

GURPS[®]

Fourth Edition

ALIENS

Sparrials[™]



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“Disarmed. Trapped in our own cargo hold. Pirates looting the ship.” Captain Ti sighed. “Any ideas?”

Nursing a broken arm, ship security said, “Only if we had weapons.”

Alanoomi, their sparrial cook, coughed and kicked a wall panel. It popped open. Several blasters spilled out.

“Illegal guns. Why am I not surprised?” Ti said. “And the locked doors, Al?”

Alanoomi held up her lockpicks. “On it, Cap’n!”

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INTRODUCTION

Whether in fantasy or science fiction, races of tricksters and thieves are common. Sparrials, a race of starfaring filches and hotshots, certainly fit the description! That's not all they can do, of course; this flexible species can be spies, primitive natives, ambassadors, troubleshooters, smugglers, psionic masterminds, or the quirky medic who patches everyone up and feeds them exotic home cooking.

Furthermore, they're perfectly adaptable to a fantasy campaign, whether part of the world from the beginning, or newfound residents of a mysterious island or hidden valley. Perhaps those pointy-eared "elves" in the forest will pick your pockets when you visit . . .

RECOMMENDED BOOKS

GURPS Space and *GURPS Ultra-Tech* are referred to heavily in *GURPS Aliens: Sparrials*. *GURPS Bio-Tech*, *GURPS Spaceships*, and *GURPS Psionic Powers* could also come in handy. If using sparrials in a fantasy setting, consider *GURPS Fantasy* and *GURPS Magic* instead!

PUBLICATION HISTORY

Sparrials originally appeared in *Roleplayer* #10, *GURPS Space* for Third Edition, and *GURPS Aliens* for Third Edition. *GURPS Aliens: Sparrials* expands and updates them for *GURPS Fourth Edition*.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Elizabeth McCoy co-authored *GURPS In Nomine* and *GURPS IOU*, as well as authoring, co-authoring, and editing any number of *In Nomine* books. She self-publishes science fiction, fantasy, and fantasy-romance (available in ebook forms from Smashwords and

Amazon, among other places), and has short stories in small-press anthologies. With Steve Jackson's permission, sparrials have shown up in some of her SF short stories. She thanks Christopher R. Rice for formatting assistance!

ABOUT GURPS

Steve Jackson Games is committed to full support of *GURPS* players. Our address is SJ Games, P.O. Box 18957, Austin, TX 78760. Please include a self-addressed, stamped envelope (SASE) any time you write us! We can also be reached by e-mail: info@sjgames.com. Resources include:

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Bibliographies. Many of our books have extensive bibliographies, and we're putting them online – with links to let you buy the resources that interest you! Go to each book's web page and look for the "Bibliography" link.

Errata. Everyone makes mistakes, including us – but we do our best to fix our errors. Up-to-date errata pages for all *GURPS* releases, including this book, are available on our website – see above.

Rules and statistics in this book are specifically for the *GURPS Basic Set, Fourth Edition*. Page references that begin with B refer to that book, not this one.

I didn't notice I was being set upon by a pickpocket, which I am glad of, because I like to work only with professionals.

*– Douglas Adams and Mark Carwardine,
Last Chance to See*

CHAPTER ONE

SPARRIAL

CHARACTERS

Small, wiry, and fur-covered, sparrials are plainly sapient – their large eyes and ears convey alertness, while their deft, four-fingered hands are quite obviously capable of manipulating tools. Or buttons, when they're getting into someone else's pockets.

SPARRIAL RACIAL TEMPLATE

24 points

Attribute Modifiers: ST-3 [-30]; DX+2 [40]; HT+1 [10].

Secondary Characteristic Modifiers: HP+4 [8]; SM -1.

Advantages: Discriminatory Smell (Emotion Sense, +50%) [23]; Night Vision 5 [5]; Temperature Tolerance 2 [2].

Perks: Fur [1].

Disadvantages: Increased Consumption 1 [-10]; Kleptomania (12) [-15], Short Lifespan 1 [-10].

Quirks: Nosy [-1]; Proud [-1]; Wanderlust [-1].

Feature: Native gravity 0.95G.

Racial Skills: Climbing (A) DX-1 [1]-11; Detect Lies (H) Per+1 [1]-11*; Jumping (E) DX [1]-12.

* Includes +3 from the Emotion Sense enhancement on Discriminatory Smell.

Common Learned Skills

Sparrials should have a point in Filch or Pickpocket or Sleight of Hand, as well as Stealth. A "primitive" sparrial would also want Cooking, Survival (Woodlands), Tracking, and Professional Skill (Weaving) (see p. 5). Lack of these skills constitutes Social Stigma (Ignorant); see p. B155.

Appreciated, but not considered necessary for an "educated" sparrial, would be the Public Speaking skill for storytelling.

Common Optional Traits

Albinism: Many sparrials have albinism, with deep pink eyes and white or blond-brindled fur (Distinctive Features [-1]). Their fur protects them from the sunburn that albino humans risk, but their eyes are still light-sensitive – take Bad Sight (Nearsighted) in bright light (such as a sunny day), with a mitigator of sunglasses or special contacts. Treat this as Bad Sight (Nearsighted; Accessibility, Bright light, -20%; Mitigator, Eye protection, -60%) [-5].

Cultural Familiarity: Planet-dwelling sparrials have little need to interact with aliens, but those who maintain stations and startowns (*GURPS Space*, p. 206) should buy at least one appropriate Cultural Familiarity. Star-roving sparrials may have several. For simplicity, the GM might require only a single 2-point Cultural Familiarity (Spacers), letting wanderers take their chances around non-spacers on other homeworlds.

Size Modifier: Strictly following the chart on p. B19, any sparrial below 4.5' tall is SM -1. If they're commonly using equipment made for a generally larger species, such as humans, this means they must often get specially constructed gear or find things that were made for human juveniles. On the plus side, they can fit into spaces that few adult humans could manage, even without Flexibility.

RACIAL HISTORY

Sparrials are mammals, descended from small, arboreal predators; their extant "chimpanzee" analogs are best described as a cross between monkeys and squirrels with sharp teeth. They are a young race, inventive and persistent, believed to have hurtled into their Age of Sail (TL4) only some 100,000 years after developing true sapience. And there they stayed, hampered by their disorganized, individualistic culture and lack of recorded knowledge, until discovered by spacefaring aliens.

Never ones to turn down a gift from the universe, sparrials took information, literacy, and teaching – as well as the occasional spaceship – from their discoverers, and bootstrapped themselves from a primitive backwater into an eccentric race found throughout civilized space . . . and uncivilized space . . . and unknown space . . . and possibly hyperspace, if they could only figure out how to find food there.

PHYSIOLOGY

Sparrials are bipedal, mammalian aliens, vaguely resembling a terrestrial cat or fox, though without a tail. They are short and lean, adapted to arboreal life on a lower-grav planet than Earth, though they are nearly as agile on the ground.



The sparrial diet is mostly carnivorous, though the sparrials do use some vegetables in their dishes. They burn a lot of energy and must eat frequently.

Sparrion, the sparrial homeworld, is 0.95G, with an average temperature of 65°F. Sparrials breathe a standard Terran oxygen mix, at 0.97 atmospheres.

Anatomy

Sparrials are humanoid: two legs, two arms, one head, no tail. Their hands and feet have four thin digits each. They have opposable thumbs on the hands, and their big toes are about as capable of a pincer-grip as human toes are. They have sturdy finger- and toenails, which are an aspect of their racial Climbing skill but not large enough to count as the Claws advantage.

A sparrial's head is broad and flat on top, tapering sharply to a pointed snout. The long, pointed ears stick out parallel to the top of the head. They have large, deep-set eyes, with vertically slitted pupils like a cat's. Their mouths are their most bizarre feature. Closed, they look relatively normal (although triangular, with three lips). When they're opened, they can be seen to be lined with rough, serrated bone instead of teeth, and to contain several fleshy organs.

There are two sexes, with anatomy roughly similar to humans, though females have six breasts. All the details are hidden by fur and, in the case of males, a concealing "pouch." Non-sparrials may find it difficult to distinguish between genders, except a nursing female, even if no one's wearing clothing. Sparrials, of course, can smell the difference instantly. Fortunately for more visual races, sparrials generally treat being misgendered as hilarious, not insulting.

Size

Adult sparrials stand approximately four to five feet tall, and weigh between 80 and 120 human pounds. Males are slightly smaller than females and often slightly faster. Despite being from a lower-grav world, they are muscular for their height when compared to humans.

Appearance

A sparrial is completely covered with sleek fur. Most have varying patterns of brown or rust shades, but albinism (p. 4) is common. Sparrials have no nudity taboo, though they often wear clothes for decoration, for protection from the elements, or to carry or conceal items.

Sparrials, unlike many furred species on Earth, sweat all over their bodies. Going from a very hot environment to a very cold one negates one level of Temperature Tolerance until they can dry off (plus they look very scruffy).

Lifecycle

Sparrials grow rapidly, reaching majority after 12 Terran years. They can reproduce about a couple Terran years earlier, but few sparrials consider this a good idea. They begin to age at 40, though high TL adds normally to their aging rolls (p. B444), as do all relevant advantages.

Sparrials mate once and for life, usually before their 20th year. Suitors of a too-young sparrial, male or female, will

almost certainly be driven away by the youth's family – who may go straight to lethal measures (see *Disagreements and Feuds*, p. 15)!

For more details about fertility, relationships, and offspring, see *His and Hers* (pp. 16-17) and *Children* (p. 17).

Professional Skill (Weaving)

DX/Average

Default: DX-5.

Professional Skill/TL (Clothmaker), a DX/Average skill, is detailed on p. 50 of *GURPS Low-Tech Companion 3: Daily Life and Economics*. However, many sparrials don't create cloth, but instead weave leaves or strips of leather into ponchos, hats, bags, belts, etc., as individual items. This form of weaving, more akin to braiding or macramé, is a skill all its own. It also can be used to make hanging "chairs" (somewhere between a hammock and a basket) strong enough to support a sparrial.

At the GM's discretion, sparrials can use Professional Skill (Wickerwork) to craft rigid baskets and lightweight furniture such as hanging bed-baskets, or stools and chairs for use on the ground. Professional Skill (Wickerwork) and Professional Skill (Weaving) default either way at -1.

NAMES

Sparrial names are mostly vowels, with a few consonants (mostly l's, m's, n's, and r's) thrown in. Sparrials have personal names and family names, but the two are customarily pronounced and written as one word. Thus, Moulelm of the Aan family would write his name Moulelmaan. Personal names are usually two or three syllables and family names are one or two syllables – e.g., Rolemnarla, Leerlaounoora, Aralanoomi. Sparrial family names are customarily passed down through the female line; males may adopt their mate's family name if they like how it sounds.

PSYCHOLOGY

Sparrials are an energetic, adventurous, and intensely competitive race. They enjoy new places, new people, and new experiences. In spite of their love for action, they can be very patient, waiting intently and motionlessly for hours until something happens. They are also very self-sufficient; they don't like to be burdens on others, and they don't have much interest in taking on a stranger's burdens. They'll usually help first – a sparrial who finds someone with a broken leg won't just walk away – but prolonged "sponging" off the individual or family group is likely to get someone yelled at or left behind in the night. *Practicing Stealth: Life As a Sparrial*, pp. 16-18, offers further insight into sparrial culture.

Sparrials like to know where they stand with those around them. They don't worry about a "ladder" of hierarchy; a sparrial is fine with knowing that Olarraneeoo is a better thief than he is, Lorramanee is better than Olarraneeoo, but he's better than Lorramanee. It may make some discussions a bit circular, but that just makes life more interesting!

Sparrials traditionally establish dominance through pilgerage, argument, and battle, in that order. When theft and logic fail, snippiness and poking other people start. Wealth and political power also enter into the equation, but not to the extent found in most other races.

A randomly assembled group of sparrials will be remarkably fractious until a pecking order is established, whereupon insults become virtually nonexistent. Likewise, sparrials often adopt a “chip-on-the-shoulder” attitude when meeting new non-sparrials. When introduced to a sparrial, it’s best to start out formal and firm. After a few days, everyone will have a place in the sparrial’s dominance hierarchy, and things will relax.

Merely sorting out everyone’s relative status rarely leads to outright battle; even a brawl would be uncommon. Serious violence is for settling *real* issues. See *Disagreements and Feuds* (p. 15) and *The Gauntlet* (p. 16) for further discussion.

Social Modifiers for Dominance

Generally, a sparrial’s personal “dominance web” can just be roleplayed with the aid of a few notes on a character sheet. If more detailed mechanics are needed, represent dominance webs by giving the sparrial +1 to Will to resist Influence skills (p. B359) used by those the sparrial feels he is dominant over, or -1 to resist influence by those he feels are dominant over him. This is in addition to any other modifiers that might be in play. A sparrial who is *extremely* impressed by someone may have a greater penalty to Will; this is how demagogues (pp. 13-14) manage to convince large numbers of other sparrials to alter their behavior!

KLEPTOMANIA

Among sparrials, petty theft is a way to establish one’s status in the community, and they don’t restrict “community” to their own species. Juveniles grab and run; adults use stealth, misdirection, and quick fingers.

While criminal sparrials may seek wealth, for most, thievery is an instinctive attempt to show cleverness and establish social dominance. They’ll cheerfully return a stolen item if asked, because this forces the owner to acknowledge the thief took it! Sparrials always watch each other carefully, and they will often let a thief keep even valuable possessions rather than admit they were stolen. Of course, sparrials would rather steal *back* their belongings.

Individuals of other races soon learn to request any property be returned after every contact; being complementary to the thief’s prowess is polite – e.g., “What’d you get this time, Leerlaou? Hmm, thanks. Nice haul.” You’re lower than the sparrial in the thieving hierarchy, but most sparrials learn to respect an alien’s skill in other areas.

