BILL COFFIN'S

SEPTIMUS

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D6 QUICKSTART

FREE RPG DAY
FREE
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FIRE & FORGET

A D6 ROLE-PLAYING GAME

by Bill Coffin

WELCOME TO FREE RPG DAY!

Welcome to SEPTIMUS: FIRE & FORGET, a free role-playing game of hard-hitting science fiction adventure set in a distant future. This is the **Free RPG Day** version of SEPTIMUS, a forthcoming RPG from **West End Games**, so what you will find here is a bit of background, some quickstart rules and everything else you will need to play a bare-bones session of this game. Keep your eyes peeled for the full version of SEPTIMUS, which is coming soon and will have tons more setting information, adventure hooks, character templates, special powers and abilities, supertechnology, starships, alien secrets and much, much more!

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The full release of **Bill Coffin's Septimus** will be of much higher quality; hardcover, full color interiors on high quality paper.

This is bookset is intened as a content preview, not a design preview.

1.0 :: INTRODUCTION

SEPTIMUS is a science fiction role-playing game set in the far future and in a distant corner of our galaxy. It takes place within the SEVENTH EMPIRE, which has ruled known space for eons, using its elaborate network of hyperspace tunnels to foster trade and to keep the peace. But after being used so extensively, the fabric of spacetime within the hyperspatial sub-dimension has begun to grow threadbare and worn, and now most of the ships that attempt to travel instantly between the stars end up many light-years off course. And those are the lucky ones. Many more who enter hyperspace never return at all. This has caused a rapid breakdown of Imperial order as the AEDOS DYNASTY, the ruling hierarchs who have governed the Empire for more than a dozen generations, watched helplessly. Within the span of a generation, trade ground to a halt throughout much of the Empire, and internal strife stoked the fires of unrest and civil war. With the Empire in tatters and utter anarchy looming, many who still had the means to leave their homeworlds did so for safe havens wherever they could find them. Some braved the dangers of hyperspace in their quest, knowing it might easily spell their doom. Others went the slow way, and consigned themselves to decades of travel just to get to their neighboring star system. For the Aedos Imperials, the beginning of the end is at hand.

Out on the distant fringes of the Empire lies the solar system of SEPTIMUS, which for many generations had been the lonely enclave of the SINDAVAR EXTENT, an order of militant aesthetics whose religious practices were as strict as they were unforgiving. Dedicated to the worship of technology in all of its forms, the Extent lived a harsh life on the edge of known space until they made a startling discovery. Where there should have been a planetary orbit between the system's third and fifth worlds, there had been nothing except for a mysterious abyss that was known for swallowing up many of the ships that crossed its threshold. Extent scientists, after much exploration and study, realized that this orbit was in fact a hyperspace depression, and within it lay one of the most remarkable discoveries in human history. It was an ancient DYSON SPHERE - an artificial, spherical construct surrounding a star and built to a radius of one astronomical unit (the distance between the Earth and the Sun). The inside of the Sphere hosted an Earth-like environment more than 150 million times the surface area of even the largest habitable planet in the Seventh Empire. Indeed, the entire population of the Empire could live comfortably in this single Sphere, safe from the madness consuming every other world known to mankind.

The Sindavar Extent very quickly abandoned its settlements on the outer planets of the solar system and resettled within the Sphere, which they re-named SEPTIMUS, after the star it surrounded. Working with an uncommon zeal, the Extent interfaced the long-dormant alien mainframe within this vast construct, activating the SINGULARITY DRIVES within. One by one, the Drives came online, as did the advanced artificial intelligences known as PERSONA CONSTRUCTS (or more simply, PERSONAS) that were stored within them. Taking control of these AIs, the Extent put them to work, operating the various supertechnology forges located throughout the Sphere to build tools, vehicles, homes... whatever was needed to survive within the Sphere. These efforts were concentrated in rebuilding the ruins of what appeared to be an utterly massive alien city located on the inner surface of the Sphere. Large enough to cover the Earth several times over, this mega-city, later re-named ARCOPOLIS, was restored piece by piece by the Extent, which re-settled there as they built their way through the ruins. Arcopolis became the center of the Sindavar Extent's civilization, as well as the heart of all settlement within Septimus. With each new section of the city restored, Extent scientists would unlock another piece of lost alien technology or knowledge, contributing to what would ultimately be known as the CODEX OF MANUFACTURE, or simply the CODEX.

The population within Septimus exploded as the Extent used the Design archive to pioneer bold new advances in the twin sciences of GENOTECHNOLOGY and NANOTECHNOLOGY, using what they had learned to modify their own biology to a more alien standard. This in turn enabled members of the Extent to incorporate numerous nanotech modifications to their bodies and minds, giving them extended lifespans, extreme cellular resilience (enabling them to be medically regenerated from just a few cells) and an ability to merge their consciousness with machines, allowing for hyper-efficient use of all sorts of technology. For the Extent, these developments fostered others, such as the widespread usage of CLONING and the wholesale creating of entire genetic templates from scratch (in the form of artificial humanoids known as SYNTHIENTS). All the while, the Extent continued to rely on its ever-expanding Design Archive and the help of its enslaved Persona Constructs (known collectively as the STEEL DREAM - the several dozen artificial intelligences stored within the Sphere's singularity Drives) to continue rebuilding the ruins within the Sphere in their own image. At the same time, however, more and more starships from the outside galaxy arrive by the day, driving into the hyperspace well outside the Sphere in the desperate hope that it will somehow deliver them to within the Sphere. Half of those who try are never seen from again. The others who make it learn too late that there is no going back. Those who have managed to find entry into Septimus have no idea how to leave it, making the voyage here a one-way trip inside what amounts, for some, to the largest prison cell ever imagined.

Anyone who seeks to live on the Earth-like surface of Septimus has only two choices: live within the ever-expanding scope of Arcopolis or try to live anywhere else in the effectively infinite wilderness of this alien world. But very quickly, those living within Septimus learn that the Extent's interfacing with the Sphere's singularity drives has enabled them to remotely control all of the large-scale SUPERTECHNOLOGY in use in the Sphere. The city-building machinery, the Codex, the legion of robotic workers and servants built to serve the Extent, even the nanotechnology present within most of the living people of the Extent themselves - all of it could be centrally controlled by the Extent leadership through their enslaved Persona Constructs. As time passed, those who entered Septimus realized that any technology they brought with them to the Sphere would slowly begin to malfunction and cease to work as it would be strangely and remotely co-opted by Persona-driven NANOBOTS, remotely co-opted it, making technology itself under the complete control of the Extent. To live within Septimus, it became necessary to surrender oneself to the technology of the Extent, and through it, to the Extent's control.

