricted. Its habbers are clones of the founder from over a thousand years ago. Though individuals, they regularly integrate their experiences via Mindscape, and regard themselves as part of a greater whole. Mito is not yet a true "mass multiple" (**Mindjammer** page 448), but hopes to develop into one.

Baxian is a lost hab, the "Secret Shame of Manhome". It hasn't been seen for over five hundred years, and there are many legends about its hidden riches and terrors. Its inhabitants are insane synthetic sentiences, the results of an experiment in "transferring" human consciousness into synthetic brains in a misguided attempt at immortality. The experiment's failure was one of the key drivers in the creation of the Eidolon Compliances. Believing otherwise is a symptom of the Transmigration Heresy.

TERRAGROND CUSTODIAN MARCHER REKLAWEV

Reklawel's specialist field is transcendence. She's often simply referred to as the Marcher. Believed to be the sponsor behind the Sedna Project, there are persistent rumours she has increased her evolutionary index and is now the custodian representing the increasing number of posthuman individuals upon Old Earth (and perhaps more widely). She has several hyperintelligence enhancements. She sports dark skin and silver hair—often called her Stellar Apparel—but usually with a whimsical touch, such as holographic adornments of wreathes, flowers, or small animals. She prefers to look "old but ageless", relying upon her natural gravity to reinforce her words.

Physical Stress: 1□ 2□ 3□ 4□

Mental Stress: 1□ 2□ 3□ 4□ **Credit Stress:** 1□ 2□ 3□ 4□

Consequences: 2 mild + 2 moderate + 1 severe

Scale: Medium (+0)

Evolutionary Index: High Human (+3)

Aspects: Highly Evolved Transcendence Specialist; Old But Ageless; Stellar Apparel; Sponsor of the Sedna Project.

Skills: Posthuman (+11) Knowledge, Science; Superhuman (+10) Resources, Technical; Transhuman (+9) Investigate, Will; Legendary (+8) Deceive, Provoke.

STUNTS

♦ **Bail Out:** Use Resources to remove moderate and severe credit consequences.

♦ **I'm Good For It:** Use Resources instead of Rapport to persuade or influence using wealth.

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

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

♦ **Sensor Analysis:** Use sensorview and Investigate for active sensing construct actions.

♦ **Specialist (Transcendence):** +2 to Knowledge, Science, and Technical rolls relating to transcendence.

♦ **Synthetics:** +2 Technical bonus for creating and repairing synthetics; access to a synthetics lab.

♦ **Truth Scan:** Use Investigate via technopsi to determine if a Mindscape-linked target is lying.

HALO

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

Supporting NPC



Special Ops Chip: Local Mindscape connectivity and special ops technopsi.

Synaptic Enhancer: Increase skill cap to Epic (+7) or Legendary (+8).

OTHER EXTRAS

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

★ **Extended Lifespan:** Marcher Reklawel is at least five hundred years old.

★ **Increased Evolution Index x 2:** Evolution Index High Human (+3).

★ **Sensory Enhancement (5 senses + IR):** +2 bonus and invokes to sensory perception Investigate and Notice rolls.

GREEN MOON

High Concept: Verdant and Unspoiled Jewel in Old Earth's Skies.

Aspects: Crisp Air and Towering Trees; Transplant Biosphere; Luna Sees All; Ancient Mysteries; The Moon Forest and Lunar Seas.

PLANETARY TYPE: STANDARD GARDEN WORLD*

Planetary Age: Mature (+0).

Orbit: Habitable Zone (+0): 1.0AU.

Year Length: 365 standard days.

Size: Small (-2): 3600km.

Density: Low Standard (-1).

Gravity: Standard (+0): 1G.

Day Length: 27.3 standard days.

Atmospheric Pressure: Standard (+0).

Surface Temperature: Standard (+0): 18°C.

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

Seasonality: Low Standard (-1).

Satellites: n/a.

Planetary Bodies: As Old Earth (page 32).

Habitability: Benign (+4).

CIVILISATION TYPE: COMMONALITY CORE WORLD CAPITAL SATELLITE

Designation: Commonality Member (+4).

Population: High (+2): 1.5 billion.

Government Type: Commonality-controlled (+4).

Societal Dev: Sentience Coordinated Collective (+5).

Openness: Equivocal (-1).

Control Index: Laissez-Faire (+0).

Trade Index: Extensive (+2).



Embargo: None.

Tech Index: T10 (+5).

Starport: Tranquillity Down (+5): A-class starport (part of Manhome Terminus A5).

Mindscape: Mindscape Nexus (+4).

Culture: Core Worlds.

*Upgraded from Inferior Garden World.

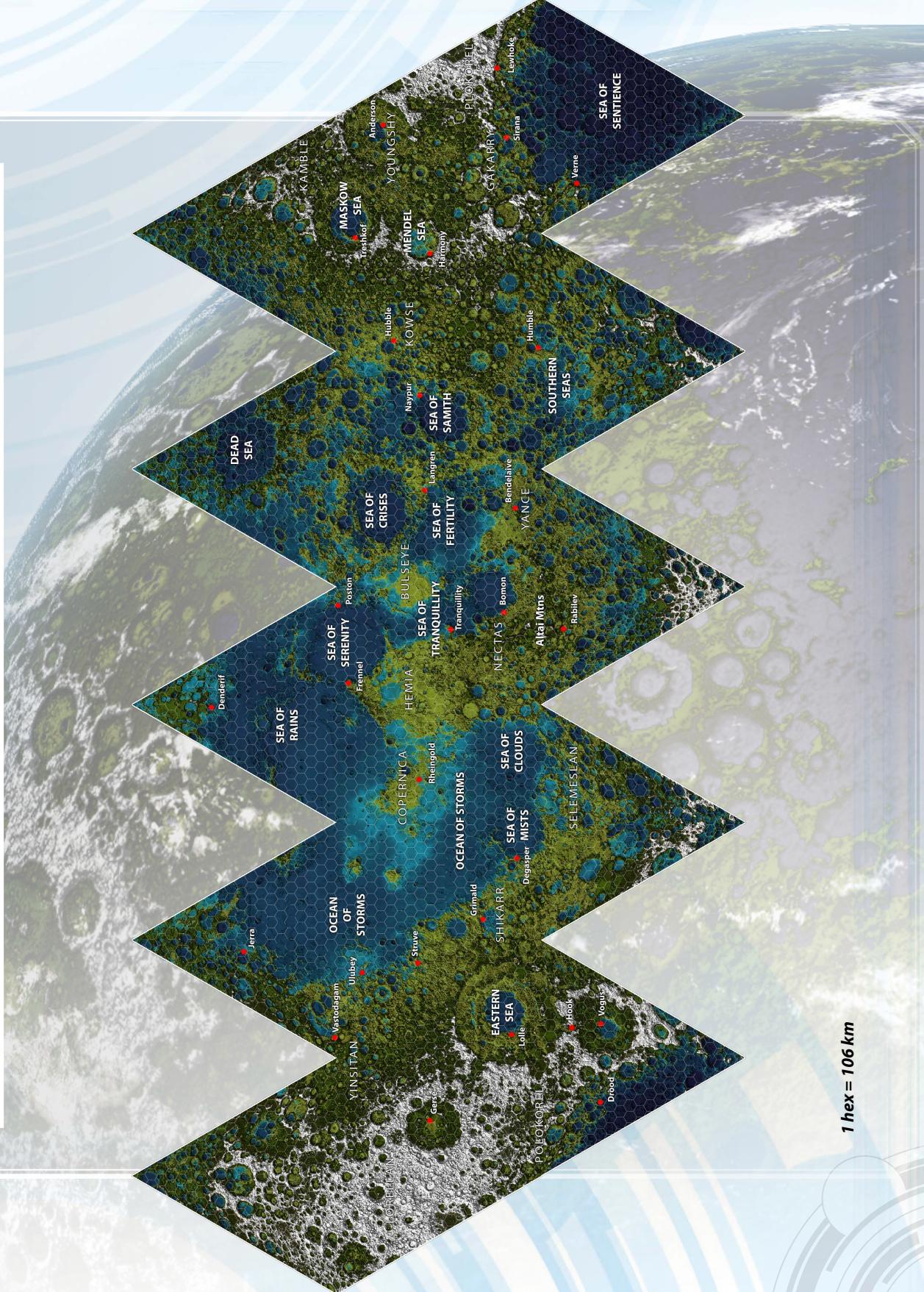
administrative capital and the world's main starport. Its Lunar Quarter includes prehistoric habitats from before the moon was green. It's a cosmopolitan metroplex, with three arcologies, including one on the sea floor, and visitors of all shapes and sizes make up over a quarter of its population of 18 million. Tranquillity makes them welcome, and is largely free of the snobbery towards xenomorphs or those from far away that is found elsewhere in the system. After all, if Luna welcomes visitors of all origins and sizes, her people should, too.

Green Moon Events

- Independence Protest
- Luna Appears!
- Prehistoric Archaeological Discovery
- Rumours From the Far Side
- Selenite Tunnel System Event



GREEN MOON





TERRAGROND CUSTODIAN CIAPHASCAIN PARAGON

Ciaphascain's specialist field is hypertech, especially of T10-11, including genurgic enhancements to the human form. It has transcended gender and sexual binaries and is believed also to be linked to the Sedna Project, presumably following the Evolver / Asexual path.

Physical Stress: 1□ 2□ 3□ 4□

Mental Stress: 1□ 2□ 3□ 4□ **Credit Stress:** 1□ 2□ 3□ 4□

Consequences: 3 mild + 3 moderate + 1 severe

Scale: Medium (+0)

Evolution Index: High Human (+2)

Aspects: Terragroned Hypertech Specialist; Androgynous Paragon Form; Evolver Posthuman of the Sedna Project.

Skills: Superhuman (+10) Rapport, Science, Will; Transhuman (+9) Provoke, Resources, Technical; Legendary (+8) Contacts, Deceive, Physique; Epic (+7) Athletics, Notice, Unarmed Combat.

STUNTS

♦ **Acrobat:** +2 Athletics bonus to overcome actions when making impressive acrobatic manoeuvres.

- ♦ **Acting:** +2 to Deceive overcome actions when trying to convince people you're a specific person.
- ♦ **Artist:** +2 create advantage Technical bonus when creating works of art.
- ♦ **Commonality Resource Allocation:** 2/session, gain a boost representing increased resource availability.
- ♦ **Demagogue:** +2 Rapport bonus before a large audience.
- ♦ **Eye For Detail:** For a fate point, make a Notice / Investigate roll to "look over" a place you've already left.
- ♦ **Martial Arts Specialist:** +2 create advantage Unarmed Combat bonus.
- ♦ **Negotiator:** Use Rapport for organisation actions.
- ♦ **Provoke Violence:** Create advantage on an opponent, and invoke it to be the opponent's next target.
- ♦ **Specialist (Hypertech):** +2 bonus to Science and Technical rolls relating to hypertech.

HALO

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

Special Ops Chip: Local Mindscape connectivity and special ops technopsi.

Synaptic Enhancer: Increase skill cap to Epic (+7) or Legendary (+8).

OTHER EXTRAS

- ★ **Accelerated Healing:** Invoke to succeed at recovery obstacles, or reduce healing time 1 step.
- ★ **Artificial Nervous System:** +2 bonus on Athletics rolls requiring physical agility; as aspect.
- ★ **Cosmetic Enhancer:** As aspect to customise physical appearance.
- ★ **Enthral:** As aspect.
- ★ **Extended Lifespan:** Ciaphascain is approaching one thousand years old.
- ★ **Increased Evolution Index:** Evolution Index High Human (+2).
- ★ **Organisation: Sedna Project:** Superb (+5) Science, Technical; Innovator.
- ★ **Organisation: Terragroned:** Great (+4) Resources, Security; Aid Package, Extreme Sanction.
- ★ **Pheromone Synthesis:** +2 Rapport overcome and create advantage bonus against susceptible targets in same zone; also as aspect.
- ★ **Subdermal Projector:** +2 Ranged Combat attack bonus; weapon:2 rating.
- ★ **Subdermal Weave:** Permanent armour:2 rating beneath skin.
- ★ **Synthetic Musculature:** +2 Physique rolls, weapon:2 rating on Unarmed and Melee Combat attacks; as aspect.



CHAPTER FIVE MANHOME



The heat shimmer of the Cimmerian deserts made the symbiont's avatar difficult to see. Jason dismounted from his dromedate and thrust his duelling spear into the red ochre sand. The pachyderm infernal blinked at him impassively, buoyant in the Old Mars gravity.

"We fight here," Jason said, adjusting his battle harness, "and then we race to the games in Morphis arena. For the honour of our ancestors!"

INTRODUCTION

Manhome is the solar system of Old Earth, the heart of the Commonality of Humankind. Also known as the Hub, it officially doesn't belong to any of the Old Commonality sub-sector's octants. Settled for more than ten thousand years, it comprises more than a dozen worlds and countless habitats, depots, and other facilities, with a dense population and rich and varied culture with profound histories. People live everywhere; for many millennia Manhome **was** the Commonality. It's dazzlingly huge, complex, highly developed, and diverse. You can live your whole long life here and never see all of it.

This chapter describes the Manhome worlds beyond Old Earth and Green Moon. The inside back cover of this book provides a schematic showing their relative locations.

DAILY LIFE IN MANHOME

It's hard to generalise about daily life in Manhome; it's a collection of very different worlds, and its inhabitants' lives are closely matched to their environments. Much of what goes for Old Earth (page 32) goes for Manhome, refracted through the prism of local culture: arcologies remain the common approach for mass population centres; family units and year-pools are standard, often with huge local variation (especially on Inferno and Old Mars). Manhome generally follows the Commonality calendar, but worlds with meaningful day/night periods usually use those, and every world has its own holidays, festivals, and traditions. Manhomers are pretty static, experiencing other worlds by virtuality, but travel within worlds and habs is more common.

MERCURY DEPOT

Mercury's 176-day rotation means the world experiences huge temperature differentials, exploited by its industrial plants. Mercurians are proud of their savage metallic world, and live in heavily industrialised conurbations, themselves **disperser** posthuman intelligences (see *Mindjammer* page 448). The world is probably the most important single concentration of disperser posthumans in the Commonality.

The See-Say Industrial Depot, Manhome's main producer of plassteel, glassteel, and related materials, has facilities across Mercury's surface. See-Say was founded two millennia ago by the entrepreneurial hazmat mechanical Arquebus, who described his century-long feat in the

The Interworld Transport Service

*The Ministry of Movement operates **Interworld**, the transport service connecting all the Manhome worlds. Its services average 400G, or slower (100G) if you don't give notice of travel, and faster if you have an urgent matter and request resource allocation to assist. Interworld transports are usually STL ferries seating 100-1000 individuals; more infrequent services to and between outer system destinations offer overnight accommodations.*

epic song cycle called the Sunstalker Sequence. Arquebus's achievement is taught to every Manhome child, and Arquebus himself is now the planetary sentience.

Mercury Events

- Dispenser Manifestation
- Mechanical Pilgrimage ("Sunstalking")
- Metal Eruption Event
- Organic Rights Protest

INFERNO

Inferno is a torrid, primeval world, hot and steamy, fertile and wet, with energetic weather systems. Over half of its 10 billion population live in the semi-aquatic marshland metroplexes; the rest live in dispersed communities across the planet.

Inferno's citizens were once terrestrial life forms; many were human, but others were pachyderms and large cetaceans. Today, Infernals are huge, tough, high endurance synthetics; their upbringing and heritage mean they have more in common with one another than their original genotypes. Some live in the marshy lowlands and research the gargantuan **mudworms**, which play a key role in the planet's developing biosphere, but many work in genurgic science, making Inferno one of Manhome's main genurgic centres.

Since first contract with the Planetary Intelligence, Chembu Genury (*Mindjammer* page 293) has taken a close interest in Inferno, offering to help Infernals go post or become multiples, or to extend genurgic intelligence deep into Inferno's biosphere using methods learned from Chembu itself. So far the Infernals have kept the Chembu at arm's length; Febeking, one of Inferno's main research stations, is believed to have other plans for the world.

Inferno Events

- Infernal Xenomorph Taboo.
- Local Festival.
- Megafauna Event.
- Meteorological Event.
- Mudworm Spawning Event.
- Terraforming Anomaly.

TROY

Troy is the oldest artificial world in the Commonality. A slightly concave disk some 370km in diameter, it continues to grow, micron by micron, weaving itself from zero-point energy along its edges. It's situated at the Sol-Old Earth L5 LaGrange point.

Troy is a connoisseur of tradition, especially of art and horticulture. Out of fashion sculptures and antiquated cultivars are maintained in the gravity gardens covering **Sunside**, and convex **Nightside** is covered in soaring

Infernal Genotype

Mandatory spend: 1 aspect, 1 stunt.

Chronological Age: 25-35.

Apparent Age: Mature Adult.

Typical Occupations: Commonality Citizen, Genurgist, Scientist.

Typical Enhancements: Massively Muscled, Mindscape Implant, Robust Physiology.

Mandatory Extras: Large*.

Genotype Aspects: You must take the Giant Swampworld Xenomorph genotype aspect.

GIANT SWAMPWORLD XENOMORPH

Even if your source genotype was human, you're a hulking humanoid with bestial features, adapted to your torrid swamp-filled homeworld, and everyone offworld who meets you treats you like a xenomorph—for good or bad.

Invoke: To be strong and intimidating, be adapted to hotworld swamps, blend in among xenomorphs.

Compel: To be massive and clumsy, stand out in a crowd, be unable to persuade someone that you're not a xenomorph.

towers; the capital Lutetia spans both faces. Although recent centuries have seen a modest exodus, the plateworld is still densely populated with over 50 million inhabitants. Reproduction and immigration are tightly controlled.

The Troy sentience occupies a spire in the centre of Lutetia, the geographic heart of the plateworld, known as the Spindle. Surrounded by museums of artefacts from the plateworld's collections, it's also the meeting place of the **Ilios**, the advisory body of residents selected by the sentience on a ten-year cycle.

Troy does not permit gravity vessels to operate over Sunside, although they're welcome over Nightside. Visitors to Lutetia dock at the distal point of the Spindle known as **Counterpoint**.

Troy Events

- Archaic Sentience Encounter.
- Gravity Garden Reconfiguration Festival.
- Ilios Summons.
- Troy Sentience Visit. Have the PCs infringed upon protocol, or does the sentience have a request?

OLD MARS

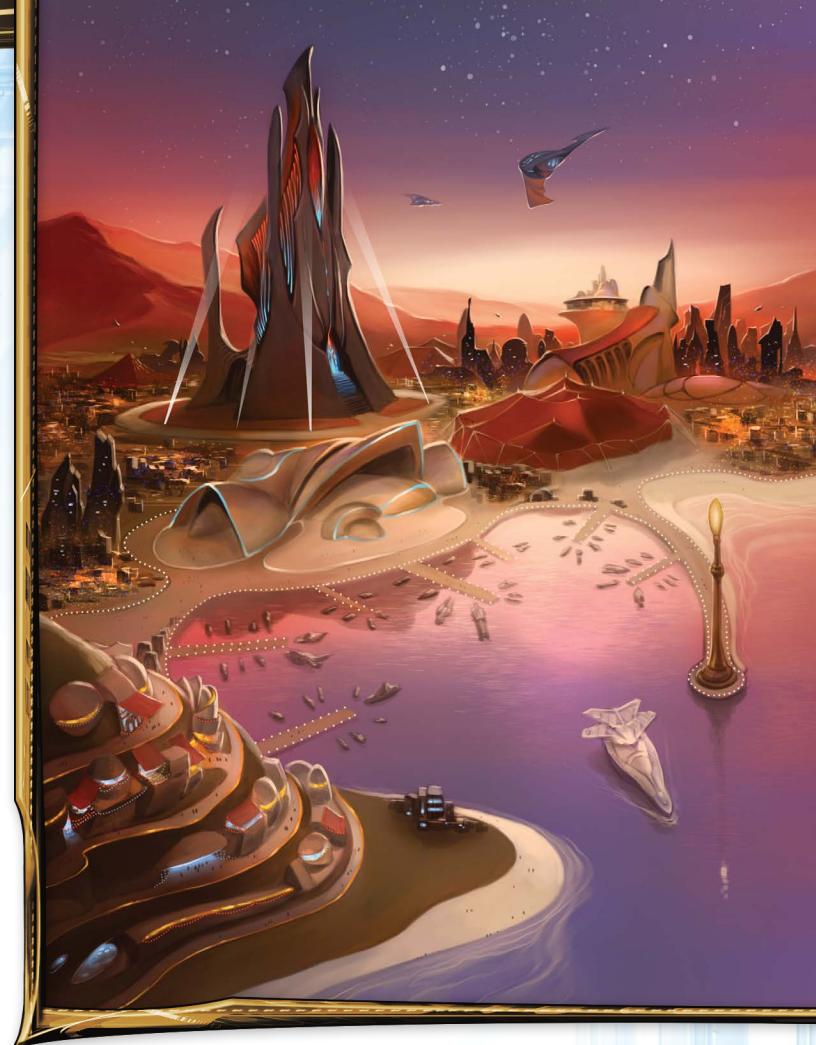
Old Mars was the first world to be terraformed by humankind; evidence exists of initial attempts predating even the Glaciation. Today, some ancient deserts remain, but open water covers 40% of the planet, the atmosphere is almost as dense and moist as Old Earth's, and gravity generators give a surface gravity of 0.75G. The Martian ecosystem is a mix of adapted Earth species and native Martian life, originally found in the subsurface biosphere or reconstructed from fossil DNA. While native DNA and body plans are related to those of Old Earth, life forms like the sand-swimming **sablefish**, the hardy **dromedote**, and the long stretches of **piper trees** are unique to Mars.

In many ways, Old Mars is even more tradition-bound than Old Earth. Many cities are thousands of years old, concentrated along coasts and watercourses. The wilderness—especially the **Red Deserts**—remain lightly settled, and are hazardous to unprepared travellers, who describe the experience like “travelling back in time”. Ancient customs from the early First Age of Space include breakneck sand-boat races and settling disputes via duels, although today most duels use non-lethal weapons unless you're in a Red Desert community (in which case good luck!). Festivals honour historical events, like the Rainburst Festival, TM57, and the Crimson Crown, commemorating Aiko Hero and Jason America, the legendary Old Queen and King of Mars. Many are local and complex.

Many Martians use discretionary interfaces to cause their surroundings to resemble previous eras or (for more fanciful individuals) ancient fictions about Mars. Even housing evokes simpler times, especially outside the metropoles. Martians are fond of using Mindscape tools to season their conversations with historical and fictional details, using references that incomprehensible to anyone not sharing their cultural background. These habits, together with fanciful Martian dress styles, have given the inhabitants a reputation for being mannered and pretentious.

However, Old Mars is also accommodating to tourists and visitors. Ancient traditions of hospitality mean Martians regularly offer their homes for visitors to stay in, and some even seek out visiting strangers to stay with them. Part of this code demands visitors do not impose for more than 1 Martian week (7 sols), unless they become close friends or lovers with their hosts (an occurrence widely celebrated in Martian fiction). The Tomb-Monument of Aiko Hero and Jason America in the coastal city of Syrtis is a famed tourist destination (virtual and actual).

While ancient stories speak of Old Mars once having one or two natural moons, today it has a single artificial one—Dnabot Station, with a surface gravity of 20G and inhabited by high-G “flattened” synthetics. The sentient moon is the nexus of Commonality efforts at predicting, understanding, and directing transhuman sociocultural change, and is one of Manhome's leading SCI Force controllers.



Old Mars Events

- A Question of Honour: A safari into the Red Desert leads to stormy confrontation with a tribal community—and a duel with lethal weapons!
- A Ruin Uncovered: Desert storms uncover an archaeological site of extreme antiquity, perhaps from the Prehistoric Age of Space.
- Flash Flood: The annual ice cap melt is heavier than expected this year, imperilling the area the PCs are visiting.
- Sandstorm / Duststorm: Old Mars whips up a spectacular storm!

CERES

From orbit, Ceres, capital of the Manhome Belt, looks like a green and white swirl. It's covered with domed habitats tracing its ice crevasses, terraformed to stripe the otherwise white surface with shining verdure. Many Belters come here to relax, despite the fact that both they and the people of Ceres are overwhelmingly mechanical, and would be just as happy on the airless surface as they are in the Gardens.

Ceres is Manhome's main pan-industrial centre, the transfer and processing hub for the raw materials harvested in the Belt. Makepoints play only a supporting role in manufacturing, and the world militates strongly against any increased deployment.

OLD MARS

High Concept: Ancient Red World of Legends and Heroes.

Aspects: Dangerous Cultural Traditions and Taboos; Hybridised Transplant / T-Congruent Biosphere; Timeless Wilderness of the Red Desert; Ancient Tribes and Hospitality.

PLANETARY TYPE: INFERIOR GARDEN WORLD

Planetary Age: Mature (+0).

Orbit: Habitable Zone, Outer (+1): 1.5AU.

Year Length: 669 local days ("sols"); 687 standard days.

Size: Small Standard (-1): 6800km.

Density: Low Standard (-1).

Gravity: Low Standard (-1): 0.75G.

Day Length: 1 standard day 40 standard minutes.

Atmospheric Pressure: Low Standard (-1).

Surface Temperature: Standard (+0): 18°C.

Surface Liquid: Average (+0): 40%.

Seasonality: High Standard (+1).

Satellites: Dnabot Station.

Planetary Bodies: As Old Earth (page 32).

Habitability: Benign (+4).

CIVILISATION TYPE: MANHOME CULTURE WORLD

Designation: Commonality Member (+4).

Population: High (+2): 1.8 billion.

Government Type: Commonality-controlled (+4).

Societal Dev: Sentience Coordinated Collective (+5).

Openness: Resistant (-3).

Control Index: Speech (-1).



Trade Index: Moderate (+0).

Embargo: None.

Tech Index: T9 (+4).

Starport: Syrtis Down (+5): A-class starport (part of Manhome Terminus A5).

Mindscape: Mindscape Nexus (+4).

Culture: Martian subculture (Core Worlds culture).

Culturally Cereans are nature lovers; organic and mechanical alike, they harbour a nostalgic fondness for growing things, so fragile and ephemeral here in the Belt. Organic citizens often emphasise their "mystical" connection with nature, perhaps compensation for the handicap it gives them outside Ceres' protected environments.