Catching a sparrial in the act will add to his respect for the catcher. Again, good-natured

comments, like “Oops, I saw that one,” are best, for they indicate one’s perceptiveness.

Since confrontation is their other form of dominance-behavior, sparrials become angry and defensive if confronted rudely, snapping things like, “If ya didn’t want it stolen, why didn’t ya watch it better? Ya trying to start trouble? Be happy to finish it for ya!”

The sparrials know perfectly well that most other species don’t view petty theft as commonplace, but that’s the aliens’ problem, not theirs. Members of other species who can display their own quick fingers – and good nature when returning something – are given the respect a sparrial would grant to another sparrial.

THE SMELL’S THE THING

The sparrial sense of smell is extremely important to them. From the sparrial point of view, all aliens look funny, but some smell better than others. In general, sparrials may add or subtract 3 from their reaction rolls to people, depending on how good or bad they smell to the sparrial. (If using *Perfume* – *GURPS Power-Ups 2: Perks*, p. 11 – the GM must decide if the odor is limited to one species, or affects everyone.)

The GM has several options to handle this; inform the players which are in effect, and for which species! For example, all gengineered heavy-world humans might smell a little funny (-1 to reaction rolls from sparrials), while regular humans have odor-appeal determined randomly.

Appearance Scent: How you look is how you smell. This quick-and-dirty option is especially suited for fast-paced cinematic games. Why do beautiful human females smell so good? Maybe Sparrior Needs Women.

Charisma Scent: The GM may allow characters to purchase additional odor-based “Charisma” or to buy it down as a disadvantage. This is especially appropriate for *sparrial* PCs, but could be used for other races as well. This is normally ±4 points per level, up to three levels either way; see *Charisma*, p. 8. If sparrials are rare, there may be an additional limitation, reducing the cost for sparrial-specific Charisma to ±1 per level.

WHO DISCOVERED SPARRIALS?

While it’s easy to make humans the unlucky souls who started by trading beads and trinkets and wound up wondering how the furry primitives got their starships, it’s not necessary. Other alien races might serve just as well, as rulers (or would-be conquerors), bewildered partners, or secret masterminds. In a campaign with genetic engineering, sparrials might have been *created* (and then escaped to found their own colony?).

The GM should consider the opportunities presented by sparrials in a tight, active cooperation with another race or racial federation; subjugated sparrials with plenty of rebels; or sparrials who are being used in some subtle plan of galactic control. Of course, first contact with sparrials – by humans or others – is a campaign plot that shouldn’t be discounted, whether the humans or the sparrials are the PCs . . .

Random Scent: Whenever someone first encounters a sparrial, roll 1d-3, giving a range of -2 to +3. That's the sparrial reaction modifier to that person.

Random Scent, Individual: As above, but the GM rolls for *each* sparrial encountered! Some sparrials think the character smells great, and some . . . don't.

Species Scent: The GM determines (randomly or by fiat) the reaction modifier for an entire race or subspecies. Unless sparrials are very powerful in the game, this could be just a racial perk or quirk for the species in question.

High-tech perfumes might be available for people who normally get the cold shoulder from sparrials. These might grant a positive modifier or merely mask offensive-to-sparrials odors. For example, *Musk (GURPS Bio-Tech*, p. 158) might be crafted to appeal to sparrials.

Note that this is based on biochemistry, not how frequently someone bathes – though thanks to the +4 to Per for Discriminatory Smell, unwashed people will certainly be obvious to a sparrial!

Sparrial Tech Levels

Sparrials are adaptable enough that it's assumed their tech level is equivalent to the general galactic TL. It could be higher, if they were discovered by a high-tech patron race, or lower if they are allied to a poorer species or making do on the cast-offs of the galaxy. If the GM is letting the PCs make first contact, then Sparrion will be TL4, and the sparrial racial template (p. 4) should include an appropriate Low TL disadvantage.

VARIANT RACES

Obviously, sparrials can be adapted to different campaigns. Even if used as-is, there's no reason they'd be One Monolithic Genotype. Here are some suggestions for variations on the sparrial theme.

*Captain Ti looked up. And up.
"Your cousin is rather tall, Al.
And green."
Ala shrugged. Her cousin gave
a sheepish sparrial grin. "Grew big,
like human. Why not dye fur too?
Still fly real good!"*

OPTIONAL ADVANTAGES

Full of wanderlust, sparrials don't often inbreed enough to have distinct subgroups. However, some groups may have a harder time getting around than others (e.g., sparrial clans who live behind a mountain range, on a large island, or in a colony far from Sparrion), or beneficial mutations may be available to lucky individuals. Appropriate advantages for a variant subgroup include any of Brachiator, Catfall, High Manual Dexterity, Perfect Balance, Subsonic Hearing, and Ultrahearing. These advantages will be part of a "lens" – a package of traits that modifies the racial template for the subgroup – and may be linked to unique fur or color patterns.

SUBJUGATED SPARRIALS

Whether a gengineered race or enslaved by outsiders, sparrials would tend to be . . . bad servants.

Enslaved: Add Social Stigma (Second-Class Citizen, Minority Group, or Subjugated) [-5, -10, or -20] and an appropriate Duty.

Genetically Engineered: Add Stress Atavism (p. B156). Some members may have Bestial (p. B124), Self-Destruct (p. B153), Semi-Upright (p. B153), and Unusual Biochemistry (p. B160) are all disadvantages that might be appropriate.

ALLIED SPARRIALS

These sparrials have a tight bond of respect for the species who helped them into space (or who rescued them from a previous subjugation). Add a quirk-level Sense of Duty toward the race in question; sparrials are inclined to help their benefactors as if they were distant kin, and they often "adopt" individuals as kin-by-choice (see *Family Ties*, p. 18). A general +1 to reaction rolls to that species would be appropriate.

PRIMITIVE SPARRIALS

Before discovery, sparrials lack a written language, and survival very nearly *requires* the skills listed on p. 4. As mentioned in *Sparrial Tech Levels* (above), they will be TL4 and have an appropriate level of Low TL (p. B22).

FANTASY SPARRIALS

Sparrials could easily fit into a game with magic, whether magi-tech space-fantasy, or all the way to *GURPS Banestorm's* Yrth. See *Spells* (p. 10) for more suggestions.

Low-Tech Fantasy: Sparrials' climbing skills would make them useful in the rigging of ships, and they might be common sights in seaports or as wandering nomad groups. Their unwillingness to linger in one place might inhibit their ability to learn many spells, but if Magery runs in families, parents could teach their children. Sparrial bandits aren't out of the question, either – though they might return property if flattered about how cunning their traps were!

Yrth Sparrials: Many nonhuman races were transported to Yrth, and sparrials could easily be one of them. In areas where religion is mandatory, they might pay lip service to the local customs, or might simply avoid such places instead. Sparrials would be most likely to appreciate the Great Forest and maybe the Blackwoods, as well as big cities such as Megalos and Cardiel, which are full of opportunities to show off their nimble fingers and climbing skills!

Dungeon Fantasy: Sparrials could replace halflings or compete for similar niches. Like halflings and gnomes, they may purchase the Giant Weapons perk (see *Gnomes, GURPS Dungeon Fantasy 3: The Next Level*, p. 10) to wield

human-sized weapons. Choice professions are scout and thief; marginal ones are barbarian, holy warrior, knight, and martial artist. Since *Dungeon Fantasy* glosses over lifespan, remove Short Lifespan from the template (p. 4); racial cost becomes 34 points.

Magi-Tech: If magic has replaced technology, with circles of mages teleporting ships through hyperspace, sparrials are likely to have much the same roles as in a normal science-fiction campaign (see pp. 11-12). They may have spells of their own devising, or have Magic Resistance – much as anti-psi abilities might be common in a game containing psionics (see p. 10).

RACIAL TRAITS

When making a sparrial character, some traits have additional nuances.

ADVANTAGES

Certain advantages are very appropriate for sparrials, if sometimes unexpectedly so.

Basic Speed

see p. B17

Sparrials may be even faster than they appear! Males are especially likely to have one or two levels of this trait.

Charisma

see p. B41

As sparrials are very scent-oriented, their species may have Charisma with the “Smell-Based” limitation (-20%), reducing advantage cost to 4 points/level. This can also be bought as a

disadvantage, for -4 points per level of “Smell-Based Reverse Charisma.” Limit this to three levels, positive or negative. See *The Smell's the Thing* (pp. 6-7) for further information.

Single-Minded

see p. B85

While sparrials often give the impression of being flighty and easily distracted, they are capable of concentrating when they need to, such as when hunting. Some sparrials are *very good* at this, and they may take the corresponding advantage. (These sparrials are also good candidates for buying off Wanderlust.)

DISADVANTAGES

Like advantages, some disadvantages have special nuances when sparrials take them.

Physical Disadvantages

A sparrial with a physical disadvantage like Blindness (p. B124) or Lame (p. B141) may wish to buy off Wanderlust and settle down somewhere. Startowns and other fixed abodes are the usual places to find them, but a zero-gravity environment is kinder to a legless sparrial than a planet would be, and the hope of technological cures may drive someone to the stars. A crippled sparrial could also be a good Dependent for a PC, who works toward a cure for their mate, sibling, child, or kin-by-choice.

Wealth

see p. B25

Many sparrials still live the life of their ancestors, traveling randomly or in patterns that repeat a route over a period of a year or five. While they may have enough possessions to satisfy themselves, by the standards of more technologically advanced cultures, these sparrials often have below-average Wealth, from Struggling all the way down to Dead Broke!

OTHER COMMON ADVANTAGES

Common advantages that *don't* have sparrial-specific nuances include Acute Senses (especially Taste and Smell, and Hearing), Ambidexterity, Claim to Hospitality (1 to 5 points, usually representing ties to kin and kin-by-choice), Combat Reflexes, Danger Sense, Fit or Very Fit, Flexibility, High Manual Dexterity, and the Deep Sleeper perk.

Stereotypical Advantages

While not necessarily *common*, some advantages are very *appropriate* for sparrial PCs. These include Daredevil, Discriminatory Taste (as an “enhanced” aspect of the racial Discriminatory Smell), Fearlessness, Flexibility, G-Experience, Improved G-Tolerance, Luck, Perfect Balance, Rapier Wit, and Versatile, as well as two Talents: Outdoorsman and Smooth Operator.

If using *GURPS Power-Ups 2: Perks*, several other perks may be of interest, including Compact Frame, Efficient (Climbing), Extended Hearing, Focused (Climbing), Limited Camouflage (Jungle/Forest), and No Nuisance Rolls (Climbing).

OTHER COMMON DISADVANTAGES

Sparrials are prone to the disadvantages Absent-Mindedness, Chummy, Compulsive Spending, Gluttony, Overconfidence, Sense of Duty (Friends and/or Family), Skinny, Stubbornness, Truthfulness (when your friends and family can smell you lying, why bother?), and Xenophilia.

Many aliens believe sparrials have Impulsiveness, On the Edge, Short Attention Span, or Trickster; this makes it easy for sparrials to *develop* these disadvantages, even if that's not what sent them off the homeworld in the first place! Likewise, a sparrial surrounded by aliens may effectively have Oblivious.

Frequent quirks include Attentive, Broad-Minded, and Chauvinistic, as well as quirk-level forms of the common disadvantages – e.g., a glutton for specific *types* of food, or truthful when *not* under stress (when you're stressed anyway, adding lie-stress doesn't smell much different). One particularly sparrial quirk is Pacifism (Cannot Kill Except in Self-Defense). When pressed, a sparrial will do what a sparrial's gotta do – but it's not easy to get them there.

As a character concept, a sparrial might *start* with equipment equal to below-average Wealth, but have a skill permitting an average job and be paid normally; their starting gear is a concept choice and worth no additional points. Likewise, those who take Poor can find jobs that will pay according to the Poor Wealth level, but they get no extra points for entering the campaign with nothing but a handmade spear and woven bag.

*There is a saying, a very old saying:
when the pupil is ready the master will appear.
– Don Diego de la Vega, in Mask of Zorro*

SKILLS

Sparrials use most of their skills in the usual way, but one deserves special consideration.

Detect Lies

see p. B187

This skill is instinctive for sparrials; they learn to smell “stress” from an early age and which kinds of odors are associated with lies. Further, adults share descriptions of the “lie-smells” of other races, giving them a good chance of detecting fibs from aliens. They can, of course, develop these abilities further; when you can smell a lie, you can also pay attention to other “tells” that indicate lack of truth. If someone is in a completely sealed space suit or container (e.g., an alien in a mobile aquarium), sparrials lose the +3 for the Emotion Sense enhancement on their Discriminatory Smell.

As a side effect of this, sparrials are often more truthful with their own kind than with aliens.

Uncommon Disadvantages

Bad Temper and Bully are two disadvantages that, at first glance, may seem common among sparrials, or like they wouldn't get the usual reaction penalties. The GM and players are encouraged to think twice about that assumption.

Bad Temper: Most sparrials do *not* have this – but aliens often can't tell that when they first meet a sparrial who wants to establish dominance! Other sparrials see one with Bad Temper as socially ambitious, but that doesn't mean they'll put up with the behavior once everything should have been settled. Such a person might end up with an *additional* negative Reputation!

Bully: Similarly, bullying behavior can be part of initial dominance spats, but it's a transient attitude. A full-time Bully would be seen as overly pushy and could get a bad Reputation among other sparrials, even beyond the usual -2 for people who have to deal with the malcontent.