For those coming to Septimus, there was no other way to live, other than to revert to a pre-industrial state in the wilderness of the Sphere, which many have done. But most settlers have submitted to the Extent's control, largely because they came to Septimus already exhausted by the levels of anarchy and chaos they fled from in the Seventh Empire. But even then, the Extent had to extend its control of its subject so that they would become slaves to the very technologies they have come to depend on in their daily lives. Anybody living under Extent control is implanted with Extent nanotechnology that is labeled as a kind of quality-of-life upgrade that will grant any new subjects with the same extended lifespan, resiliency and technology linkage already enjoyed by the rest of the Extent. And while these implants do that, they have a much more insidious purpose. For this same nanotech provides the Extent leadership with a comprehensive catalog of its host's genetic information. As the Extent populace's genetic structures themselves are slowly and inexorably studied and modified as the Extent sees fit, these same subjects are also cloned and eventually replaced by subsequent versions of themselves. The Extent actually transfers the mental template of the recently deceased into their newly cloned bodies so that the individual identity goes on without skipping a beat. But with each subsequent transfer, everyone within the Extent is further modified not to think for themselves, not to question, not to resist. This is what the Extent leadership secretly refers to as the ZERO EFFECT, in reference to how it ultimately breeds zero resistance to authority. To those who resist the Extent and who have figured out that there is some kind of massive, clandestine behavior modification process in place, it is simply

and derisively called DRONING. Droning takes seven generations of identity transference to produce what the Extent considers to be the ideal subject - hard-working, technically innovative, socially adept yet totally loyal to its government and unquestioning of any orders it receives from those it has been conditioned to accept as an authority figure. Even once a person hits the zero effect, however, certain social conditions might arise that require further conditioning, such as the rejection of newly formed elements of society the Extent leadership finds objectionable. Rather than wait for subjects to die again to condition the proper responses to these stimuli, the Extent uses subliminal programming in the media.

So it is that the Extent has created a temple of total control in deep space, populated by more than a trillion people now, many of whom were either cloned from clones, synthetically created within Extent laboratories, or modified into complicity and complacency by Extent technologies.

Then came the CORRUPTION.

Nobody really knows when the Corruption started. Those in control do not even believe it exists. But there are those who point to evidence that the Extent's overuse of genotech and nanotech modifications, paired with their integration with the Sphere's alien (and not entirely understood) technologies and the over-reliance on the efforts of the persona constructs has culminated in a disaster scenario. These various technologies are beginning to conflict with each other, and the entire Sindavar civilization is poised for a massive systems failure that could destroy not just the technology of the Sphere, but kill all who have been integrated into the Sindavar technological continuum. The notion of a coming catastrophe has been bolstered by explorers who, in the process of salvaging technology from other alien city sites strewn across the Sphere's inner surface, have pieced together bits of information that suggest that the mysterious aliens who built this Sphere (and who strangely left so little of themselves behind) destroyed themselves in exactly the same manner that the Extent is doing now. This over-reliance and overintegration with technology ultimately causes fatal conflicts with each other and it brings the whole system down, along with everything that is attached to it. As talk of this scenario spread throughout Arcopolis, the Extent labeled it as the GREAT HERESY and moved to imprison, recondition or destroy those who professed it.

But by then, it was too late. Too many had seen the effects of the Corruption firsthand, in the degradation of people's own genetic templates, in the inability of clones to be further perpetuated by additional cloning, by unstoppable mutation among Synthients that gave them distinctive personalities and senses of identity. In Arcopolis itself, the Corruption affected the super-

technology that had enabled the Extent to rebuild their ancient alien city, and on the fringes of it, where new construction met old ruins, there developed a gray one between living city and dead ruin. But more than that, at the edge of Arcopolis, the infrastructure so recently built with corrupting technology began to break down and slowly fall apart. In a city as huge as Arcopolis, this slow unraveling of the edge of the metropolis could go on for decades before people in the city center would even take notice, but to the Extent's highest leaders, the development of this periphery of new ruins, known collectively as the SCRAPLANDS, is a troubling development that must be kept quiet for the sake of maintaining control over the rest of the populace.

But even then, the notion of the total control the Extent had worked so hard to cultivate was beginning to slip through its fingers in too many different ways to counter entirely. As more and more colonists came to Septimus from the outside, there were more than enough free-thinking outsiders with technology independent of the Sindavar mainframe who began transporting people out of Arcopolis, if they wanted to go. These NEWCOMERS established a society of their own within the DEEP SKY (that space within the Spheres interior, between the surface and the central star) and on the ARCHIPELAGO, a group of seven planets all inhabiting the same orbital track around the sun. This group's orbital configuration resembled a string of pearls, only those pearls were planets, each equidistant from each other, and each an unopened tomb of alien technology and civilization. So far from Arcopolis, these enclaves of settlers living outside of the Extent's control, or FREEZONES, remained free of the technological co-opting that had subverted all surface tech to the Extent's will. What's more, freezone hackers managed to break the codes to the Extent's technology subversion protocols, making it possible to operate technology within Arcopolis, or anywhere else in the Sphere, for that matter, free from Extent control and the interfacing of the Steel Dream.

Things for the Extent went from bad to worse as freezone militants started resistance cells within Arcopolis with the intent of helping those within the Extent who yearn for freedom to escape and make it to freezone territory. But such resistance quickly morphed into a dozen different movements, with some intent merely to evacuate people beyond the Extent's influence while others wish to destroy the Extent entirely while still others wish to overthrow the Extent and replace it with some other kind of government. This has led to a fracturing of the various movements dedicated to resisting the Extent. All of these movements have been decried as terrorists and insurgents by the Extent itself, a grave threat to all who would live in the supertech utopia the Extent has built for its subjects. Despite the ferocity of the fighting between the Ex-

tent and its enemies, the scope of it, compared to the scope of Arcopolis itself, amounted to little more than a violent nuisance, the kind of thing that rankled only the most controlling members of the Extent leadership, who could not tolerate even the slightest defiance of its authority. And so it went for some time, with the Extent expending a considerable amount of resources trying to thwart and destroy its rebel foes while the rebels themselves evaded their enemy, hitting and running as best they could. It continued like this, with more newcomer ships and their cargoes of settlers slowly increasing the scope of the conflict, until the dreaded IRON HELIX attack that changed everything.

Iron Helix was the code name for the freezone military operation tasked with destroying every persona within the Steel Dream and thereby destroy the Extent's ability to manage the vast supertech empire it had created. The attack was a partial success, resulting in the fragmentation of three personas out of the several dozen the Extent had under its control. These persona fragments scattered within the Extent mainframe, where they developed into independent identities, able to move through the Septimus architecture as the rest of the Steel Dream could, but free from Extent control. For the Extent, the prospect of free personas roaming the architecture was a nightmare scenario it had hoped would never come about. But more than that, Iron Helix proved that the insurgency it faced was a deadly serious one that, despite its small size, could one day destroy the Extent itself.

From that point on, the Extent has gone to a war footing, dedicating ever more resources to destroying or subjugating any settlement within Septimus outside of Extent control. To the Extent, there can only be the Extent or nothing; there can be no middle ground or peace among different civilizations. To the many freezones within the space of Septimus and to the low-tech enclaves scattered across the Sphere's inner surface, this has plunged everything into a state of perpetual war. Outside of Arcopolis, it is not a matter of if the Extent will one day arrive with an army to destroy you. It is a matter of when.