Ceres Events

- Anti-makepoint Protest.
- Distress Call.
- Environmental Event.
- Green Man Festival.
- Makepoint Sabotage.

CETACEA

One of the Jovian moons, Cetacea is a water world with a global ocean 100km deep beneath a layer of flexible ice. Unlike some ice moons, its oceans are warm enough that liquid water sometimes vents on the surface. Despite this, Cetacea has no atmosphere.

Evidence exists that Cetacea once had a biosphere similar (or possibly identical) to the Protectorate. Researchers have suggested it may even have been the original home of the Protectorate Medusae, although it's impossible to tell, as Cetacea's

Scenario Hook: The Jewels of Mars

Someone has stolen the royal amulets worn by the ancient queens and kings of Old Mars, relics said to date to Aiko Hero and Jason America. To avoid scandal, the theft has been kept secret, but the forthcoming Crimson Crown Festival, devoted to ancient Martian royalty, means the amulets' absence will soon be noticed. While the amulets may have been stolen for a collector, the heads of Martian ISI suspect the theft may be a memetic attack aimed at reshaping Martian culture. The thieves' ability to evade surveillance indicates they have impressive anti-surveillance technology, powerful allies, or both.

original life forms were wiped out during the Prehistoric Age of Space, replaced by a chaotic medley of Old Earth species.

Key to the Cetacean biosphere today are the **Jonas Symbionts**, group-mind entities formed from a single cetacean xenomorph and one or more aquatic hominids, who act as hands and avatars for the group sentience. Jonas Symbionts provide physical transport (the cetacean component is enhanced to move cargo and passengers) and

OLD MARS



1 hex = 207 km

manage the flow of data through the Cetacean Mindscape. Symbionts are born and die together. Octopoid, cephalopod, and dolphin xenomorphs exist alongside non-sentient counterparts and terrestrial ichthyiforms, as well as less modified humans inhabiting the submarine arcology spires which pierce the surface ice and give the world its characteristic “pincushion” appearance.

The **Pansolognistics** are a philosophical organisation comprising mostly Jonas Symbionts which operates from the Pwyll-Chaos arcology. They scour the ocean floor ruins looking for hidden truths; their mystical outlook, bordering on the religious, has attracted frequent censure.

Cetacea Events

- Arcology Confrontation With Jonas Symbionts.
- CORESEC Emergency.
- Jonas Symbiont Overture.
- Pansolognistic Declaration.
- Water Volcano (surface venting).

JUPITER AND ITS MOONS— THE JOVIAN SUBSYSTEM

Jupiter's moons form a small system in their own right. Io, Cetacea, Ganymede, and Callisto, each as large as small planets, are accompanied by over sixty smaller moons, most a few kilometres in diameter. Some were mined to exhaustion centuries ago for raw material to build the Jovian gas mines.

Early in the First Age of Space, Jupiter was an industrial centre. It was moribund and obsolete, until it received a new lease of life from the trade and traffic from the construction of components for the Manhome Gate.

The Jovian subsystem's oldest settlement is on Callisto, whose crust is a mix of rock and ice with a liquid subsurface ocean. The ocean environment is less hospitable than Cetacea, but is nonetheless the habitat for native non-terrestrial single-celled organisms. Although too extreme for terraforming, the moon has extensive underground chambers with Earth-like environments, and has reinvented itself as a luxury resort. Some tunnels are rumoured to hold ancient records of the First Age of Space. Many scientists who work at Io Station live on Callisto and access remotely.

Himalia is the biggest of the smaller Jovian moons. Further out than the Galilean moons, it's 60km across with a retrograde eccentric orbit, and is the main production and instantiation facility in the Jovian subsystem for hazmat synthetics capable of tolerating Jupiter's upper atmosphere and Io's surface.

Scenario Hook: Deep-Mantle Observatory

The Pansolognistics have disappeared en-masse from their subaquean clerestory on Cetacea, leaving behind a hallucinatory series of exomemories that portend a transcendent disaster. The PCs are tasked to investigate and assess the risk in the Pansolognistic thoughtcast event. All indications are that the mystics have left for somewhere deep in the lightless ocean.

The trail leads to enigmatic symbiont minds and abyssal xenomorph squids, then deeper still. What have the Pansolognistics discovered that has made them quit their home? The PCs must brave crushing depths to penetrate the cult's deep-mantle observatory and its secrets before the events of the Pansolognistic thoughtcasts come true.



Jovian Subsystem Events

- Distress Signal.
- Magnetic Storm.
- Mindscape Disruption.
- Mystery Signal.
- Radiation Storm.

IO STATION

The innermost of the big Jovian moons, Io is the most geologically active body in the solar system, its crust constantly flexed and heated by Jupiter's gravity; at any one time it has hundreds of active volcanoes. Metal rich, its close orbit to Jupiter generates a powerful electric field. A stream of highly charged particles flows between Io and Jupiter, and the potential difference across Io is as high as 400,000 volts.

Io Station was founded to exploit these energies for scientific research. The incredible electrical charges are used to manufacture exotic matter used in 3-space gates. Io's hostile environment means it was never colonised by ordinary humans, but rather by synthetics, mainly sturdy minder arrays with coordinating eidolon intelligences. Human scientists, mainly based on Callisto, access Io Station remotely.

Io Station Events

- Electrical Storm.
- Exotic Matter Explosion.
- Ionisation Event.
- Minder Array Gestalt Celebration.
- Mindscape Eclipse.

The Jonas Symbiont Multiple

Mandatory spend: 2 aspects, 1 stunt, 1+ skill points.

Chronological Age: 50+.

Apparent Age: Mature Adult.

Typical Occupations: Posthuman Evanescence Multiple.

Typical Enhancements: Longevity, Mindscape Implant; Cargo Hold and / or Passenger Accommodation stunts.

Mandatory Extras: Aquatic, Multiplicity.

Genotype Aspects: You must take the Huge Organic Vehicle genotype aspect..

HUGE ORGANIC VEHICLE

Your cetacean body is Huge (+2) scale, and has been surgically altered to provide organic cargo hold or passenger accommodation facilities.

Invoke: To be huge, strong and intimidating; to compete against mechanical constructs; to travel through inhospitable aquatic regions.

Compel: To be taken for a machine rather than a person; to be unable to interact adequately with smaller-scale entities; to experience occasional body dysmorphia.

JOVIAN GAS MINES

The Jovian gas mines were once vital to humankind's presence in space. Gravitic technology floated platforms and domed habitats in Jupiter's upper atmosphere to make use of its natural energies and chemical resources, including deuterium and helium-3, providing material for the fusion reactors which serviced Manhome's energy needs.

Today, the Jovian gas miners are still mostly human, and gas miner communities have been here for thousands of years, forming a complex and varied culture. However, despite (or perhaps because of) the high tech nature of the work, people have evolved traditions which eschew technology, including music made by primitive musical instruments and pastimes involving elaborate but non-technological games.

Unfortunately, makepoint and ZIP cell technology has made the products of the gas mines far less valuable. CORESPAN has closed many of the mines, and today many miners withhold their labour in protest; many have simply left to start new lives, and whole platforms now stand empty.

Gas Mine Events

- Blowout!
- Game Festival.
- Lift Module Failure Distress Call and Emergency Rescue!
- Music Festival.
- Strike!

FARGATE-1

The space around Fargate-1 is always busy, divided into **transit pounds** covering thousands of kilometres, organising vessels planning to travel to the many gate destinations, and processing those vessels arriving in system rapidly and efficiently. Even with hyperintelligent control, the traffic situation around Fargate-1 is always a snarl-up.

Fargate-1 is situated between Jupiter and the Belt, and (with the exception of the Tyche Emergence Zone—the TEZ—see page 57) is the only authorised entry point into the Manhome system; since the Venu War, 2-space emergences and departures have not been permitted in the Manhome system, and are met with immediate and summary destruction. As a result, millions of vessels flow through here, and ships may have to queue for days. See page 8 for more details on fargate operations.

Fargate-1 Events

The current gate cycle is overridden, top urgency! All traffic grinds to a halt, then the Fargate sentience overrides controls and shunts ships out of the queue. The gate dials a new destination, and a small flotilla of ships—possibly heavily armed—either enters or exits at very high velocity.

The gate cycle is overridden, but not before a ship of completely unknown design exits and barrels off at high velocity

Scenario Hook: NOW At All Costs

*The Nanoyok-Old Wayist radicals from the scenario hook Eyes in the Jungle (page 44) have other bases in Manhome. On Baxian Station (page 44) they've made a deal with insane synthetic intelligences, promising them revenge on humankind. They've amassed stockpiles in an abandoned Jovian gas mine, and the Strylian outback on Old Earth, and are planning devastating simultaneous attacks throughout Manhome, including against Fargate-1 and the Dodecahedron. Can the PCs track down the **NOW** terrorists and stop them in time?*

into the Manhome system. The gate immediately shuts down, and an emergency is declared; the local system patrol boat heads off after the intruder at maximum acceleration!

THE PROTECTORATE

Also known as Enceladus, the Protectorate is a moon of the Saturn subsystem and an interdicted world, its delicate natural environment preserved from accidental destruction. It comprises a 30km-deep sub-surface ocean beneath a thick layer of pure-white water ice, surrounding a rocky core heated by radio-nucleotide activity. The dark ocean teems with life around sea-floor hydrothermal vents, including the dominant life form called **Roark's Medusae** (named for their ancient human discoverer), cnidarian-like polyp creatures with multi-chambered luminescent bodies and radially decentralised nervous systems. Adult Medusae farm populations of smaller sessile creatures in gardens around the vents. Despite possessing complex display and sensing abilities, the Medusae are not sentient; but sea floor ruins dating from around 1 billion years ago suggest they may once have been.

Both ruins and Medusae are cautiously studied by mechanical sentiences, who enter and leave the ocean through a series of crevasses that pierce the ice at the south pole above an area of active vulcanism. Steam geysers vent through these crevasses creating plumes of snow across the surface. Organic visitors are not permitted beneath the ice for fear of contamination.

Roark Station, a sentient orbital platform that resembles the Protectorate itself (a smooth white sphere of reflective white), keeps position above the southern geyser field, providing an operating base for the research probes as well as enforcing the interdiction on organic visitors.

Protectorate Events

- Archaeological Discovery.
- Biohazard.
- Distress Signal.
- Life Form Die-off Alert.
- Medusa Breakthrough.

SATURN DEPOT

Saturn has lower gravity than Jupiter, and its orbit is rich in raw materials from its moons and rings, including complex hydrocarbons and more water (in the form of ice) than is present on Old Earth. Saturn Depot, Manhome's principle shipyard, has facilities throughout the Saturn subsystem, catering for both Space Force and civilian projects.

Rhea Yards is the main civilian facility, orbiting Rhea, a 1000km-diameter airless rock and ice ball of low density, little visited except for the extraction of construction mate-

rials. Rhea Yards is an oblate disk 15km in diameter, with a population of 5 million (mostly mechanicals) and 500,000 transients. It has a skeletal superstructure with multiple voids acting as construction bays. Similar facilities run by Space Force, and off-limits to unauthorised personnel, can be found throughout the Saturn subsystem.

Workers in Saturn Depot are mostly mechanicals; many are crab-like synthetics similar to oversized minder arrays, which supervise the machinery and construction process (often sentient in its own right). Organic workers concentrate in admin, management, and personnel positions. If necessary, Depot also has facilities to breed populations of fast-maturing, short-lived Quints to fill necessary roles (see page 26).

The snobbish citizens of Manhome don't really know how Saturn Depot operates, nor how much it relies on mechanicals.

Saturn Depot Events

- Emergency Space Force Requisition.
- Quint Emergence.
- Wargames!

TITAN

Titan is home to the first non-terrestrial multi-cellular life ever encountered by humankind. With a dense nitrogen-based atmosphere and a surface resembling that of Earth, with hills and mountains, rivers and lakes, wind and rain (although mountains of water ice and rivers of liquid methane), there is considerable organic material on Titan's surface, and its methane cycle resembles Old Earth's water cycle. The presence of a biosphere with a panspermia link to that of Old Earth should probably have been unsurprising—if it hadn't been the first.

The dominant life form is the **Kite**, a wing- or kite-shaped creature up to four metres long, which glides through the atmosphere, never landing. Kites live for millennia unless they fall victim to accident or violence. Observed social interactions between Kites suggest an intelligence which operates at a far slower temporality than humankind. Despite the presence of an orbital observatory, Oberon Station, for thousands of years, no recorded attempt at communication with the Kites has ever been unequivocally successful.

Nonetheless, Oberon Station is **the** place in the Core Worlds for the study of xenolinguistics, and the communication techniques developed here have proven successful elsewhere in the Commonality in interactions with other exointelligences. It says a lot about scientists working in this field that one of their main bases is the site of either their greatest failure or their greatest dead-end, depending on whether or not the Kites ultimately prove to be intelligent.

Most traffic in Titan orbit is not for Oberon Station but the **Dodecahedron**. This newer construction, 5km in diameter, is the headquarters of CORESPAN, the Core Worlds Pansectorate, where high-ranking officials of different ministries discuss shared issues and agendas. It's spacious, with the latest technology, but has a cold and clinical feel. Nobody stays here for longer than they have to, though there are frequent visitors from the highest echelons of all of the Core Worlds. It has a population of 5 million, including 1 million logistical and support staff.

Titan Events

- Archaeological Discovery.
- Dodecahedron Event.
- Kite Interaction.
- Linguistics Breakthrough.
- Oberon Station Gestalt Language Cascade.

SATURN'S OTHER MOONS

Saturn has remarkable rings, one of Manhome's natural wonders, and dozens of small satellites. There are seven major moons, five over 1000km in diameter. Saturn's moons are mostly composed of water ice, with a quarter of the material being rock. The presence of so much water meant Saturn's moons were settled early in Manhome's history, well before Jupiter with its fierce gravity.

The third largest moon, Iapetus, has no atmosphere, and a distant orbit inclined away from Saturn's equator, making it the best place in the solar system to view the magnificent rings. **Iapetus Complex** is an exclusive place to stay, its massive viewports and extensive sensorium facilities taking full advantage of the panorama. Important visitors to the Saturn subsystem often base themselves here, and travel to wherever they need to work (such as the Dodecahedron, Saturn Depot, etc).

Saturn Moon Events

- Diplomatic Scandal.
- Visiting Dignitary Culture Clash.
- Life Form Remnant Discovery.

SEDNA

Sedna is a frozen dwarf planet beyond Manhome's heliopause. It has an extreme eccentric orbit with a period of 11400 years, and is currently 400AU from the Sun. It's roughly 1000km in diameter and made mostly of ice and frozen nitrogen, methane, and complex hydrocarbons. It was settled 5000 years ago as a science station researching extreme enhanced intelligence, and within 1000 years had become a semi-in-

dependent colony of sentiences whose entire culture was focussed on transcending human intelligence limits. It's now a world of 1.2 million inhabitants, almost entirely posthumans with a High Human (+2) Evolutionary Index (see *Mindjammer* page 407), and is Manhome's primary research facility into T10 technologies, posthuman transcendence, and the study of alien T10+ artefacts—the so-called **Sedna Project**.

Sedna's population is concentrated in an artificially maintained subsurface ocean, where much of the complex sea-life has been genetically enhanced to human or para-human levels of sentience. Individuals who are determined to "go post" regularly apply for residence here, since it is widely regarded as both one of the premier posthuman research facilities in the Commonality and also one of the best locations for attempting to raise your Evolutionary Index. The government of Sedna, such as it is, involves 5% of the population multi-tasking their minds to devote a portion of their thoughts to any issue relating to governance which cannot be resolved by basic sentiences. Each issue relies on the thoughts of a different subset of the population.

Sedna Events

- Aquatic Biosphere Event.
- Deep Space Anomaly.
- Hyperintelligence Breakthrough.
- Multimind Polling Event.
- Posthuman Ascendance.

TYCHE (Y-CLASS BROWN DWARF)

This Y-class magenta brown dwarf is Manhome's oldest and closest extrasolar colony, only a fifth of a light year from Old Earth between the Kuiper Belt and Oort Cloud. Although Y-class stars are too small to permit safe use of planing engines, Tyche's proximity to the Manhome gravity well means that planeships can safely travel to and from the star, a 2-space transit of approximately 1.6 hours, following a tightly controlled schedule from the intensively policed volume along the Manhome heliopause known as the **Tyche Emergence Zone** (or **TEZ**), the only place in Manhome where 2-space entry and exits are permitted (see page 7).

Before the Second Age of Space, Tyche was effectively an independent system of worlds. Orbited by two cold terrestrial planets (Amalthea and Iasion), two frigid ocean worlds (Demeter and Orontes), and the small planetoid belt called Ploutus Belt, all in its narrow habitable zone, extensive terraforming has made the two terrestrial worlds habitable, and both of the icy ocean worlds now have warm subsurface oceans. There are also several hundred habs and other colony installations in Ploutus Belt. Tyche today is a T10 civilisation.

Although not as heavily modified as many hominids, the 3 billion inhabitants of the Tyche system have large featureless black eyes seeing both visual and infrared frequencies; Tyche gives off no visible light, and visitors without visual enhancements or a PSA are effectively blind.

The lengthy terraforming efforts necessary to make the Tyche worlds habitable gave the system's culture a strong belief in collective effort and shared responsibility. Today, Tycheans regularly link themselves together in deep Mindscape contact to work more effectively; members of every research team, business, or work group share their thoughts real-time, creating small, temporary pseudo-multiples (*Mindjammer* page 448) known as **communions** that can rapidly solve problems and collaborate in seamless harmony.

Because the constituents of these communions regularly shift as individuals change duties, Tycheans are just as adept at working with strangers as they are with people they've worked with for many years. Communions can also join with one another, linking a world or even the whole of the Tychean system into a unified whole in times of crisis; the anti-Venu defence drills during the darkest days of the Venu War are one such example. Tychean communions have led to a corresponding emphasis on personal privacy and, for many, solitude in their private lives. To outsiders,

Tycheans have reputations as asocial introverts; most prefer hobbies and entertainments they pursue either alone, or with only a small number of companions, and on the few occasions when large numbers of Tycheans gather for entertainment, most use discretionary interfaces so that everyone except a few designated friends and companions appear as faceless obstacles.

The 3-Space Instrumentality (page 21) has established Palamedes Station, a depot (page 10) in Tyche orbit, where it is building an experimental 3-space micro-gate. When complete, this will not permit physical travel, but will enable near-realtime Mindscape updates between Tyche and any world with a fargate. The 3SI anticipates these "d-gates" will be faster and easier to produce than full-scale 3-space gates (see page 10 for more).

Tyche Events

- 3SI Emergency.
- In the Land of the Blind.
- Patrol.
- Communion Aggregation / Dispersion Event
- Sensor Anomaly.
- Spies!





CHAPTER SIX

THE OLD COMMONALITY—THE CORE OF THE CORE

When the ship landed, the hierophants mustered to meet us. The plaidants huddled behind them, hunched over and barely half their size, cowed yet ready to obey their masters at a moment's notice. Behind them, the windowless grey walls of the Basilica warren clouded with vent-moisture, exuded by the countless millions of their pallid brethren within.

"We bring greetings from Old Earth," began controller Stylites. "It has been years since we came in person to Heaven's Tsar, and —"

"We know who you are," interrupted the hierophant's translator with a buzz. "Your platitudes can wait until you have recovered from Union. First you must submit to gene sacrifice..."

INTRODUCTION

The Old Commonality is that group of systems—roughly a subsector of space—settled by Old Earth during the First Age of Space, which remained in regular frequent contact by light-speed tightbeam and slowship. Its worlds have considered themselves part of the Commonality for millennia, despite developing strange and conservative cultures.

Old Commonality worlds never felt the need to submit themselves to the Commonality or to emulate its ways; they **were** the Commonality, and what they did defined what the Commonality was. These worlds are confident and tradition-bound, often surprisingly low tech or with divergent populations and cultures, all united by the fact that they've been in contact with Manhome for as much as 10,000 years. What they've **done** with that contact—whether they've exposed themselves to Old Earth's overwhelming impact, or have controlled that impact (up to and including sakoku and censorship)—depends on the individual world. CORESEC's job in the Old Commonality is to monitor worlds for divergence from their traditional cultures, and to decide whether cultural shifts should be prevented. It errs on the conservative side—the Old Commonality isn't supposed to change.

DAILY LIFE IN THE OLD COMMONALITY

Many of Manhome's cultural values persist in the Old Commonality. Yearpools are the norm, as is an intense con-

servatism. However, local customs and traditions are often curious variations on aspects of Core Worlds culture, as if the world has blown one tradition up out of all proportion. Worlds in the Old Commonality subsector are recognisably Core Worlds by their atmosphere, attitudes, and common heritage, but often they're very different from one another.

Traffic Control in the Old Commonality

Even before the Venu War, the Rediscovery Era was not a time of great individual travel between the worlds of the Core. People travelled outwards on Fringebound waggon ships and stasis vessels, but few had access to individual vessels, or thought to travel within the Old Commonality, except on official business. Since the Venu War, this tendency has strengthened, and a Bureaucratic Travel Restrictions aspect applies on attempts to find passage in the Old Commonality subsector or to travel in your own vessel. Yes, that means it requires a Fair (+2) Bureaucracy or other appropriate skill roll to gain permission to pilot your own ship through 2-space in the Old Commonality subsector; getting permission usually takes a week.

MAP OF THE OLD COMMONALITY

There are roughly one hundred worlds in the Old Commonality subsector, TX3.3.3 of the Core Worlds sector; most of these are shown in the schematics below and on page 61, and key systems are described below.

WORLDS OF THE OLD COMMONALITY

The following star systems are key systems marked on the Old Commonality Subsector schematics below. Each system is

Javawayn Star City Routes

The Javawayn are great travellers, and their star cities are particularly dense in the Core Worlds. By tradition, they tend to travel along specific routes; originally slower-than-light, but today increasingly in 2-space. At worlds along these routes, there is always an increased likelihood of finding a Javawayn star city in-system.

OLD COMMONALITY SUBSECTOR TX333 OF THE CORE WORLDS SECTOR



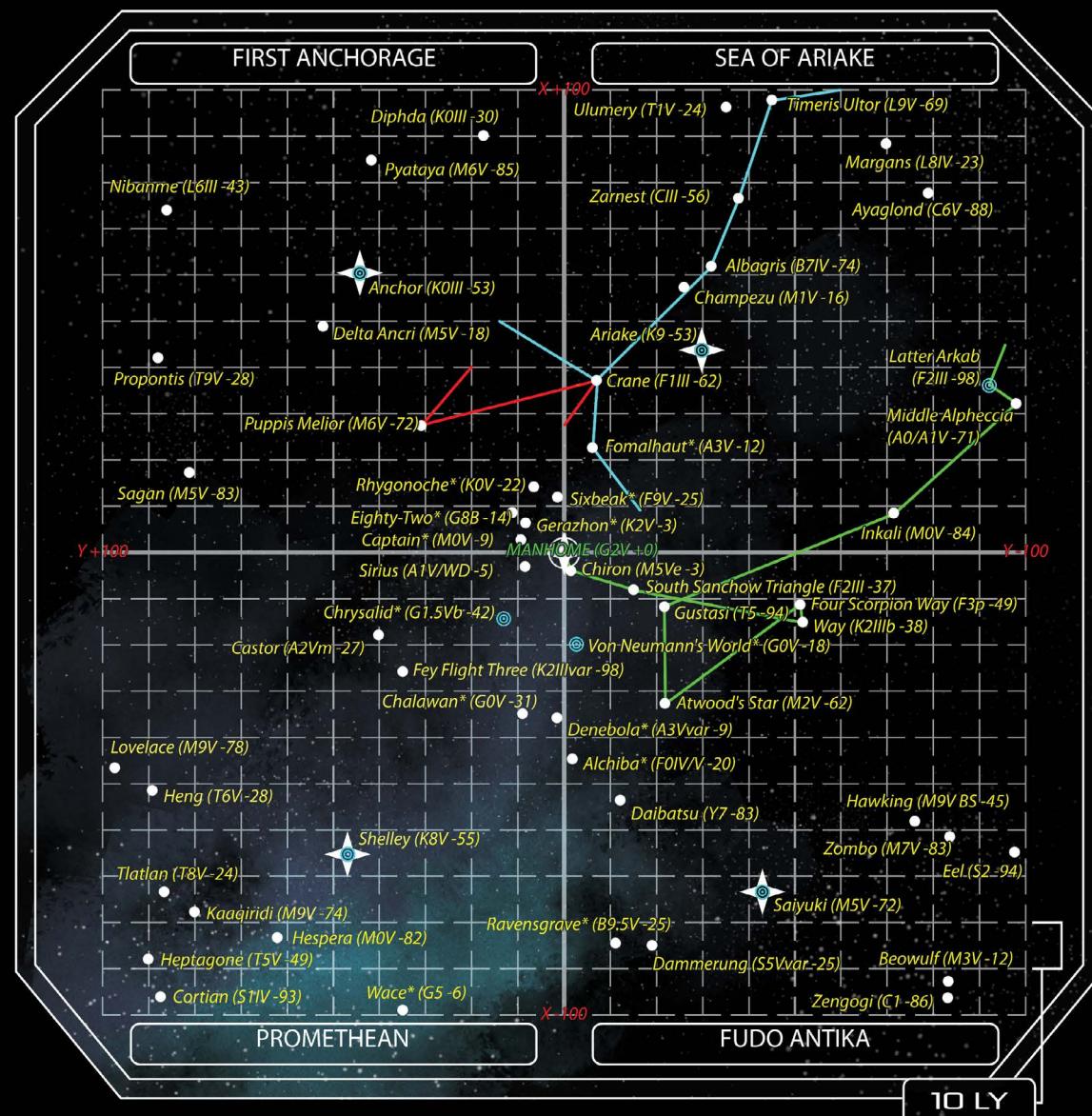
GALACTIC PLANE
NORTH



KEY

- STAR SYSTEM
- QUARANTINE
- EMBARGO
- ◆ DEPOT
- ★ OCTANT CAPITAL
- ◆ SUBSECTOR CAPITAL
- ◆ SECTOR CAPITAL
- FAR GATE
- DUST CLOUD
- NEBULA
- RIFT
- ESSOTAIR RADIANT
- VENU INVASION ROUTE
- JAVAWAYN STAR CITY ROUTE

+50 to -50 Z COORDINATE



listed by world name and high concept, and then as appropriate by tech index, stellar body type, population, and distance in light years from Manhome.