MARTIAL ARTS STYLE: SSARALOORO

4 points

Sparrials favor speed, dodging, and using other people's attacks against them. It's all the better if one can be a little flashy from time to time, or annoy one's opponent. Getting your enemy angry enough to make mistakes can only help *you*, after all. Certain family lines have developed these ideals into trainable techniques, resulting in “Ssaralooro,” referred to by humans as “Sparrial Judo.” (Sparrials have a hard time translating the word; it apparently refers to a subtle quality of scent, initially pleasant, but irritating to the nostrils after a short time.) Practitioners are referred to as *Ssararo*. Humans often translate this as “*especially* irritating sparrials.”

Ssaralooro, like many human martial arts, emphasizes keeping your temper. It has some “ninja” aspects, but a sparrial assassin would be just as likely to use regular skills as to be trained in this style.

The cinematic skills are probably merely the stuff of legend, though sparrials will swear they're real, quite convincingly . . .

Skills: Acrobatics; Judo; Knife.

Techniques: Acrobatic Stand; Arm or Wrist Lock; Attack from Above (Knife); Breakfall; Choke Hold; Evade (Acrobatics or Judo); Judo Throw; Sacrifice Throw; Trip.

Cinematic Skills: Blind Fighting; Light Walk; Lizard Climb; Precognitive Parry; Pressure Points (Sparrial); Push.

Cinematic Techniques: Binding; Hand Catch; Roll with Blow (Acrobatics or Judo).

Perks: Acrobatic Feints; Biting Mastery*; Drunken Fighting; Sure-Footed (Tree branches and similar narrow, swaying structures).

Optional Traits

Advantages: Combat Reflexes; Danger Sense; Enhanced Dodge; Perfect Balance; Rapier Wit. For non-sparrials, the sparrial language.

Disadvantages: On the Edge; Overconfidence. (Sometimes Ssararo get a little too self-assured about their skills. These are *not* considered “ideal” disadvantages!)

Skills: Sling (used to deliver stink-bombs from a distance).

Perks: Sure-Footed (Rachou). See pp. 26-27 for rachou information. Otherwise, fighting from the broad back of a rachou counts as bad footing (pp. B547 and B549).

* Biting Mastery for Ssaralooro is a cinematic combat version of Hands-Free (*Power-Ups 2*, p. 16), which allows Judo grappling and throws using mouth-holds. Make a Judo roll after a successful dodge; the sparrial is presumed to have gotten out of the way, then “grabbed” a hand or clothing in his mouth.

Other Appropriate Traits for Ssararo

A Ssararo, much like a human martial artist, strives to be calm and alert. Sparrials add the ideal of “Pinpoint Accuracy When Being Annoying.” The stereotypical master Ssararo would have Danger Sense, High Pain Threshold, Indomitable, Rapier Wit, and Unfazeable. A cinematic Ssararo would have Trained by a Master, of course, and might have a level or two of Silence, Slippery, or Striking ST – as well as any other ability attributed to cinematic human martial artists.

PSIONICS

If the GM desires, sparrial characters may have access to psionics. They especially might have a racial tendency to be *anti-psi*, making them difficult to push around psychically! Thematically, they’re not likely to have notable ability with any other power; powerful sparrial psionics on a quest for galactic domination are not typically useful for a campaign.

Suggested abilities from *GURPS Psionic Powers* include:

Power	Ability	Page(s)
Anti-Psi	Psionic Shield	24-25
	Psi Static	26
Ergokinesis	Confuse	32-33
	Electric Vision	33
ESP	Combat Sense	37
	Awareness	39-40
	Visions (any type)	39
	Psi Sense	41
	Psidar	41-42
	Psychic Hunches	42
Probability Alteration	Combat Sense	45
	Second Chance	45
Psychic Healing	Aura Reading	46
	Cure	46-47
	Regeneration	49
Telepathy	Emotion Sense	58
	Mind Shield	66-67

Most of the perks for Probability Alteration (*Psionic Powers*, p. 44) are also appropriate. An additional ESP ability might be *Clairosmia*, below.

Note that Psychic Vampirism is *not* included in this list! It may be a kind of theft, but the creepy-factor is not thematically compatible with the more straightforward sparrial personality. Naturally, if the GM needs an Evil Sparrial Mastermind, this would be the first section to peruse.

New Ability: Clairosmia

13 points for level 1, plus 5 points for each additional level

This functions like Clairaudience (*Psionic Powers*, p. 40) but only affects the sense of smell and has a longer range by default. A sparrial ESPer who uses Clairosmia would be able to make a Per roll to identify things like the number of people in a room and their individual emotional states. They might have some idea of the long-term emotional states, too, by the lingering aromas – e.g., a recent argument or consensual canoodling.

Statistics: Clairsentience (Clairosmia, -60%; ESP, -10%; Fixed Range, -5%) [13]. Further levels add Increased Range, one level at a time [+5/level].

SPELLS

Sparrials *can* be used in a campaign with magic. Sparrial shamans could confound spacefaring races, or “magi-tech” may be the order of the day for the entire campaign. Sparrials would be particularly interested in spells pertaining to stealing, catching thieves in the act, creating food, letting the caster function without food for longer than usual, and enabling the mage to go more places, faster.

A short list of spells* from the *Basic Set* that would particularly entertain sparrials include:

Air (pp. B242-244): Purify Air, No-Smell, Walk on Air, Stench.

Body Control (pp. B244-245): Spasm, Clumsiness.

Healing (pp. B248-259): All of them.

Light and Darkness (pp. B249-250): Blur.

Mind Control (pp. B250-251): Daze.

Movement (p. B251): All of them.

Protection and Warning (pp. B252-253): Armor, Magelock.

* Less-interesting prerequisites aren’t listed, but they remain necessary.

Odo: You’re Betazoid?

Lwaxana Troi: Of course.

Odo: Telepathic?

Lwaxana Troi: Yes.

Odo: And you sense no guilt anywhere in this room?

Lwaxana Troi: No. But Betazoids cannot read Ferengis.

– *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine* #1.16

ICONIC PROFESSIONS

While *GURPS Space* has useful templates for criminal sparrials (see *Templates from GURPS Space*, p. 12), one profession is near and dear to the sparrial heart, allowing both flamboyant displays of skill *and* enabling them to travel.

“So you’re a pilot?” Captain Ti asked, ignoring the green fur.

Lorilono grinned. “I am *best* pilot in sector! Just ask cousin Alanoomi!”

PILOTS

Sparrials, with a racially high DX and a willingness to buckle down to get what they want, gravitate to piloting positions on starships. Even military organizations can often find a place for a competent hotshot, and a government who wants first-in scouts appreciates a fast, sturdy sparrial who doesn’t mind being alone on a scout ship for long periods of time.

As for scruffy trader ships? Well, sparrials often work cheap, just for the chance to go to new places, meet new people, and steal their wallets.

Sparrial Pilot

100 points

Attributes: ST 7 [0]; DX 13 [20]; IQ 12 [40]; HT 11 [0].

Secondary Characteristics: Damage 1d-3/1d-2; BL 9.8 lbs.; HP 11 [0]; Will 12 [0]; Per 12 [0]; FP 11 [0]; Basic Speed 6.00 [0]; Basic Move 6 [0].

Advantages: Cultural Familiarity (Spacers) [2]; Language (a major spacefaring race) at Accented [4]; *and* Sparrial [24].

- 15 points chosen from among Absolute Direction *or* 3D Spatial Sense† [5 or 10], Charisma [5/level], Claim to Hospitality [1-5], Combat Reflexes [15], Cultural Adaptability [10], Danger Sense [15], Daredevil [15], G-Experience [1-10], Hot Pilot† [5/level], Improved G-Tolerance [5-15], Intuition [15], Language Talent [10], Lightning Calculator *or* Intuitive Mathematician‡ [2 or 5], Luck [15], Perfect Balance† [15], Reputation +1 to +4 (Good pilot; To other spacers) [2-10], Serendipity 1 [15], Single-Minded [5], or any of these perks: Alcohol Tolerance, Deep Sleeper, Honest Face, No Hangover, or Shtick [1/perk].

Disadvantages: -30 points chosen from among sparrial-themed disadvantages or spacer-themed disadvantages.

Sparrial-Themed Disadvantages: Albinism (p. 4) [-6], Curious (12) [-4§], Enemy (A law-enforcement officer; Watcher) [Varies], Enemy (Another spacer; Rival) [Varies], Gluttony [-5*], Greed [-15*], Impulsiveness [-10*], Miserliness [-10*], Oblivious [-5], On the Edge [-15*], Overconfidence [-5*], Stubbornness [-5], Trickster [-15*], Truthfulness [-5*], Weirdness Magnet [-15], Xenophilia [-10*], or any of these quirks: Attentive, Broad-Minded, Careful, Congenial, Dull *or* Imaginative, or Staid [-1/quirk].

Spacer-Themed Disadvantages: Addiction (DX Adders, TL9, \$25/dose, LC3; see *GURPS Bio-Tech*, p. 155) [-5],

Alcoholism (or similarly incapacitating, legal substance, which may be sparrial-specific) [-15], Compulsive Carousing [-5*], Compulsive Gambling [-5*], Reputation -1 to -4 (Sparrial hothead, etc.; To other spacers) [-2 to -10], Sense of Duty (Commander or other crewmember) [-2], Sense of Duty (Ship crew or similar small group) [-5], Wealth (Poor *or* Struggling) [-15 or -10], or any of these quirks: Alcohol Intolerance, Code of Honor (Spacer’s, Pilot’s, etc.), Horrible Hangovers, or Minor Addiction [-1/quirk].

Primary Skills: Area Knowledge (Interplanetary State) (E) IQ [1]-12; Navigation/TL (Hyperspace *or* Space¶) (A) IQ [2]-12; Piloting/TL (FTL Type) (A) DX+1 [4]-14; Piloting/TL (High-Performance Spacecraft *or* Low-Performance Spacecraft) (A) DX+1 [4]-14.

Secondary Skills: Five of Beam Weapons (Pistol) *or* Gunner (any), both (E) DX+1 [2]-14; Free Fall, Piloting/TL (Aerospace), Piloting/TL (Contragravity), Piloting/TL (High-Performance Spacecraft *or* Low-Performance Spacecraft, whichever wasn’t selected above), *or* Vacc Suit/TL all (A) DX [2]-13; Computer Operation/TL *or* Spacer/TL, both (E) IQ+1 [2]-13; *or* Electronics Operation/TL (Communications *or* Sensors) *or* Mechanic/TL (specific power plant type, specific space-vehicle motive system type, *or* specific spacecraft type), all (A) IQ [2]-12.

Background Skills: Four of Brawling, Knife, *or* Fast-Draw (any), all (E) DX [1]-13; Filch (A) DX-1 [1]-12; Judo *or* Pickpocket, both (H) DX-2 [1]-11; First Aid/TL (E) IQ [1]-12; Gambling, Holdout, Merchant, Smuggling, *or* Streetwise, all (A) IQ-1 [1]-11; *or* Scrounging (E) Per [1]-12.

* Multiplied for self-control number; see p. B120.

† 3D Spatial Sense gives +1 to Piloting; +2 to Aerobatics, Free Fall, and Navigation (Hyperspace *or* Space); and +3 to Body Sense and Navigation (Air, Land, *or* Sea). Hot Pilot gives +1 per level to Gunner (any), Navigation (Air *or* Space), and Piloting (any). Perfect Balance gives +1 to Acrobatics, Climbing, and Piloting (any). If you take any of these advantages, apply the bonuses to the appropriate skills; they are not figured into the template’s skill levels!

‡ Intuitive Mathematician (p. B66) permits those who have it to “perform astrogation without a computer,” making it a useful advantage for a pilot. The sparrial still needs *points* in a suitable Navigation skill, of course. Meanwhile, “mere” Lightning Calculator lets a hotshot figure accurate tax, tips, and total fees in bars, no matter how drunk.

§ For sparrials, the Curious disadvantage *replaces* the racial Nosy quirk and is thus effectively worth one point less.

¶ “Space” covers slower-than-light ship movement, warp drives, *or* any other “normal-space” navigation. “Hyperspace” covers any FTL system that “folds space,” drops the ship into a pocket dimension with slightly different physics, *or* otherwise removes the ship from normal space. Some settings may have *both*. Consult the GM for the actual names of these specialties.

Lenses

One-Person Ship (+4 points): Take Mechanic/TL (Spacecraft type) (A) IQ+1 [4]-13.

LEERLAOUNOORA (140 POINTS)

Leerlaounoora is an amiable fellow of unremarkable appearance, dark brown and brindled. While he has a cover job of keyboardist in a local bar band, he's really a thief in the grand style. His particular specialty is cat burglary.

Leerlaou is wanted by the cops, though they don't yet know who he is. He has a definite sense of professional style; his MO includes leaving a corny joke or cartoon at the site of each robbery, and the press has nicknamed him "the Cheerful Bandit." He doesn't steal more than he needs at the moment, although he's looking for that one big score he can retire on. As a gentleman thief, he only steals from the very rich, and while he carries a laser, he's never hurt anyone during a job.

Leerlaounoora is a 140-point character, suitable as an NPC or a heroic-level (p. B487) PC. His TL skills should be adjusted to the campaign default for sparrials.

ST 7 [0*]; **DX** 13 [20*]; **IQ** 13 [60]; **HT** 11 [0*].
Damage 1d-3/1d-2; BL 9.8 lbs.; HP 11 [0*]; Will 13 [0]; Per 15 [10]; FP 11 [0].

Basic Speed 6.00 [0]; Basic Move 6 [0]; Dodge 9.
4'3"; 100 lbs., SM -1*.

Social Background

TL: (as defined by the GM) [0].

CF: Sparrial [0]; one Cultural Familiarity of the GM's choice [2].

Languages: Sparrial (Native) [0]; one other language of the GM's choice at Accented [4].