And so what began as a refuge for a galaxy on the brink of ruin has become a warzone, a prison in which those seeking safety have only been delivered into a new kind of danger. A place where covert operatives move silently through the shadows of Arcopolis on their secret missions to undermine the Extent in a never-ending game of cat and mouse. It is a place where soldiers in power armor engage in high-caliber gun battles among the skyscrapers and floating platforms of the supercity and beyond. Where clone armies search and destroy fellow clones in wargames meant to entertain an uncertain populace and to desensitize them to the horrors of war. It is where armored vehicles blast away at

each other in the crumbling confines of the Scraplands and in more distant ruins and open country all across the Sphere. It is where high above the surface, Extent warships reach into space to do battle with the pirates and mercenaries and rebels who occupy the Archipelago and will not be dislodged from there without dying first. It is a place where conflict of every kind is on full burn. A war with endless fronts and endless configurations... and endless possibilities for glory, victory and tragedy.

Still, there is the possibility of freedom and prosperity here, if only the tyranny of the Extent can be kept in check, and if only the revolutionary zeal of those offended by the Extent's very philosophies can keep from goading the Extent into ongoing militarism. To the more than one trillion people living in Septimus, this is a time of great uncertainty as well as of great promise. Outside of this seemingly intractable conflict with the Extent, the presence of so many alien ruins and technology fragments across the Sphere point to incredible secrets to unlock, if only humanity can abandon its folly of war long enough to think straight and act properly. Will the people of Septimus create the safe haven this place was supposed to be? Or will the ambitions and suspicions of the people within the Sphere doom everything to the ruin of war and devastation? For there is no clear good and evil within Septimus, there is only the challenge to survive amid the threat of war. And in every war, both sides have their heroes, and all know the pain of destruction. In a world such as this, there are both extraordinary people and extraordinary circumstances, and where those two things combine arise the chance for a mere handful of people to determine the fate of humanity itself.

This...is SEPTIMUS.

1.1 :: SEPTIMUS: FIRE AND FORGET

While the setting information provided in the previous section gives a basic overview of the world and game of SEPTIMUS, this game text will only cover the bare essentials for playing the game from the point of view of Newcomer explorers and refugees who have entered Septimus and run afoul of the Sindavar Extent. There are many other possible modes of play in SEPTIMUS, but for full information on them, you'll have to pick up the full version of this game, due to come out later this year.

2.0 :: WHAT IS ROLEPLAYING?

Now that you have a taste of what the world of SEPTIMUS has in store for you, it's time for you to jump into the driver's seat and begin having adventures of your own as a Sindavar enforcer, a rebel from the Archipelago, a Newcomer privateer, or whatever other exciting path you choose to follow. But first, let's go over a few basic concepts of role-playing for the benefit of those who never tried a role-playing game before.

Roleplaying is a kind of entertainment where you get to pretend you are somebody else, usually some kind of heroic persona. This imaginary person is your character, and through your character, you get to engage in all sorts of fun and exciting adventures. In the world of SEPTIMUS, your character might very well get mixed up in dangerous situations like the ones described in the previous section's short stories.

Also known as RPGs, role-playing games typically involve three to six players-each of whom runs a single player character-and a game master (or G.M.) who acts as the game's referee, narrator, organizer, and administrator. In one sense, the players and the G.M. playing against each other, since the G.M. pits some kind of adventure, crisis or other dramatic situation against the players and challenges them with a way to get out of trouble and triumph. Along the way, the G.M. will orchestrate whatever hardships or trials the characters must successfully navigate if they are to succeed. At the same time, the players and the G.M. are jointly participating in a collaborative storytelling process, and that makes them sort of partners. As the adventure at hand progresses, the players announce what their characters will do, the G.M. takes that information and reacts to it, telling the players how well their actions succeed, or what they must do to make their actions succeed. The players respond in turn, and the game goes on, with the players and G.M. playing off each other. Along the way, this interaction forms a story that often can't really be appreciated until after the game session is done, and both the players and the G.M. can look back on the gaming session and revel in the story they have created and participated in together.

Ultimately, any RPG is about the player characters. They are the real protagonists of the game, and the success of their actions that what's really at stake in any given adventure. The G.M. may act as the character's foil, but in the end, how well the G.M. succeeds really isn't important. What matters is whether or not the player characters meet with triumph or defeat. Everything else is an ancillary outcome. In this regard, one might be tempted to consider the player characters' success as "winning" and their defeat as "losing," but in a RPG, things are not quite that simple. Why? Because of the way that they are played. Because of the stories generated by the adventures shared by player and G.M. And most of all, because players often use the same character over and over with each adventure or playing session unfolding like the next chapter in an ongoing story. In time, players grow attached to their characters the same way we might get attached to the recurring characters of a series of books, or a television show or a movie franchise. So in that regard, the real goal for most players is not so much to "win" or "lose," but to advance one's character, to avoid death or defeat, and to enjoy the adventures at hand for as long as they last. In the long run, a RPG is like life. There are no real winners and losers in life, even though sometimes we like to tell ourselves otherwise. By that token, by the time a character dies or is retired by a player, that character can not be said as having "won" or "lost." He merely was part of some adventures, and the sum effect or value of his deeds is up to the players to evaluate on their own terms. See? Like life, only a little different.

2.1 :: WHAT YOU NEED TO PLAY

Like any other role-playing game, you will need a few extra things besides this book to play the game. You will find that what follows are common to most RPGs, not just this one.

A PLAYING GROUP. At the very least, you will need one person to be the G.M. and one person to be a player. However, role-playing like this can be pretty difficult and not nearly as much fun as if you include more people. While you will decide for yourself what is the best size of role-playing group, a common size is three to six players and a G.M. Fewer than that, and the games start to feel a little forced. More than that, and the games might descend into anarchy, especially is the G.M. is inexperienced and can not handle overseeing multiple players at once.

DICE. With very few exceptions, all RPGs use some form of dice. Being a D6 game, SEPTIMUS uses six-sided dice, the kinds you can find in most board games. Each player should have a set of at least four dice to play with (though they may want to have even more than that). Dice can be bought at most toy, gaming and hobby stores. There are also numerous freeware programs to download that allow for electronic dice-rolling for those who wish to play this game online vie e-mail or on web forums.

PENCILS AND PAPER. You'll find it's pretty hard to play without these. At the back of this game are character sheets for you to record your character's vital information. There is also a combat sheet for the G.M. to copy and keep on hand when running combat in a game. There is also two kinds of graph paper - standard grid-type graph paper and hexpaper, either of which are good for mapping out areas or scenes within the game. All of these sheets may be printed or copied for your personal use. In addition to these, it is a good idea to keep some scratch paper around. In any RPG session, there is almost always going to be a need for some scratch paper. Finally, when you're filling your character sheet, use a pencil, not a pen. Few of your character's details are likely to stay the same forever. Besides, being able to erase what you write is a good idea, even when you're just scribbling things down for the moment.