Alchiba

- *Holdout Marginal Garden World Resisting Synthetic Enslavement*
- *F-class subgiant, T9, 5 billion, 48LY.*

For a Core World, Alchiba's history is sketchy, due to its inability or refusal to communicate with Old Earth. Its early colony almost failed, until governing helper sentiences confined its colonists in subterranean quarters. They prevented physical contact

between colonists, who eventually spent their time in controlled virtualities. In the mid-5500s FA, this system became unstable: most humans perished in the subsequent unrest, and the remnant which made it to the surface regressed to a T3 tech index.

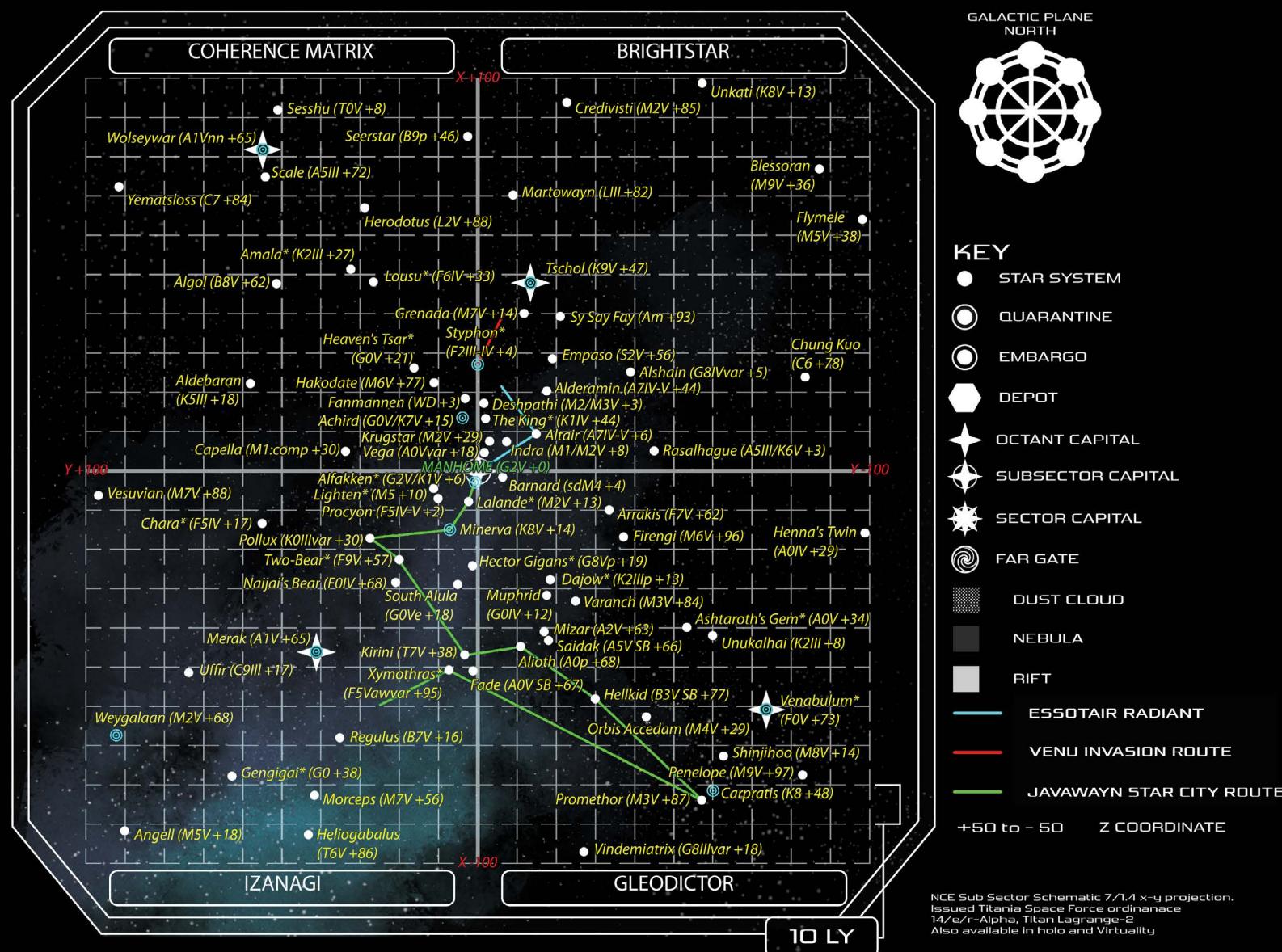
An automated vessel dispatched from Denebola helped Alchiba return to T6. However, at that point the helper sentiences completed their self-repair and forcibly returned all humans to underground virtuality cells "for their own protection". This time, aware of its imprisonment, Alchiban culture eventually revolted, founding a second surface civilisation at war with the helper sentiences.

Since then, this cycle has repeated, with minor variations, at least three times (there may have been more). While the surface

OLD COMMONALITY SUBSECTOR

○ ALPHA / BETA / GAMMA / DELTA
○ EPSILON / ZETA / ETA / THETA

TX333 OF THE CORE WORLDS SECTOR



Alchibans have returned to T9 since Rediscovery, the subsurface is riddled with rogue helper sentiences and virtuality cells, which are rebuilt and restocked with captives almost as soon as they are destroyed, and the conflict continues.

Mass transplantation of the Alchiban population to another world has so far been rejected. The culture appears to have achieved a cyclical if turbulent stability, and has been categorised as a form of holocene virtuality (page 25).

Alfakken

- *Highly Developed Core World Hub*
- *G-class and K-class main sequence binary with M-class red dwarf companion, T10, 120 billion, 3LY.*

The Alfakken mega-system is a trinary star system and the closest system to Manhome. Almost as developed as Manhome, it's a key part of the Hub.

Alfakken Tors is a unique array of six Oneill cylinders, a very ancient form of plateworld and heart of the Alfakken system, orbiting the Ixion / Nephele binary. The Tors no longer rotate, and instead are locked in a star-shaped structure encrusted with external constructions. Six tribune sentiences govern the Tors, able to form an ad hoc multiple known as the Tor Contiguity.

Fargate-2 orbits the Alfakken binary in a trojan orbit. Proxima is a garden world around Chiron, the system's distant red dwarf.

Amala

- *Partially Tidally-locked Twin World System of Amphibian Hominids and Tree-climbing Arboreals*
- *K-class giant star, T10, 2 billion, 66LY.*

Over nine thousand years ago, colonists settled the ocean-world moon of one of the Amala system's gas giants, which had warmed enough to enter the system's new habitable zone after the primary's expansion into a red giant. They discovered that one of the inner planets had once been a cool, lush garden world, before the expansion had exterminated all life except in the deep ocean and at the poles. The colonists constructed a huge sunshade to cool the superheated world, dubbed **Torrid**, and spent two millennia using gravity engines to slowly move it into a more favourable orbit. Seven thousand years ago, the planet was again a garden world. However, by this point, few Amalans wished to leave their harsh watery home to dwell somewhere they regarded as both too dry and suitable only for the weak and lazy. For the last five millennia, the two worlds have been fierce but peaceful rivals, inhabited by what are now two different hominid species—the seal-like amphibian Amalans, and the arboreal tree-climbing Torridians, who build their cities in their world's coral-like forests. There is also a sizable population of minder arrays on the Torridian shade.

Ashtaroth's Gem

- *Glittering Minder Array S5 Synthetic Colony*

- *A-class main sequence star, T10, 10 billion (minder array), 75LY.*

Ashtaroth's Gem is a glittering rocky world orbiting a brilliant young sun. It's one of the few minder array worlds (page 25), colonised by mechanical synthetics which maintain the world and its system facilities in an intricate inhuman dance. The system is awash with energy, exploited by the arrays to expand and consolidate their culture. Ashtaroth's Gem is also the name for the B-class starport, one of the few places in-system to cater for non-mechanical visitors.

Barnard

- *Space Force Manhome Defence Hub*

- *M-class red dwarf population II flare star, T10, 100 million, 4LY.*

Barnard is part of the MDN, the Manhome Defence Network, a heavily-armed and defended instrumentality hub managed by Space Force. It's off-limits to all non-Space Force personnel except for Daedalus Station, a sentient research post documenting Barnard's flare activity and researching some of its seemingly anomalous behaviours. Space Force maintains an extensive fleet presence here, and conducts regular manoeuvres; its HQ is the *Erstwhile Contingency* plateworld, whose mediator sentience is in constant contact with Manhome, Alfakken, and other MDN worlds and outposts.

Captain

- *Alien Civilisation Inferior Garden Culture World*

- *M-class red dwarf, T10, 2 billion, 13LY.*

Today, Captain is the closest system to Manhome to harbour exointelligent life. Ten thousand years ago, its first colonists found an inferior garden world around a small gas giant in a close orbit of a red dwarf which frequently erupted in small to moderate flares. A powerful magnetic field and highly-charged ionosphere protected the world from radiation. The first indication of something unusual came when the colonists set up proto-Mindscape nodes and found EMS interference in the upper atmosphere they could not explain. Investigation established that exotic paradigm exofauna inhabited the ionosphere, beings which could briefly venture into space but could not survive in the denser regions of their own world's atmosphere. Swiftly dubbed **Flimsies**, it was long suspected that these life forms might have some form of intelligence, but no communication was ever successful.

Tech and evolutionary index breakthroughs in the century since the Venu War finally led to first contact with the Flimsies, who had themselves been unaware carbon-based intelligent life was even possible, and became fascinated by their new co-inhabitants. Dialogue between the two very different species finally began and, while they had little in common, discussions of mathematics, philosophy, cosmology, and

THE CORE WORLDS CUSTODIAN XALDAMAR IMOBILIS

Xaldamar Imobilis is the Core Worlds custodian. Fascinated by the human mind and human behaviour, she nevertheless often feels detached from the reasonings of Commonality citizens. Based in the Whispering City in Jiva, she makes frequent visits in *actuo* to the Dodacahedron in Titan orbit. She appears at locations around the Old Commonality, and even the Penumbral Worlds and Satellite Domains; it's not known if this is by emulator or other representative. She is involved in monitoring and regulating the impact of Rediscovery on the minds of Core Worlds citizens. She often collaborates with Terragrond Custodian Zoraster, although Xaldamar's goal is less one of facilitating humankind's evolution as of protecting it from destruction through cultural shock.

Xaldamar's true form is unknown. She certainly has an organic body, although it may be an avatar. Some rumours say she is a ship-based hyperintelligence. She often deals with the 3SI, and is said to be responsible for many instances of "bumping" in the Fargate-1 schedule.

Physical Stress: 1□ 2□ 3□ 4□ **Mental Stress:** 1□ 2□ 3□ 4□

Systems Stress: 1□ 2□ 3□ 4□ **Credit Stress:** 1□ 2□ 3□ 4□

Consequences: 4 mild + 3 moderate + 1 severe

Scale: Medium (+0)

Evolutionary Index: High Human (+2)

Aspects: Core Worlds Custodian; Cultural Protector Against the Onslaught of Rediscovery; Distant From Those She Protects; In It For the Species; Everywhere and Nowhere; Secret 3SI Interactions.

Skills: Superhuman (+10) Intrusion, Technical, Will; Transhuman (+9) Deceive, Empathy, Investigate; Legendary (+8) Contacts, Notice, Rapport, Systems.

STUNTS

♦ **Cultural Intrusion:** Use Intrusion for culture actions.

♦ **Cultural Redaction:** Use Empathy for culture actions.

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

♦ **Memetic Engineer:** Use Technical to take culture actions; you also have a culture extra.

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

♦ **Specialist (3-Space):** +2 Technical bonus for rolls relating to 3-Space.

♦ **Suspension Matrix:** +2 bonus to Deceive overcome actions in the Mindscape.

HALO

Gestalt Propagation: On a successful gestalt language



attack, spend a fate point to force a consequence or affect an entire zone.

Stage II Gestalt Communication: Create gestalts on the fly; +4 bonus on all gestalt language actions (persuade, intimidate, provoke, elicit emotional responses).

Special Ops Chip: Local Mindscape connectivity and special ops technopsi.

Synaptic Enhancer: Increase skill cap to Epic (+7) or Legendary (+8).

OTHER EXTRAS

★ **Culture: Core Worlds:** Good (+3) Provoke; Fair (+2) Assimilate; Inquisitors.

★ **Dispersion:** For a fate point, make a single roll using one or more Mindscape-linked items in your zone, plus 1 zone per additional fate point.

★ **Extended Lifespan:** Custodian Xaldamar is at least 500 years old.

★ **Increased Evolution Index:** Evolution Index High Human (+2).

★ **Organisation: CORESPAN:** Great (+4) Bureaucracy, Resources; Good (+3) Security, Will; Extreme Sanction, Mindscape Connections, Strike Force.

★ **Organisation: Terragrond:** Fair (+2) Contacts; Average (+1) Knowledge.

★ **Organisation: 3SI:** Good (+3) Deceive, Science; Fair (+2) Provoke, Technical; Average (+1) Security; Extreme Sanction.

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

Scenario Hook: Celestial Prisoners

The Flimsies of Captain and the gas giant beings of the Domain of Storms (page 82) appear to be related; both are intelligent, non-technological exointelligences based on plasma and fields. Some Flimsy narratives refer to their larger cousins, and one Flimsy philosopher offers coordinates to the supposed location of Flimsy devices which once enabled them to travel between worlds—the moon in the Chalawan system with the curious name of Celestial Prison (below). Chalawan culture has dire theories about this world, which contain a grain of truth; Celestial Prison was built millennia ago to hold Flimsies which had committed violent crimes, suspended in stasis fields. Digging things up here is surprisingly dangerous, but the potential discoveries make the risks worthwhile...

poetry engendered mutual understanding and respect.

Today, the descendants of Captain's colonists are hominids, with large eyes with infrared vision, enhanced radiation resistance, and, recently, a genurgic organ sending and receiving radio and microwave signals, enabling communication with the Flimsies. Cities have been constructing **spires** extending into the lower ionosphere for interaction with the Flimsies, and field spheres (page 6) permit direct contact. While elements of Captain's original neo-Shinean culture remain, people have become fascinated with philosophy, music, and poetry with clear Flimsian influence. Outsiders consider Captainians to be moody and detached; however, the world is home today to some of the Commonality's finest cosmologists and mathematicians.

Chalawan

- *Regressed Marginal Desert World in Stage Two Normalisation*
- *G-class main sequence star, T3, 1.3 million, 46LY.*

Chalawan is a rarity in the Old Commonality, effectively a lost colony "rediscovered" only two centuries ago and the subject of gradual reintegration. In fact Chalawan has been known about for millennia, and was the subject of several slowship expeditions which assisted with its gradual terraforming, but the colony never achieved a sufficient level of advancement or technology to fully join with Commonality civilisation.

Chalawan is a small desert planet, with an average surface temperature of 70°C. Its atmosphere has been genurgically adjusted to be breathable by the introduction of microscopic thermophilic life forms, although most of the world remains unable to support larger organisms. The poles, however, are today merely tropical, with free-

standing water, and are suitable for human habitation. Chalawan's population had regressed technologically, but is responding well to Commonality integration; the world is regarded as a success story.

The desert planet is not the only world of interest in the system. There are three gas giants, of which the largest, Chalawan b, has a moon with the curious name of Celestial Prison. The people of Chalawan believe that "devils" were imprisoned on Celestial Prison long ago. Commonality archaeologists have sought to excavate alien ruins found there, anticipating clues to the fate of the colony's early, higher tech civilisation, but have faced significant protests. One Chalawan belief is that the people's ancestors received a message warning them away from Celestial Prison, and people now fear the archaeologists are about to unearth a great and ancient evil.

Chara

- *High Human Superior Garden Core World*
- *F-class subgiant, T10, 8 billion, 27LY.*

Ten thousand years ago, the first colonists in the Chara system found a hot inferior garden world of deserts and high atmospheric CO₂. Within two thousand years, terraforming had transformed it into a superior garden world. For the past three-and-a-half thousand years, it has been a rigidly hierarchical sapiocracy; the most intelligent 5% of the population in every industry or large-scale endeavour are in charge of that field. After millennia of genurgy, a fifth of the population has a High Human evolution index (see **Mindjammer** page 407), and overall intelligence levels are high. Intelligence on Chara is closely tied to social status, and inhabitants' haloes almost always include scores on popular cognitive tests. Charan society is unfathomably complex to standard humans, although Commonality hyperintelligences apparently find it "amusing" and there is considerable two-way traffic with the Sedna Project (page 57). Getting things done here (page 29) faces a *Hypercomplex Intellectual Obstacles* aspect which conventional resource allocation will have difficulty overcoming. Charans are well-known for considering most of the rest of the Commonality to be of limited intelligence...

Chrysalid

- *High Population Quint Tech World*
- *G-class main sequence star, T10, 120 billion, 47LY.*

Chrysalid is a Quint system (page 26) and a major shipyard. Its fargate opened fifteen years ago, enabling easy delivery and deployment of vessels. The main planet is a tech world; early in its history, its frozen surface was exploited to provide materials for Quint production and shipyard operation. Overpopulation problems resulted in a denuded biosphere which today is largely Maintained (**Mindjammer** page 387).

The Quint population of Chrysalid is short and

cyborged; its dense population relies on makepoints for most organic materials, including synthogens and other food-pastes. Other planetary bodies have been heavily exploited, and there are several plateworlds; almost all efforts go towards supporting shipbuilding activity.

Dajow

- *Twin Research Stations in a Red Giant Binary System*
- *K-class red giant, T10, population 25000, 37LY.*

Dajow is a red giant 25 times the diameter of the Sun and 170 times as luminous, a huge beacon in space. It has a brown dwarf companion named Yogi, with its own satellite / planetary system, including a dark, swamplike world with solifugid-analogue life forms, one species of which shows signs of being intelligent in its larval stage. There are two research stations in-system: a genurgic one on Yogi II, and an astrophysical one observing Dajow's oscillations and stellar evolution.

Denebola

- *Protoplanet Synthcolony Orbiting a Variable Star*
- *A-class main sequence star, T8, 10 billion, 36LY.*

Denebola is a young, rapidly rotating, oblate, short-period variable star with a rich accretion disk and a system of protoplanets. In the First Age of Space, humankind explored the system remotely using low sentience nooprobe seeders (page 27), programmed to exploit any metal or mineral resources and to construct probes for further exploration and information sharing.

Although human technology has advanced beyond the level of the mechanicals which discovered the system, they are still in operation, and new seeders are still being produced. When they encounter inhabited systems, the **Denebola probes** are programmed to share information and technology—originally information they received through STL signals from Manhome, but also incorporating data archived during the exploitation of Denebola itself. In most places today, Denebola probes are regarded as curiosities, though they have had a substantial impact on Alchiba (page 61). Denebola is regarded as an early form of synth colony (see **Mindjammer** page 351).

Eighty-Two

- *Low-G Marginal Garden Desert World of Batlike Hominids*
- *G-class main sequence star, T10, 300 million, 20LY.*

The Eighty-Two colony initially required substantial terraforming. It's a low gravity (0.5G) marginal garden world with little water, a planetary haze array maintaining a relatively dense atmosphere, and a canal network irrigating its many deserts. The original colonists underwent unusual genurgic adaptation, the reasons for which are still not fully understood. **Toans** today are winged, human-sized, bat-like carnivores,

most of whom still hunt living prey; only the ill and the injured forgo the joys of the chase. The Toans' bloody nature is also evident in the fact that duelling is a common method of settling disputes, often involving flying contests or battles with non-lethal weapons. Both Space Force and the AFI have recruited pilots for their new heavy manned fighters here, but most Toans refuse to consider killing intelligent beings they don't know, and few are willing to accept military discipline. Increasingly, though, Toans are found offworld, often operating in other systems as n-pilots or low-G specialists.

Fomalhaut

- *Marginal Garden Culture World With Global Shield*
- *A-class main sequence star, T10, 3 billion, 25LY.*

The Fomalhaut system is less than half a billion years old. It contains seventeen planets orbiting a bright A-class primary, including eight terrestrial planets, two of which have liquid surface water and simple, early stage biospheres. Shinean colonists from a conservative subculture settled one of these worlds, allowing the other to evolve naturally. Faced with lifeless rock and a poisonous atmosphere, they constructed a series of domed habitats, which in less than fifteen hundred years expanded to cover the entire planet, which by then had a dense breathable atmosphere 20km thick and a planetwide energy shield, also an integral part of climate control and meteor defence (including orbital null cannon installations). Today, the Fomalhaut planetary sentience creates openings in the field to permit vessels to take off and land.

Gengigai

- *Closed Garden Culture World Broadcasting Distorted Mindscape Updates*
- *G-class main sequence star, T8 (estimated), unknown population (at least High), 106LY.*

The people of the Gimon archipelago in eastern Shine abandoned their home early in the First Age of Space, and eventually settled on Gengigai. As part of the Old Commonality, the world remained in contact with Old Earth and, as it received Mindscape updates, it constructed its own Mindscape and communicated its own updates back.

The transmissions which Old Earth received from Gengigai, however, were wildly distorted mirrors of what Old Earth had originally transmitted, with key facts, exomemories, and deep cultural data constantly changed. The nature of these distortions varied from century to century, and were never considered safe to integrate back into the Manhome Mindscape. No explanation for the alterations was ever provided.

Rediscovery has changed nothing. When the first planeships reached Gengigai, they found it an impenetrable fortress of orbital defences, militarised plateworlds, and commu-



nications blocks. The world does not respond to contact, has permitted no landings, and continues to broadcast its bizarre Mindscape updates to this day. Long distance sensor sweeps have revealed a densely populated garden world with extensive megastructures in orbit and throughout the system. Interactions seem complex and highly ordered. Unofficially, SCI Force is believed to have agents operating in the system, but official diplomatic policy has remained unchanged since before Rediscovery.

Gerazhon

- *Garden World of Quadrupedal Herbivorous Hominids*
- *K-class main sequence star, T10, 40 billion, 10LY.*

Gerazhon is a young garden world with a primarily sessile (plant analogue) biosphere, with some wind-blown semi-motile fungi analogues. The ecosystem is energetic and fast-growing, and a large number of "plants" and "fungi" live by devouring others. There is no native motile, animal-analogue life, although some of the plant- and fungi-analogues come close. The world sees epic storm systems; there are no ice caps.

Gerazhon was colonised early in the First Age of Space, and is almost considered part of the Hub. Its population diverged rapidly, however, becoming first vegetarian and then herbivorous, and eventually adopting a more quadrupedal existence. Regular Manhome contact has maintained

Gerazhonian civilisation and technology, but most natives are content with a simpler, bucolic existence. The Gerazhon hominids have a sensitive olfactory system and a developed apocrine (armpit) gland capable of scent-born communication across great distances; their secretions seem to preserve emotional memory even after removal. Gerazhons are highly empathic and make excellent redactors.

CORESEC and SCI Force both monitor Gerazhonian culture for signs of further regression.

Heaven's Tsar

- *Core Culture Inferior Garden World*
- *G-class main sequence star, T9, 15 billion, 35LY.*

Heaven's Tsar, also known as Basilica, is an inferior garden world colonised millennia ago. It has a ritualised, hierarchical society with a reverence for class superiors which threatens to transgress Commonality proscriptions against religiosity. Its **hierophants** are similar to nootropes (page 26); hereditary, over 2 metres tall, they are a separate subspecies from the **plaids**, 1-metre tall hominids forming the mass of Basilican society. Plaids live in sprawling windowless grey-walled metroplexes known as **Basilica warrens**, with a central **strongpoint** inhabited by hierophants. Hierophants administer and manage the lives of plaids, who in turn labour to support them.

While a Core World, most plaids have no contact with Commonality culture, and even the hierophants receive Commonality visitors rarely. One thing they do enjoy is enriching the Basilican genury pool by compelled extraction of biosamples from visitors, a distressing experience for the unprepared.

Heaven's Tsar culture is strong and profound. The purity of its Plaidant Choirs are known throughout the Core Worlds.

Since the Venu War, Space Force has maintained a base in the outer system. They know they're not welcome on Heaven's Tsar, but recently the hierophants have been requesting frequent "diplomatic visits", including the "gene sacrifice" ritual known as **Union**.

Hector Gigans

- *Marginal Garden Core World Gerontocracy*
- *G-class main sequence star, T10, 400 thousand, 30LY.*



Although the people of Hector Gigans appear to be standard humans, some are thousands of years old, with memories stretching back to not long after the world was settled. Since then, Hector Gigans has maintained a continuously high tech index and open communications with Manhome. Gigantians do not remain awake the whole of their long lives, but instead hibernate during the decade-long periods of instability which afflict the system primary and cause havoc on the planet's surface, when the population retreats to underground shelters. Hibernation was adopted as an effective means to cope with these long periods of confinement.

LORAC EESTLIN OF THE DIPLOMATIC DISSONANCE, AMBASSADOR TO HEAVEN'S TSAR

Lorac Eestlin is the organic avatar of the Communications Instrumentality planeship Diplomatic Dissonance. He takes the form of a clearly synthetic organic humanoid, a dapper dresser with a disarming smile, who exudes a warmth and bonhomie which—for most rediscovered worlds—offsets his obviously inhuman origins. He usually neglects to mention that he's an avatar—or at least plays down what that actually means—instead leaving that revelation for later in his diplomatic efforts on the more resistant worlds of the Old Commonality and beyond, when the bombshell of Oh By the Way I'm Really a Starship can have its maximum memetic effect.

The Diplomatic Dissonance travels with a whole crew of ambassadorial support staff, researching local cultural variations and taboos, and helping prep Eestlin for those crunch moments when each mission stands on the brink of breakthrough or disaster—those moments of possible enlightenment the ship lives for.

Physical Stress: 1□2□ **Mental Stress:** 1□2□3□4□

Systems Stress: 1□2□3□ **Credit Stress:** 1□2□3□4□

Consequences: 2 mild + 2 moderate

Scale: Medium (+0) / Huger (+2)

Aspects: Avatar of the Diplomatic Dissonance; Oh By the Way I'm Really a Starship; Now Some of Your Best Friends Are Synthetics; Occasionally Unsure Which Is His Original Body; This Makes Me Feel Alive!