Advantages

Absolute Timing [2]; Flexibility [5]; Sparrial [24].

Disadvantages

Code of Honor (Gentleman Thief's†) [-5]; Enemy (Police; 6 or less) [-10]; Gluttony (12) [-5], Greed (12) [-15]; Stubbornness [-5].

Quirks: Always dresses as a "masked bandit" for costume parties and holidays (e.g., raccoon, Zorro, Robin Hood, Swiper the Fox, and the like); Chocoholic; Has never missed an episode of a certain daily soap opera; Is *not* a confirmed bachelor and will flirt with unattached female sparrials; Leaves jokes at the scene of his crimes and is always on the lookout for new quips. [-5]

Skills

Acting (A) IQ-1 [1]-12; Architecture/TL (A) IQ-1 [1]-12; Beam Weapons/TL (Pistol) (E) DX+1 [2]-14; Climbing (A) DX+2 [0]-15*‡; Detect Lies (H) Per+1 [0]-16*; Electronics Operation/TL (Security) (A) IQ+4 [16]-17; Escape (H) DX+2 [2]-15‡; Explosives/TL (Demolition) (A) IQ+1 [4]-14; Fast-Talk (A) IQ [2]-13; Holdout (A) IQ-1 [1]-12; Jumping (E) DX [0]-13*; Lockpicking/TL (A) IQ+2 [8]-15; Musical Instrument (Keyboard) (H) IQ [4]-13; Pickpocket (H) DX-2 [1]-11; Running (A) HT [2]-11; Scrounging (E) Per [1]-15; Stealth (A) DX+2 [8]-15; Streetwise (A) IQ-1 [1]-12; Traps/TL (A) IQ+1 [4]-14.

* From the sparrial racial template (see p. 4).

† Only steal from the rich. Leave a calling card. Injure or kill only as a last resort.

‡ Includes +3 from Flexibility.

Scout or Prospector (+8 points): Take Geography/TL (Physical) (H) IQ [4]-12 and Geology/TL (Earthlike or Rock Worlds) (H) IQ [4]-12. Scouts specialize in Earthlike worlds, while prospectors usually specialize in Rock Worlds.

Smuggler (+8 points): Take Smuggling (A) IQ+1 [4]-13 and Streetwise (A) IQ+1 [4]-13.

TEMPLATES FROM GURPS SPACE

Character templates can be modified by racial templates (see *Stacking Templates*, p. B261). Even in 100-point campaigns, several templates can absorb the sparrial racial one and have a few points left over for customization.

Criminals

Quite aside from their casual filching of other people's property, sparrials can be greedy for toys as much as any human, and the way to get toys is to *steal* . . .

Sparrials are not, however, well-equipped to be muggers. Their strengths are their good DX and keen senses, though some modern sparrials are obsessed with all the intellectual ways they can obtain cash for what they want. Suitable templates include con man (*GURPS Space*, p. 228) and thief (*GURPS Space*, p. 235).

A sparrial assassin could modify that thief template by taking Stealth at DX+1 and Beam Weapons (Pistol) at DX+2 (4 points each). A sparrial smuggler who *isn't* a pilot could use the merchant template (*GURPS Space*, p. 230) with the smuggler lens from *Sparrial Pilot* (pp. 11-12).

Ordinary Spacers

Not every sparrial is a hotshot adventurer! Their wandering feet may lead them to the stars, but not necessarily to more excitement than helping build starships or working to colonize a new world. Eventually, they'll move on, but for now, there's plenty of interesting stuff. Suitable templates include colonist (*GURPS Space*, p. 227) and space worker (*GURPS Space*, p. 234).

Other sparrials might throw themselves into the engine room instead of the pilot seat. The technician template (*GURPS Space*, p. 235) can make a good ship's engineer.

The *bare minimum* skills for a spacefaring sparrial are Spacer/TL (E) IQ+1 [2], Free Fall (A) DX [2], and Vacc Suit/TL (A) DX [2], for 6 points.

Of course, just because they start out as shabbier members of their species doesn't mean circumstances – or the GM – will let them *stay* in the background!

CHAPTER TWO

THE WAY OF THE ANARCH: SPARRIAL CULTURE

Sparrials are individualists who live for the moment, with little loyalty beyond kinship ties. They strive for one-on-one social dominance more than societal prestige, and they find no value in abstract governmental institutions. If a sparrial can't see how it benefits him or his family, he's not inclined to sacrifice his own time.

Conversely, a sparrial who understands the value of something – such as public education – is perfectly willing to work to support it. Some will even give up their wandering ways to tend to a physical location. Charismatic and eloquent sparrials can sway hundreds of families into a

course of action. The species won't follow ideals, but they will pursue concrete *goals*. These leaders are responsible for much of the spacefaring civilization that sparrials enjoy.

The great thing about being the only species that makes a distinction between right and wrong is that we can make up the rules for ourselves as we go along.

*– Douglas Adams and Mark Carwardine,
Last Chance to See*

SOCIAL (DIS)ORGANIZATION

Sparrials are rarely cooperative. Even when everyone agrees on a goal, the means to reach it may be the subject of contention. Nearly every important advance has come from a great leader who personally dominated or swayed tens or hundreds of families, or from an alien technique or system that was adopted when the sparrials realized what a good idea it was. Sometimes both were required.

Typically, a grandmother or mother directs her family's course until the children are old enough to move on. Sometimes a sibling-group will stick together, along with their mates, with the most dominant member in charge of the clan. Prior to space-age communications, though, groups as small as 20 were considered *large* and difficult to steer.

Even now, when modern medicine extends the lifespan of grandparents, and modern communications let them stay

in touch with their kin, only about 50-100 sparrials might be expected to frequently act as a group.

RABBLE-ROUSERS AND DEMAGOGUES

And then there are the silver-tongued and deft-fingered sparrials who use a combination of sweet persuasion and personal status to sway entire extended families and not just their own. They don't tell others what to do from their stumps and vid broadcasts; instead, they explain why something's important to accomplish, why their listeners should help, and why it should be done *this* way. Then they put their muscle where their tongues are, easily seen to be leading the way – and showing off in the process.

CULTURAL TRAITS

As a race, sparrials don't understand settling in one place for a decade or more as being anything but a sacrifice. They're conscious of their standing as and with individuals – not their standing in society as a whole. They can smell lies and are delighted when they realize there are aliens who *can't*. They're unpleasantly surprised when others take offense at their displays of skill – either at pickpocketing or at intimidation.

Much sparrial behavior is still driven by instinctive urges. Their cultural essences are innate enough that even a sparrial raised by another species would quickly fit in on the homeworld. Humans (or similarly flexible races) may assimilate many sparrial attitudes, though they'd be handicapped by their comparatively poor sense of smell. A suitable explanation might allow “native” non-sparrials to take the sparrial Cultural Familiarity and language as their default.

Cultural Familiarities

All sparrials are assumed to have their own Cultural Familiarity by default, and they should purchase others as needed. Sparrials pick up Cultural Familiarities about as easily as humans do – though they don't always abide by other cultures' norms! (Sparrials hate being ordered around by people they don't respect.) For aliens, anyone who regularly deals with sparrials should take the 2-point

Cultural Familiarity (Sparrials), to avoid giving offense to a race of thieves and hecklers.

Languages

The core sparrial language is clipped and no-nonsense, with a tendency to dispense with nouns *and* pronouns if the speaker feels they're clear from context. There are hundreds of different dialects. Fortunately, the race's wanderlust keeps the core language understandable despite accents and odd words; few communities are isolated enough to become unintelligible. Their written language came only after they were discovered, and it hasn't drifted much. Unless raised by aliens, sparrial PCs are presumed to be literate and know their own language for free; other languages require points.

Because of oddities of the sparrial mouth (p. 5), many non-sparrials have trouble pronouncing the language, speaking at the Accented level even though their comprehension may be Native. In turn, many sparrials don't bother to learn other languages past Broken or Accented. Even Native-level speakers frequently affect a lower ability, dropping words or sounds they find unnecessary. Exceptions to both are valid without any special traits! Some sparrials enunciate perfect, pedantic Oxford English, and some non-natives can whorl an *oo-oo-ou* combination like a Northern Sparrion granny.

Rabble-rousers are more common than true sparrial demagogues. Their goals are short-term, passionate ones: lynch the murderer, repel the invaders, storm the enemy stronghold. They appeal to the obvious dangers of standing by and letting killers do as they please, and the obvious benefits of teaming up and following a coordinated plan. After that, everyone can go home, get the blood out of their fur, mourn the dead, and get on with the business of living.

Demagogues, by contrast, are trying to build something that lasts, and hopefully lasts beyond their death. It was demagogues who organized families into startown maintainers, schoolteachers, and organizations that approximated governmental officials enough to make trade agreements with alien ambassadors and corporate representatives. They appeal to the practical necessity of long-term behaviors and sometimes long-term sacrifices. Many of them die young for their causes, burned out by the stress of alternating personal dominance in one-on-one situations with the appeal to self-interest required to reach the masses.

EDUCATION

Sparrials aren't required to educate their children (it's hard to *require* a sparrial to do anything), but over 90% of them do, to the extent of their offspring's patience. Parents are expected to contribute to the educational institution – or traveling teachers – as their resources allow, and students are expected to donate time to assist with maintenance and educational efforts.

STATIONS AND STARTOWNS, SCHOOLS AND COMPANIES

The most important families are those who've been persuaded to settle down in one place and keep things running – in particular, the ones who maintain orbiting, deep-space, or ground-based stations that provide R&R and ship repair. Some families are large enough to allow rotation when wanderlust becomes unbearable, but even so, it requires dedication. Fortunately, both stations and startowns get travelers coming *in*, and the variety of those can satisfy the need for stimulation.

Less obviously vital to the racial urge to explore are the sparrials who maintain the public and private educational facilities on Sparrion (and any colonies the GM creates). These teachers and administrators include both families and individuals who tend to stay at one place for a few years before moving on to the next town. Without communications gear, this setup would be fragile and patchwork – a good teacher might move on and be replaced by a fast-talking but incompetent or uninformed one, with no oversight or way to tell who was right. A family might move out of the area and be unable to find a teacher in their new surroundings. If given high-tech (or magi-tech) abilities to find out what's going on where *and* to travel there quickly, though, socially dominant administrators can organize a network of teachers, sparrials studying to be teachers, and students.

And finally, sparrial-run corporations channel the race's competitive nature. They're best known for selling anonymous email accounts – a business that can be run from the back of a large truck, if the driver stays within comm-relay range. However, some sparrials run perfectly legitimate establishments, such as vehicle manufacturing and sales companies, grocery chains, or any other business that allows the owner to travel frequently. What large corporations do *not* have are all-sparrial workforces, usually. Sparrials understand the need to let their fellows both hire on and move on easily, but for posts that require stability? The sparrial CEO hires non-natives.

*Seize the day, whatever's in it
to seize, before something comes
along and seizes you.*

– Lloyd Alexander, *The Arkadians*

DISAGREEMENTS AND FEUDS

When sparrials argue, it tends to be a quick thing, started as soon as one of them feels offended – and it's done between relative equals. (Someone who's proved himself a better thief than others is rarely challenged.) These disputes are loud and

full of gestures. The first person to turn away is *usually* the “loser,” but it's possible to make that an expression of “you're not worth my time.” Often, both parties can feel vindicated!

A pattern of disagreements results in one sparrial rounding up local kinfolk and friends before standing outside the other sparrial's camp (or quarters, etc.) to repeat the yelling and gesticulation with reiterations of every annoyance they've been putting up with. At this stage, turning away *is* losing.

If shouting alone doesn't work, the next stage is “ritual combat,” which adds posturing threat-displays, light slaps, shoves, pinches, and ear-pulling. These rarely result in anything more than bruises, and the matter is generally settled; the losing party is more likely to move on than stay in the area and snipe.

However, sparrials can become sufficiently at odds that the normal social resolutions don't work. Sparrials aren't saints; some steal for greed, cause accidents for spite, or are just plain mean. They may have their families fooled, be part of a nasty clan, or be so subtle that *no one* is sure whether they're acting in good faith or not. More tragically, if a sparrial is responsible for an unintended death, the bereaved family or friends may not be willing to accept “it was an accident.”

In these cases, a shoving contest isn't enough; individuals may fight to the death. Entire families may start feuds against each other, ruthlessly sniping until only one has any adult members left.

Fortunately, sparrial *wars* are unknown. It's just not possible to get enough clans to pick sides.

SPARRIAL BOOTSTRAPPING

When discovered, sparrials had – despite lacking either literacy or real government – managed to achieve a roughly TL4 society, complete with tall-masted ships, trade-towns, and factory-towns. Oral tradition links these to demagogues and their families. In particular, the probably apocryphal Souoronoomi and her clan are credited with such things as the first trade-town, the first money, and the first concept of localized schools that people could travel *to* when they wanted to learn more than the immediate family could teach.

The basics of the legend are that Souoronoomi was a female who suffered an accident that left both legs crippled. Rather than suicide, she convinced her siblings to build her a shelter beside a river, near the coast. Other sparrials visited, bringing stories, furs, plants, and other souvenirs of their adventures and thus feeding Souoro's hunger for new experiences. The shelter became a store of necessities that were well-guarded by the crippled sparrial, who traded them for other goods. Still, even with her keen memory, it became useful for Souoro to exchange tokens with those who had more to trade than she could match immediately, so they could return later for supplies when her stock was replenished. This is said to be the first money.

Other sparrials established their own tents and tree houses in the area, keeping Souoro company till they became too restless to stay, settling while they raised their children, or seeking a place to keep an elder comfortable

until the end. One of these travelers was a storyteller who caught Souoronoomi's ear, and she used her trade tokens to pay children to leave courting gifts, which were eventually accepted. Her chosen male was a gifted teacher who was content to spend most of his time in his mate's town. Thus, the first classrooms were built.