G.M.'s SCREEN. This is another optional prop. In the old days, a G.M. never dared to play without a three-fold piece of cardboard, sometimes two of them, set up to shield his dice throws and written notes from the prying eyes of the players. Since the G.M. is going to have all the materials he needs for the adventure before him, a player could simply look over and read them, thus ruining any surprises the adventure had in

store. G.M. shields were the solution to that. They usually are made for a specific RPG, and have that RPG's most important information, charts, tables, etc. printed on the shield for easy reference. Nowadays, these things see less use, perhaps because it's just as easy for players to be cool and not sneak a peak at the G.M.'s notes. Either way, G.M. shields are readily available at your local hobby or game retailer for other game systems. You can always use one of those for SEPTIMUS.

FOOD AND DRINK! It is a time-honored tradition with more than two decades of experience verifying it: if you're going to have a good roleplaying session, you'd better have some good vittles on hand. Pizza and soda pop are always favorites, as are chips, pretzels, and various other snacks. Try to stay away from especially sweet snacks, though. Chances are you'll just be distracted by the sugar rush (if the caffeine from the soda pop doesn't get you first), and most gamers (especially yours truly) are distracted easily enough as it is. Oh, a point of etiquette: try not to serve or bring to the session snacks that have a powdery coating. Dusty fingers have a funny way of marking up the pages of your game book, not to mention your dice, scratch paper, etc.

A SENSE OF IMAGINATION. We mention this last, but it's really the most important ingredient. Roleplaying games are theaters of the imagination. Their characters, settings, themes, dramas and action all take place within the minds of those who play them. If you don't come prepared to imagine everything that the game involved, you're likely to have a really boring experience. As important as this is, though, it pretty much goes without saying. After all, one of the reasons why gamers are drawn to RPGs is because they have exactly the kind of fertile imagination needed to get the most out of games like SEPTIMUS.

A SENSE OF DRAMA. The adventures you, your fellow players and your G.M. will all engage in will typically involve a great deal f danger, uncertainty, opposition, heroism and villainy. Not every roleplaying game, or every roleplaying game session needs to be like this, of course, but since SEPTIMUS is an adventuresome RPG, the game is geared towards lots of action and excitement. But even those are just means to a greater end: drama. The whole reason why your characters are put in peril, or have missions to accomplish, or have enemies to confront is to provide drama to you, the player. The tension of whether your character will fail or succeed is what drives a lot of the excitement of role-playing, and the more you can appreciate it and really get into the act, the better.

ONE MORE THING: The sections you just read does not entirely describe role-playing. It does not even come close. No description of this sort ever can, for the thing about role-playing is that it is far easier to un-

derstand it by playing it than by simply reading about it. With that in mind, we're going to cut this part of the book short it would be best to stop talking about RPGs and to just drop you into SEPTIMUS, so that you might learn as you go along. Any role-playing game can be an intimidating thing to learn at first, especially if you are unfamiliar with role-playing in general. The best advice we can give you is to focus on your character and really pretend to be that imaginary person. Think about how your character would act when challenged by death and danger. Think about what you might do in a world such as the one of SEPTIMUS. Imagine what heroes would want to accomplish in such a setting, and then go about accomplishing those very things! Most of all, do not worry about all of the rules and lingo you will see thrown about. Let more experienced players and the G.M. clue you in to the mechanics of the game as the situation warrants. And if your entire group is new to the game, don't fret. The D6 rules uses to power this game are both simple and intuitive. But don't just take our word for it - in the next sections we have provided a brief overview of the D6 rules set, a sample character and adventure for you to run through alone. This will give you a good enough idea of how the game works so that by the time you and your friends come together to play, you'll be ready to go.

3.0 :: D6 MECHANICS

What follows is a boiled-down version of how the D6 rules work. These are pretty simple, and after a quick read-through, you should be good to go to begin playing SEPTIMUS.

3.1 :: ATTRIBUTES

The first thing you need to know about how to run this game is that every character has a series of basic characteristics that describe him - how smart, strong, personable, insightful or proficient he is. These are the character's ATTRIBUTES. Every character in SEPTIMUS has six attributes:

DEXTERITY is a measure of a character's coordination, balance and physical finesse.

KNOWLEDGE is a character's education and knowledge of facts and data.

MECHANICAL is short for "mechanical aptitude." It gauges the character's ability to control vehicles and other complex technology.

PERCEPTION measures the sharpness of a character's senses, his ability to interpret the behavior of others, and his powers of observation.

STRENGTH is a measure of the character's physical prowess - including stamina, the ability to heal, and athletic abilities as well as raw physical strength.

TECHNICAL is short for "technical aptitude." It is an instinctive feel for technology and learned vocations.

3.2 :: DIE CODES

Many of the actions the players undertake in this game will have uncertain outcomes. Whether they are trying to fix a malfunctioning suit of power armor, pilot a jumpglider, or battle an opponent, the final result of the player's actions is up in the air. To determine whether these kinds of actions succeed or fail, the player must throw a number of six-sided dice and hope that the right number comes up. Rolling dice is a big part of this game, and the core concept to all of this is the die code. Every one of your character's basic attributes (such as strength, agility, endurance, etc.) has a die code assigned to it. Anything your character might try to do defaults to the appropriate attribute. If you have a strength of 3D, then any time your character tries to do something strength-related, you roll 3 six-sided dice to see if you succeeded or failed.

Sometimes you will want to try specific tasks for which you have a skill. Skills are based off of your attributes, and every character has a certain number of skills that represent the things he is naturally better at than other characters. Suppose that your character has the lift skill, which is based off of your Strength attribute. Your lift die code will essentially be your strength die code plus a few more dice attached to it. A starting character might have a strength of 3D and a lift skill of 4D or 5D.

Sometimes, your die code will have a little bonus added to it, such as "+1" or "+2." These are referred to as pips - you add these to the total result you roll on the dice. So if you have a lift skill of 3D+2, you roll 3 dice and add 2 to the result. No die code can have a pip of greater than "+2" attached to it. If a die code has a pip of "+2" and it gets another pip added to it, then the die code rounds up to the next highest die code. For example, if you have a lift skill of 3D+2, and you use a really good shovel which would give you another +1 to your die code, the total result would be 3D+3. But since you can't have a pip of +3, the die code rounds up to 4D.

3.3 :: THE WILD DIE

Whenever any player, including the GM, makes any roll, one of the dice must be different from the rest (in size or color). This is the wild die, and it represents the randomness of life, like the direction of the wind affecting the flight of a bullet, that is too small to warrant its own difficulty modifier.

Example: If a character's agility attribute is 3D+1, when he tries to jump on a table, he rolls two regular dice and one wild die.

If the player has only 1D to roll, then that one die is always the wild die.

If the player rolls a 6 on the wild die, then a critical success has been rolled; the player may add that 6 to the total result and then roll the wild die again. If it rolls another 6, then the player adds it and keeps on rolling, repeating the process until the wild die finally produces a number other than 6. This is known as an exploding die roll. The wild die's value essentially explodes upon rolling a critical success because theoretically, the Wild Die could never stop turning up 6s, making the potential result limitless. Where the effect of a critical success really comes into play is that it allows characters the chance, however slim, to successfully do something that might otherwise be effectively impossible.