Skills: Legendary (+8) Rapport; Epic (+7) Empathy, Will; Fantastic (+6) Contacts, Provoke; Superb (+5) Bureaucracy, Notice; Great (+4) Deceive, Resources; Good (+3) Planing, Ranged Combat; Fair (+2) Manoeuvre, Systems.

STUNTS

♦ **Best Foot Forward:** 2/session, turn a Rapport roll boost into a situation aspect with a free invoke.

♦ **Extended Manoeuvrability (Atmospheric):** Use Manoeuvre in atmospheric actions.

Hector Gigans society is more conservative than most of the Core. Its society is a rigid gerontocracy. Offworld visitors are allowed but are regarded as inferior. Despite its high tech index, Hector Gigans has no presence in space, and people have little interest in leaving. Why should they, when the rest of the universe is so clearly a poorer alternative? Life on Hector Gigans is unchanging and peaceful, and most here view it as perfect.



♦ **Fortress of the Will:** +2 Will bonus to defend vs Provoke and Will damage / control attacks.

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

HALO

Special Ops Chip: Local Mindscape connectivity and special ops technopsi.

Synaptic Enhancer: Increase skill cap to Epic (+7) or Legendary (+8).

OTHER EXTRAS

★ **Armoured Hull:** Armour:3 rating.

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

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

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

★ **X-Core:** Doubles jump maximum.

The King

- *Superior Garden Core World*
- *K-class subgiant, T9, 1.7 billion, 45LY.*

The King system's one habitable world formed as a frigid ice-covered rock orbiting a gas giant. Tidal stresses gave it liquid oceans filled with simple life. When the system primary expanded half a billion years ago, the world's surface thawed and life began evolving rapidly. The first settlers found a



superior garden world with an oxygen atmosphere, where life had only begun colonising the land fifty million years before. Subsequently, most land life was transplanted from Old Earth. The King's inhabitants today belong to a subculture where clone-groups form the fundamental social unit, a structure that has proven exceptionally stable. Society comprises family clone-group units of eight to two hundred clones, whose members share emotions and memories; although they do not share one mind, they come closer than is normally possible. Eidolon sentiences on the King retain membership in the clone-group of their thanogram source.

Lalande

- *Tidally-locked Balkanised Marginal Garden World*
- *M-class red dwarf, T7-T10, 16 billion, 8LY.*

Lalande has a sunward pole covered by a steaming hot ocean and a perpetually frozen ocean at the sunless pole. The narrow band of dry land at the twilight terminator has a primitive biosphere and a thin, barely breathable atmosphere. To survive on this harsh world, the inhabitants built a series of arcologies, each of which is today a separate polity with its own rules and TI. Each favours one of the Manhome worlds or Old Earth heartlands, or even an individual Old Earth arcology, with which it communicates preferentially and from which it derives cultural movements and memes. The twenty-six arcologies range from T7 to T10, each with its own range of genotypes, like Dzacha (T8, Danasi / Shaklaan), where all citizens are nearly identical hermaphrodites, or Phlass (T10, Yoosa), where citizens group to form unique genotypes, each with a legal maximum of fifty members. Governments are equally diverse. Over the millennia, some arcologies have changed drastically, and at least four have been destroyed by war: two by violent revolution, and two in attacks by neighbouring arcologies. Travel between arcologies is freely permitted by Commonality charter, but ingrained tradition means it's also rare. Almost no one visits the world's surface except basic sentiences.

Lighten

- *Core Marginal Garden World of Memory-erasing Unprinters*
- *M-class red dwarf, T10, 12 billion, 12LY.*

Lighten is only 12 light years from Manhome, an integral part of the Old Commonality. It's a low-G, tidally-locked world orbiting a red dwarf, with a population concentrated around the habitable "dawn zone" or "lighten zone".

Lighten is notable for its unusual approach to longevity. Thoughtcasts to the Lighten Mindscape are structured to remove the original engram, effectively "deleting" the memory. The planetary sentience catalogues and organises the thoughtcast exomemories into a range of memplexes, updates of which are then sent to subscribers, known as **Unprinters**.

Memplex membership is decided by the Lighten sen-

tience, but is generally based on activity. The result is that Unprinters can undertake repetitive tasks with no memory of having done them before, avoiding boredom, while sharing common cultural memories and viewpoints with their peers. Unprinter society has existed for millennia and is highly stable. Outsiders often regard them with horror, considering them little better than contented, brainwashed drones. The Unprinters themselves don't seem to mind, and indeed seem always fresh, stimulated, and interested in their lives.

Lousu

- *Quarantined Garden World Re-education Resort*
- *F-class subgiant, T10, 1 billion, 64LY.*

Lousu is a pleasant standard garden world in a far orbit. It's a well-known re-education resort; although you can freely land at various port facilities, visiting further is subject to resort policy and constant supervision. Lousu's "guests" live lives perhaps not all that different from other Core Worlds, except that their activities are coordinated and their surroundings controlled to ensure optimal rehabilitation; PCs aren't usually conducive to either of those ends.

Several regions are designated high security zones and closed to visitors; no one may even land without authorisation.

Ravensgrave

- *Instrumentality Hub and Research Station*
- *B-class main sequence star, T10, 5 thousand, 88LY.*

Ravensgrave is a young, bright star with a protoplanetary system. Its photosphere has a plasma-based ecosystem, including an exotic paradigm exointelligence called **Ravensgravers**, which operate at a higher temporality (*1 Exchange is 1 Second*). Space Force believes Ravensgravers may make good natural pilots, and has managed a research and contact station here with SCI Force for over a century. While they've made progress, there have recently been serious sabotage attempts, blamed on starship sentiences from the Two Space League (page 22).

Rhygonoche

- *Genurgically Engineered Hominid Core Ocean World*
- *K-class main sequence star, T10, 3 billion, 27LY.*

Despite its breathable atmosphere and comfortable temperature range, dry land has never existed on Rhygonoche: its a large warm ocean world several hundred kilometres deep, with pressure ice beneath and a surface gravity of 1.4G. Early colonists spent several centuries transforming more than thirty metallic and rocky asteroids into flattened landscaped disks between two hundred and two thousand kilometres in diameter and more than a kilometre thick; these now float in Rhygonoche's oceans. By then, the inhabitants had engi-



neered themselves into 200kg amphibian bipeds, covered in fishlike scales. Today they gather food and organic materials from the oceans and use the floating disks for industry. They build their dwellings on and in both sides of these disks, as some prefer to live entirely aquatic lives, but with protection from the ocean's many large and dangerous predators.

Sixbeak

- *High Temporality Marginal Garden Core World*
- *F-class main sequence star, T9, 4 billion, 28LY.*

Although less than 30 light years from Earth, Six Beak remained unsettled for centuries after other nearby worlds had been colonised, since its one habitable planet was a steaming inferno with an average temperature of 65°C and a t-alternate biosphere where life had a temporality notably faster than that of humankind. Sixbeak's colonists subsequently adapted themselves to the world's biosphere and temporality, which has since made contact with the rest of the Commonality problematic: Sixbeakers move and think several times faster than standard humans, and require survival gear in standard temperatures. Mindscape subroutines easily handle translation, but few Sixbeakers have the patience for real-time conversation with others. They try to live in harmony with the natural world; their buildings are constructed in natural areas, and the division between city and wilderness is almost non-existent.

Styphon

- *Inferior Garden Survivor World and Space Force Depot*
- *F-class giant, T6 (T10), 4 billion, 54LY.*

Styphon is famous throughout the Commonality, the site of the epic space battle between Commonality forces and the Venu invasion fleet in 120NCE, where a Commonality victory marked the end of the Venu blitzkrieg and the start of its retreat from Commonality Space.

Worlds which survived Venu occupation and invasion—in whatever state—are known as **survivor worlds** (page 27). Styphon saw the presence of Venu forces for only a few weeks, but this included orbital bombardment and ground forces, and the experience was traumatic and took many years to recover from. Due to the destruction and environmental contamination caused by the Venu attacks, Styphon lost its standard garden world status, and is still recovering today, seventy years on. Modular cities have replaced arcologies, and the biosphere is being gradually repaired, but Styphon is a scarred world, and the wounds run deep.

Styphon is regarded as highly strategic. It's the location of a fargate and a Space Force depot. Its people are split between those who long to return to how things were, and those who believe change and adaptation are the way ahead. It's the classic memetic damage sustained by survivor worlds.

Two Bear

- *Core Garden World With Deep-seated Rejection of Mindscape Implants*
- *F-class main sequence star, T9, 5 billion, 64LY.*

The inhabitants of the warm, wet garden world of Two Bear left Manhome eight thousand years ago, shortly after the development of the T8 Mindscape. They embraced basic sentiences and other T8 advances, except Mindscape implants. Instead, they relied on lens and retina displays, basic sentience assistants, and occasionally VR suits to use and navigate their proto-Mindscape. Two Bear happily adopted subsequent tech updates received from Manhome, but continued to reject implants. Today, this rejection has become deep-seated conviction: visitors may use PMIs, but not implants, to connect to the Two Bear Mindscape. Educators excel at using memory- and cognition-enhancing drugs and augmentations, as well as immersive suits, and while starships regularly visit, few eidolon sentiences have moved here, and none can be created locally. There is no planetary sentience, a very different day-to-day experience for Core Worlds citizens.

Venabulum

- *Group Mind Memplex Culture World*
- *G-class main sequence star, T9, 2 billion, 121LY.*

On the edge of the Old Commonality, Venabulum's inhabitants form a single group mind, cyclically **recapitulating** the thoughts and experiences of one of their original One Thousand Founders in a series of intense and intrusive memplexes. Each such recapitulation of ten Venabulan days, the chosen Founder changes, in a strict sequence, with each Venab receiving the new memplex and adopting the mannerisms, appearance, and dress of the Founder thanogram.

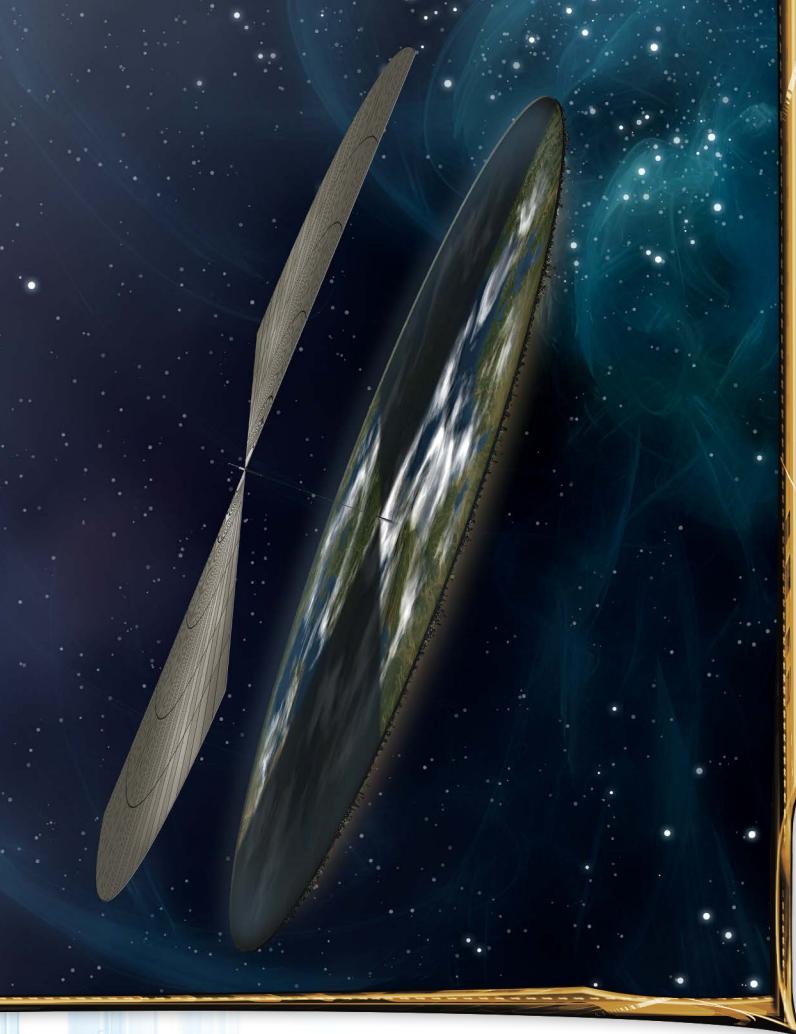
The order in which the Founder memplexes rotate changes at the end of every **myriad** (10000 days), using a complex algorithm based on precedence and performance during the previous myriad. The algorithm is applied by the Founder Archive sentience which manages the memplexing process, in a ten-day period in which the Venab are left only with their own organic memories. Most choose to spend this traumatic period, known as the **Wilderness**, in an artificial coma.

Over time, most Founder memplexes have become generalists capable of maintaining Venab culture, but this is not always the case. In recapitulations where the planet memplexes Xolos Pergarrison, for example, only abstract sculpture is pursued; while Adria Caeloftair plunges the world into narcissistic self-admiration; and Portho Alforgan spends the world's days hunting.

Von Neumann's World

- *Strategic Tribune Plateworld With a 3-Space Gate*
- *G-class main sequence star, T10, 12 billion, 27LY.*

Von Neumann's World is a strategic system notable for its paucity of rocky planets. It has been connected to the



fargate network for 15 years. For over seven-and-a-half thousand years it has been the location of a tribune world (page 27), a highly developed plateworld and one of the oldest in Commonality Space. Its tribune sentience (page 27) is served by a population of autotrophic nootropes (page 26) known as **Neumanners**. It's an exotic and often impenetrable culture to visitors from the Fringe, but also a typical instance of a tribune world.

Wace

- *Alien Civilisation Garden World*
- *G-class main sequence star, T8, 500 million, 105LY.*

The first colonists of Wace discovered that its single garden world had previously been inhabited by a T8 exocivilisation that had died out a million years before. Overwhelmed by the discoveries, most of which were made on the planet's airless outermost moon, a faction of early colonists engineered themselves into simulacra of the slender, seven-limbed, vaguely centaur-like exointelligences, and attempted to reconstruct their exoculture from the fragmentary artefacts retrieved. Over time, this faction became dominant, so that today no non-engineered humans remain. Outsiders studying the Wace ruins agree that the colonists' reconstruction of the exoculture and its tech involved interpretation and wholesale invention, and was prompted by motives still not fully understood; the Wace disagree, believing themselves the exo-

culture's legitimate inheritors. The Commonality considers the Wace to be members of humankind, but the Wace do not, and most, like the extinct aliens, show little interest in space travel. CORESEC maintains a discreet presence, believing the world may still be under some subtle yet profound alien influence.

Xymothras

- *Former Canid Shipyard on an Inferior Garden World*
- *F-class eruptive variable main sequence star, T9, 2 billion, 107LY.*

Every twelve standard years, Xymothras's system primary increases its brightness by half, shedding stellar matter in months-long coronal mass ejections. During this period, temperatures on Xymothras rise by an average of 9°C, and the atmosphere is washed by radiation, causing climate chaos and environmental disruption. Life has developed strategies to deal with the **Candescence**, but the planet is temporarily classified a marginal rather than inferior garden world.

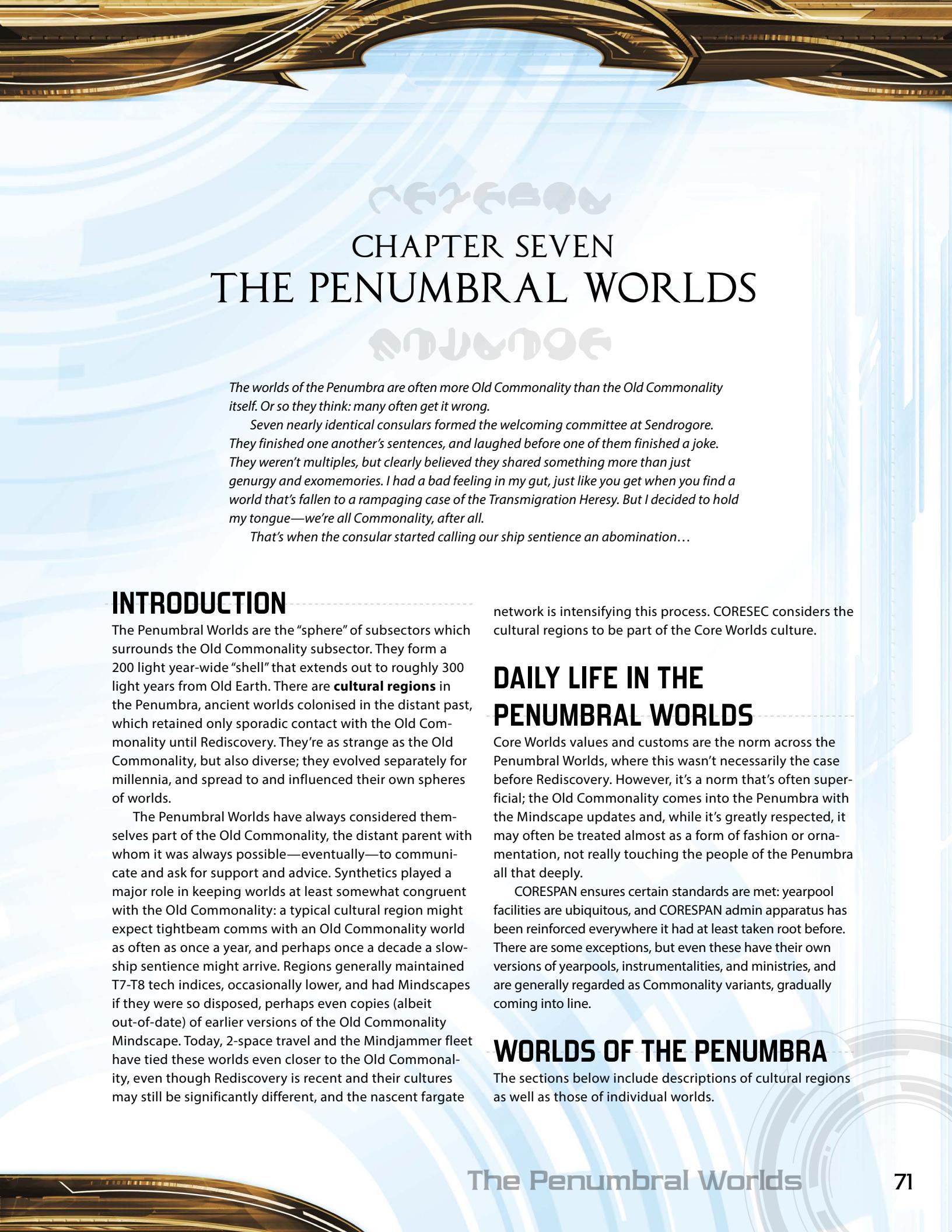
Xymothras's inhabitants are robust, wolf-like canid xenomorphs; a population of humans apparently went extinct early in the colony's history. Mutation rates are high, but during Candescence they take refuge in deep underground shelters.

Xymothras's primary is a borderline zanthium star. Before Rediscovery, the world was an industrialised shipyard; since Rediscovery, easy 2-space travel has made zanthium extraction uneconomical, and the system has become something of a backwater. The Xymothrans are looking for a new purpose.

Scenario Hook: Deep Running

Disturbing reports have reached CORESEC, sightings of what sounds like a Venu Warhawk in the outer edges of the Old Commonality spacelanes, not far from the old shipyards of Xymothras! Space Force insists that the Q-Zone cannot have been breached, so the ISI has been forced to consider the bizarre possibility of a rogue Venu vessel trapped behind Commonality lines since the Venu War.

The PCs are partnered with a Space Force Surveillance Ship and sent in search of the phantom Warhawk. But are they chasing an illusion, or can a Venu ship really have remained hidden among the Old Commonality worlds for eighty years? And, if it is real, what is it doing lurking around a known zanthium star? Can the PCs defeat a Warhawk, if that's what it is, and live to tell the tale?



CHAPTER SEVEN

THE PENUMBRAL WORLDS

The worlds of the Penumbra are often more Old Commonality than the Old Commonality itself. Or so they think: many often get it wrong.

Seven nearly identical consulars formed the welcoming committee at Sendrogore. They finished one another's sentences, and laughed before one of them finished a joke. They weren't multiples, but clearly believed they shared something more than just genury and exomemories. I had a bad feeling in my gut, just like you get when you find a world that's fallen to a rampaging case of the Transmigration Heresy. But I decided to hold my tongue—we're all Commonality, after all.

That's when the consular started calling our ship sentience an abomination...

INTRODUCTION

The Penumbral Worlds are the “sphere” of subsectors which surrounds the Old Commonality subsector. They form a 200 light year-wide “shell” that extends out to roughly 300 light years from Old Earth. There are **cultural regions** in the Penumbra, ancient worlds colonised in the distant past, which retained only sporadic contact with the Old Commonality until Rediscovery. They’re as strange as the Old Commonality, but also diverse; they evolved separately for millennia, and spread to and influenced their own spheres of worlds.

The Penumbral Worlds have always considered themselves part of the Old Commonality, the distant parent with whom it was always possible—eventually—to communicate and ask for support and advice. Synthetics played a major role in keeping worlds at least somewhat congruent with the Old Commonality: a typical cultural region might expect tightbeam comms with an Old Commonality world as often as once a year, and perhaps once a decade a slow-ship sentience might arrive. Regions generally maintained T7-T8 tech indices, occasionally lower, and had Mindscapes if they were so disposed, perhaps even copies (albeit out-of-date) of earlier versions of the Old Commonality Mindscape. Today, 2-space travel and the Mindjammer fleet have tied these worlds even closer to the Old Commonality, even though Rediscovery is recent and their cultures may still be significantly different, and the nascent fargate

network is intensifying this process. CORESEC considers the cultural regions to be part of the Core Worlds culture.

DAILY LIFE IN THE PENUMBRAL WORLDS

Core Worlds values and customs are the norm across the Penumbral Worlds, where this wasn’t necessarily the case before Rediscovery. However, it’s a norm that’s often superficial; the Old Commonality comes into the Penumbra with the Mindscape updates and, while it’s greatly respected, it may often be treated almost as a form of fashion or ornamentation, not really touching the people of the Penumbra all that deeply.

CORESPAN ensures certain standards are met: yearpool facilities are ubiquitous, and CORESPAN admin apparatus has been reinforced everywhere it had at least taken root before. There are some exceptions, but even these have their own versions of yearpools, instrumentalities, and ministries, and are generally regarded as Commonality variants, gradually coming into line.

WORLDS OF THE PENUMBRA

The sections below include descriptions of cultural regions as well as those of individual worlds.



Capricornian Consularity

The Capricornian Consularity was colonised in 5000FA, late in the Great Diaspora. Some 190-270LY from Manhome, spanning the second and third Core Worlds transects, its main worlds are New Capricorn, Kaelorus, Albali Prime, Sendrogore, Taemar, Sekkore, and Seto Core, all of which lie along the ancient routes of the slowships Geidi King and Geidi Queen. Before Rediscovery, the Consularity was never out of tightbeam communication with Old Earth (round trip comms taking approximately 500 years), but was considered remote, and evolved its own unique forms of administration.

The Consularity addressed the Transmigration Heresy (*Mindjammer*, page 114) very differently to the Old Commonality. From the beginning, it viewed the instantiation of eidolons from the aggregated thoughtcasts of its living citizens (as opposed to using the thanograms of the dead) as a way of bridging the light years that separated its worlds. Capricornian consuls were duplicated in this manner using **zoograms** (see below) transmitted by tightbeam from world to world for instantiation into new bodies, carrying out the will of New Capricorn.

Duplicated consuls were regarded as “close cousins”. Zoograms, less intrusive than thanograms, were also less accurate; they required a supervised medical procedure lasting several hours. Each consular derived from the same zoogram source was given the same surname, forming lineages that spanned the Consularity. When a lineage needed to action a matter on another world, a consular would be selected for copy transmission to the lineage’s **legate** on that world. There, the zoogram would be applied to a recipient body cloned from another lineage member, and assigned a new given name to denote the start of their independent existence. Over the millennia, as the administrative needs

of the Consularity grew, consuls were not simply created for transmission, but also to answer manpower shortages on their own worlds, and to maintain the continuity of the lineages. As a result, each ministry of the Consularity became staffed with countless semi-identical members.

This form of administration led to a highly stable society. Procedures established by lineages rarely varied; consuls on each world almost always agreed, for they were of nearly one mind. Common citizens (those who did not belong to a lineage) formed a lower caste, serviced—and ruled by—the consuls.

Direct contact with the Commonality proved problematic. The Commonality viewed Zoogram Consul Transmission (ZCT) as dangerously close to the Transmigration Heresy, while the Consularity found the use of thanograms distasteful, compared with the living continuity of the lineages. The Consularity did not attempt to ban eidolons from its territory, but the proposal was often discussed. CORESPAN offered to provide nootropes to replace the consuls, but was (predictably) turned down. The Consularity offered zoogram cloning to the rest of the Commonality, with the same reaction.

This situation persists to this day. However, with easy 2-space travel available, the instantiation of new consuls has fallen, and these days consular clones are more likely to be instantiated at the source world, and travel out to other worlds as required. Even the necessity of this is being questioned, as rapid and frequent Mindscape comms allow for a more centralised administration, and the recent opening of the fargate at New Capricorn is causing shockwaves which haven’t yet fully had their effect. Needless to say, factionalism in the Capricornian Consularity is at an all-time high.

For unknown reasons, Terragrond custodian Marcher Reklawel has made repeated visits to the Consularity since 2-space contact was established, and even more so since the opening of the fargate.

Claveth

- *Tidally-locked Terrestrial Planet With High Subsurface Population*
- *M-class red dwarf, TX4.4.3, T9, 12 billion, 198LY.*

Claveth orbits a red dwarf. Because of its slow rotation, thin atmosphere, and the primary’s frequent flares, its surface is uninhabitable without protective gear. However, it has many small subsurface lakes, and a cavern network that almost covers the globe. Unlike similar worlds like Derro (page 74), these caverns are mostly narrow tunnels, rarely exceeding 10 metres across, which contain abundant native life. The colonists are hominids adapted for underground living: their unusual double hands function as digging claws and hands, and they possess both sonar and infrared vision. Most Claveths prefer enclosed spaces, and agoraphobia is common (and widely regarded as sensible).