The legend continues that Souoronoomi's eldest twins, Mouraanoomi and Awoulonoomi, were likewise gifted with the uncharacteristic ability to hang around in one place for long durations, and they had all their parents' talent of influencing other sparrials. Family dwellings were built for kinfolk to use as they came through the area; the concept of renting a house came into being; and the concept of *buying* houses when you came into town, and selling them when you left, was likewise adopted. Even the idea of pledging to work on a single project for a certain number of months – with plenty of exceptions for why you might need to leave early, with notification of the project's leader – reportedly dates to the Noomi clan's innovations.

While it's hard to sort out historical artifacts – paintings, tapestries, carvings, etc. – from forgeries, there's *some* evidence a crippled matriarch presided over one of the early successful towns. The sparrials themselves are full of pride for this possibly mythical female; they know how hard it is to convince their people of anything! Stereotypically, anyone with the Noomi name is expected to be a teacher, a storyteller, or an excellent con artist.

MILITARY MATTERS AND POLICE

The usual unit of sparrial military varies between the small guerrilla squad and the lynch mob. In the sparrial mindset, “warrior” is something you do because you must, and once it’s done, you go back to your everyday life. The idea of a “career soldier” is alien; they can understand the “travel to new places, meet new people” parts, but the “and shoot them” seems unnecessary to a happy life. Nonetheless, sparrials on the hunt, whether their quarry is food or an enemy, are patient, stealthy, and silent. They don’t toy with their prey.

Sparrials only vaguely understand the concept of “police” or “station security.” People resolve their disputes as individuals, or with help from their friends and family. Right-thinking sparrials know when to walk away, after all – and if someone is too wrong-thinking . . . That’s what the Gauntlet is for.

The Gauntlet

Sometimes a sparrial is just *bad*, and *everyone* local has been horribly wronged by him or finds out about his actions. Sometimes an alien is likewise deemed anathema by a large

number of sparrials. If enough people want a piece of the criminal’s hide, and he’s been captured, someone will organize a Gauntlet.

A Gauntlet involves placing the accused in an area (e.g., a clearing in the jungle, or a gazebo in the middle of town), giving the angry mob a chance to show up, and then letting him go. Either he gets a head start (rare) or the mob has to position itself a distance away for a short time – not for “fairness,” but to give everyone the opportunity to throw things and scream insults. Traditionally, each sparrial in the mob is allowed to draw blood *once*, and must then give everyone else a turn – though they can obviously follow along.

In theory, someone could escape a Gauntlet, evading everyone. In practice, unless the angry mob is only a *little* angry (inflicting minor cuts instead of their best effort) or a significant number of people *help* the target get away . . . it’s a death sentence.

Potential subjects of a Gauntlet include serial killers, child molesters, pirates who’ve been egregious about their piracy, people who sell highly dangerous drugs to sparrials, and slavers. Sparrials won’t necessarily go out of their way to preserve vile specimens for a Gauntlet; pragmatism dictates a fast death if the criminal would otherwise get away. But someone who does bring such people to sparrial justice *is* given respect for it.

PRACTICING STEALTH: LIFE AS A SPARRIAL

The sparrial term for “growing up” is more literally translated as “learning stealth.” Every day is a test of skill, and for the most part, one sparrials embrace with enthusiasm. While they can wait for hours, patiently, for something to happen – even days, if they’re stalking nervous prey – a bored sparrial is one who’ll be looking for new trouble to get into. Still, despite their racial Kleptomania and tendency to be pushy with strangers, sparrials are no more malicious about their lives than humans are – and no less so, overall, despite some humans’ desire to idealize sparrials’ tendency to live in the moment. Tasks that require tools do tend to take longer, between the performer’s terse “Saw that, kid” remarks and having to replace or steal back tools and materials.

An average day is spent being constantly alert for attempts to pilfer one’s belongings, and for opportunities to pilfer the possessions of others. Showing off one’s physical skill is important, but only a barely grown kid pulls stunts that could inconvenience everyone else if he slipped. Dying would be entirely embarrassing – driving vehicles rarely includes

jaywalker-dodging. (Besides, sparrials quickly figured out that if you ran into some vehicle’s way, and it didn’t stop, you got hurt or dead. If it *did* stop, it proved the *driver’s* skill, not yours! Sparrials may have only traffic “suggestions,” but they obey them as much as a human would.)

For a contentious, competitive society, though, sparrials rarely take each other’s thefts and jibes *seriously*. Their keen sense of smell lets them tell the difference between malice and posturing.

HIS AND HERS

Though females are usually a little larger and males often a bit faster, sparrials have little sexual dimorphism, and their courtships are more akin to bower birds than chimpanzees. Females are romantically aggressive, males build their status and fortunes and wait to be asked, and pair-bonding monogamy is the ideal. Spacefaring sparrials, more used to other cultures, sometimes have forward males who offer gifts to ladies who’ve caught their eyes. Likewise, mating outside a relationship is less taboo to those “infected” by alien mores.

In a typical relationship, the female chooses a prospective mate – some humans say “target” – and informs him of her interest by leaving anonymous gifts of food, jewelry, or minor tools. Later, once she’s gauged what he likes, she sneaks not-so-anonymous offerings into his home, workplace, or similar location.

For a contentious, competitive society, sparrials rarely take each other’s thefts and jibes seriously. Their keen sense of smell lets them tell the difference between malice and posturing.

To signal a lack of interest, the male can discard the gifts or, in later stages, “fail to notice” who is leaving them. A very persistent female may need to be discouraged by a confrontation with shouting and public argument (see *Disagreements and Feuds*, p. 15).

If the male accepts the gifts, it indicates he’s at least interested in romance. Publicly thanking the female accepts her proposal.

In the sparrial ideal, mates are pair-bonded for life and never take another, even if one dies. In reality, even sparrials have promiscuous or cheating members, and widows and widowers may take unofficial mates – especially if their partner died while they were still young.

Same-sex relationships are rarely sexual (the smells just aren’t right for that) but do exist. However, platonic friends can be cuddly enough to confuse non-sparrials. It’s perfectly easy for *sparrials* to tell who’s involved and who isn’t – scent gives away lovers’ liaisons.

CHILDREN

Sparrial females are fertile only when certain environmental and nutritional conditions are met, and frequently only with males who meet certain genetic requirements and thus “smell good.” Females can also smell their own fertile times, and choose whether do anything about it.

Children are born in litters of one to seven, with an average of three or four. They are born blind and open their eyes about a week later. Spacefaring sparrials rarely have more than one or two litters in their lives, while planet-dwelling ones are more prolific. Modern sparrials rarely go above four litters.

The young stay with the mother constantly until they’re weaned, which happens around their second or third Terran year. Then aunts, uncles, fathers, grandparents, and older siblings take on various childcare tasks.

From an early age, many sparrial babies roughhouse like puppies or kittens. So long as no one squawks too much, they’re left to establish their own social order. As they grow, scrabbling for their preferred breast (sparrials have six, only evident when nursing) becomes channeled – by watching their elders – into filching each other’s toys or treats. Those elders also play theft-games with the children directly, which both teaches them how to watch out for a teasing parent and enforces the idea that parents are socially dominant to their children.

While adult sparrials rarely wish to acknowledge that someone pilfered something from them, parents often *allow* their children to swipe minor items. The adults then praise their clever offspring for their accomplishment, much as humans praise their own young for halting performances of “Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star.”

Eventually, children grow up, find mates, and have their own families to care for. In older times, this meant moving away from their parents’ hunting grounds, and even modern sparrials tend to go off on their own. If they consider their parents too domineering, they often leave home the moment they feel they can without starving (which may mean unilaterally attaching themselves to passing starship crews or other adventuring groups). This can result in genuinely concerned

– if overbearing – parents chasing after their runaways to bring them back or make sure they’re in a relatively safe place! Even sparrials can have overprotective kinfolk.

If the parental relationship is more harmonious, children may return to their families with their new mates, to visit or group together in a clan. Sparrials who do *not* find mates, whether through inclination or poor luck, may also come back to be an aunt or uncle.



JOBS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The most visceral role of a sparrial is as the co-head of a family, along with one’s mate: providers and defenders. Before aliens discovered them, sparrials were hunters and gatherers, with animal-keepers and farmers in areas where they settled for a while. Some herders brought their animals along with them, and gardeners tended the edible plants along their nomadic routes.

Those core identities are still important, with the more recent addition of *teachers*. To fail to meet the challenge of the galaxy is unthinkable. Being ignorant savages is shameful. Teaching is both a modern invention on Sparrion and a hearkening back to the wisdom of grandparents who told stories to children. Of all the raw concepts sparrials took from the aliens of the galaxy, *universal education* is the most obvious.

Other “normal” community positions are less noted. Law enforcement is entirely absent, though serious crimes are punished by impromptu gangs of vigilantes or lynch mobs (see *Military Matters and Police*, p. 16). Startowns often have “hobbyist” neighborhood watches. When one family has too much say over what’s “fair” in a town, everyone who disagrees moves away.

There are, however, wandering (of course) doctors, teachers with portable schoolrooms in their vehicles, peddlers, and mechanics. If someone has a problem, communications devices of the appropriate tech level are plentiful enough that an expert can be located quickly. Someone might have to journey to get the problem and the solution together, but traveling is rarely considered a hardship by sparrials.

Startowns and stations have more familiar management, modeled after whichever aliens sparrials deal with most. Behind closed doors, there may be sparrial politics (and shouting and shoving), but the families who interact with aliens know when to present an unruffled front. As for world governments . . . Forget it. If there are Galactic Councils, sparrials on

them are generally appointed from among the more influential demagogues rather than voted into office. (Sparrials have a rocky relationship with voting; they'll vote for themselves on a whim as much as if they really want a position – but if they discover they don't like the responsibilities of a job, they have no qualms about abdicating, even if many other sparrials voted for them!)

KLEPT-ECONOMY

Surprisingly to many aliens, sparrials came up with the idea of *currency* long before they were discovered (see *Sparrial Bootstrapping*, p. 15). The convenience of trading something small and portable, instead of bartering for everything, was useful – but more useful was the *stealability* of money! The difficulty in swiping someone's small food-creatures is more than counterbalanced by the difficulty in carrying the darned things afterward.

As a point of pride, sparrial groups crafted hard-to-forge currencies. Most of these were backed by family organizations, kinfolk who serially run trading towns in key locations. (When one member of the family can't stand hanging around, another steps in to continue the job; sparrials are contrary, not irresponsible.) The most popular form is a stone, shell, or metal coin (which may or may not be round) with a hole in the center. The usual way to carry money is to loop four to eight coins on a leather cord, then tie the cord to a bandolier, harness, or belt – adding additional loops of coins as necessary.

FAMILY TIES

To aliens, sparrials seem capricious. One moment, they rebuff someone asking for assistance, and the next, they're offering any aid possible. While some of this is because they're more inclined to help someone who smells good, other instances are due to their sense of kinship. Family is family. Someone who smells like a cousin should be helped like a cousin. This can include *chosen* family! Unrelated sparrials may be close enough friends to declare themselves "siblings," much like humans may have "blood brothers." The sparrial word translates to "kin-by-choice." On starships, sparrials can become fast friends, even kin-by-choice, with alien crewmembers, to the extent of helping relatives or mates of those non-sparrial "kin."

A strong exception to a sparrial's disdain for the troubles of unrelated people is *children*. Orphaned or abandoned babies or clearly unable-to-survive children are either adopted by even unmated sparrials or passed on to someone who can raise them properly. Sparrials extend this to aliens as well. If they realize one is a child or baby, they'll give what aid they can while seeking a proper alien parent. Children they can raise themselves may be adopted! It's a rough life out there, and a kid can't be expected to handle it alone.

Children make good Dependents for sparrials, while mates, kin, and kin-by-choice may be Allies. A sparrial family or clan could be a group of Allies for a player character or potentially even a Patron!

ADVENTURE SEEDS

The stereotypical sparrial propensity for detecting lies and stealing things can make life difficult for the PCs! Here's a pair of examples to spark the GM's imagination.

Busted!

The PCs are brought in for questioning. Since there's no hard proof of their misdeeds, the cops send in the standard tough human detective – and his sparrial partner, Mouooli, or "Moe" for short. If the suspects *know* sparrials can smell lies, they can have an entertaining time trying to answer the detective's questions without telling an outright untruth.

If the local legal system is akin to that of present-day America, the PCs may be able to claim that Moe's presence is a violation of their rights; her nose-testimony isn't admissible in court. A successful Law roll can think of this line of argument. The suspects can also remain silent, but this will convince the police of their guilt as much as Moe's nose might. In fact, if the group has anything to hide, only brilliant roleplaying will save them from the cops' suspicion. Hopefully, they're not guilty of what the *cops* think they're guilty of.

It Takes a Thief

A scientist, on her way to a meeting where she was to deliver valuable information to a corporation, happened to stare disapprovingly at a sparrial spacer . . . who retaliated by lifting the computer disk from her coat pocket and then went cheerfully off to shore leave. The scientist didn't realize what had happened until she arrived at the meeting, reached into her pocket, and . . . oops.

The company wants those plans! And, incidentally, the thief – dead or alive. They hire the PCs, and probably several other independent agencies, to get the disk back.

It turns out that Trostoo-oe (Stewie, to his human friends) is no professional. He's just a ship's cook and cargo-handler who bit off more than he can chew. Stewie would *love* to give the disk back, but someone else, probably corporate competitors, heard about the theft when the other company was hiring retrieval experts. The competitor's agents got to Stewie first and forced him to give it to *them*. Stewie will do whatever he can to help the party recover the plans – he sees it as the only way to save his skin. He's a 50-point character, but he can identify who took the disk.