If the player rolls a 1 on the initial toss of the wild die, this is a critical failure and the GM may chose one of two options for the result, depending on the gravity of the situation.

1. The critical failure cancels out the highest roll. Then the player adds the remaining values and the roll is determined normally.

2. Add the dice results normally, but a penalty or a complication occurs. The GM gauges the significance of the penalty or complication. While the type of mishap is left strictly up to the gamemaster's interpretation, penalties are much more common than complications. Penalties are routine; complications are special events which increase tension and add to the drama of the story. If you want a simple mechanic, roll a die: on a 1-4, the character suffers a penalty; on a 5-6, the character suffers a complication.

Penalties: When a character suffers a penalty, the character loses the wild die and their highest die for that round. If more than one die is tied for highest roll, the character loses only one die.

Complications: Complications are much more creative than simply taking away a character's highest die and they help tell a more interesting and exciting story. Sometimes the results are disastrous for a character, while other times they are simply intriguing or even humorous. They should be unusual events that help move the story along or help amplify exciting or dramatic situations, such as the conclusion of an exciting adventure.

Complications may put characters into more danger, but they shouldn't be immediately fatal; instead, the characters should have to use their utmost courage and skill to deal with the situation.

A complication may also be a way of balancing then characters - if one character has become invincible doe to a fantastic set of armor, for example, when the character rolls a complication, the armor may malfunction.

Complications should be directly related to the skill or attribute being used when the mishap was rolled. The game master must be sure to keep his complications fair and balanced - the players will get very upset if they think you are misusing the complications rule.

Here are some suggested complications you might want to spring upon your characters. Complications must be customized to reflect the current situation and the story, so the gamemaster should take a few a minutes to come up with complications for key scenes in his adventures.

One of the characters kills a guard in combat - unfortunately, when the soldier hits the ground, it triggers the grenade on his belt, and most of the characters are within blast radius. The characters only have a few seconds to react...

A character is trying to sneak up on enemy troops when his comlink squawks on ("Hey! Have you guys infiltrated the base yet?"), alerting the troops.

A character slips and falls while moving, possibly injuring himself (if he twists his ankle, he might only be able to move at walking speed), or at the very least, being caught out in the open during the middle of a battle.

A character is bargaining for a good price on a weapon when a complication happens: someone else comes up offering what the seller is asking for the weapon. This is especially helpful is the weapon is somehow necessary to continue the adventure.

The characters are tracking someone with a beacon. The complication is that the target has dropped the beacon or somebody else has taken it, leading the players on a wild goose chase.

The characters are piloting a vehicle when a complication happens; the vehicle has run out of fuel, its controls freeze up or its cannons begin to misfire because that patch job you did on the wiring finally gave out.

A character is in a sword fight with another character. He successfully parries the other character's attack, but rolls a mishap. The gamemaster decides that the two weapons have entangled with each other, and both characters must make Strength rolls to free them.

Note: Unlike rolling a Critical Failure initially on the Wild Die, no complications occur when a 1 shows up on later tosses of the Wild Die in the same roll.

3.4 :: DIFFICULTIES

Difficulty numbers are a simple way to resolve whether or not a character does something when he's not acting directly against another character. Each type of task should be ranked as one of six difficulty levels: Very Easy, Easy, Moderate, Difficult, Very Difficult, and Heroic. Each one of these difficulty levels has a numerical difficulty range assigned to it. The difficulty range represents the target number a character must roll his or her relevant die code against when trying to accomplish a task.

VERY EASY (1-5): Almost anybody should be able to do this most of the time. Examples: Firing a

weapon at point-blank range. Driving a jumpglider across open, flat terrain. Knowing that Septimus is a Dyson Sphere within the Seventh Empire.

EASY (6-10): This task is a little tougher, but most characters should be able to do this most of the time. Examples: Firing a weapon at short range. Driving a jumpglider over somewhat rough terrain, like a choppy lake. Knowing that Septimus has been previously colonized by the Sindavar Extent and that

MODERATE (11-15): This kind of task requires some skill, effort and concentration. Examples: Firing a weapon at medium range. Driving a jumpglider over a big ditch or other obstacle and keeping control. Knowing which sectors within Arcopolis are safe havens for Newcomers and which are not.

DIFFICULT (16-20): Normally only professionals will be able to pull off this kind of task. These kinds of tasks require thought, effort and lock wouldn't hurt, either. Examples: Firing a weapon at long range. Driving a jumpglider at high speed around moving pedestrians and other obstacles. Knowing where in Arcopolis your character can safely hide out in a manhunt.

VERY DIFFICULT (21-30): Even professionals have to really work at succeeding at Very Difficult tasks. Only the most talented individuals in the galaxy will succeed at these tasks with any regularity. Examples: Shooting at someone at long range who is behind very good cover. Being able to safely drive a jumpglider at high speed through a traffic jam by taking to walkways and making insane maneuvers. Knowing which members within the Sindavar Extent are open to bribery.

HEROIC (31+): Something that's almost impossible to do, and calls for extraordinary effort and luck. Very seldom will this kind of success "just happen." Examples: Shooting out the knee joint of a suit of power armor at long range with small arms. Piloting a jumpglider between streams of tracer fire without getting hit. Navigating a hyperspace jump from within Septimus.

Not all tasks within a given difficulty range are the same - some are a little harder than others. Therefore, each difficulty level has a range of possible difficulty numbers. Once the gamemaster has chosen the difficulty, he should pick a difficulty number from that range. Example: A suit of Newcomer power armor has been damaged in combat and requires a Moderate mechanical roll to fix. The GM chooses a difficulty number of 12, since the character in question is already familiar with Newcomer armor designs. If the armor had been designed by the Sindavar Extent, whose designs the character is not familiar with, that same Moderate difficulty number might be 14 or 15, depending on the GM's ruling.

3.5 :: OPPOSED ROLLS

Characters will make opposed rolls when they are acting directly against another character. Sometimes characters will use the same skill or attribute; often characters will be using different skills against each other.

When opposed rolls occur, each character makes their roll. Whoever rolls higher has the advantage or succeeds. In combat, if the shooting character rolls higher than his target's dodge, he hits. If characters are wrestling to get a knife, whoever rolls higher gets it.

3.6 :: MODIFIERS

If one character has a clear advantage over another, you may want to assign a modifier to reflect this.

Modifiers aren't used when one character simply has a better skill than the other because that's taken care of with the skill codes; instead, modifiers are used to reflect unusual situations where skill is not the only determining factor.

Some sample modifiers:

The characters are racing to get information out of a computer system. If one character already knows this system inside and out, and the other character has never seen a system like this at all, the first character might get a +1D bonus modifier to his die roll.

Two characters are playing a dice game. One character has a set of cheater dice, so he can control what kinds of numbers he will throw. He might get a +2D bonus modifier to his gambling skill roll.