Gadoline

- *Holocene Virtuality Holdout World*
- *G-class main sequence star, TX4.4.2, T8, 1 million humans and 2 million synthetics, 272LY.*

Gadoline was not the world its initial colonists had hoped for. From a distance, it had seemed ripe for terraforming, but on closer analysis it was found to be a young, volcanically active world which constantly spewed toxic and corrosive gases into its atmosphere, undoing any attempt at change. The colonists knew they could never leave their secure shelters without protection.

Fortunately, the nascent Mindscape provided a far richer environment. Over time, Gadoline’s population withdrew into its artificial realms, and today live their whole lives in full virtuality immersion, supported by synthetic **Caretakers** which now outnumber the Mindscape-dwelling humans and which

Getting Around the Penumbral Worlds

Most cultural regions and all subsector capitals in the Penumbra are on Fringebound routes. Travel within cultural regions depends on the region, but is generally common. Entering cultural regions can be a bureaucratic obstacle, especially for independent travellers.

Fargates are present in nine of the Penumbra's cultural regions (the Cantor Designate, the Capricornian Consularity, the Chenai Concordance, the Earthkid Coalescent, the Heiki Array, the Relos Triumvirate, the Scorpio Dialectic, the Second Determination of Geronthropy, and the Starsailor Migratory), providing boosts to and from their respective systems.

fast enough to permit communication. Since Rediscovery, an **Accelerator** movement is disrupting Hainer society; the older generation grumble at their "fast vehicles", "dashing around", and "jabbering speech"—genurgic enhancements to temporarily accelerate Hainers to standard human temporality.

Hainers are given to contemplation and appreciation of their dark world and its perilous biosphere. The **Auburn Retreats** in the mountains of the dayside terminator (known as the Red Dawn Range) are visited by Commonality tourists and mystics looking to "slow down". Visitors either find its pace of life relaxing or infuriating. However, it would be wrong to mistake slowness for stupidity: much of the biosphere is deadly if approached too hastily.

Leyghost

- *Hot Desert Tech World of Cyborg Integrates*
- *A-class main sequence star, TX3.4.4, T10, 6 billion, 324LY.*

A metal-rich world with a silicon- and metal oxide-based parallel paradigm biosphere, Leyghost orbits in the inner habitable zone, with average temperatures of 80°C. While temperatures are more survivable at the poles, at the equator they can be hot enough to melt lead. There is oxygen in the atmosphere, but liquids are acidic, and breathers and protective gear are essential for standard humans.

Leyghost colonists adapted to their beautiful but deadly world using mechanical enhancements such as dermal plating and metabolic converters to breathe its atmosphere and metabolise its life forms (especially the softer plant- and animal-analogues). Leyghost has an energetic biosphere with light orange-yellow and blue-white colouration. Young people are raised in protected **yeardomes**, acclimated to the outside via sequential enhancements beginning at majority. Mechanical augmentation is second nature to Leyghosts, who may appear to be synthetics to the untrained eye. Since Rediscovery, the world has become one of the foremost providers of mechanical cyborg enhancements in the Core Worlds and, since its new fargate recently came on line, throughout the Commonality.

Magister Belt

- *Regressed Asteroid Belt Civilisation With a Violent Resistance Movement*
- *G-class main sequence star, TX3.4.2, T7, 150 million, 173LY.*

The Magister Belt system possesses a dense inner planetoid belt that is almost 1000 times the mass of Manhome's, the debris of a life-bearing terrestrial planet destroyed by a rogue planet collision four million years ago. It gave early colonists a wealth of exploitable materials, including frozen remnants of the destroyed planet's biosphere, with which they built a thriving T8 space-dwelling civilisation with a population of more than four billion, living in more than fifty thousand space habitats and on three plateworlds. Eight centuries ago, an uprising against

are comfortable in Gadoline's environment. They maintain the Mindscape and human storage facilities, and care for the organics as if they were invalids.

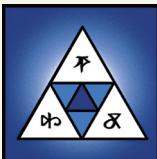
Caretakers have spherical bodies with multiple extending manipulators, and have at least human intelligence. They are Commonality citizens, and Gadoline's principal authorities. They have remained true to their initial purpose—to sustain a human presence on Gadoline—although there is now fierce debate about its ongoing validity. The humans communicate with the Caretakers mostly via Mindscape and occasionally interact with the actual world via avatar, and are eager for ships to arrive with news and new environments and entertainments.

Gadoline civilisation has always rested on shaky foundations and, since Rediscovery, it has become profoundly unstable. There's a "Back to Bodies!" rehabilitation movement, agitating for people to be raised in actuo and then given the option of entering the virtualities, rather than the opposite (as is currently the case). SCI Force evaluations have been unpromising, judging that the Gadoline are physiologically degenerate and unprepared to re-enter the actual world. The world is considered a **holocene virtuality** (page 25).

Hainer's World

- *Slow-moving Monastics on a Dark and Deadly World*
- *M-class red dwarf, TX2.2.4, T10, 250 million, 347LY.*

Hainer's World is a dark, tidally-locked planet with an ancient biosphere of specialised life forms subsisting on the low-energy environment. Over the millennia, the Hainers engineered themselves to match their biosphere's slow-moving temporality (1 Exchange is 1 Minute), becoming Standervires (page 27). Tough and wiry, with pale skins, nearly hairless, they operate at half the speed of a standard human—slow, but still



Relos Triumvirate

- TX4, T9, 23 billion (all planets), 270LY.

The heart of this ancient cultural region is a triple star system fortunate enough to possess garden worlds orbiting two of its three stars, and a partially terraformed world of cloud cities orbiting the third. However, the three stars are quite distant; two are 0.1 light years apart, with the third 0.25LY from the other two.

The original colonists settled all three worlds. They attempted to create a society whose members were physically diverse but mentally unified, even across distances between their stars. They maintained cultural unity using **dubs**, discrete individuals living on two or more of the Relos worlds who freely shared their memories by Mindscape (with a delay of 5-12 weeks). Every citizen on each world had one to three dubs on the other two, and up to two dubs on his or her own world, connecting up to nine individuals in a **dubstate**. In practice, to avoid confusion, most individuals had one dub on the other two worlds, for a three-person dubstate. Some people travelled to meet their dubs; however, if they chose to remain on the new world, they were required to obtain a new dub on their old world, typically someone of roughly the same age who had moved there from a different star system or whose previous dub had died. The dubstate system continues, with minor modifications, to this day. On each of the triumvirate's world's, some inhabitants alter their bodies for work or personal preference, but most use variations on a single human or hominid genotype designed for life on that world—see below.

a repressive government turned into a devastating war lasting more than one hundred and fifty years, which destroyed thirty thousand habitats and two plateworlds, badly damaging the third. It ended through mutual exhaustion rather than victory.

A century later, Magistran civilisation had fallen to tech index T6. Survivors sent distress calls to Manhome and, 350 years after the war had begun, a T8 relief ship arrived filled with equipment and aid workers. The inhabitants of the remaining Magistran plate-world seized the relief ship and killed most of the crew, before using the vessel to attack the habitats opposing them. Saboteurs destroyed the vessel and sent word of its fate to Old Earth.

There were no further missions to Magister Belt until the Second Age of Space, when a peacekeeping flotilla found the Belt's population reduced to 80 million and T5, and still declining. Today, Magister Belt is administered by CORESPAN: although its population and TI are recovering, many Magistrans cling to ancient hostilities and violently oppose the CORESPAN presence, leading to regular incidents of terrorism.

GOLDEN

The most Earth-like of the three Relos worlds, only 13% of Golden is land, mostly islands between 1,000 and 100,000 square kilometres. Goldens construct their settlements in the large shallow seas surrounding the larger islands, leaving the land as wilderness, except for those functions where dry land is absolutely necessary (such as some types of manufacturing). Spaceports are constructed on land by preference. Goldens are amphibious hominids, similar in appearance to the Chembu.

DERRO

Derro orbits the smallest of the three Relos stars, a red dwarf. Tidally locked and quite cold, it's an inferior garden world, where tidal stresses have created large cavern systems containing thermosynthetic and chemosynthetic life. Derro's caves even contain two underground seas, and several large air-filled spaces. While most caverns are illuminated, Derrans also have a sonar sense. They regularly visit the surface, and several cities are located there, but they are most comfortable below ground.

TELECHAK

Once a hot, lifeless world, like Inferno before its terraforming, Telechak now has a surface atmospheric pressure of only 20 atmospheres, and average temperature is 150°C. Further terraforming is possible, but 20km above the surface, the atmosphere is warm, wet, oxygen rich, and relatively dense; it's now home to tens of thousands of floating sky habitats (some as large as cities), as well as a thriving aerial ecosystem of float-plankton, airsquid, and living airships. Almost all Telechaks are winged hominids.

Shukkat

- Regressed Inferior Garden World in Stage II Normalisation
- K-class red giant, TX4.2.4, T6, 7 billion, 389LY.

The world of Shukkat regressed to T6 at least two millennia ago, but retained the ability to receive Mindscape updates from the Old Commonality. Seeing the impossible technologies represented in the parts of the updates they could decypher, the Shukkati began to believe they represented a form of fiction or allegorical communication—lessons which they re-broadcast as public entertainment and edification on communal and home viewers. Cultish groups of enthusiasts, dedicated to following these apparently fictional stories of people in the Core, dominated Shukkati life for hundreds of years. Multiple generations of families dedicated themselves to the lessons of one character's story.

Rediscovery has been hard for the Shukkati. The benevolent attentions of their Commonality mentors have proven to be

THE VACKERS

Because of the long travel times between the three Relos worlds, a fourth polity evolved in the system, known as the Vackers, hominids adapted for life in zero-G. With less extreme adaptations than the Hydragand-Dezimeer (page 84), Vackers can nevertheless survive in vacuum for up to an hour. They work on slowships and engage in asteroid and gas mining at the outer edges of the trinary constituent systems. Although Vackers make up only about 5% of the population of any of the three planets, they also have dubs on all three Relos worlds.

THE RELOS FARGATE

The 3-space gate in the Relos system has come online only in the past few years, and already Relosians are realising that upheavals to the dubstate system are imminent. The gate itself is closest to Telechak (it's often called the Telechak gate), and is inhabited by a high proportion of Vackers.

THE NEW COLONIES

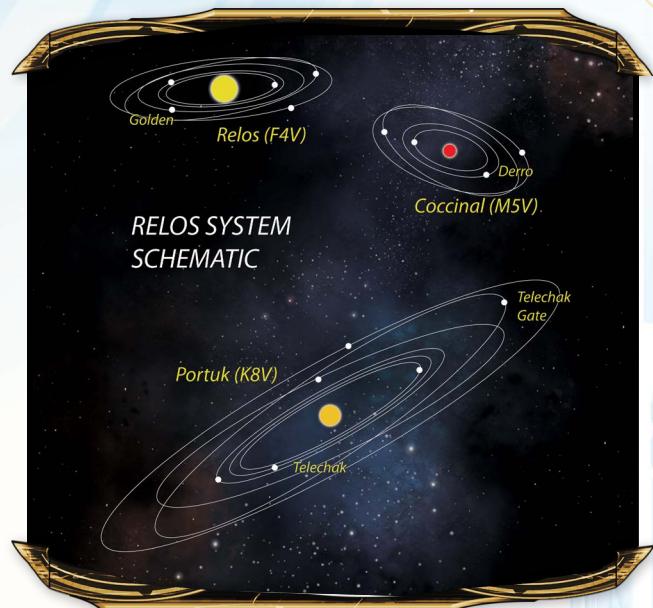
Five millennia ago, Relos began sending slowship expeditions to nearby stars, and ultimately settled five other systems: Acubens, Cancri, Hydra, Hydralone, and Laminilar. Despite the distances, Relos attempted to maintain the use of dubs. Eventually one system, Hydra, broke away, and is now independent; the other four systems continued as part of the Triumvirate and persisted in using dubs, although distances and times meant dubstate existence in the New Colonies was extremely different from the Relos worlds. Since Rediscovery, travel times are much reduced, and again dubstate use has become much more practical, although the New Colonies tend to seek dubstates among themselves as their cultural experience is similar. SCI Force is

illusory, and the complex philosophical framework developed to explain the broadcasts nothing more than self-delusion. Entire factions have been devastated by the revelations; yet others still maintain the nature of the Commonality updates does not matter, it is the **interpretation** of them that counts. SCI Force has struggled to manage the ongoing cultural conflict, and Shukkati culture has been flagged for Stage II Normalisation.

Tholos

- *Standard Garden Core World With an Alien Megastructure In System*
- *G-class main sequence star, TX2.4.4, T10, 16 billion, 251LY.*

The Commonality world of Tholos shares its star system with the extraordinary structure known as the **bone-world of Charorum**. From space, the Charorum artefact resembles the fossilised skeleton of an enormous creature, its limbs and tail curled around its body to form a rough sphere. The



trying to engineer a rapprochement between these two rapidly diverging dubstate systems.

THE TRIUMVIRATE TODAY

The dubstate system still survives, and has caused the Triumvirate's culture, technology, and even languages to remain remarkably consistent. The opening of the 3-space gate near Telechak has sparked concern that, once all the Relos worlds are connected by gate, exomemory updates will become real-time, possibly causing at least some dubstates to become collective intelligences. Relosians are split on whether or not this is desirable.

continental scale of these "bones" is so staggering that they are naturally assumed to be something else—possibly an ancient work of art or the artefact of an unknown and highly advanced exocivilisation. The artefact may only be observed remotely: any object approaching closer than a little over 37000km is immediately destroyed by an unknown form of 2-space disruption, presumably a weapon.

The people of Tholos have a hundred competing theories about the Charorum "makers"; factions supporting these theories maintain satellite research stations outside the critical orbit. These are often at odds, and compete to develop ever more esoteric scanning techniques or hypotheses.

A recurring rumour suggests that the 3SI—and by extension the fargates—was born in the orbital observatories of Charorum. Despite this, Tholos is not yet part of the fargate network.



The Second Determination of Geronthropy

The Second Determination is, as its name suggests, the second polity to occupy this cultural region, the first having succumbed to revolutionary movements millennia ago known as the **Longevity Wars**. The Mortality Statutes never applied to the First and Second Determinations; however, the Second opted for a form of longevity where aging itself was not prevented, but rather its affects were treated and mitigated, a question of life extension rather than rejuvenation. Geronthropes appeared "well-preserved" and hale and hearty, remaining active throughout their first century and only gradually weakening thereafter; lifespans averaged 250 years. All four worlds of the Geronthropy had dense populations, and activities were segregated by age; the young were active and dynamic, while the old occupied management, admin, and mentoring roles.

Until Rediscovery, this system was stable; living space and resource constraints were powerful arguments for population control. Since Rediscovery and the rescinding of the Mortality Statutes, however, the Geronthropy is in deep trouble, and resorting to propaganda and administrative restrictions to prevent its population simply fleeing the cultural region to seek rejuvenation and longevity treatments elsewhere. Population numbers are plummeting: most of those leaving are its oldest, most skilled and experienced members. Geronthrope society is racked with unrest, including violent riots, as the whole basis for society across multiple worlds is simultaneously undone, and SCI Force and CORESPAN are struggling to cope.

The opening of the Tython fargate in the Geronthropy is regarded by some as a last-ditch attempt to infuse Geronthrope society with some much needed "staying power"; at the moment, however, people seem to be fleeing via 3-space just as much as they once did via planeship.

Scenario Hook: Misinformation Campaign

Over the past year, tensions have risen between the Capricornian Consularity and the Second Determination of Geronthropy. People in each are accusing individuals in the other of petty offenses and unethical behaviours. Leaders and Mindscape dirigeants on the world of Little Wolf in the Second Determination believe these accusations are due to a series of subtle alterations to the Mindscape; it's possible that SCI Force or even CORESEC are attempting a cultural manipulation operation, or that some other powerful organisation has found a way to alter large amounts of Mindscape information in a nearly undetectable manner. In either case, the individuals who discovered these alterations would like them to stop and want to know why they are happening.

Another possibility, highly disturbing and currently kept top secret by CORESEC, links these events to possible Mindscape manipulations emanating from the Astrabalene Sodality (page 80).

Rebel With a Cause

Officially, the Commonality doesn't interfere in the Vindix-Titus Collective; its government is recognised as a Core World variant. As a result, the Commonality can't officially give sanctuary to anyone fleeing its worlds. However, this time the PCs have been approached by just such an escapee, who claims to possess a Mindscape virus which will crash the implants which monitor and control the Collective's population. Are the player characters willing to help bring down an oppressive regime, even if that runs counter to Commonality law, and even though the result may be chaos?



Vindix-Titus Collective

- TX3, T8-T10, 300 billion.

Titus and Vindix are two garden worlds orbiting a yellow dwarf star. From their earliest colonisation, they developed planned economies and tight internal cohesion, societies where individuals subordinated their will to the well-being of the whole.

Over centuries, this structure ossified in response to "terrorist" rebels. Today, all citizens work for the state, in tasks the state chooses according to its need and an individual's psychological profile. Property is loaned to citizens, and even clothing takes the form of uniforms dependent on seniority and assigned task. Marriage and permission to reproduce is at the state's decision.

A thousand years ago, the Collective decided to expand, sending colony slowboats to twenty neighbouring systems. To avoid the new colonies diverging from Vindix-Titus culture because of the times and distances involved, implants were used which not only connected colonists to the local Mindscape, but reminded them of expected behaviours, tracked their emotional states, and monitored their locations. This system continues to this day: Vindix-Titus sentiences claim to detect potential deviants with a greater than 99% accuracy, and anyone who doubts the Collective's philosophy is scheduled for re-education well before they rebel.

The Collective never sought a radically different governmental system to Manhome, with whom they stayed in sporadic contact. Instead, they saw their system as a reflection of Old Earth trends, and even today maintain that it is a natural development of Commonality practice. Officially the Commonality agrees: the Collective is not dangerous, and most citizens are happy.

However, a dissident faction within SCI Force known as **Deprogrammers** considers the Collective's effective state slavery to be very much counter to the Commonality way. Hidden from the Collective and their own superiors, they work to undermine its control.

The Collective includes few sentiences other than those which assist the ruling committees and help track dissidents. It's an axiom of Vindix-Titus culture that work—especially dangerous work—is conducive to human dignity. Makepoints are likewise restricted.

VINDIX

- *Industrial Civilisation Marginal Garden World*
- *G-class main sequence star, TX3.2.4, T9, 22 billion, 251LY.*

Vindix is a chilly world at the outer limits of what constitutes a garden world. Originally the seat of industry in the Vindix-Titus system, in recent years much of that industry has been moved to more remote gas giant moons to protect Vindix's environment and control its population of over 20 billion, which is now falling as the state mandates work force migrations offworld. Although most people are happy to serve the state as it sees fit, a minority is deeply unhappy at the forced migrations, and is sufficiently numerous to make immediate re-education impractical. The Vindix state apparatus has a problem on its hands.

TITUS

- *Standard Garden Agri-World*

Titus is a garden world in the same system as Vindix, an agricultural planet with a population of under 100 million. It produces most of the food for the Vindix-Titus system. Its hava bird and jubu fruit in particular are exported to other worlds of the Collective.

Titus's inhabitants are agricultural workers, or those the state rewards with homes on the world in return for good service. Many citizens aspire to such rewards, but fewer than one in a thousand achieve them.

IXIL

- *Marginal Garden Industrial World*
- *K-class subgiant, TX3.2.4, T9, 11 billion, 234LY.*

Ixil is an Earth-like world with an elliptical 10-year orbit crossing the habitable zone of its star. Native life forms become dormant when it gets too close to the sun and surface water boils, or when it is too far away and there is a long frozen spell. The Vindix-Titus government on Ixil assists with settler adaptations as they store water for the temperature extremes, and retreat underground or into cooled buildings for the "big heat".

Despite its challenging orbit, Ixil is prosperous and known for its industry and certain forms of abstract art permitted by the state. Vindix-Titus views Ixil as a success story and a vindication of its approach.

XENAI

- *Gas Giant Moonbase Core World*
- *F-class main sequence star, TX3.2.4, T10, 200 thousand, 187LY.*

Xenai is a gas giant moon base. It's not terraformed, though the moon has large underground water reserves. It is the Vindix-Titus Collective's outward face; visitors from elsewhere in the Commonality are permitted here, and other domains even have embassies.

The planet's population of 200,000 consists of specially selected citizens from the Collective, the most loyal servants of the state. There's a constant change-over, with few staying for more than a few years. The Collective fears memetic contamination, and by rotation and careful selection hopes to minimise the risks.

YSELDA

- *Marginal Garden World Prison Planet*
- *M-class giant, TX3.2.4, T4, 450 million, 249LY.*

Yselda is an arid marginal garden world. It's an ancient planet, very flat, with shallow lakes rather than oceans, and hills rather than mountains. The native biosphere offered little resistance to colonisation, and its life forms are now found only in reserves and zoos.

The Collective uses Yselda as a place of exile for dissidents it cannot re-educate. Called "Lowlives", they're supposed to be a warning to others, although they wear their name with pride. Yselda's varied population—exiles and natives—get by, although the world has regressed to a T4 tech index.



The Starsailor Migratory

The Starsailor Sentiences are a hybrid human-spacecraft species originating from Delta Scuti. In 2174 FA, the passage of a rogue star made their world uninhabitable, destroying its cultures in a series of cataclysms. The survivors hardwired themselves into STL starship bodies and began a slow emigration.

Individual Starsailors are variform vessels, but their most common form is elongated, squid-like craft of up to 1000 tonnes. Their synthetic brains still contain a significant organic component, developed *in vitro* and carefully incorporated into new ship hulls. ZIP plants are carried in trailing positions, and most Starsailors are well armed. Families of 50-100 vessels follow long interstellar migration routes, spending most of their time in deep space at around 0.7c. There are approximately 250 known families—the number varies as groups merge and split.

Although generally self-sufficient, Starsailors require the energy and material resources of a star system to reproduce. Migration routes visit one star every 2-3 decades, remaining for half a standard year. A spawning—in which new vessels are spun out of solar energy, asteroid metals, and conjoined minds—lasts a full standard year, and is an occasion for celebrations on nearby worlds.

Visiting Starsailors bring news, technology, artefacts, Mindscape updates, and sometimes living passengers. The worlds covered by the migration routes (most of TX2.3.3, itself known as the Starsailor Migratory Subsector) form a cultural region of 42 inhabited systems.

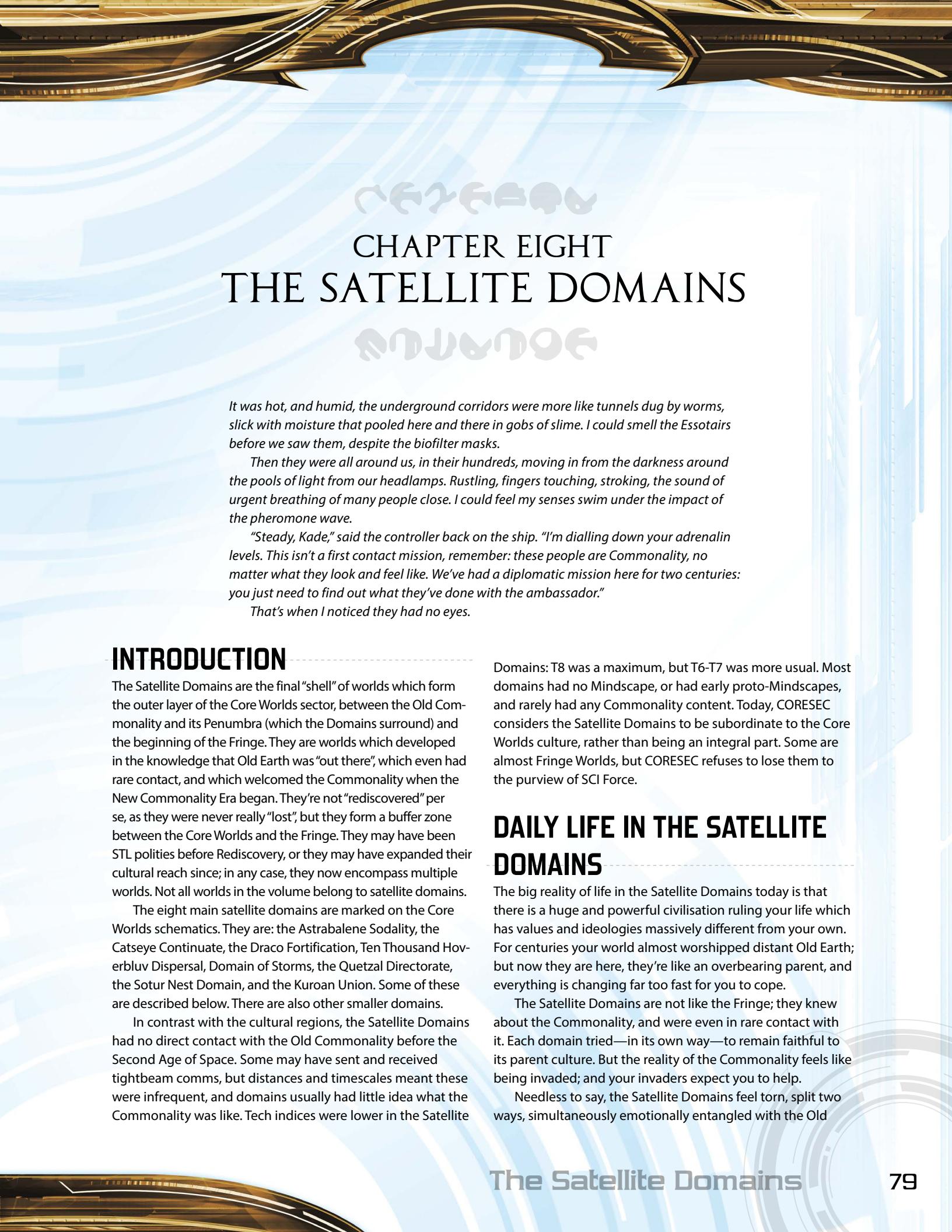
A system might expect to be visited by a Starsailor family 2-3 times a century, but certain systems form nexuses in the migration routes, visited every few years: Alya's Serpent, Kaus, Nunki, Shield of Tian, and Tianbanyi. These nexus worlds are

not generally used as breeding grounds.