ARTS AND ENTERTAINMENT

As a young race, sparrials haven't had lots of time to develop convoluted arts and sports. They appreciate subtlety and complexity in many things, and co-opt ideas and games quickly if they're pleasing. Like their civilization, "rough-and-ready" is the most common adjective for their pastimes. For example, while sparrials do take up orchestral composition, oil painting, or handmade dressmaking, it's because they've "stolen" the idea and are now using it to demonstrate their skill, drive, and patience.

PASTIMES AND HOBBIES

All sparrials steal – or try to – and regard this as a "hobby" no more than humans consider talking to others to be a hobby. True sparrial hobbies highlight an individual's mental or physical dexterity. They prefer activities that they can show off to others or that produce a result they can use or display. A modern sparrial might indulge in parkour, building a starship in a bottle, or toying with cryptography.

Many sparrials cook as an art form. Males often do it to attract female attention, while females specialize in recipes they can use as presents for a male of their choice. Even long-mated couples smooth over disagreements with a good meal, full of subtly chosen spices and cooked just the right amount. Being able to show off one's kitchen skills to others is a sure way to applause. Sparrial cuisine is meat-heavy and generally enjoyed by compatible races.

Storytelling is another fine skill, closely related to teaching. Being able to hold children's rapt attention is useful both in parenting and for someone who wishes to gain the respect of every harried parent in the area. Gaining exciting experiences to tell *adults* about is just as good! Good storytellers never buy their own drinks.

POPULAR ENTERTAINMENT

In larger groups, sparrials enjoy semi-organized sports – usually variations on capture-the-flag, steal-the-flag, and get-the-ball-to-your-base, though forms of tag and hide-and-seek have been adapted to team play. Rules tend to be "anything goes," with only the goals stated and perhaps the playing area. Imported galactic games are loathed by some sparrials and embraced by others, who figure the complicated rules to remember and obey will show off their skills even more! All-sparrial teams exist for any number of sports.

Sparrials prefer to be in the audience for sporting events, shouting out encouragement and suggestions. They'll watch

recordings or live broadcasts, but with an eye to learning new tricks more than cheering on a team.

Theater is a form of entertainment that was new to sparrials, but they ran off with it as soon as they discovered the concept. Sparrial theater performances tend to include not just actors on a stage, but also ringers in the audience, audience members hastily drafted for a few lines, and set design that extends around and above the seating areas.

CRAFTS

Sparrials prize self-sufficiency. A young sparrial on Sparrior should know how to hunt, cook, hide, weave simple items (bags, ponchos and other useful clothing, tents, and nets), and filch things. Adding high technology doesn't *entirely* erase the focus on those skills, but priorities shift to skill with computers, electronic lockpicks, and vehicles. Many sparrial ship crew have only theoretical knowledge of making tents or snares.

Sparrials still admire good craftsmanship, whether handmade or from a robotic assembly line. Glittery equipment is for show; simple is fine for durability. Getting both is always appreciated!

Architecture and Furniture

For nomadic sparrials, "architecture" is a tent stuck on the ground or tent-pouch hanging from a tree, and "furniture" is a woven mat to sit on. Rachou-riders (pp. 26-27) add wicker-work stools and tables, as well as larger tents and the poles to erect them. However, rented rooms and buildings in sparrial towns often come furnished with such luxuries as carved decorations, heavier chairs, and frames for mattresses. Given a choice, sparrials prefer hanging beds, chairs, and hammocks, and no sparrial would sneer at a dining room with a low wicker table and comfortable mats.

HIGH ART – OR LACK THEREOF

The sparrial worldview is characterized by immediacy, with little time for what humans call the "higher" and "finer" things in life. Sparrial art and literature are rare, primitive, and obscure. Sparrials love to dance, but their "music" is merely a series of complex rhythms, with no melody or harmony.

RELIGION

With their focus on "here and now," sparrials have few spiritual leanings. Many profess a matter-of-fact belief in reincarnation, but it's not clear whether they believed that before sparrials encountered other races. Religions with a supreme entity are met with blank noncomprehension of

the concept, or an angry sparrial who thinks omniscience is *cheating*.

This doesn't mean that other races don't try to convert sparrials, nor does it mean sparrials won't go along with the proselytizers if they think there's a good caper in the offing . . .

RACE RELATIONS

Sparrials, as a race, are “live and let live.” Many are curious about newcomers, enjoying the stimulation of New People and New Stories, and evaluating ideas (and possessions) for possible theft. Most ignore or are annoyed by assumptions that their lives require change – if they want change, they’ll take it, thank you very much. Aside from those generalities, their reactions to other sapient species are individualistic, just like everything else in their society.

Naturally, sparrials get along best with species that respect their desire for independence and that can handle their forms of confrontation. They get along poorly with races that prefer rigid organization, a pecking order built on a linear hierarchy, or extreme displays of subservience. Even a sparrial who considers himself less dominant than someone else has his pride.

The sparrial sense of smell also influences racial relations. If they *like* the odor of a given species, they may put up with silly rules just to be near them. Or they may hang around and be *irritating* while they inhale happily! See *The Smell’s the Thing*, pp. 6-7.

Sparrials don’t really pay attention to other races’ idea of status. While they’re affected normally by Reputation, just about any other social advantage (or disadvantage) will have to be backed up *in the sparrial’s opinion* by the other person’s abilities. Being born into wealth and power never impresses

sparrials; they’re only influenced by such displays that were gotten via skill. It’s up to the GM to decide if sparrials respect any given institution enough to assume Rank is earned.

Alanoomi, stay out of the nice bird-alien’s luggage, please.

When other races deal with sparrials, they quickly learn that “trade” is . . . complicated. Sparrials themselves have many patterns, from a straightforward exchange of barter goods or credits (after haggling), to a complicated ritual where one sparrial steals the products while the other steals payment for them. This leads alien shopkeepers to tactics such as hiring employees to stand by the door and request the return of any unpaid-for items, setting out easily filched and inexpensive knickknacks, or investing in very good security systems.

Visitors to Sparrion or other locations with lots of sparrials are advised to invest in “theft belts” – flimsy plastic chain links with baubles or cheap toys attached. Sparrials enjoy the challenge of removing a doodad without getting spotted, and they generally ignore more boring things like wallets or weapons.

SPARRIALS IN THE GAME

With a racial cost of 24 points, sparrials are a good choice for PCs in the typical 150-point campaign. Nosy and Wanderlust quirks enable them to be proactive in seeking out adventure or grabbing plot hooks the GM leaves in their path. Kleptomania is also sure to invite trouble, whether a minor barroom brawl when some non-sparrial objects to losing a wallet, or a campaign starter if they wind up with something Really Important. If a campaign has the “thief/spy” niche open, sparrials are an archetypical shoo-in. Sparrials are *not* very strong, compared to humans; while this may not matter when beam weapons or powered armor are available, players who frequently want to thump things are likely to be disappointed.

Players of sparrials and the GM should consider the comfort level of other players when doing “intro scenes,” lest the initial racial pushiness be upsetting, not fun. In some groups, a sparrial should take an “Easygoing” quirk or buy off Proud.

Although “thief” and “smuggler” are valid and common roles, sparrials are versatile choices for both PCs and NPCs. They can be medics or counselors, using the Emotion Sense of their Discriminatory Smell and its attendant Detect Lies ability to get to the heart of a patient’s worries. They might be part of rescue teams, clambering around mountains and forests to find wounded hikers, soldiers, or colonists. Their Night Vision and Temperature Tolerance mean they have a slight edge as first-in scouts or archaeologists seeking Precursor sites (see *GURPS Space*, p. 22).

In the right organization, a sparrial who’s (relatively) willing to take orders could be a military scout or sniper. Cultural tendencies produce sparrials who are master chefs, performers, and teachers. Those who fall in with criminals make excellent assassins and blackmailer-spies, but they’re rarely found as common muggers. And finally, sparrial-crewed vessels could be perfectly legitimate passenger-ships or merchants that hardly *ever* smuggle anything. Or anyone. Really.

No matter their occupation, they’ll still swipe things – and give them back if asked.

Sparrials for the GM

As NPCs, sparrials are the obvious choice to *remove* something from the player characters and get them chasing after it. They’re excellent nuisances, being small, clever, aggressive, and insatiably curious – much like 10-year-olds, only more capable. Sparrials want to see and try everything, and if adventuring looks fun and interesting, a sparrial might join the first bunch of adventurers to wander by – without asking permission.

Sparrials can be good Allies, Contacts, and Enemies. They’re especially good at being Rivals (see p. B135), ready to appear, upstage the PCs, foil their plans, and swing off with the gold, glory, and members of the appropriate gender. Or a sparrial can be a ruthless assassin who wants one of the group *dead*.

CHAPTER THREE

GEAR: WHAT HAS IT GOT IN ITS POCKETSES?

The key element to sparrial gear is *lack of weight*. They may be strong for their size, but they're not as strong as humans. They also want to be able to snatch-and-run, even if they

consider themselves too clever to resort to that, and thus dislike anything that puts them above Light encumbrance. Frankly, they dislike *any* encumbrance!

LOCKPICKS, SECURITY, AND DEFENSES

The first time some sparrial got the bright idea to tie a knot, some other sparrial took it as a personal challenge to untie it, and the race was on. When discovered, sparrials were handcrafting clockwork traps and puzzle boxes, as well as surprisingly sophisticated key-in-lock structures. Naturally, the species leapt into the high-tech and ultra-tech fields of security systems in all their glories.

Not all sparrials have the mindset ("the nose," in sparrial slang) for picking locks, whether mechanical or electronic. Some only wrap their fingers around one or the other. Some work to master both, or at least give a competent showing. For those with the nose, Lockpicking and Electronics Operation (Security) are the obvious duo, but Traps and Electronics Repair (Security) can also be important. A specialist might add Electronics Operation (Surveillance), giving a better opportunity to avoid being spotted or to spot rivals! A truly dedicated sparrial may take up Engineer (Electronics) and focus on security and surveillance.

Some useful gear includes electronic "lockpicks," standard lockpicks, nanobugs, night-vision goggles, telescopes (for scoping out a place ahead of time), and web gear (all p. B289). From *GURPS Ultra-Tech*, consider such options as scent synthesizers (*Ultra-Tech*, p. 52) for use against other sparrials; passive visual sensors (*Ultra-Tech*, pp. 60-61) for either swiping things or catching others trying; and slipspray

(*Ultra-Tech*, p. 83) for squeezing through tight spots, as part of amusing defensive traps, or to slow down pursuit. Further, nearly everything in the *Covert Ops and Security* chapter (*Ultra-Tech*, pp. 95-111) will be of interest to sparrials for use in their own thefts (though flesh masks may work poorly with their fur), as something to overcome, or as tools to defend against other thieves.

*"The vault is empty,"
the Organization boss said.
"Um," replied the security chief.
"You said no one could get in
here without being spotted."
"There's sensors all over, boss."
"So where are my paintings,
and why is this bad drawing of me
in the middle of the floor?"*

Few sparrials bother with chemsniffers (*Ultra-Tech*, pp. 61-62), as they believe their own native abilities are better. Some eschew night-vision gear, too – but while their eyes are exceptionally good, high-tech gear can be a little better.

Plastex B (*Ultra-Tech*, p. 88) and other explosives are sometimes used for cracking open safes (or walls), but many

sparrials frown on such “brute force.” Those who *do* use Explosives skill point out the hazards of the tools and how it shows off their abilities to work with dangerous materials without getting blown up.

Note: All gear, especially that from *GURPS Ultra-Tech*, should be vetted by the GM for availability.

CUSTOMIZING GEAR

Sparrials are large enough to use *most* human gear, especially if equipment is available that’s designed for juvenile humans. (If the campaign has no other races of similar conformation – e.g., a setting with only sparrials, bird-people, and snakemen – getting things to fit is more of an issue!)

Though sparrials have only three fingers and an opposable thumb, they can wield most human handheld weapons easily, as well as computer keyboards, musical instruments, etc. Some areas where they *do* encounter minor difficulties include the following items.

Space Suits: All human ones have an extra finger, which can give an occasional penalty to tasks where it would get in the way. The fastest, cheapest fix is to invert the empty finger and slap a repair patch on it; this doesn’t compromise the suit’s integrity, but pressurizing it may pop the patch off if it wasn’t carefully placed. Suit patches (*GURPS Ultra-Tech*, p. 188) cost \$10 for 10 units and require a Vacc Suit skill roll to place properly. However, without the threat of air leakage, time can be taken for a bonus to skill. Many human suits aren’t comfortable over fur, and sparrials may rely on rescue bubbles (*Ultra-Tech*, p. 77) for emergencies rather than wear a skinsuit. Biosuits (*Ultra-Tech*, p. 179) require *programming* to accommodate fur and the hands; if sparrials are common, this is a \$25 (or less!) add-on, but if they’re rare, a programmer could charge \$500 or more for a “custom job.”

Seating: Ground-car and starship seats are all likely to be made for people little shorter than 5’; taller sparrials

can usually manage – with extra cushions, if necessary – but shorter ones may be at -1 or more because the controls are badly placed. Custom seat-adjustments may be as inexpensive as \$100, or cost thousands of dollars. Often the easiest (if not always cheapest) fix is a direct neural interface (*GURPS Ultra-Tech*, pp. 48-49 and pp. 216-217), if the vehicle or equipment in question can be controlled with one.

Heavy Weaponry: When you reach a certain power output, the spacing of the user’s hands can become more awkward for a weaker, smaller sparrial; consider -1 to -3 to skill for human-built weapons that use Gunner skill, depending on the design.