The players' characters are trying to sneak out of an Sindavar outpost undetected. The Sindavar overlord knows the layout of the base and is aware that the characters have escaped. He might get a +3D bonus modifier when rolling his search skill to figure out what route the characters will use to escape.

Whoever has the advantage adds the modifier to any die rolls they make. For a list of sample modifiers, see the list below.

+1 to +5: Character has only a slight advantage

+6 to +10: Character has a good advantage in this situation.

+11 to +15: Character has a decisive advantage, and should win.

+16 and beyond: Character knows much more about the situation than the competition.

4.0 :: IMPROVING A ROLL

The average person fails at average activities nearly half the time. Characters, however, are not average people, so they need ways to beat those odds. Thus, they have fate points and character points, which represent those surges of adrenaline, sudden insights and other unexplained helpful acts of chance.

4.1 :: FATE POINTS

All player characters begin the game with fate points. These give characters the chance to be successful at a task when they really need to, but

because they are so limited in quantity, characters aren't guaranteed success on a whim.

Ordinary characters start with one fate point. They may have a maximum of five fate points. A character may only spend one fate point at a time. He must declare that he is spending the fate point prior to declaring any other actions for that point in the game. Once character spends a fate point, all of his skills, attributes and special ability die codes are doubled temporarily. Weapon damage values, armor values and other technology or tool values are not doubled. Only the innate abilities of the character using the fate point are doubled. Melee weapons are an exception to this, since damage for the weapon is usually based on the user's Strength, with a bonus for the weapon itself - roll double the Strength, but not the weapon's bonus damage.

The duration of the effects of a fate point are up to the GM to decide. Most often, a fate point's effects will only last for one round of game time (which will be described later).

BEING EVIL: How fate points are used during an adventure determines whether or not the character gets the Force Point back at the end of the adventure. If the character uses a fate point to do something evil, such as kill a helpless innocent, cause unnecessary harm to innocents, or knowingly act against his normal personality, the character will not get the fate point back at the end of the adventure. Instead, he gets a Corruption point. When he gets too many of those, his character is taken out of the game and falls under the GM's control as a villainous NPC, more monster than man.

BEING UNHEROIC: If a character spends a fate point to do something that is not particularly heroic, but not evil either, the character doesn't receive the Force Point back at the end of the adventure. It is lost. Examples of being unheroic include avoiding danger, saving your own life, achieving personal gain, or using lies or deception for gain or advantage.

BEING HEROIC: When a character is heroic while spending a fate point, the character receives the fate point back at the end of the adventure. Examples of being heroic include exposing yourself to great danger in the name of good, making sacrifices to help others, and fighting the forces of evil.

BEING DRAMATICALLY HEROIC: When a character is heroic at the dramatically appropriate moment, the character receives the fate point back at the end of the adventure and gets another one as well. Dramatically appropriate moments are any time when success is vital to the story. Examples of being heroic at the dramatically appropriate time include: conquering a more powerful evil foe; saving a city from destruction; or preventing the deaths of millions of innocent people.

In most cases, the dramatically appropriate moment for a character will happen during the climax of an adventure, or at most, one other time during an adventure.

Not all characters will have a dramatically appropriate moment available to them in every adventure - though they probably should. Since most player character groups stick together through the adventure, they will most likely all be around at the dramatically appropriate moment.

DOING THE RIGHT THING: Characters may spend fate points in unheroic or wrongful ways. If a character only has one fate point and spends it in such a way that he shouldn't receive it back at the end of the adventure, it is lost and he has no fate points left. How does he get fate points back? By being heroic no matter what the risks. If, in the opinion of the GM, the character is heroic at the dramatically appropriate time, no matter the risks, the character receives a Force Point at the end of the adventure. This rule applies only to characters who begin an adventure with no fate points.

4.2 :: CHARACTER POINTS

Character Points are yet another way for characters to improve their rolls. Character Points are more plentiful than fate points, yet much less powerful. There is no limit to the number of Character Points that a character may have.

Character points are awarded to characters by the GM at the end of an adventure, depending on how the character performed during the adventure. These points can be used to increase the character's attributes and skills in between adventures. But any character points a character has left over at the beginning of an adventure can be used during the course of the game to gain a temporary boost to skills or attributes.

A character cannot spend character points in the same round that he is spending a fate point in.

Unlike fate points, a character can wait until after an attribute or skill is made before deciding to spend character points. However, the points must be spent before any other characters make any die rolls.

When a character spends a character point, they roll one extra die and add it to their total. If the roll is a 6, add six to the total and roll again - like the wild die, a character point can dramatically increase a character's score. Characters so not suffer a mishap if they roll a 1 when spending a character point.

A character can spend more than one character Point on an action, declaring their use one at a time. Characters can spend character points to influence their own actions, but may not spend points on another character's actions. In addition, characters can spend character points on actions that take longer than one round to complete, as long as the character isn't spending a fate point on that action and that is the only action that is being done for the whole time period.

CHARACTER POINT LIMITS: There are limits to what Character Point can do. 1) A character may spend up to two Character Points for any skill or attribute use. 2) A character can spend up to five Character Points on any dodge, vehicle dodge, melee parry or brawling parry attempts. 3) A character can spend up to five Character Points when they are using a skill specialization. 4) A character can spend up to two Character Points to increase the damage of an attack, but this often counts as an evil action. Characters can only increase damage for their own attacks. 5) A character can spend up to five Character Points to increase their Strength score to resist damage.

AWARDING CHARACTER POINTS: Player characters get awarded additional Character Points at the end of each adventure to reflect their experience and how successful they were. Typically, a character should receive between three and fifteen character points depending on how he did. If the players worked well as a group and the adventure was a general success for them, then each character should receive 6-8 character points, depending on how hard the adventure was. Any player who played exceptionally well, either by rolling very well throughout or by executing brilliant planning or tactics, should receive another 2-3 character points. If the group of players worked well as a team, each player should receive another 2-4 character points. Players who played in character and really got into the act should receive another 304 character points. If the entire group had fun playing, then everybody should receive another 304 character points. The total amount of character points gained from a single adventure should not exceed 15.

5.0 :: SKILLS

There are a number of specific skills in this game. Whenever a character tries to do something that would reasonably fall under one of those skills, he must roll the die code he has in that skill to determine success. If he does not have the required skill, he may roll his die code for the relevant attribute governing the skill in question. This is sometimes referred to as defaulting to the attribute or using the skill untrained or unskilled. The GM may include an unskilled modifier to the difficulty number. This modifier takes into account that people who are not trained or who do not have experience in certain tasks usually have a harder time doing them. Typically, this modifier to the difficulty number ranges between +1 and +5, depending on the complexity of the task. (A lower modifier for simpler tasks, a higher modifier for harder ones.) The GM may rule that some situations, such as building a spaceship, or performing nanosurgery, are impossible for anyone t attempt without the proper training and the correct skills.

When attributes are given in the text along with the skill, do not apply the untrained modifier. This also includes most uses of the dodge and brawling skills in combat situations, attempts to find clues in a room with the SEARCH skill, and resisting interaction attempts with the con or command skills.