Although the Migratory region has historically had no common government, the Starsailors have enforced certain behaviours, by force if necessary: hospitality to the Starsailors, maintenance of mining and energy production, accurate tracking of stellar bodies. Migratory cultures have absorbed these values, and complex hospitality rules are common. Starsailor sentinels remain in inhabited systems to protect their interests; there have been occasions where they've intervened in local conflicts. When Spathus Minor attempted to deny the Pythonus family spawning resources, the Starsailors bombarded it with planetesimals, but this was a rare occurrence.

The discovery of planing has had a mixed reception among the Starsailors. While most have added 2-space engines to their bodies, or spawned new Starsailors incorporating the new drives, they have continued to make most of their voyages at STL speeds, insisting there are glories and mysteries in deep space that 2-space travellers can never experience. More traditionalist families have refused planing engines altogether, and there have been conflicts when these families have encountered planing Starsailors at nexus worlds. The recent instantiation of a far gate in the Nunki system has been extremely controversial, and there is talk of boycotts. So far no Starsailors have applied for gate transit, so happily the 3SI have not had to decide whether to issue permission, but it's only a matter of time.

A number of 2-space equipped Starsailor families participated in the last-ditch defence of the Core Worlds during the Venu War, when the invasion fleet passed through the Migratory. Losses were heavy: more than half the members of nine families were lost at Styphon V alone, and an almost equal number at Nunki.



CHAPTER EIGHT

THE SATELLITE DOMAINS

It was hot, and humid, the underground corridors were more like tunnels dug by worms, slick with moisture that pooled here and there in gobs of slime. I could smell the Essotairs before we saw them, despite the biofilter masks.

Then they were all around us, in their hundreds, moving in from the darkness around the pools of light from our headlamps. Rustling, fingers touching, stroking, the sound of urgent breathing of many people close. I could feel my senses swim under the impact of the pheromone wave.

"Steady, Kade," said the controller back on the ship. "I'm dialling down your adrenalin levels. This isn't a first contact mission, remember: these people are Commonality, no matter what they look and feel like. We've had a diplomatic mission here for two centuries: you just need to find out what they've done with the ambassador."

That's when I noticed they had no eyes.

INTRODUCTION

The Satellite Domains are the final "shell" of worlds which form the outer layer of the Core Worlds sector, between the Old Commonality and its Penumbra (which the Domains surround) and the beginning of the Fringe. They are worlds which developed in the knowledge that Old Earth was "out there", which even had rare contact, and which welcomed the Commonality when the New Commonality Era began. They're not "rediscovered" per se, as they were never really "lost", but they form a buffer zone between the Core Worlds and the Fringe. They may have been STL polities before Rediscovery, or they may have expanded their cultural reach since; in any case, they now encompass multiple worlds. Not all worlds in the volume belong to satellite domains.

The eight main satellite domains are marked on the Core Worlds schematics. They are: the Astrabalone Sodality, the Catseye Continuate, the Draco Fortification, Ten Thousand Hoverbluv Dispersal, Domain of Storms, the Quetzal Directorate, the Sotur Nest Domain, and the Kuroan Union. Some of these are described below. There are also other smaller domains.

In contrast with the cultural regions, the Satellite Domains had no direct contact with the Old Commonality before the Second Age of Space. Some may have sent and received tightbeam comms, but distances and timescales meant these were infrequent, and domains usually had little idea what the Commonality was like. Tech indices were lower in the Satellite

Domains: T8 was a maximum, but T6-T7 was more usual. Most domains had no Mindscape, or had early proto-Mindscares, and rarely had any Commonality content. Today, CORESEC considers the Satellite Domains to be subordinate to the Core Worlds culture, rather than being an integral part. Some are almost Fringe Worlds, but CORESEC refuses to lose them to the purview of SCI Force.

DAILY LIFE IN THE SATELLITE DOMAINS

The big reality of life in the Satellite Domains today is that there is a huge and powerful civilisation ruling your life which has values and ideologies massively different from your own. For centuries your world almost worshipped distant Old Earth; but now they are here, they're like an overbearing parent, and everything is changing far too fast for you to cope.

The Satellite Domains are not like the Fringe; they knew about the Commonality, and were even in rare contact with it. Each domain tried—in its own way—to remain faithful to its parent culture. But the reality of the Commonality feels like being invaded; and your invaders expect you to help.

Needless to say, the Satellite Domains feel torn, split two ways, simultaneously emotionally entangled with the Old

Commonality, and yet feeling drawn towards the more free-wheeling, individualistic ways of the Fringe. In some domains, this dichotomy is already causing outbreaks of violence, and it's not easy to see how the contradictions might be resolved.

Most Old Commonality conventions are common in the Satellite Domains, having been introduced over the past two hundred years. Nootropes provide administrative assistance and consultancy on most worlds, organising yearpools, longevity treatments, educational programs, Mindscape modifications, and so on; and the instrumentalities follow in their wake. The Satellite Domains don't overtly have Commonality embassies; rather, the Commonality views its work here more as one of *Reconstruction and Modernisation*.



The Astrabalene Sodality

The Astrabalene Sodality is a satellite domain whose volume is contiguous with the **Tethys Clouds**, a giant molecular cloud and area of active star formation in the First Core World Transect. It's a group of human colonies that were influenced to unite by a mysterious exointelligent species dwelling in deep space known as **Astrabalenes**. The exointelligences directed the Sodality worlds' evolution by interfering in their Mindscape, modifying comms sent and received to and from the Old Commonality, and also those exchanged between themselves. It's unknown why the exointelligences did (and continue to do) this, nor how widely their interference might extend beyond the Sodality's boundaries. Needless to say, CORESEC and SCI Force are actively involved in Sodality affairs.

Commonality contact with the Astrabalene has been difficult and somewhat fraught. Before Rediscovery, there was no hint of their existence; the Sodality worlds seemed to cohere of their own accord. Since Rediscovery, it has become clear that something was interfering with the region's comms; not just disrupting, but actively manipulating and modifying Mindscape updates. A little under fifty years ago, this was first identified as the Astrabalene.

Commonality scans showed the Astrabalene to be enormous life forms, several kilometres in length, with carbon-based bodies in a loose, elongated balloon-like body plan, native to deep space. They appear to have nothing to do with the Pulse Dragon phenomenon, although they do not enter star systems, apparently finding gravity wells damaging to their physical integrity. They extrude manipulative pseudopods, and scans reveal multiple discrete life forms within their bodies, leading to the hypothesis that they may be some kind

WORLDS OF THE SATELLITE DOMAINS

Dhalpa

- *Distant Domain World in the Throes of Xenomorph Rebellion*
- *F-class main sequence star, TX1.5.1, T8, 6 billion, 735LY.*

Dhalpa is so far from Old Earth that it's practically a Fringe World; only its ability to remain in unbroken contact with the Old Commonality made it a Satellite Domain world. Even then, transmissions during the First Age of Space were unidirectional: any reply took over 700 years, so meaningful dialogue was impossible. Nevertheless, Dhalpa considered itself part of the Commonality—albeit a remote and passive one.

of symbiont. They metabolise elements in the Tethys Clouds, and photosynthesis and magnetosynthesis likely also play roles. Their reproduction method is unknown.

Astrabalene senses include the EM spectrum and radio communication. It's this latter ability that apparently allows them to understand and interfere with Mindscape updates, likely via electromagnetic lensing, although this is yet to be observed.

Astrabalenes have avoided close contact with humans; standoffs at a distance have permitted scans, but meaningful communication has yet to be achieved. Indeed, exoscale and evolutionary index differences, and perhaps even temporality (see **Mindjammer** page 409), may be precluding effective communication. It's even been theorised that the Astrabalene Mindscape interferences have been their communication attempts; experiments are ongoing between SCI Force, Space Force, and CORESEC. Attempts to force closer contact have been met by overwhelming EW attacks, frequently destroying vessels.

The Astrabalene Sodality worlds don't seem to have suffered from the interventions, except for the fact that face-to-face encounters between Sodality representatives have been less amiable, diplomatic, and successful than previous STL Mindscape communications, leading to the suspicion that the Astrabalenes may have acted as emissaries and go-betweens for centuries, smoothing relations between the worlds. The **Pansodality Solidarity Movement**, originating on Beta Cygni, proposes overtures to the Astrabalenes to encourage them to continue as ambassadors and mentors. At the other extreme, the **Non-Interference Organisation** is employing a flotilla of shielded "double-blind" Mindjammers to ensure comms integrity, and even talks of establishing a parallel, shielded Mindscape.

Dhalpa was settled seven millennia ago by colonists who found a large, warm, pleasant standard garden world with a 1.3G gravity. They founded a conservative neo-Yoosan society which made extensive use of xenomorph labour. Unrestricted longevity among the human population, which had left Old Earth before the Mortality Statutes were introduced, ensured an exceptional level of social stability.

Perhaps due to its remoteness, Dhalpa, unlike many Core Worlds, gradually gave its xenomorphs limited civil rights, although access to the Mindscape and augmentations remained restricted. T8 surveillance by basics and sentinels kept society stable for millennia; though Dhalpa experienced dozens of large-scale xenomorph revolts, all were swiftly and firmly repressed and survivors subjected to re-education and personality modification.

Since the start of the Xeno Wars thirty-three years ago, Dhalpa has become keenly aware of the differential treatment of xenomorphs in the Core and Fringe, and tensions have been rising. Riots and strikes are frequent, as are other forms of dissent. Local eidolon sentiences, including two system Mindscape dirigeants, have at least passively supported the struggle, mostly because of their contact with off-world synthetics.

A year ago, three quarters of Dhalpa's xenomorphs walked out of their jobs, refusing to work for their human masters until given full citizenship. This general strike continues, and every week a small but steady number of xenomorphs joins the rebels (partly because the rebels intimidate those xenomorphs still working). Sentient Alliance activists have smuggled themselves onto the world despite CORESEC surveillance, and provide the xenomorphs with makepoints and other imported tech, but for many conditions are worse than before. CORESPAN has been unwilling to end the rebellion for fear of negative reactions from the Sentient Alliance.

Grey

- Quarantined Gas Giant Moon Space Force Outpost
- M-class red giant, TX1.2.3, T10, 2000 Space Force personnel, 533LY.

Grey is a rocky cratered moon with no atmosphere. Its surface is dotted with ancient ruins of alien metallic architecture, hexagonal in form. Discovered accidentally by patrols after the Venu War, explorers have since found technological wonders, devices which match or even exceed Commonality tech. Whatever happened to Grey's original inhabitants is a mystery: no similar ruins have been detected in nearby systems, and there's little sign the world was destroyed by violence. No bodies or organic remains have been found.

Some excavations have triggered holographic images of four-armed brightly coloured beings, apparently communicating with some urgency. Xenoarchaeologists suspect there

Getting Around the Satellite Domains

CORESPAN is concerned about indiscriminate contact between the Satellite Domains and the Fringe. It wants to expand the centripetal forces which help the Commonality cohere, outwards from the Old Commonality, Penumbra, and Satellite Domains, and into the Fringe, while at the same time preventing the importation from the Fringe of those centrifugal forces which may cause the Commonality to come apart. The battlegrounds for these two struggles are the Satellite Domains.

As a result, CORESPAN encourages travel and communication between the Satellite Domains and the rest of the Core. Conversely, it tries to control, screen, and often actively discourage travel between the domains and the Fringe. It's easier to board a Fringebound transport in the Old Commonality than it is in a Satellite Domain, and easier to travel Corebound from the Fringe to the Old Commonality than to the Satellite Domains.

Travel between domain worlds is less problematic, and more subject to the policies and customs of individual domains.

is more of interest beneath Grey's surface, but initial excavation attempts have encountered what appear to be defences: powerful distorting energy fields capable of turning "intruders" inside-out.

Space Force currently maintains a *Lightning Inspiration*-class interdiction cruiser in orbit around Grey, with advanced laboratory facilities, and has quarantined the surface. The defences (if that's what they are) may reach beyond Grey, and are considered too dangerous to tamper with at present.

Helos

- Ancient Xenomorph Garden World
- G-class main sequence star, TX4.5.3, T9, 3 billion, 366LY.

Helos is a standard garden world settled eight thousand years ago by a small human colony with a xenomorph labour force. Distrusting the increasing sophistication of synthetics, the colonists determined to live lives of luxury served by xenomorphs working with highly restricted basics. Information development was limited to a T7 proto-Mindscape. Over time, the humans engineered the xenomorphs into contented obedience. They forbade further colony ships, and so slow-ships rarely visited more than once a century, and even then were not given free access to the world. Yet Helos maintained communications with Manhome, cheerfully describing the advantages of their way of life.



Domain of Storms

The unifying polity of the Domain of Storms is not human, but an unusual exointelligence—the **Storms**. Sentient electromagnetic vortices inhabiting the atmospheres of gas giants in this region of space, the Storms have no technology as humankind understands it, but are capable of entering space for periods of at least several days and travelling close to the speed of light. They live in gas giants in over a dozen systems (an estimated total “population” of 40 billion), suggesting they once made interstellar journeys. They do not appear to do so today.

Storms live for centuries, and grow throughout their lives. As they grow, their temporality (*Mindjammer* page 409) slows. A young Storm, a few centimetres across, has a temporality greater than humans (perhaps as much as 1 Exchange is 1 Millisecond), whereas old Storms think and communicate more slowly, taking hours in human terms to formulate a sentence (1 Exchange is a Few Hours).

Although Storms have no use for technology, they are intelligent and have their own cultures, communicating using EM signals even between star systems. They have notions of music, poetry, and pure mathematics; indeed, in the latter field, their insights may be ahead of humankind. Communication between humans and Storms is difficult but possible, especially for Storms in the middle stages of their lives. Humans and Storms have been aware of one another for two thousand

Fifteen hundred years ago, the xenomorphs rebelled. Killing 90% of the human population, they spared only those who had helped them gain their freedom. The survivors were legally treated as another type of xenomorph but, as many of the xenomorphs distrusted them, most eventually hybridised themselves or their descendants with other xenomorphs to better integrate into the new order.

With access to longevity and the enhanced education used by their former masters, the Helosian xenomorphs had no trouble governing their world. However, they feared retaliation from Manhome if word of their revolt spread. Aware they would be unable to resist punitive expeditions by armed slowships, they began to falsify their communications to Old Earth, pretending nothing had changed...

For four hundred years, the xenomorphs and the few remaining humans met visiting slowships from the Commonality, whose crews (as before) were kept from visiting the world’s surface. The Helosian government maintained their illusion that nothing had changed. Eventually, fearful of discovery, they fabricated a bogus historical event: a terrible plague, created by a human terrorist, which had killed more than half of the xenomorph population and had wiped out the human presence on the world. In the wake of this fictional plague, the human survivors liberated the xenomorphs to

Scenario Hook: Stormflight

Storms in the Akhai VI gas giant are becoming agitated, preparing to make the first known interstellar storm-flight. Why are they doing this? Is it anything to do with the complex mathematical calculations the Akhai Academy has been working on under Storm tutelage for more than a century? Can the PCs figure it out?

The Storms preparing for flight appear to be on the verge of panic. Is there a danger? And, if so, what is it?

years, although successful communication was established only about five hundred years ago. Old Earth became aware of the Storms a little over a century before the discovery of planning, but first contact was initially withheld from the public.

Some Storms can control sound sufficiently to produce human speech. They regard humans with as much curiosity as humans do them, and indeed with some pity, seeing them as trapped in material bodies and forced to rely on technology to survive. In turn, humans have difficulty understanding the reasons for the Storms’ “pity”.

There are few garden worlds in the Domain of Storms (two are given below), and comparatively light human habitation. In gen-

ensure the colony’s survival. Thereafter, Helos embraced T8 technologies, but used only xenomorph thanograms when instantiating eidolon sentiences.

Since the “Great Plague”, humans have become extinct on Helos, and everyone now learns only the false history of their past, except for the rare few in positions of power who continue to hide the truth. This deception has survived even Rediscovery, in part because of the compartmentalisation of the Helosian Mindscape, where information about the world’s true history is deeply buried restricted content. Today, some in the Helosian government wish to join the Sentient Alliance and reveal the truth, while others still fear disclosing the ancient massacre. Debates continue out of sight of the Commonality but, until the issue is decided, sentinels prevent anyone from stumbling across the truth. It’s doubtful this situation can continue for long.

Jomon

- *Red Giant Garden Moon With Uplift Exofauna*
- *M-class red giant, TX2.2.1, T9, 17 billion pop, 443LY*

Jomon is a planetary-mass moon of the gas giant Craga. With a t-congruent biosphere, it’s the heart of a civilisation which

eral, the Domain of Storms is protective of its worlds, and reluctant to let the Commonality have unsupervised access, though Commonality assimilation so far has generally gone smoothly.

AKHAI

- *Mountaintop Core World Civilisation of Mathematicians*
- *G-class main sequence star, TX3.5.3, T9, 250 million, 330LY.*

The Akhia system is the site of the sole fargate in the Domain, a recent innovation and a focus of intense interaction between Storms and the Commonality. Akhia III has a dangerously dense atmosphere at low altitudes, but mountaintop atmosphere plants generate breathable air at survivable pressures; the environment was only rarely visited by Storms before humans arrived. Akhia embraced Commonality contact; its people acquired great mathematical insights from the Storms, developing techniques to solve problems in pure mathematics once thought impossible. In the Commonality, they have found whole new fields of science in which to exercise their prowess, and the Akhian Academy in the capital of Tempest is well known.

TULUS

- *Tidally-locked Inferior Garden World Regressed Civilisation*
- *F-class subgiant, TX3.5.3, T5, 500 million, 462LY.*

Tulus, a garden world, is a gas giant moon. Its civilisation has regressed to a T5 tech index, and comprises several compet-

has spread across Craga's planetesimal belt, to 32 smaller moons as well as countless mining outposts.

Jomon's economy is dependent on exploiting Craga's chemical resources. Its first settlers discovered non-sentient jellyfish analogues in the gas giant's atmosphere, and genetically adapted them for greater intelligence and pliability, before employing them as gas giant miners. Over the ensuing millennia, the Cragalids were indoctrinated with pseudo-religious beliefs extolling the superiority of humans and the virtues of serving them.

Since Rediscovery, the Jomon have become aware that their treatment of the uplifted Cragalids looks like distasteful slavery to the Commonality. Some have begun to agitate for Cragalid rights; others have reacted angrily towards the Commonality "interference". The Cragalid liberation movement enjoyed a brief popularity after the release of the virtuality drama "Heresy in the Skies". It's not clear what the Cragalids think.

ing nations currently on the brink of war. The Storms visit frequently—there is a large population in the gas giant—and are worshipped as semi-divine beings, dispensing wisdom. The Storms appear to enjoy this relationship, which has posed a thorny problem for CORESEC to resolve before Tulus can be properly integrated into the Commonality.

Scenario Hook: Losing My Religion

The PCs travel to Tulus in the Domain of Storms to see if they can resolve their problematic worship of the magnetic vortex exointelligences; after all, religion is forbidden in the Commonality, let alone worship of an exointelligence.

How will they handle this? One approach might be to convince the Tulusians that Commonality technology can do everything the Storms can and more. However, the Storms are likely to directly compete once they hear what's going on, and there will be cultural consequences of replacing one form of worship with another.

Scenario Hook: False Memories

Since the Cragalids of Jomon have been connected to the Mindscape as a result of the growing emancipation movement, they've become convinced (against all available evidence) that they're an originally sentient exointelligence enslaved by humans, and not an uplifted species at all.

*A rebellion is brewing. Rogue Cragalids have already attacked Jomon gas miners, claiming that humans have hidden **Atlan**, their ancient home, somewhere in the cloud wastes of Craga.*

Who has planted this false memory in the Cragalids, and how? A rival corpocracy? Xenomorph rights activists? A SCI Force or CORESEC faction? Can the PCs locate the corrupted exomemories in the Mindscape and identify the culprits before all out war ensues?

Hydragand-Dezimeer

- *Industrial Hydragand-Dezimeer Home System Protoplanetary Disk*
- *Xi Auri Perseus, A-class main sequence star, TX5.1.1, T10, 1 billion, 704LY.*

The vacuum-dwelling Hydragand-Dezimeer are the most radically divergent hominids so far encountered by the Commonality. They were discovered 704 light years from Old Earth, on the very edge of the Satellite Domains. Today their home system, Xi Auri Perseus, is connected to the Commonality fargate network.

HISTORY

The ancestors of the Hydragand-Dezimeer were members of the Dezimel Collective, a subculture devoted to radical genurgic transformation. They departed for a world on the far edges of the exploration horizon almost seven-and-a-half thousand years ago. When their slowship's gravity engines began failing, they were forced to stop to make repairs at Xi Auri Perseus, a young A-class main sequence star surrounded by a dense, rich proto-planetary disk, seven hundred light years from Old Earth.

While making repairs, the colonists discovered the Xi Auri Perseus system already had its own vacuum-dwelling, alternate biosphere. Its life forms generated weak gravitational fields, travelling slowly between planetoids and eventually stars, colonising stellar accretion disks. The colonists decided to remain in the system and adapt themselves and their descendants to the environment by incorporating traits from these life forms. They communicated their intentions back to Old Earth and waited for a reply. Updates began 1400 years later, when the colonists had already diverged into the Hydragand-Dezimer species.

PHYSIOLOGY

The Hydragand-Dezimeer are a species exhibiting extreme sexual dimorphism; the Hydragand are male, and the Dezimeer female. All individuals are initially born as Hydragand, humanoid creatures ranging in adult height from 1.8 to 2 m and in mass from 80 to 110 kg. 10% of their mass consists of their rocky outer covering, resembling a smooth, carefully-made stone wall, which protects them from vacuum and radiation and temperature extremes.

Hydragand can survive indefinitely in vacuum as long as they have access to water and nutrients. They also have a weak gravitational propulsion system derived from the Xi Auri Perseus life forms; too weak to leave any body with a gravity of more than 0.03G, it nevertheless permits slow acceleration and gives the Hydragand the freedom to manoeuvre in space. They also use this propulsion to walk relatively normally on surfaces possessing only negligible gravity, and to extend a weak field capable of capturing dust and small particles.

Individuals live for 60 years in the Hydragand state, before beginning a year-long transformation into the Dezimeer state, during which their mass increases fourfold to between 350 and 480 kg. Dezimeer live for 60 more years. They resemble dome-shaped ovoids which move slowly on thousands of cilia and which manipulate objects and dig through rock using their dozen strong, half-metre long tendrils. They also possess the same rocky exterior and can survive in vacuum. Dezimeer brain growth gives them greater intelligence than standard humans, and their original propulsion ability now becomes a short-range ability to cling to low gravity rocks, to create and reinforce asteroid tunnels, and to maintain a low-level awareness of their structure and potential weaknesses. Today, rejuvenation and longevity allow individuals to remain in the Hydragand or Dezimeer states for as long as they want, and other treatments permit transformation back and forth at will.

SENSES

Although they possess a keen sense of taste and their sense of touch is almost as acute as a standard human, Hydragand-Dezimeer have no sense of smell. Their vision is sharper than human and ranges from the far infrared to the far ultraviolet. They are deaf, but possess a strong vibration sense, and the ability to "hear" the radio spectrum and charged particle radiations. Hydragand-Dezimeer travelling outside their star system usually undergo a simple genurgic procedure allowing them to hear normally.

TECHNOLOGY

During their long isolation, the Hydragand-Dezimeer maintained their T7 tech index and advanced to T8. They made use of nanomachines and genurgic organisms derived from their star system's biosphere, living man-

ufactories performing functions from separating rock into its component elements to using those elements to create anything from tools to genurgic augmentations. Hydragand-Dezimeer grow Mindscape implants and other augmentations inside their bodies, and cultivate tools and vehicles in femtotech "gardens".

In Hydragand-Dezimeer culture, preparedness for emergency is highly valued. As a result, most devices that other people wear, hold, or carry in their pockets, Hydragand-Dezimeer instead inlay into their stony hides. This includes everything from effectors to grav packs, hand scanners to weapons. Designed to be functional and attractive, many resemble jewels or other decorations.

SOCIETY

Most Hydragand-Dezimeer live on small planetoids, 50-500km in diameter, in closely knit, polyamorous clans of 30-500 individuals. Larger planetoids are home to up to 200,000, living in separate but closely allied communities, each made up of up to several dozen clans. Professions are gendered, due to a mixture of culture and biology. Hydragand work as prospectors, traders, engineers, diplomats, peacekeepers, and emergency first responders; Dezimeer work as scientists, leaders, administrators, teachers, physicians, genurgists, nanovat and manufactory gardeners, miners, and entertainers.

Hydragand-Dezimeer settlements comprise chambers and tunnels created by Dezimeer miners, providing a mixture of private and communal spaces, but in general Hydragand-Dezimeer have a lower privacy requirement than other hominids. They are fiercely loyal to clan, a loyalty which they typically transfer to crewmates, company members, or other group fellows. Hydragand-Dezimeer prefer rule by consensus or majority vote.

DISCOVERY

No one even thought to look for a human colony around a young A-class star surrounded by an accretion disk. The Hydragand-Dezimeer were rediscovered, accidentally, thirty-one years after the invention of the planing engine, when an event horizon probe follow up records of sporadic transmissions with a lost colony which had washed up in a system without garden worlds, yet from which a handful of subsequent communications appeared to have been received. On a routine astronomical survey, the probe's shock at



encountering radically transformed hominids in the unlikely environment soon turned to interest when the Commonality realised the Hydragand-Dezimeer were uniquely suited for working in space.

ACROSS THE COMMONALITY

Today, Hydragand-Dezimeer are renowned as asteroid miners and spacers. They have settled eight other star systems with accretion and proto-planetary disks, and their asteroid mining vessels are found everywhere. They have moved into deep space construction, including helping to construct several of the new 3-space gates. Even belters from other branches of humankind increasingly regard ship sentiences based on Dezimeer thanograms as the best choice for asteroid-miners. Miniature Dezimeer vacuum terrariums growing strangely beautiful space-dwelling lifeforms have become a popular import on a number of Commonality worlds.

Kantang Orbital

- *High Population Ringworld Culture World*
- *G-class main sequence star, TX2.5.2, T9, 35 billion, 522LY.*

The colonists who settled Kantang had a bold dream: to construct a huge orbital, capable of providing living space for millennia to come. After spending several centuries creating the equipment required to disassemble the system's three large rocky planets, the Kantangians returned to stasis to allow their basics to work. Construction and initial terraforming required over a millennium. Two thousand five hundred years ago, when the orbital was complete and a fifth of its surface had been terraformed, the colonists awoke, and settlement began.