Adjusting for Sparrial SM

When in doubt about a given piece of equipment, determine the sparrial’s Size Modifier, and consult the following table. Multiply the gear’s *weight* and *power requirement* by the factor given. For gear that does not require customization, also multiply cost by the factor.

SM	Factor	Example
-3	×1/10	A sparrial child.
-2	×1/5	A young sparrial, or one with Dwarfism.
-1	×1/2	An average sparrial.
0	–	A tall sparrial, or one with Gigantism.

Customizing melee weapons of any tech level can make them more comfortable for sparrials. This generally costs 4× the list price, the same as a “very fine” weapon at TL7+.

CLOTHING AND ARMOR

When you have fur that can be rubbed the wrong way and aren’t very strong, you may not want to wear much . . . Nevertheless, sparrials rarely go around *completely* unclad.

CLOTHING

Sparrials, equipped with their own fur and a lack of nudity taboo, view clothing as decorative or strictly functional: a poncho to keep off the worst of rain, footgear if the ground is overly spiky, tough pants for wading through brambles, aprons if cooking or otherwise working with hot things, etc. Harnesses, bandoliers, and belts are generally all sparrials feel like wearing routinely, and those only because they can attach pouches or scabbards. Even so, sparrials may wear Hawaiian-style shirts or tie-dye muumuus if they like the color patterns,

or enjoy annoying someone who *doesn’t*. They’ll also affect clothing so aliens can tell them apart, or as a role identifier (such as “Startown Mayor”; *multiple* sparrials may rotate through that office!). Tricky sparrials may get people used to seeing them in something distinctive, like loud ties, so when they take off that marker, they become anonymous and able to sneak around more effectively.

Sparrials with albinism (see *Common Optional Traits*, p. 4) typically wear hats and hoods to protect their eyes and ears from sunburn, or sunglasses/visors at higher tech levels. Hats with flared brims, or roomy hoods, are also used in bad weather by sparrials who don’t want rain on their ears.

Unless they *must* have full foot coverage, sparrials go bare-foot or wear sandals. Sandals have thin soles under the toes, and are cut to allow some use of toes for emergency climbing.

Clothing Table

Damage Resistance of individual pieces depends on the material. Fur and cloth garments are generally DR 0-1*, depending on thickness, with cloth weighing the least. Leather is DR 1* or 2, depending on flexibility (and thus thickness). Wood or metal would be DR 2-3, again depending on thickness.

If made from high-tech materials, *reflex* fabric (TL9) has DR 6/2* if thin or 12/4* if thick; *nanoweave* (TL10) is 9/3* or 18/6*; *monocrys* (TL11) is 12/4* or 24/8*; *bioplas* (TL10) is

15/5*; and *energy cloth* (TL12) is 15* to 30*. Reflex, nanoweave, and monocrys are detailed on p. 172 of *GURPS Ultra-Tech*, while bioplas and energy cloth are on p. 174 of that book. Split DR provides full protection (the higher number) against some types of damage (piercing and cutting damage for reflex, nanoweave, and monocrys; piercing and burning damage for bioplas), and partial protection (the lower number) versus other kinds of damage.

Clothing	Location	Weight (lbs.)	Notes
Bandolier	Torso	neg. to 1	Effectively a long belt, worn cross-body from shoulder to hip, with holes, D-rings, or leather/cloth thongs as attachment points. Fabric bandoliers are lighter but less sturdy.
Belt	Torso	neg. to 0.5	Usually has attachment points, but may simply have items tied around it.
Harness	Torso	neg. to 2	There are various designs; the simplest is X-shaped, like two bandoliers fastened together, but some incorporate a belt as well. Includes attachment points. Cloth harnesses are lighter but flimsy.
Hat/Hood	Skull	neg. to 0.5	May have ear holes. Hats also have under-chin ties, because of the flatter sparrial skull.
Poncho	Torso, arms	0.5-3	Often leaves the hips uncovered.
Sandals	Bottoms of the feet	0.5	Often allow the toes to overlap the sole, for easier climbing.
Web Gear	Torso	2	A TL6 version of a harness; see p. B289.
Umbrella Shield	-	0.1	TL11^; keeps off rain and pests. May be handheld or built into headgear. See <i>GURPS Ultra-Tech</i> , p. 194.

Sparrial-made ponchos come in many styles. They may have armholes or be a circular cloak (sometimes worn off-center to allow a walking staff to be used). If a style can be imagined and isn't too confining, some sparrial probably tried weaving it at least once.

For a selection of items sparrials might wear, see the *Clothing Table* (above).

ARMOR

On their own, the most armor sparrials tend to wear is fur, leather, cloth, and maybe wooden or metal bracers. Exposed

to high tech, they quickly pounce on light, flexible, and sturdy armor – at least, if it works for a furred race with large ears. Still, a sparrial who doesn't expect trouble will generally ditch everything but the basics.

Sparrials in the military – or similar organizations, such as system-defense vigilantes and pirate-stalking bounty hunters – wear rigid armor when on duty, with complaints about walking around in a body cast. On spaceships, they wear skin-suits like the rest of the crew, if they can get ones that fit (see *Customizing Gear*, p. 22), but most sparrials dislike how it pulls their fur around.

The pirate crew stood, hands on their heads, as the military boarders methodically searched and cuffed them.

“Aren't you a little short for a space marine?” one snarked at the shoulder-high, armor-suited squad member.

Eenlanaom rolled her eyes inside her helmet. “Why humans always saying that?”

A selection of ultra-tech armor that sparrials would gravitate toward:

<i>Armor</i>	<i>TL</i>	<i>Ultra-Tech Page(s)</i>
Armored Shades	9-12	176
Ballistic Armor	9-11	172
Bioplas Armor	10	174
Cybersuit	11-12	184-186

<i>Armor</i>	<i>TL</i>	<i>Ultra-Tech Page(s)</i>
Energy Cloth	12	174
Exofield Belt	12^	181-182
Force Shield Bracelet	11^	192
Laser-Resistant Body Armor	9-11	173-174
Nanosuit	12	185-186
Personal Force Screen	12^	191
Space Biosuit	10	179

WEAPONS

The most “traditional” sparrial weapon is the pointy stick (essentially a very cheap javelin, p. B273), but there are other favored implements of combat. In general, sparrials prefer close-combat weapons that can be used among the branches of Sparrion’s forests, and lightweight distance weapons that don’t weigh them down.

Typical melee weapons include batons (p. B273); black-jacks or saps (p. B271); knives (p. B272), especially with options like superfine, monowire, and vibroblade (*Ultra-Tech*, pp. 163-164); short staves and smallswords (p. B273); and,

if they can get them, force swords (p. B272 and *Ultra-Tech*, p. 166). Sparrials who primarily travel on the plains may also use quarterstaves (p. B273).

Ranged weapons include thrown knives, javelins, and slings, as well as blowpipes, bolas, and short bows on the plains. (See pp. B275-276 for details.) Higher-tech sparrials like low-recoil projectile weapons (e.g., firearms; pp. B278-279 and *Ultra-Tech*, pp. 135-145), but prefer lighter-weight beam weapons (p. B280 and *Ultra-Tech*, pp. 113-133).

The chiora returned to hork up a wild nulea at Naaleraan’s feet. The sparrial displayed the damp kill. “Meat for dinner!”

The tourists stared, silent and unappreciative. One raised a hand. “Er, could we just have ration bars instead?”

Naal sighed. The chiora drool was only on the outside, but tourists were fussy.

PETS AND LIVESTOCK

Sparrials are more likely to eat animals than keep them as pets, but as with all generalities about an entire species, there are exceptions. They generally respect the pets of other races once they’re introduced to the concept, and they would rather filch them for dominance than for meals. Some sparrials *have* trained native wildlife into something resembling domestication, and they do herd food-beasts as well as follow them. Further, some of the herding clans have accustomed themselves and their beasts to riding.

Some examples of Sparrion wildlife – and “tamelife” – appear below.

Chiorra

-73 points

Chiorra (singular: chiora, but only sparrials really notice the difference) are snakelike creatures with hind legs, vestigial forelimbs, and a shortish tail. They have folds of skin that they can splay out to glide from tree to tree in a manner similar

to a cross between a terrestrial flying squirrel and a flying snake, and they look like a diamond-shaped kite while doing so. Chiorra are covered in a very short, fine fur, even on their glide-flaps, in shades of beige.

There are many subspecies of chiora, with different color-patterns and sizes. The smallest is as long as a sparrial’s forearm (about 1’), while the largest is some 7’ long and appears to be amphibious. None are known to be venomous; they kill prey by constricting it or by breaking its neck with their powerful jaws.

Chiorra are diurnal and crepuscular. They hunt alone, but return to a family nest or burrow at night. They bear live young and regurgitate food for them like birds.

Some sparrials have trained chiorra to hunt for them. While they’re easily tamed if captured when very young, and will return to their owners, the animals tend to eat whatever they catch when they catch it. To guard against this, the owner weaves a collar and fastens it around the chiora’s neck.

Since the creature eats like a snake, unhinging its jaw and swallowing the dead prey whole, the band prevents the kill from getting very far down. The chiora eventually returns to its master in a high snit, prey in its mouth.

Chiorra don't breed well in captivity, though sometimes a tame one will present its owner with a litter of little chiorra – usually in the middle of his bedding.

Stats are for a “hunting chiora,” approximately 2-3' long, that can capture small prey. Chiorra are less effective in plains, though they can slither into burrows after prey. They adapt well to microgravity and can be used to hunt vermin on starships when it's not feasible just to vent everything to vacuum. (Or when the vermin are *resistant* to vacuum!)

ST: 3	HP: 3	Speed: 6.00
DX: 14	Will: 8	Move: 4 (Ground)/4* (Air)
IQ: 4	Per: 12	Weight: 3-6 lbs.
HT: 10	FP: 10	SM: -4
Dodge: 9	Parry: N/A	DR: 0

Constriction: Victims of equal size or smaller who fail to break free from a grapple might be squeezed to death. Roll the chiora's effective ST 3 vs. the victim's ST; victory inflicts crushing damage equal to the margin. This counts as an Attack. Reach C.

Grapple (14): No damage, but may be followed up by *Constriction* (above). Reach C.

Short Fangs (14): 1d-6 large piercing. Reach C.

Traits: Acute Vision 2; Domestic (or Wild) Animal; Double-Jointed; Enhanced Move 1 (Air; Halves deceleration); Flight (Gliding); No Fine Manipulators.

Skills: Brawling-14; Stealth-13; Wrestling-14.

Cost: \$50-\$75 for a wild adult chiora, especially if it doesn't have to be in good condition; \$100-\$250 for one young enough to be trained and bond with a master. It's difficult to transfer loyalty from one owner to another, so trained adults are rarely sold; still, a sparrial might be willing part with one, for the right price.

Notes: Native gravity 0.95G.

* Higher if diving or towed.

Nuleou

Nuleou (singular: nulea; again, only sparrials are likely to get this right) are herbivores, approximately the size of a Terran squirrel. They resemble a cross between a lizard and a fluffy guinea pig with a fur-covered, prehensile tail.

They come in two overarching varieties: domesticated and wild. Domesticated nuleou can be carried

in baskets, though they have to be well-fed so they don't *eat* their containers. They breed well in captivity, reproducing quickly after mating – and sporadically, a bit as if chickens had live young. One breeding can produce blind, nearly hairless young once every day or two for two months afterward. They are adult enough to mate at three months, and fully grown by six. Nuleou have little maternal instinct. They care for their young in a haphazard fashion, with the wild ones returning to suckle them because of engorged mammary glands.

Sparrials generally breed nuleou for a placid disposition and plentiful meat, but some select for color and fur length. In colder climes, patchwork nulea-fur cloaks and sleeping rolls are useful, and certain varieties of nulea can be sheared and their fur spun for thread. The “wool” thus obtained is soft, like terrestrial alpaca, and if properly cared for, retains a pleasant odor (to sparrials; other races may or may not agree) for years. Because nuleou are much smaller than sheep, it takes a lot of them to make much thread; nulea-wool items are a valuable commodity.

Sparrials who go into space are likely to take nuleou with them. Even far from Sparrion, sparrial restaurants may have cages of nuleou, much like seafood restaurants may have tanks of lobsters, so diners can select the animal they want for their meal.

Stats on p. 26 are for domesticated nuleou. Wild ones are 0.5-1 lb. lighter, have less desirable fur, and are more skittish.



ST: 1 **HP:** 1 **Speed:** 4.50
DX: 8 **Will:** 3 (Domestic)/5 (Wild) **Move:** 4
IQ: 2 **Per:** 10 **Weight:** 1.5 lbs.
HT: 10 **FP:** 10 **SM:** -4
Dodge: 7 **Parry:** N/A **DR:** 0

Bite (8): Negligible damage; can draw blood. Reach C.

Traits: Combat Paralysis; Domestic (or Wild) Animal; Fur; Quadruped.

Skills: Stealth-10 (12 for wild nuleou).

Cost: \$10-25 for an average nulea intended for consumption; \$100+ for wool-producing nuleou.

Notes: Native gravity 0.95G.

“Doing good!” Naaleraan
called to the tourist.

“It’s upside down!”
he yelled.

“And you not fall off!”
Great!”

“It’s going to sleep now!”
Naal sighed and started
up.

MOUNTS

While modern sparrials adore starships and any other high-tech vehicle that allows them to move quickly (hoverbikes are *very* popular, if available), some herders still follow the old ways.