5.1 :: SKILL LIST

Below are some basic descriptions of what each of the skills in this version of SEPTIMUS can do. Later in this book, you will find four pregenerated characters you can play with. Each of them has every one of these skills, but to varying degrees.

This is just a partial skill list comprising the skills common to the characters included in this book. The full version of SEPTIMUS will contain additional skills, sample difficulty levels for each skill, and more extensive descriptions for how and when each skill might come into play.

ALIEN RACES: Knowledge of non-human sapient species. There are no living alien civilizations in the Seventh Empire; this skill governs knowledge of their ruins and lost technology.

ASTROGATION: The ability to accurately navigate a hyperspace jump between star systems. This ability is needed to enter or exit Septimus, but exiting Septimus is a task of Heroic difficulty because of the peculiarities of the worldsphere.

BARGAIN: The fine art of haggling over price or just to get somebody to sell something they otherwise would not part with.

BEAST RIDING: used to ride animals. This is a common noble skill n the Seventh Empire. In Septimus, it is used on the wilderness to ride the many weird animals found there.

BRAWLING: Ability in unarmed, hand-to-hand combat.

BRAWLING PARRY: Used to parry another's attack in hand-to-hand combat without weapons.

BUREAUCRACY: Knowledge of red tape and how to cut through it (esp. to obtain cooperation from officials).

CLIMBING/JUMPING: Roll against this skill when trying to leap across a gap, hurtle an obstacle, or scale a surface. Failure means you fall. Long climbs may require multiple rolls.

COMMAND: The ability to make non-player characters do what the character wants merely by asserting one's own authority. You there! Snap to!

COMPUTER PROGRAMMING & REPAIR: Used to operate, modify and fix computer equipment. The more complex the machinery, the higher the difficulty.

CON: The ability to trick a non-player character into doing something that is not in his best interests. This could involved an overpowering logical argument, or a baffling salvo of doublespeak.

CULTURES: Knowledge of the customs, histories, arts and politics of different civilizations within the Seventh Empire and Septimus.

DEMOLITION: The setting and activation of explosive charges. The stronger the target, the higher the difficulty, assuming that the proper amount of explosives are being used for the job. Failure means the item remains in tact. Critical failure means you blew yourself up. This skill can also be used to defuse set charges. Red wire or blue wire?

DODGE: Used to dodge incoming fire and grenades.

GAMBLING: Skill at games of chance. When playing honestly, roll against other players at the table; highest roll wins. When cheating, you automatically win; roll this skill against the other players to see if they detect foul play.

GRENADE: The proper throwing of handheld explosives. Success means you're on target.

GUNPLAY: Used to fire small arms, such as pistols, rifles and the like. It doesn't apply to fixed or multi-crew weapons, or those mounted on vehicles or starships.

HEAVY WEAPONS: Used to fire fixed, crewed weapons, vehicle-mounted weapons, and armor-mounted weapons. For space-fired weapons, use Starship Gunnery.

HIDE/SNEAK: The ability to hide oneself, to camouflage something, to sneak past someone, or to disguise oneself. Roll against the Search skill those you are trying to evade.

LANGUAGES: There is a common language in the Seventh Empire, but many planets and societies have their own modes of speech. This skill governs the ability to decipher and use them. Roll once to understand, and roll again to speak or write.

LIFTING: Used when the character tries to lift or carry a heavy object. The heavier the object, the greater the difficulty.

MEDICINE: Used for first aid and emergency medical care purposes. Serious surgery and the like is handled by regen tanks. The use of medkits adds on to this skill.

MELEE: Used to wield a weapon in hand-to-hand combat, whether it be the butt of a pistol, a sword, whatever.

MELEE PARRY: Used to parry with a melee weapon.

PLANETARY SYSTEMS: Knowledge of the geography, weather, life forms, trade products and other data of various planets and star systems.

ROBOTICS: The programming, servicing, modification and repair of robots. The Sindavar Extent makes great usage of semi-intelligent machines. Elsewhere in the Seventh Empire, robots are frowned upon.

SEARCH: Used when trying to locate someone or something hidden from view. Use against the Hide/Sneak skill to detect a hidden someone or something.

SECURITY: The knowledge of security locks and systems, and how to bypass them. The difficulty depends on the sophistication of the security system.

STAMINA: When a character exerts himself for a long time, roll this skill to see whether he tires.

STARSHIP GUNNERY: Used to fire starship weapons.

STARSHIP PILOTING: Used to fly a starship.

STARSHIP REPAIR: Getting under the hood of your starship.

STARSHIP SHIELDS: Used to operate shield systems. In starship combat, this skill is used as an opposed roll to incoming fire.

STREETWISE: Ability to make contact with outlaws to purchase illegal goods and services or to find someone willing to do something illegal. Critical for making contact with rebels within the Sindavar Extent.

SURVIVAL: Knowing how to survive in hostile environments by living off the land. The more familiar you are with the territory, the easier the difficulty to use this skill.

SWIMMING: Used whenever swimming. When swimming under challenging conditions, roll this skill to avoid drowning.

TECHNOLOGY: Knowledge of different kinds of equipment and how to use it. Essentially a measure of how tech-savvy you are in a very tech-heavy universe.

VEHICLE OPERATION: The ability to drive any vehicle short of a starship. This also applies to suits of power armor. You don't need to roll on this skill unless you are moving at breakneck speed or trying some fancy maneuver.

VEHICLE REPAIR: The repair and modification of any vehicle short of a starship, including suits of power armor.

6.0 :: COMBAT

Characters in this game get into a lot of fights - combat is central to the stories of the setting. Combat is always fought in rounds, and uses all of the rules explained in prior chapters.

6.1 :: COMBAT DIFFICULTIES

The combat rules are identical to the basic rules: determine the difficulty to hit, just like any other skill use. If the attacking character rolls higher than the difficulty, he hits and causes damage.

RANGED WEAPONS: Ranged weapons have several ranges listed with them: short, medium and long. Anything closer than short range is considered to be point-blank. Each weapon's ranges are different, so pay attention when characters are using different weapons.

Shooting at someone at point blank range is a Very Easy task.

Shooting at someone at short range is an Easy task.

Shooting at someone at medium range is a Moderate task.

Shooting at someone at long range is a Difficult task.

This difficulty can be modified by the target's cover, the scale of the target (see Section 3.3, "Scales.") and other modifiers, such as rain and darkness.

Most ranged weapons have finite ammunition. When a weapon runs dry, reloading takes an action.

MELEE WEAPONS: Melee weapons have a difficulty to use (Very Easy, Easy, Moderate, Difficult, Very Difficult or Heroic), which is listed with the weapon. The gamemaster has to pick a specific difficulty number from that difficulty range when the weapon is used.

The gamemaster then has to decide which combat modifiers apply to the attack. Once all of the modifiers are added in, the gamemaster has a final difficulty number.

6.2 :: ROUNDS AND INITIATIVE

Generally, time in a roleplaying game doesn't matter too much. A character may spend several hours searching a library, though only a minute passes as far as the players and GM are concerned. To keep the story line moving, sometimes it is necessary to skip the tedious parts.