The Kantang orbital is a rotating ring 10 million km in circumference (a diameter of 3 million km) and 30,000km in width, with a surface area of almost 600 Earths. Just under half the surface is covered in water. The ring rotates once a day, providing gravity and a normal day-night cycle. At first, most of the surface was kept lifeless; during the millennia which followed, its inhabitants have used biological and ecological data received from other star systems to recreate multiple different biosphere zones.

Efforts to duplicate existing ecosystems, or to create artificial ecosystems containing life forms from different biospheres, have intensified during the Second Age of Space. Today, 85% of the orbital is given over to this huge diversity of **biozones**, the most controversial of which include isolated exointelligence, hominid, and xenomorph cultures with tech indices T0 to T3, who lack any knowledge of other species or even the fact that they're living on an artificial world. Kantangians observe these biozones, and the rest of the orbital, using the sensorweb which criss-crosses its surface. Visitors often accuse them of keeping a "sentient zoo". However, less morally-concerned social scientists have found the orbital fascinating, and have asked for permission to perform limited social experiments of their own on one or more of its isolated populations.

Unusually, the Kantang system is the location of a fargate whose construction appears to have been at the behest of either a Commonality custodian or the 3-Space Instrumentality itself. It has been open for several years, and there has been a steady traffic of visitors and researchers to the ringworld.



Kuroan Union

- *Standard Garden Core World*
- *G-class main sequence star, TX5.3.3, T9, 10 billion leets and 30 billion lows, 334LY.*

KURO

Four thousand years ago, settlers from Helos (page 81) and distant Old Earth arrived within years of each other on the garden world of Kuro. Disagreements between the two colony expeditions led to a devastating war, which saw the world regress to T2 and fragment into numerous small states.

The settlers from Helos had brought their xenomorph servants with them, and one of the new states, Tarran, maintained a sufficiently high tech index to keep the latter drugged and obedient, whereas elsewhere they became free. As Tarran rebuilt its technological base, it re-established tenuous contact with the Old Commonality, and fought a series of wars to unify Kuro under its rule. The world has been under a single government for the last thousand years; there were two exchanges of communications before Rediscovery.

THE LEETS

Kuroan culture is sharply divided between human **leets** and xenomorph **lows**. Leets are taller than standard humans, and somewhat fluid in form; they routinely change their skin, hair and eye colour, metabolic speed, and gender (the last change takes roughly a year to complete). Leets are fertile in both male and female forms, and it's frowned upon to stay with a single gender throughout your entire life, an injunction which applies no less to those within formal partnerships.

Leets perform no physical work, but rather live a life of the mind. Artists, poets, and writers are especially esteemed, and it's expected for a leet to engage in one or more of these pursuits. Kuroan planetscapes and poems about the horrors and glories of war are known throughout the Commonality.

Leets are also administrators and soldiers: Kuroans engage in ritualised battles, with a few hundred participants on each side, commemorating major battles from the planet's past. These more closely resemble dangerous sporting contests than actual war, but there are nonetheless fatalities. An unspoken justification for this militaristic readiness is that the leets do not take the subservience of the lows for granted, and act to avert revolts. The lows take no part in the training or rituals of war.

Since the Commonality's arrival, Kuroan culture has advanced to T9 and, with news from Helos, Kuroans have begun to speculate about what happened to their now extinct Helosian human ancestors (page 81). Some have come close to the truth, but their speculation is seen as nothing more than conspiracy theory at present.

THE LOWS

The lows are high-GD pithecine xenomorphs, 1.4m tall as adults, raised to obey leets through a combination of custom and conditioning. There are three times as many lows as leets, and they do all manual labour on Kuro. Most see their role as an unchanging part of the natural order, though some groups retain origin stories of a time they were free, and some less cautious Commonality contacts have suggested their station is anything but natural.

For the present, the lows can do little to emancipate themselves, and the Commonality can do little to help without overthrowing the leet culture, something it is unwilling to do after experience with the Venu. While CORESPAN maintains the status quo, SCI Force agents have engaged in memetic conflict on Kuro, targeting leets and lows with freedom-related memes. The situation looks likely to deteriorate.

Kuroans frequently point out that xenomorphs in Man-home are subservient to humans. The situation on Kuro may be more extreme, but for the Commonality to move against xenomorph indenture here, it might also have to address species inequalities deep in the Core, and elsewhere in the Commonality (such as on Dhalpa).

COLONIES

Eight hundred years ago, Kuro sent slowboats to establish colonies of its own. It maintained contact with these daughter worlds and, since the advent of planing, has united them into a **Kuroan Union**. The colonies are asked to see themselves as part of a "Greater Kuro", and most have done so. Notable colonies include:

Scenario Hook: Xeno-War

On Dhalpa or a world of the Kuroan Union (or some other world where xenomorphs live lives of indenture), riots, unrest, and widespread protests by xenomorphs have been worsening. As more xenomorphs join the protests and a growing number of humans denounce them, society appears poised on the brink of civil war. Members are working for peace, but others are eager for war; representatives of both CORESPAN and the Sentient Alliance are involved.

Extremists on one side have decided that an atrocity blamed on the other might sway the offworld forces to their cause. Can the PCs uncover the conspiracy, and stop the false flag cultural manipulation before it's too late?

Scenario Hook: 3-Space Protests

The 3-Space Instrumentality is considering constructing its next fargate in the Kuro system. Many welcome the increased commerce and Mindscape access this will bring, but others fear the destruction of the Kuroan Union's ancient and unique culture as it's absorbed into the carefully managed Core Worlds. The 3SI's decision isn't yet final, and a few members of the Two-Space League (page 22) are advocating violent protest to force the 3SI to look elsewhere. Simultaneously, a contingent of the Threespacer movement (page 22) is inciting TSL extremists to terrorist outrages to discredit their cause.

Kaplan

- *Core World Civilisation on Non-Garden World Moons*
- *M-class red giant, TX5.4.2, T9, 700 million, 361LY.*

Kaplan is a spectacular gas giant with bright stripes in contrasting colours. It orbits a red giant. There are no garden worlds in-system, but colonies have been established on several moons. Kaplan is more outward looking than Kuro; it had a higher T7 tech index than Kuro before Rediscovery, and has arguably embraced Core Worlds culture more readily. The Kaplani are not content with Kuroan rule, but have the same leet-low division as Kuro and feel they should maintain unity in the face of a Commonality which could disrupt their way of life.

Dunmar

- *Marginal Garden World With Fast Young Biosphere*
- *B-class main sequence star, TX5.3.3, T9, 1 billion, 375LY.*

Dunmar is a marginal garden world with rapid rotation: days are less than six standard hours, and the world is wracked by hurricanes. Early colonists suffered technological failures; many lows perished, and leets and lows were forced to labour together so the colony could survive.

Although Dunmar still maintains a division between leets and lows, distinctions have become social and porous. Some xenomorphs have the status of leets, and there are fewer human leets than lows. Of all Kuroan colonies, Dunmar is the most open to the Commonality. The capital and main starport, Aishé, is neutral ground where Commonality visitors and important leets from elsewhere in the Kuroan Union can mix freely.

Saskaran

- *Alien Symbiosis Garden World*
- *G-class main sequence star, TX1.2.3, T9, 2 billion humans and 2 billion Saskars, 486LY.*

Saskaran is a torrid high-G world with a t-analogue biosphere of teeming jungles; unadapted humans must wear environment suits with exoskeletal or grav reinforcement. Four hundred years ago, it was visited by human explorers from the expanding (and already ancient) Yaha Nohey Domain, who were investigating anomalous signals from the system, and who found the world already inhabited by an exointelligent species. The **Saskars** are five-metre-long serpentine life forms with five pairs of manipulating limbs and a sensor cluster "head" with six equidistant eyes giving 360-degree vision. They are tough, high-endurance omnivores, eating once every Saskaran day (70 standard hours), and communicating in a musical hissing mostly above human hearing ranges. They are homogamous, reproducing via routine physical transfer of genurgic material during social interaction.

Before human contact, the Saskars had a pragmatic yet mystical world-view, a love of time-consuming ritualised behaviour and a reverence for a "Divine Crafter". Food being plentiful, they had little need to develop farming. With an interest in practical science and crafts, they formed communities analogous to T4 city states. When the Yaha Nohey humans arrived, the planet was showing signs of environmental damage from uncontrolled industrialisation. Food was becoming scarce, and the Saskars, having no access to agriculture, were mired in placatory rituals. The Yaha Nohey repaired the ecological damage and received the gratitude of the Saskars, who interpreted the act as an intervention by their "Divine Crafter".

At this point, the Saskars might have become subservient to the Yaha Nohey, had not the explorers realised their natural capacity for engineering. Once a principle was explained to the Saskars, they quickly improved upon it. The Yaha Nohey established a presence on the world. Confining themselves to theoretical research, they interacted with the Saskars and encouraged them to develop practical applications of their findings. The situation rapidly stabilised into a cultural symbiosis which has only deepened and strengthened since. Technological development on Saskaran is the fruit of this symbiosis, including subsequent solar system exploration and exploitation, development of a uniquely symbiotic Saskaran Mindscape, and, recently, adaptation of 2-space technology. The Yaha Nohey even developed their own version of the Saskar's "Great Crafter" belief system.

Before the Second Age of Space, the Yaha Nohey Domain had communicated sporadically with Manhome. Nevertheless, word of the Saskars had not yet reached Old Earth at the time of Rediscovery and, upon its arrival, the Commonality was surprised to find the Domain had been reorganised into a new hybrid human-alien polity, the **Saskaran Symbiosis**. Since

The Saskaran Symbiosis

While the Saskarans enjoy a primarily cultural symbiosis, the domain offers countless examples of the uniquely close relationship which regularly develops between the human and exointelligence populations. In game terms, it's possible to play a Saskar character with a Saskaran human partner extra, or a Saskaran human character with a Saskar partner extra. The Saskar genotype is as follows:

Mandatory spend: 2 aspects, 1 stunt

Chronological Age: 50-100.

Apparent Age: Mature adult.

Typical Occupations: Artist, Technician, Uplifter.

Typical Enhancements: Enhanced Vision*, Highly Adapted (Hotworlder)*, Multi-Attack, Robust Physiology*.

Mandatory Extras: Large*, Mindscape Implant.

Genotype Aspects: You must take the High-G Hotworlder Exointelligence genotype aspect. You may take the Mystical Pragmatism of the Divine Crafter aspect.

HIGH-G HOTWORLDER INTELLIGENCE

You belong in the packed underground warrens of the Essotair, surrounded by the press and the smell of pale warm bodies. You barely have to talk to communicate, and you want everyone to feel this.

Invoke: To feel at home in huge crowds; to smell someone's emotions, or to transmit your own; to make someone else feel like they want to join your people.

Compel: To feel depressed or panicked when aboveground or alone.

MYSTICAL PRAGMATISM OF THE DIVINE CRAFTER

The universe is a great construction whose rules you can see everywhere. It's an act of reverence to take a crafted item and rebuild it better and closer to the divine perfection.

Invoke: To quickly understand how something works; to make a copy of a technological item; to repair or improve upon a technological item.

Compel: To get carried away contemplating a technological construct; to spend way too much time constructing, repairing, or copying a technological item because you **must** get it just right!

then, with the introduction of planing engines, the Symbiosis has explored and expanded, and the new Saskaran fargate is widening their horizons still further. The symbiotic relationship

TEREB BOSE, SASKARAN SYMBIOTE

Physical Stress: 1□ 2□ 3□ **Mental Stress:** 1□ 2□ 3□ 4□

Credit Stress: 1□ 2□ 3□

Consequences: 1 Mild + 1 Moderate

Scale: Medium (+0)

Aspects: Diplomatic Envoy from the Saskaran Symbiosis; Saskaran Symbiote Pair; Bright-Eyed Sense of Wonder; No Longer Entirely Human.

Skills: Superb (+5) Empathy, Rapport; Great (+4) Science, Will; Good (+3) Bureaucracy, Investigate; Fair (+2) Pilot, Resources; Average (+1) Athletics, Physique.

STUNTS

- ◆ **Best Foot Forward:** 2/session, turn a Rapport roll boost into a situation aspect with a free invoke.
- ◆ **Negotiator:** Use Rapport for organisation actions.
- ◆ **Probe:** +2 create an advantage Will bonus to discern surface thoughts.
- ◆ **Shield of Science:** Use Science to defend against Provoke
- ◆ **Xeno-Empath:** No penalties for using Empathy on non-human intelligent beings.

HALO

Special Ops Chip: Local Mindscape connectivity and special ops technopsi.

OTHER EXTRAS

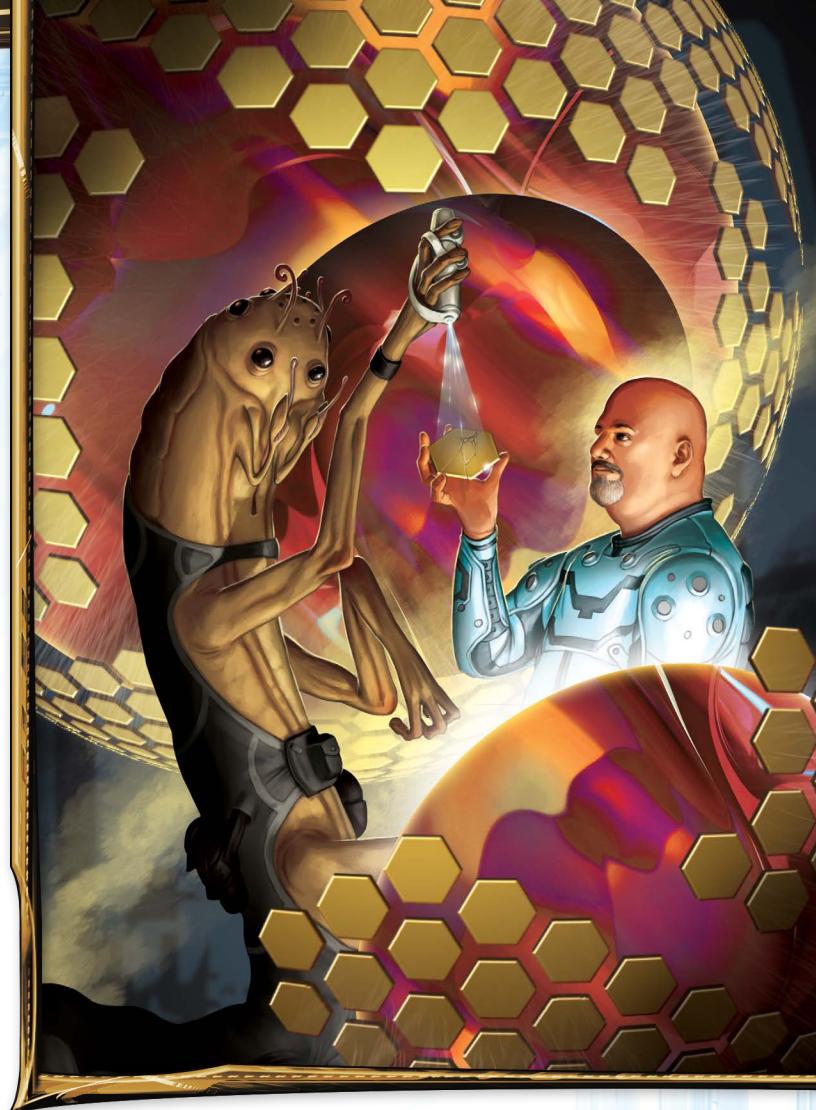
- ★ **Herald-class Fast Courier:** As aspect; Herry-C, Avatar.
- ★ **Shath the Saskar Symbiote:** Saskar Technician, High-G Hotworlder Exointelligence; Technical, Notice; Better Than New! stunt

between humans and Saskars has left them trusting and somewhat naïve in their diplomatic relations; they are pacifists, and have few weapons. The Commonality, or any other interstellar polity, could easily abuse this. Nevertheless, both CORESEC and SCI Force remain wary of this unique culture.

Tralen

- *Human-Lowhigh Singularity Research Station*
- *M-class red dwarf with black hole companion, TX1.1.5, T10, 200 humans and unknown Lowhigh, 731LY.*

Tralen is a red dwarf star orbited by several belts of asteroids but no planets. The system is of interest because Tralen has an unusual companion: a black hole. The system provides an



opportunity for Commonality scientists to study a singularity at close range.

The scientists are based on Tralen Station, an asteroid base just ten years old. They have discovered that the Hawking radiation from the Tralen singularity is more than white noise; there are patterns within it, and so information, if only it could be deciphered. This information could be from incredibly far afield, or early in the history of the universe; either way, it is invaluable.

A year ago, two Lowhigh lightjammers appeared in the Tralen system, apparently also with an interest in the black hole (it's hard to tell with the Lowhigh...). Some of the station linguists have diverted their energies from the black hole to try to understand the Lowhigh better.



Sotur Nest Domain

The Sotur Nest Domain lies 550LY from Old Earth at the end of the Sotur Radiant, an Essotair migration path (page [XX](#)) which snakes through the northeastern reaches of the 4th and 5th Core Worlds transects. It's a collection of a dozen or so worlds in a volume a little smaller than a subsector, all of which are Essotair worlds.

The Domain is subject to a travel advisory: it's not actually quarantined, but visits are not recommended without biohazard protection from the Essotair pheromone effects. Prior to Rediscovery, communication with the worlds of the domain was patchy at best; Essotair worlds are typically inward-looking. Nevertheless, the Old Commonality managed to identify the domain and even help its worlds become aware of one another's presence; a ramshackle travel network gradually took shape.

Everything changed with Rediscovery. Contact between the domain worlds is now much more rapid, taking just a few

months from end to end. However, it has also been problematic; each Essotair world is effectively a slightly different species, a difference which becomes marked on a pheromonal level. Increased contact has led to some estrangement between the domain worlds, and an irrational fear that the other worlds might be ganging up to attack and destroy a given subspecies. There have been several instances where one domain world has sent out an "attack ship" to try to destroy a competing subspecies on a neighbouring world. There's no logic to this; it's an instinctive response to a perceived pheromonal threat.

CORESPAN has representatives on all domain worlds, nootropes engineered to resist Essotair pheromones. It's hoped that the Sotur Nest Domain can eventually be forged into a proper satellite domain with a full complement of Panseccorate and instrumentality facilities.

CHAPTER NINE

CORE WORLDS CAMPAIGNS

"I wonder about the future. Where are we going? Have we doomed the Commonality to extinction, by rediscovering our lost brethren out among the stars and exposing our inner contradictions? Have we doomed humankind to extinction, by moving beyond the limited physical form which is our evolutionary heritage, into so many new forms, in so many directions, all at once?

It depends who you ask. Some say this is the start of a new golden age. Some say it's the beginning of a war which none of us will survive. I guess it depends on what we fight for, and how hard we fight. And who wins."

—Dirk Seventy, Fomalhaut Multiple Representative to the 194th CORESPAN Symposium, DDC-340, Titan Orbit, 193 NCE.

INTRODUCTION

The Core Worlds are an immense volume of space, with thousands of worlds. On the surface, they may appear peaceful and utopian, hardly places of high adventure, but nothing could be further from the truth! The Core is filled with conspiracy and intrigue, with unfathomable cultures and bizarre behaviours, ancient worlds and often hostile environments. There are lethal dangers, deadly plots, and perilous adventure—but which differ from the Fringe. This chapter outlines the themes that drive Core Worlds games, and the practicalities of setting your campaign in the Commonality Core.

THEMES

The Core Worlds are an arena to explore science-fiction themes relating to ancient, densely populated, and hyper-advanced civilisations. Here are some of them.

Overpopulation

Core Worlds have often been settled for millennia, high-tech societies supporting dense populations. Worlds of tens or hundreds of billions are not unusual. Arcologies, faceless masses, substrates; when masses are packed together, behav-



hours turn extreme and people get bent out of shape, and individuals struggle to matter.

Aspects: *The Hubris of Psychohistorical Prediction; Marooned in a Sea of Faces; The Anonymity of Crowds.*

Questions: *How can you understand a world that's more complex than a whole sector on the Fringe? Do the pressures of hyperdense populations make people something other than human? Should we encourage high population worlds to leave for the Fringe?*

Weirdness

The Commonality exists fifteen thousand years in our future. Parts of the Core are truly weird. Populations obsessed with cosmetically changing skin and eye colour, gender, even sex, on a whim or according to fashion; people with cyborged bodies, or so old they move with ethereal grace, having long since learned to avoid bumping into things. People often choose when to die; they regard your homeworld as dull and uninteresting; their obsessions with artificial foods fill entire days...

Aspects: *I Can't Understand Anyone's Body Language! At Midday Everyone Stands Naked in the Sun; He Became She and Was Exiled to Give Birth.*

Questions: *Can you adapt yourself to this world of photosynthesising nootropes and fulfil your mission? Will you take the ticket to hunt down Mortality Statute evaders, even though the Statutes haven't been law for two hundred years?*

Tensions With the Fringe

Rediscovery is pulling the Commonality apart, exacerbating tensions between the conservative, centripetal Core and the freewheeling centrifugal Fringe. The Core is willing to be heavy-handed to preserve its civilisation as it expands, valuing the continuity of ten millennia; but the Fringe has only been part of the Commonality for a couple of centuries, and has no such respect or nostalgia: maybe the whole thing needs tearing down and starting again!

Aspects: *Those Fringeworlders Have No Respect For Tradition; These Old Laws Are Irrelevant; Whole Worlds Terrified of Change.*

Questions: *A satellite domain thinks it has more in common with the Fringe than the Core—can you keep it from falling apart? Is the Commonality right to use force to keep itself together? How much force is too much? What about worlds that don't want to belong? How much should Fringeworlders try to fit in when travelling in the Core?*

Divergent Evolution

The Core Worlds claim to be humankind's home—yet the people of the Core may seem less human to us than those of the Fringe. Ten thousand years is a long time for Manhome's

inhabitants to diverge significantly from what they were. Almost everywhere in the Core, the people calling themselves human are so far removed from the Fringe that they might as well be an alien species.

Aspects: *The Staggering Diversity of the Core; Human In Name Only; Ten Millennia of Diaspora and Divergence.*

Question: *Who gets to say what's human? How will you deal with the hypocritical treatment of xenomorphs in the Core? Where is the cutting edge of human evolution?*

CORESPAN and CORESEC

The Core Worlds is all about bureaucracy; gargantuan faceless administrations managing the lives of vast, equally faceless populations. Whatever you do in the Core, CORESPAN will be there, asking if you have the right permits, checking if what you're doing is being done the right way. It can be labyrinthine, even Kafkaesque, as though the whole universe is strangling you in red tape when you're just trying to do the right thing. And, if you need to cut corners (and who doesn't?), you may end up with the seriously scary CORESEC on your tail.

Aspects: *This Is My Receipt For Your Receipt; Do You Have a Permit For Those Opinions? The Illusion of Control Is the First Stage of Control.*

Questions: *CORESEC has decided what you're doing contravenes some Core Worlds statute—how will you get round it? A desperate renegade turns up on your doorstep, scheduled for extreme sanction for repeated violations of the Broadcast Propaganda Prohibitions. Will you help?*

Going Post Everywhere

Everywhere you look, humankind is evolving beyond its limits. There are people with more than one body; people sharing bodies; people sharing memories. There are people who are starships, minds administrating entire worlds, others so intelligent no normal human being can understand them, who've withdrawn from everyday life to think loftier thoughts. Some of this is true across the whole Commonality—but in the Core people have been pushing the boundaries of what it means to be human for thousands of years.

Aspects: *A Mind That Can Have a Million Conversations At a Time; This Whole Planet Is Trying to Answer a Single Question.*

Questions: *One morning a Sedna Memoplex reaches you via the Mindscape. Do you accept?*

Dynasties

During the ten millennia of Core Worlds history, some organisations have been passed down within yearpool descent groups or even traditional families, forming complex dynasties. Some of them reach as far as the Fringe in the form

of corporacies, but their power in the Core is truly pervasive, often controlling entire systems.

Aspects: *Nootrope Dynasties of Mu Crucis; This Whole World Is My Family; Byzantine Family Traditions and Dress Codes To Die For.*

Questions: *The ISI on this world is run by a dynasty of mechanicals who never investigate one another. Will you break the mould?*

THE PREOCCUPATIONS OF THE CUSTODIANS

Commonality civilisation is changing at a dizzying speed, and the Core Worlds are reeling under the impact. The custodians of Old Earth (the Terragron—page 35) and of the Core Worlds (page 63) influence the nature and pace of that change by their own preoccupations.

Civilisation and Society

Terragron custodian Zoraster (page 43) is obsessed with maintaining the cohesion of humankind's civilisation and society. It's seen a lot of changes in the thousands of years of its existence, and now aims to permit that change as long as it doesn't cause irrevocable damage to the Commonality. Zoraster is above factionalism, but intervenes with extreme prejudice against existential threats. It regards the Venu as one such threat, and is also one of the biggest opponents of the Transmigration Heresy. Anyone attempting to circumvent the Eidolon Compliances or increase thanogram thoughtcast fidelity will find Zoraster a ruthless adversary.

Human Mind and Behaviour

Custodian Xaldamar (page 63) believes that the mental and behavioural parameters of Core Worlds populations are the pinnacle of human evolution, and works aggressively to identify and destroy memes which conflict with Core Worlds culture. Loosely speaking she favours the Integrator faction, but with Consolidator tendencies (page 22). Her influence is strong in the satellite domains, where CORESEC and the 3SI are tightening the Core Worlds hold (often by regime change or other unequivocal measures). Her solutions are absolute and ruthless compared with Zoraster's relatively flexible approach; yet the activities of the two custodians often overlap.

Transcendence

Humankind is on the cusp of transcendence; in biological terms, evolution into successor species to *homo sapiens* is upon us. Terragron custodian Marcher Reklawel views herself as champion and patron of posthumans everywhere; she

has ties to the Evolutionary Ministry, and intervenes to guide and manage (often forcefully...) the process of going post. She believes that transcendence should not mean the end of the Commonality, nor preclude many different subspecies of *homo sapiens transcendens* coexisting simultaneously and at many different evolutionary indices. If you're going post and coming to the attention of bigger players, expect your efforts to be of interest to Marcher Reklawel...