Rauachon

17 points

Rauachon (singular: rachou) are creatures that generally need to be seen to be believed; “giant snake-necked sloth-goats” is the most apt description. They are primarily herbivorous quadrupeds, though they’ll munch on carrion opportunistically. They’re covered in coarse, shaggy fur and are about the size of a dairy cow. They have curled claws on their feet, somewhat sloth-like. Their necks are somewhat elongated. They have no horns, but the shape of their heads is indeed goatlike, and they have horizontally set slit pupils like a goat.

They are marsupials, bearing one to four young at a time, who remain in the mother’s pouch for approximately six Terran months. They then ride on their mother’s back – or that of any other herd member who doesn’t shake them off – for another six months. They become capable of breeding

at approximately two years of age. For the first year of their lives, the entire herd will defend them against predators, sitting shoulder to shoulder and waving their long, clawed forelimbs menacingly.

Though rauachon primarily travel on the ground, grazing as they meander along, they are capable of climbing (slowly) and will stray a short way up sturdy trees in search of foliage and fruit. They are equally happy to clamber about on rocks in more mountainous regions. They are capable of bursts of speed, such as when an immature rachou of the herd is threatened, but otherwise rarely bother.

Rauachon are diurnal, though they also take frequent naps. They prefer to sleep hanging from trees or cliff faces.

The sparrials who herd rauachon for meat, hides, and fur tend to be among the most patient of the species. Ambling along at the herd’s speed is intolerably slow for many sparrials.

Rachou-herders frequently accustom their favorites to being ridden – bareback, with a sparrial clinging cheerfully to the animal’s fur as he straddles the rotund body. With the coming of aliens to Sparrion, the concept of “saddles” was introduced to the rachou-herders, who promptly laughed themselves into little piles on the ground before setting out to train their beasts to tolerate harnesses. (It’s inefficient to put a saddle on something that occasionally decides to climb trees or cliffsides.)

Rauachon are poor choices for pulling wagons, due to the aforementioned climbing. They are also not very milkable, as they object to hands inside their pouches. This doesn’t keep sparrials from *trying*, but even light-fingered sparrials have limits.

ST: 20 **HP:** 20 **Speed:** 6.00
DX: 10 **Will:** 12 **Move:** 6
IQ: 3 **Per:** 11 **Weight:** 1,200 lbs.
HT: 14 **FP:** 14 **SM:** +2 (3 hexes)

Dodge: 9 **Parry:** N/A **DR:** 2

Weak Bite (13): 2d-4 crushing. Reach C, 1.

Talons (13): 2d cutting or impaling. Reach C-2.

Traits: Acute Hearing 2; Domestic (or Wild) Animal; Fur; Long Arms (+1 SM); Quadruped; Stubbornness; Temperature Tolerance 1.

Skills: Brawling-13; Climbing-13.

Cost: An untrained rachou that is accustomed to people is \$1,000. A rachou who tolerates a rider is \$1,500. A rachou who tolerates a *harness* that a rider can fasten himself to is \$1,700-\$2,000. Use the higher end of the price range for one that tolerates the thump of bags against its sides as well as the harness they’re attached to. Expect to pay \$3,000 and up for a *racine* rachou, with Enhanced Move 1 (Ground).

Notes: Native gravity 0.95G. While they have Move 6, they more commonly use a fast amble of Move 3. This can surprise someone who thought that was as speedy as rauachon ever got.

Rachou Gear

Sparrials – or other sapients – can use certain items to stay on a rachou and possibly even steer it. Bonuses to control rauachon only offset penalties to Riding skill; they do not give a net bonus.

Ear-Reins (TL1): The animal's tall, sensitive ears are pierced near the base, and braided leather rings are drawn through the holes. Reins (braided leather or woven rachou hair) are tied to these and allow a rider +1 to control a rachou if using one hand, or +2 if using two hands. \$35, 3 lbs.

Food on a Stick (TL1): Fragrant vegetation, lashed to a long pole, is the *minimum* gear to have any control over a rachou's movement. It requires two hands, both because the pole gets heavy for a sparrial, and because rauachon will try to reach up with a foreleg and hook the pole so they can drag it to their mouth. Neighbors will go after the treat, too. \$5-\$25 (depending on if the stick and food are found or bought), 6 lbs.

Harness (TL2*): A leather or woven rachou-hair harness has many rings (much like the ones used in ear-reins) incorporated into it. These serve as anchor points for a rider to tether his own harness to, and any bags he has – if the rachou has been trained to accept bags thumping gently against its sides or back as it climbs. Using a harness and tethers gives +2 to

any rolls to avoid falling off a rachou that is moving quickly or over erratic ground, or climbing. \$150, 15 lbs.

Harness Bags (TL1*): Woven from leaves, vines, leather strips, or rachou hair, these incorporate attachment points that let them be bound onto a harness. More modern materials and construction often are lighter and sturdier, and they can carry more. They hold 20 to 50 lbs., and weigh 2-5 lbs. each. Harness bags range from free (for ones personally made) to \$100 (for purchased bags).

Stirrups (TL3): Sparrials generally don't bother with these, but non-sparrials may wish this aid in Not Falling Off a climbing rachou, or one going along rough ground; stirrups grant +1 to rolls for this purpose. \$125, 20 lbs. (lower weight if made from higher-tech materials).

* Prior to learning about alien riding beasts and their tack, few sparrials had bothered with more than clinging to the backs of their rauachon, and any packs carried were worn by the *sparrial*. After discovering saddles and such, sparrials could hardly be outdone by aliens!



STARSHIPS

Sparrials favor ships that are compact, fast, and sneaky. They rarely get all three, of course. Many all-sparrial craft are small freighters, known for hauling cargo destined for the outer fringes of civilized space – and for smuggling things to all manner of locations. What they'll carry is limited only by the size of their secret compartments and the sparrials' own sense of appropriateness.

For details on the logistics of taking on (and smuggling!) passengers and freight, see *GURPS Spaceships 2: Traders, Liners, and Transports*.

CHORIALOOA (TL11[^])

This ship is either a sparrial-built design or adapted for an all-sparrial crew, and uses the rules in *GURPS Spaceships*.

It's a lightly armored freighter, shaped as a streamlined 135' winged lifting body (SM +7, 300 tons), and primarily used by *mostly* legitimate sparrials to haul cargo and the occasional passenger. It can take on a total of 87.5 tons of cargo, and the shielded cargo areas, scattered throughout the central section, can be used for smuggling – or just to protect valuable items from thieves posing as passengers, or pirates doing a smash-and-grab. Each segment has an airlock.

It has ECM, giving -2 against incoming attacks from TL11 or below, and a stealth hull; subtract 10 (TL-6 × 2) from rolls to detect it with sensors. It also has a dynamic chameleon system on its hull, giving -4 to Vision rolls to detect it – useful for landing on planets when you don't want people to know you're there . . .

The *Chorialooa* uses reactionless thrusters in atmosphere and reactionless warp drives with pseudo-velocity in space.

CUSTOMIZING SPARRIAL SHIPS

Sparrials *favor* light, agile, speedy craft. They're also disinclined to pay through their sensitive noses for them. Here are some options the GM may use to give sparrial ships their own flavor.

Enhanced Systems: The sparrial love of speed has resulted in higher-performance drive systems, cheaper ones, or both (see *GURPS Spaceships*, pp. 24-25, 36-38, and 40-41). This may be due to the dedication of sparrial engineers, or the cunning of sparrial corporate espionage.

Four-Finger Discount: If sparrials can steal a starship, or parts for one, they'll at least consider it. (Leaving sparrial crewmembers alone often requires comm calls of, "Yes, Meera, you stole the ship again. Bring it back now,

please.") Sparrial "chop-shops" can render down stolen or "dubiously salvaged" starships, providing cheaper parts.

Sparriion Armor: Native materials on the sparrial homeworld are useful as starship armor, granting organic armor (*GURPS Spaceships*, p. 12) at any TL, reducing ship armor prices for sparrials, or both. Any of these options could make other races eager to trade!

Tech Level Discount: While many components often remain expensive even when there are higher-tech alternatives, electronics are prone to being discounted, either because they've been used to the point of obsolescence or because fabricating them has become trivial. Appropriate parts are discounted by 10%-25% per TL below the campaign's TL.

If the setting permits, contragrav lifters may be added. There are additional, unshielded cargo holds in the front hull and central hull, for customization by the GM if desired. Options from *GURPS Spaceships* include refrigerated cargo holds, more passenger cabins, contragrav lifters, additional weaponry, or force shields. Adding lower-TL ECM may be useful if pirates are equally likely to have lower-TL sensors/missiles! See *Customizing Sparrial Ships* (above). If replacing cargo holds with other systems, remember to increase the ship's cost and reduce its load.

Front Hull Systems

- [1] Light Alloy Armor (dDR 3).
- [2] Defensive ECM.
- [3-4] Cargo Holds (15 tons capacity each).
- [5-6] Cargo Holds (15 tons capacity each).

Central Hull System

- [1] Light Alloy Armor (dDR 3).
- [2] Habitat (bunkroom, cabin).
- [3] Cargo Hold (7.5 tons, shielded).
- [4] Habitat (bunkroom, 5 tons of steerage cargo).
- [5] Cargo Hold (15 tons capacity).
- [6!] Medium Battery (two turrets with 30 MJ UV lasers, one "top" and one "bottom").
- [core] Control Room (C7 computers, comm/sensors 7, three control stations).

Rear Hull System

- [1] Light Alloy Armor (dDR 3).
- [2] Habitat (one-bed sickbay, minifac fabricator).
- [3] Engine Room (one workspace).
- [4!-5!] Stardrive Engines (FTL-2).

Rear Hull System

- [6!] Standard Reactionless Engine (1G acceleration).
- [core] Fusion Plant (two Power Points).

The ship has a winged hull. If the campaign has contra-gravity technology, add artificial gravity. If it doesn't have contra-grav, there may still be enough limited gravitic control to allow artificial gravity.

The *Chorialooa* can be operated with a skeleton crew of two: a pilot with communications, sensors, and navigation skills, and an engineer with First Aid. The preferred minimum crew is six: three engineers and three pilots who can take eight-hour shifts. The best pilot does the tricky stuff, while the others may have just enough skill to "sit the boards" on the off-watches. The *optimal* crew, by sparrial standards, adds two more to fill in any gaps in the other crew's skill-sets; at least one should have enough medical skills to handle the sickbay. The ship can also take on two passengers.



TL	Spacecraft	dST/HP	Hnd/SR	HT	Move	LWt.	Load	SM	Occ	dDR	Range	Cost
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PILOTING/TL11 (HIGH-PERFORMANCE SPACECRAFT)

11^	<i>Chorialooa</i>	50	-1/5	14	1G/c	300	87.5	+7	10ASV	3	2x	\$19.41M
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In atmosphere, top air speed is 2,500 mph, and it has Hnd/SR +3/6.

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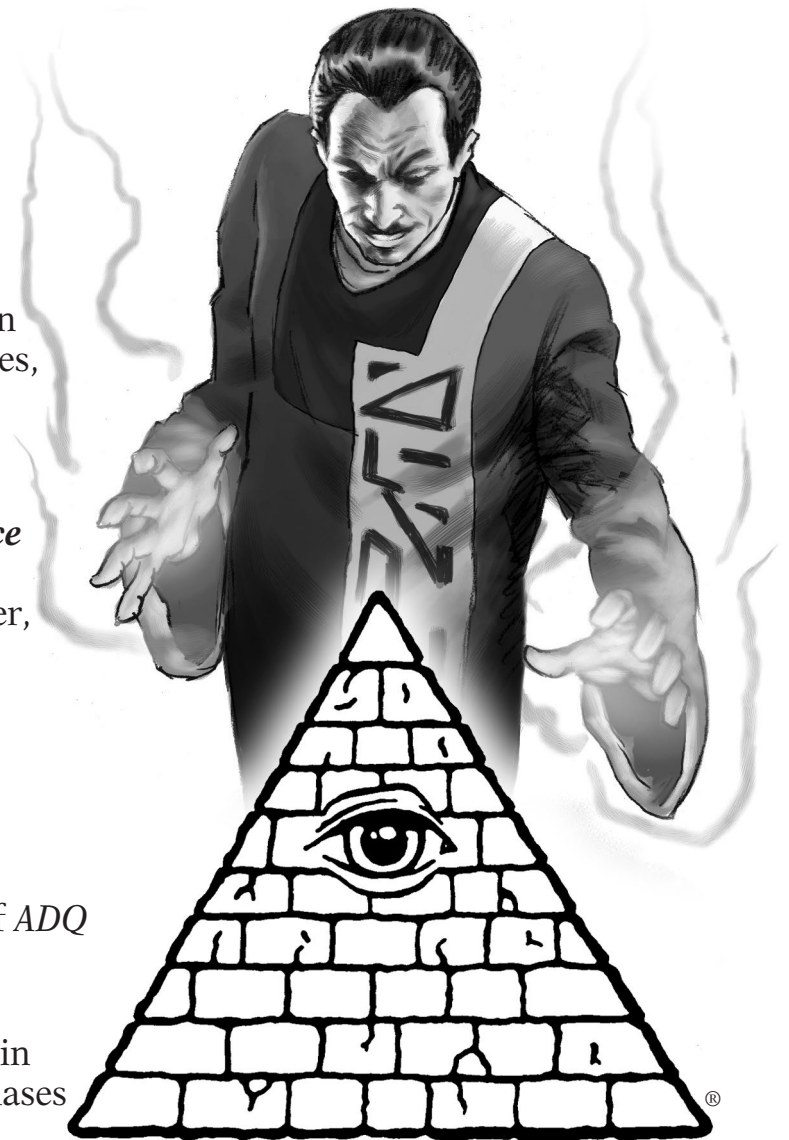
*A zealous locksmith died of late,
And did arrive at heaven gate.
He stood without and would not knock,
Because he meant to pick the lock.*

– William Camden

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