Further Technological Enhancement

The speed of technological change can easily outpace a culture's ability to cope with its disruptions. History has shown this countless times: civilisations can collapse if advancement isn't correctly managed. This is the preoccupation of Terragron custodian Ciaphascain.

In the Commonality's near future, technological leaps are likely that will make 3-space travel pale into insignificance. Increasingly high-fidelity thanogram thoughtcasts will challenge the Commonality's subjectivity-based opposition to the Transmigration Heresy, especially when 3-space comms permit extender posthumans (*Mindjammer* page 450) to have "bodies" encompassing entire solar systems; and 3-space research will make breakthroughs in so-called "dimensional travel" and the possibility of exploring hitherto unknown regions of the cosmic manifold. For centuries, research into these areas was curtailed. Now, Ciaphascain and others are trying to harness the lightning, to use the cultural energies provided by revolutionary research to revitalise the Commonality's advancement into the future—without destroying it.

Humankind's Survival and the Alien Threat

So far the Commonality has been lucky: it has found one exointelligence which clearly surpasses it in power—the Planetary Intelligence of Chembu—and it has turned out to be friendly (probably...). This may not always been the case. Explorers have found many exointelligences in Commonality Space: most are so alien as to have little to do with human endeavours, but here and there are tantalising hints of devastating destruction in the distant past, ruins of exocivilisations which have been wiped out by unimaginable forces.

Terragron custodian Teofilo Essensor (page 41) is concerned that the Commonality is ignoring this threat. In fact, by relying too heavily upon enhancements and technologies which require a peaceful status quo for their functioning, he is worried that it will be rendered helpless by the first superior hostile force it encounters. His opponents counter by saying that advanced exocivilisations must by necessity have evolved beyond such primitive fears and urges, but Custodian Teofilo dismisses this as anthropocentric hogwash: alien attitudes are impossible to predict, and reality will be determined by events, not theories.

Teofilo intervenes in situations of potential alien threat. He acts to defuse projects which might render the Commonality more vulnerable than it already is. He's a chess-player behind the scenes, playing a long game and unafraid of sacrificing pieces to secure his goal.

Warfare and Security

The Commonality is still not ready for war. It wasn't a century ago and, while it's better prepared than when the Venu War broke out, there's still a prevailing view that large-scale interstellar conflict is simply unfeasible. Custodian Strategian's goal is to change all that. With plans on many different levels, in the short-term he deploys the Commonality's still undirected (yet enormous) resources to provide a flexible and rapid-response defence shield, protecting all of Commonality Space but capable of controlled collapse to safeguard the Core. In the medium term, he bolsters preparedness and resources, promoting the ongoing reorganisation of the AFI and the increase in Space Force defence fleets and mediators. In the long term, he coordinates efforts to redefine the very concept of interstellar conflict, using the destabilisation of stellar bodies, the manipulation of 2-space and 3-space, and even investigation of singularities and the Pulse Dragon Phenomenon for possible military applications. Strategian is always on the look-out for exemplary tactical minds (enhanced and otherwise), as well as individuals with insights and breakthroughs pertaining to the arts of war.

GAMING IN THE CORE WORLDS

This section discusses some particularities of games set in the Core Worlds—the stories you can tell, how they work, and how they might differ from the Fringe.

Playing a Core Worlder

Core Worlders away from home (especially if that home is Manhome) think of themselves as nobles among savages. Their standards of dress, behaviour, culture, and language are "better" than those of the people around them. They don't expect others to behave as they do; in fact, they probably think it's beyond them. When forced to participate in barbaric customs such as trading, fighting, and what have you, they do so with detached superiority. If someone tries to coerce them into doing something, they most likely refuse, with stiff repugnance.

This even happens when the place being visited is another part of the Core. The Core isn't homogenous, and a Core Worlder will think his own traditions are better than those of other Core Worlders he's travelling among (although a visitor to Manhome likely has a certain respect for what they see).

Core Worlders in the company of a group of visitors to the Core itch to explain everything. They try not to be so crass as to make explicit the Core's superiority, but everything they

say drips with that conviction: the short-lived cultures of the Fringe lack the majesty of true human civilisation, their obsessions with individual freedoms are anachronistic.

Sometimes, the opposite happens. As members of a society steeped in stifling history and custom, some Core Worlders can't wait to escape to the Fringe. Some go native, hoping that the long arms of CORESEC never catch up with them. The meaningless traditions of the Core are a nightmare to them; they reject caste, dress, and rules for the simple plasticity of life on primitive worlds.

If forced to return to the Core—or, worse, if they never leave it—misfit Core Worlders chafe at the uncountable restrictions around them. Perhaps eventually they come to the attention of CORESEC, and the merciful ministrations of the re-education resorts, gateways to a happier life... Or they live lives of repressed desperation, terrified of re-education; or dream of bringing the system down from within.

Tradition vs. the New

Core Worlder attitudes towards the Rediscovery Era vary. Some regard it as a gauche irrelevance, others as the first taste of novelty in their long and static lives.

Fringe Worlders will constantly encounter both approaches. Many Core Worlders won't want to associate with them, fearing memetic contamination, or simply thinking them distasteful or irrelevant. Others will treat them as visiting curiosities, to be entertained, invited to parties, culturally absorbed. Fresh news from the Fringe, and the people spreading it, may be suppressed by the ISI.

If your characters are visitors to the Core, then portraying these extremes will help to cement them as strange and different. Those who challenge the way things are done will be rejected by traditionalists, seized upon by sensation seekers, or even imprisoned by overly-solicitous hosts.

To really stress this theme, trap the characters between both parties. Conservative forces want rid of the characters and their tradition-defying hosts; radical non-conformists want to use them to start a revolution. Expect incautious visitors to be dealt with by CORESEC, often decisively.

Scarcity in a Post-Scarcity Universe

The Core is "post-scarcity": pretty much everything you need day-to-day can be trivially obtained, usually via makepoint. Desires are easily satisfied, and not necessarily the drivers of action they may be elsewhere.

This isn't simply a question of there being no money; Core Worlders simply don't see material things as aspirational. They're only passingly interested in treasures from the Fringe, precious metals, commercial relations, drugs, trade, and the like. In those few cases where items can't be easily obtained, it's usually a boring matter of dealing with supply chains

THE XENOMORPH SAGA OF BLACK RIBBON C'JEM

The Satellite Domains are strange places—hinterlands between Core and Fringe, often prevented from communicating with either. There's a demand for information and goods travelling in both directions.

Black Ribbon C'Jem is a legend. Rumoured to be from the Catseye Continuate, he's a feline xenomorph of dubious morals and great dexterity, who's made a name for himself acquiring whatever you need and delivering it wherever you need it. A thief and smuggler, he prides himself on tackling the hardest jobs himself. His vessel has many names and is nondescript and variform—but the tall tales people tell of it call it the Zan Straparola. Rumours place C'Jem and his crew between the Draco Fortification and the Second Determination of Geronthropy, stealing and smuggling who knows what.

Physical Stress: 1□ 2□ 3□ **Mental Stress:** 1□ 2□ 3□ 4□

Credit Stress: 1□ 2□ 3□

Consequences: 2 Mild + 1 Moderate

Scale: Medium (+0)

Aspects: Sinuous Smuggler of Legendary Renown; Hero of Feline Xenomorphs Everywhere; Always Falls on His Feet; Captain of the Zan Straparola; Fiercely Loyal Crew; Tell Me Why Again I Don't Put You Out the Airlock?

Skills: Fantastic (+6) Deceive; Stealth; Superb (+5) Athletics, Intrusion, Will; Great (+4) Pilot, Provoke, Ranged Combat; Good (+3) Rapport, Resources, Unarmed Combat; Fair (+2) Contacts, Notice, Physique.

STUNTS

- ◆ **Acrobat:** +2 Athletics bonus to overcome actions when making impressive acrobatic manoeuvres.
- ◆ **Always a Way Out:** +2 create an advantage bonus to escape from a location.
- ◆ **Danger Sense:** Notice is unaffected by environmental conditions when something means you harm.
- ◆ **Ear to the Ground:** Use Contacts for initiative in physical or virtual space where you have operating contacts network.
- ◆ **Hey, What's That?** +2 bonus to momentarily distract someone by talking.
- ◆ **Illusion:** +2 Will bonus for Technopsi create advantage actions to create images in target's mind or optic nerve.
- ◆ **Streetwise:** +2 Rapport overcome bonus when "on the street".
- ◆ **Vanish:** Once per scene, spend 1 fate point to vanish while in plain sight.



better suited to eidolons than standard humans.

When a character uses the Resources skill in the Core Worlds, it doesn't represent fiscal power, but reflects the influence and connections needed to obtain the items desired. As GM, you can choose to handwave item acquisition, letting your players have all permissible items without quibble; if they need a flyer, a planeship, a house to hold a party in, you can simply give them access, and concentrate on other forms of opposition for the focus of your game's drama. Alternatively, you can expand important acquisition attempts into challenges requiring not just Resources, but skills like Bureaucracy and Rapport.

If you want to use scarcity as a challenge, focus on the non-physical. Memories, data, and experiences can be difficult to find in the Mindscape (use Intrusion and Investigation), and access to people or places can be equally troublesome (use Bureaucracy and Contacts). In the Core Worlds, influence and contacts are a far more valuable commodity than mere money and gear.

The Byzantine Maze

Core Worlds society is authoritarian and byzantine in complexity. As mentioned above, any action you take has a protocol for it. Even working out who to approach for permission can be a social challenge. Seemingly innocuous actions—speaking to an eidolon, entering a virtuality, landing a ship, exhibiting an artwork, visiting a monument—may be surrounded by gatekeepers.

In most of the Core, ultimate authority lies with CORESPAN. However, countless layers of bureaucracy may stand in your way. Nootropes (page 26) handle most requests, and aren't known for being susceptible to bribery or intimidation.

Reaching the right person might be the goal of a scene, an episode, or even a scenario, depending on what you're trying to achieve. The challenge might lie in attracting a gatekeeper's attention, or achieving the required status (or notoriety) to speak to them. This works well if players enjoy figuring out new social rules (for each step in the hierarchy), or if two groups are competing for the same permission.

Don't overuse protocol, or it'll be merely frustrating. Instead, consider narrating the bizarre steps involved in a bureaucratic action without making the PCs play through them; they'll express the texture and background of the Core Worlds. However, an occasional contest or challenge structured around Bureaucracy, Contacts, and Rapport rolls will remind your players that they're enmeshed in a maze of restrictions.

The Mindscape

The Mindscape is everywhere in the Core Worlds, technopsis all but universal. Communication via thoughtcast is more common than face-to-face meetings; citizens have more

exomemories than intimate personal recollections, and ubiquitous sentience means that every object has a Mindscape presence. People don't open doors with their hands; they don't cook (except as a cultural affectation); they don't use objects to communicate; they're never unable to record, research, or call for help; nothing is un-surveilled. Special ops chips are required if you wish to be anonymous, or move untracked.

Many Core Worlds spent millennia running centuries or more behind the Manhome Mindscape, generally regarded as the "one true source" of information. The Mindjammers have laboured to bring these worlds up to date, but in some places the process is ongoing. Old versions of lost data may still wait to be integrated at the edges of the Core.

Physical Danger

The Core Worlds, and Manhome especially, may be the physically safest environments in which your stories will be set. Core Worlders don't (usually) crash their flyers, pilot their own spaceships, or engage in dangerous professions. Ubiquitous sentience ensures that almost all risk of accident is removed, and medical treatment can cure most illnesses players are likely to encounter.

Of course, this doesn't mean dangerous places don't exist. Some parts of Old Mars and Inferno are lethal to unprepared explorers; in any star system there are unpredictable and unstable environments; and there are always the substrates. But most people avoid these: after all, you only have one life, and it might continue indefinitely if you don't take unnecessary risks, so it pays to be careful.

While you can certainly contrive situations of physical danger in the Core Worlds—trapped in a damaged ship at the edge of the system, chased and threatened with extreme sanction by CORESEC or the instrumentalities—the real dangers in Manhome lie elsewhere. Intrigue and character assassination are everywhere, the stuff of mental and credit conflicts leaving your character a quivering wreck or tumbling into the substrates, unable to access resource allocation again. And, if you ever want to send in the ninjas, you can always do so in the Mindscape—sentinels and imposalsities abound!

THE CORE AWAITS!

We hope you've enjoyed this introduction to the Core Worlds of the New Commonality of Humankind. It's a huge and complex civilisation, far more than can be covered in a single volume such as this. But you now have the essentials: the structure of the Core, the nature of its peoples and its cultures, and the pressing concerns which drive intrigue and adventure there. The battle for the future of the Commonality is here. Which side will you be on?

GLOSSARY

Abolitionists: Core Worlds name for the Polyvox faction, often regarded by CORESEC as terrorists.

Ahelots: Stone age, mostly human inhabitants of the Glasslands of Izranal on Old Earth.

Aiko Hero: The Old Queen of Mars. A cultural hero on Old Mars.

arcology: Vast settlement structures providing all living facilities for millions of individuals. Common in the Core Worlds.

astrabalenes: Deep-space carbon-based exointelligences of the Astrabalene Sodality.

bumping: The practice of interrupting fargate transit schedules in cases of urgency.

Cola Station: The ancient orbital hab of Old Earth which is home to the Terragrond Custodians.

communions: The temporary multiples created by citizens of the Tyche subsystem, Manhome.

Corebound: The Coreward version of Fringebound.

CORERAN: The Core Worlds Resource Allocation Network, a Mindscape service of helper routines and hyperintelligences responsible for distribution of resources.

CORESEC: In the Core Worlds, the ruthless enforcement arm of CORESPAN.

CORESPAN: The Core Worlds Pansectorate. In the Core, this term is broadly synonymous with the Commonality government.

cultural regions: Groupings in the Penumbral Worlds which share a common culture.

data gate: A smaller version of a 3-space gate, permitting only the passage of Mindscape data. Also called d-gates.

Denebola probes: Antiquated exploration and seeder probes found throughout Human Space and still produced on Denebola.

Dodecahedron: The CORESPAN HQ in Titan orbit, Manhome.

dubstates: Memory-sharing social grouping which is the basis of society in the Relos Triumvirate.

Earthport: The tethered star city in Old Earth orbit which is the primary point of access to the planet's surface.

Emancipationists: A Commonality faction active in the Core which supports giving full rights to xenomorphs.

essotair: Pheromone-based massmind hominids living on densely-populated worlds distributed along essotair radiants in the Core Worlds.

familial: A Commonality citizen who, unusually, was raised in a parental unit rather than a genpool.

Five Guiding Wisdoms: The five sentiences responsible for administrating the Shine heartland on Old Earth.

Flimsies: Exotic paradigm exointelligences of the Captain star system.

Fringebound: Commonality-wide transport

service linking the Old Commonality with the Fringe.

gashador: Remnant human-killing war machines of the Talis-Qualis heartland.

genpool: The *in vitro* birthing groups to which almost all Core Worlders belong.

glasslands: Devastated remnants from ancient wars on Old Earth, commonly preserved as monuments.

Global Climate Control: The hyperintelligent service responsible for maintaining Old Earth's placid climate.

governor sentience: Hyperintelligent sentiences responsible for administrating entire worlds. Also called planetary sentiences.

Green Moon: The terraformed moon of Old Earth. Sometimes called the Eighth Heartland.

habbers: Mostly human inhabitants of interplanetary or orbital habs, generally in Manhome.

heartlands: The seven continental culture groupings of Old Earth.

holocene virtuality: Highly-structured Core World where interaction is primarily via virtuality.

Interworld: The Commonality transport service providing transport between the worlds of the Manhome system.

Jason America: Husband-consort of Aiko Hero. The Old King of Mars.

Jonas symbionts: Group-mind entities forming a key part of the population of Cetacea in Manhome.

Luna: The governor sentience of Green Moon in Manhome.

minder array: Colonies of very small mechanicals charged with maintaining plateworlds, habs, Mindscape nodes, etc.

Mortality Statutes: Old Commonality laws which required citizens to submit for euthanasia at age 500. They were repealed 200 years ago.

nootrope: Neuter hominid species responsible for much of Core Worlds administration.

Old Commonality, The: The heart of the Core Worlds, and the subsector immediately around Manhome.

O'Neill Cylinder: A very ancient cylindrical form of plateworld, rotating about its long axis with environments on its inner surface.

Penumbral Worlds: The shell of subsectors immediately around the Old Commonality subsector.

Pansolognistics: Semi-mystical faction of Jonas Symbionts scouring Cetacea for ancient artefacts and hidden truths.

quint: Short-lived short-stature hominid species grown when a labour force is needed rapidly.

radiant: An essotair dispersal path, radiating outwards from Manhome.

re-education resort: Therapeutic resort where troublesome memories are erased and personalities repaired.

Roark's Medusae: Post-intelligent exofauna inhabiting the Protectorate in Manhome.

saskar: Serpentine exointelligence native to the Saskaran system, participants in the Saskaran Symbiosis.

Satellite Domain: The outer shell of subsectors in the Core Worlds sector.

Sedna Project: Manhome's primary research facility into T10+ tech, including alien artefacts.

sphere: A personal transport vehicle consisting primarily of fields, common on T10 Core Worlds.

standervire: Hominid species engineered to operate at slower temporalities.

Starsailors: Synthetic sentience starships whose culture predates the invention of planing, originating in the Starsailor Migratory cultural region.

Storms: Exointelligence magnetic vortices of the Domain of Storms.

strate: A colloquial term for an inhabitant of a substrate.

synthegen: Mass produced foodstuffs of multiple vintages and varieties popular on Old Earth and other high population Core Worlds.

substrate: The unregistered and illegal "undercities" which exist beneath arcologies.

Survivor World: Culturally damaged worlds along the Venu invasion route in the Core which were subject to Venu attack and occupation.

Terragrond: The Custodial Council of Old Earth. There are five Terragrond custodians.

Terra Tower: The space elevator which descends from Earthport to the surface of Old Earth.

Threespacers: A Commonality faction which enthusiastically supports the Fargate Project.

transentience: A hyperintelligent sentience which has gone into retreat from Commonality society to concentrate on going post.

transit pounds: The organisational basis for traffic transiting fargates, used widely in Manhome.

tribune sentience: Ancient governor sentience of a tribune world.

tribune world: Nootrope world governed by tribune sentiences tightbeamed from Old Earth during the First Age of Space.

Troy sentience: The governor sentience of Troy, the oldest plateworld, in Manhome.

Two-Space League: A Commonality faction which broadly opposes the Fargate Project.

Tyche Emergence Zone (TEZ): The only place in Manhome where 2-space entry and emergence is permitted.

Venu invasion route: The path the Venu invasion fleet took through the Core Worlds towards Old Earth. See also Survivor Worlds.

xenopool: A xenomorph genpool. Less structured, shorter term, and lower quality than citizen genpools.

yearpool: Another term for genpool, focussing on the specific year of birth.

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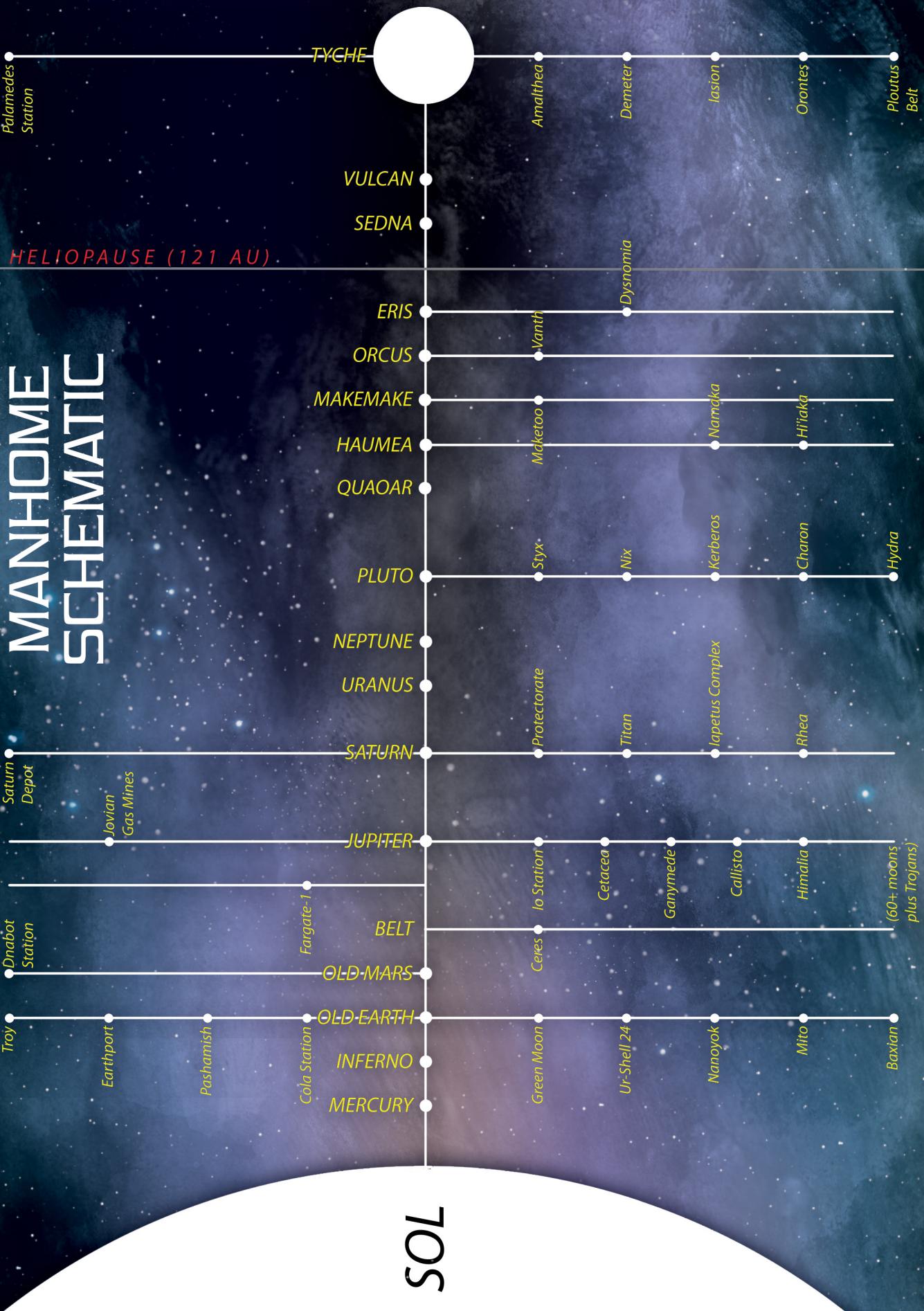
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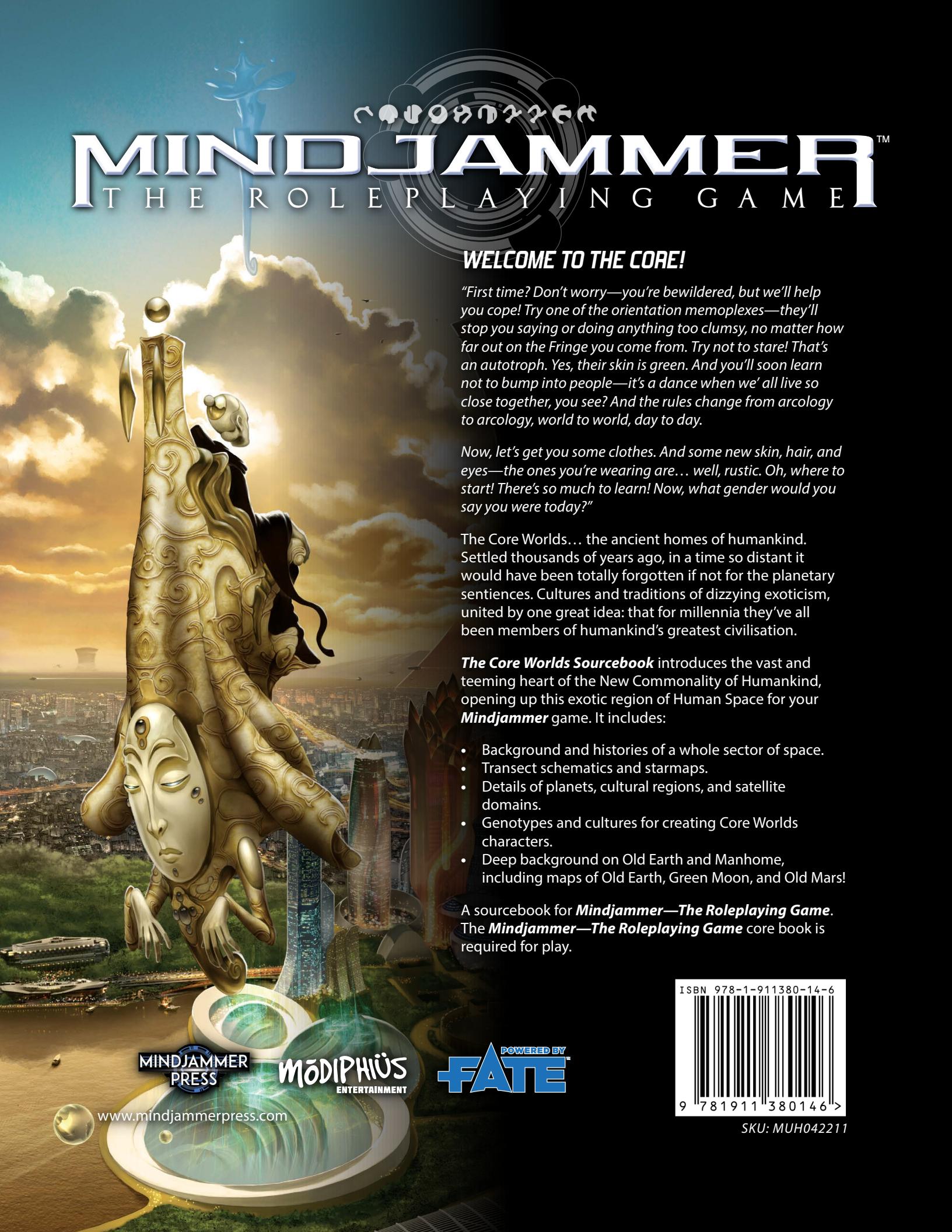
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