More intense scenes require more detail. In these cases, time slows to units of five seconds called rounds. Each character may take one action in the round with no penalty. Once a round ends, the next one begins, continuing until the scene ends (with the task completed, the opponent subdued, etc.)

Since all characters in a scene are making actions in the same fie-second round, the actual length of game time taken up by an action is usually less than five seconds. This is obviously the case when a single character is performing multiple actions, but it is also true when one character reacts to what another character is doing. Actions in rounds are not simultaneous (actions out of rounds sometimes are).

Determining initiative does not count as an action.

Once rounds have been declared and depending on the situation, the GM determines in what order everyone goes. This is done by having every character make a Perception roll. Then the characters all go in the order in which they rolled, from the highest roll down to the lowest. When the last character acts, then the round is over, and the process begins anew with the next round. Characters roll for initiative once again (by rolling their Perception), and perform their actions in turn until the scene is resolved. Characters who roll identical initiative rolls act simultaneously.

MULTIPLE ACTIONS: Characters may, if they choose, act more than once in a given round. If a character is making two actions in a single round, then each die code for that action is reduced by 1D. Three actions, reduces all die codes by 2D. Four actions reduces all actions by 4D and so on. Eventually, every character will hit a point where his abilities are so downgraded by multiple actions that none of those actions will actually succeed. Multiple actions are used most often in combat, when characters use specific combat skills more than once to get off multiple attacks.

Note that some weapons have autofire options that give "free" extra attacks that do not apply skill penalties. Single-shot weapons do not have this feature.

6.3 :: DEFENSIVE SKILLS

Characters have several skills that they can use to get out of the way of different kinds of attacks. These skills can increase the difficulty to hit the character.

DODGE is used against any ranged attack, whether it is a blaster bolt, a bullet, missile weapon, or other attack made from a distance.

MELEE PARRY is used when the character is attacked in hand-to-hand combat and the character has a melee weapon or makeshift weapon in his hands (makeshift weapons include bottles, chairs, and anything else that is grabbed out of desperation).

If the character is being attacked by someone who is using a weapon or is attacking with very sharp natural tools, the character rolls their skill naturally.

If the character is defending against someone who is attacking unarmed and without sharp natural weapons, the character gets a +5 bonus modifier to his parry roll.

BRAWLING PARRY is used when the character is attacked in hand-to-hand combat and is unarmed. A character uses this skill normally when they are attacked by someone who is also unarmed and doesn't have sharp natural tools like claws; they simply roll their skill. If the character is defending against someone who is attacking with a weapon or sharp natural tools, the attacker gets a +10 bonus modifier to their attack roll.

FULL OR NORMAL DEFENSES: When a character declares a defensive skill use they have two things they can do: a full use (full dodge, full melee parry, and so forth) or a normal use (dodge, melee parry and so forth).

FULL USE: When a character does a full defensive skill use (full dodge, full melee parry, full brawling parry, etc.), they roll their character's defensive skill and add it to the difficulty to hit the character.

When a character does a full defensive skill use, they may only do that and make one normal speed movement that round (see "Movement"): the character may not so any other action, such as attack or use another skill.

Note that characters can't do multiple full defensive skill uses in a round - for example, a character couldn't do a full dodge and a full brawling parry in the same round. In fact, the only thing a character can do in the same round as a full defensive action is one move.

NORMAL USE: When a character makes a normal defensive skill use, the character simply rolls their skill dice. The player can then choose to use either the

skill roll as the value for all attacks in that round or use each individual attacker's difficulty in that round. This decision applies to all attacks made in that round, and must be made at the time the roll is made.

6.4 :: DAMAGE

When characters are hit in combat, they roll to see how badly they are injured. First, whoever hits rolls the damage for the weapon they are using. Then, the character rolls their Strength attribute to resist damage. If the damage result is greater than the Strength result, than the character is hurt, according to the levels described below.

STUNNED (0-3): Stunned characters suffer a penalty of -1D to skill and attribute rolls for the rest of the round and for the next round. A stun no longer penalizes a character after the second round, but it is still "affecting" him for a half an hour, unless the character rests for one minute. If a character is being "affected" from a number of stuns equal to the number before the "D" for the character's Strength, the character is knocked unconscious for 2D minutes.

W**OUNDED (4-8)**: Wounded characters fall prone and can take no actions for the rest of the round. The character suffers a penalty of -1D to skill and attribute rolls until the character is healed (through medkits or natural rest). A character who is wounded a second time is incapacitated.

INCAPACITATED (9-12): An incapacitated character falls prone and is knocked unconscious for 10D minutes. The character can't do anything until healed. An incapacitated character who is wounded or incapacitated again becomes mortally wounded.

M**ORTALLY WOUNDED (13-15)**: A mortally wounded character falls prone and is unconscious. The character can't so anything until healed. The character may die - at the end of each round, roll 2D. If the roll is less than the number of rounds that the character has been mortally wounded, the character dies. A mortally wounded character who is incapacitated or mortally wounded again is killed.

KILLED (16+): A killed character dies immediately.

NOTE: Characters can spend character points to increase their Strength to resist damage. That is why we encourage GMs not to tell the player what they rolled for damage - just how many dice they used.

Fate points can also be used to increase Strength dice to resist damage - but they still have to be declared at the beginning of the round, during the declaration phase. This is usually only done if a character knows he is going to be hit, or if it is vitally important that he not take damage this round. Almost always, resisting damage is a "selfish" use of fate - the character may not get the fate point back at the end of the adventure (though there are undoubtedly exceptions).

6.5 :: ARMOR

Some characters wear armor; other characters or have natural armor (by way of genetic or alien modification). Armor adds to a character's Strength roll to resist damage. Different levels of armor provide different level of protection. A simple blast helmet might just provide a pip or two to your Strength roll whereas a full suit of combat armor might provide as much as 3D or 4D. Generally speaking, heavy armor also detracts from your Agility attribute and any skills derived from it, so there is a bit of a tradeoff involved. For details on various armor options, check out the HARDWARE section.

7.0 :: HEALING

Characters can heal through a variety of ways, but the four most common methods of healing are natural healing, skilled medical care, medkits, and regen tanks.

7.1 NATURAL HEALING

A character can heal naturally, but this process is slow. The character must rest a specified amount of time and then can make a natural healing roll: roll the character's full Strength plus any appropriate modifiers. Then find the result on the chart related to the character's current Wound level to see if the character heals.

Healing characters can do virtually nothing but rest. Characters who try to work, exercise, or adventure must subtract 1D from their Strength when they makes their natural healing roll. Any character who opts to take it easy and do virtually nothing for twice the necessary time may add 1D to the Strength roll to heal.

The length of time it takes to recover naturally from a wound is listed below. These times indicate how long a character must rest and recuperate before attempting to make a Strength roll to improve his or her condition. These times do not take into account any special modifiers that might speed the process of recuperation.

STUNNED: 1 minute

WOUNDED: 3 days

SEVERELY WOUNDED: 3 days

INCAPACITATED: 2 weeks

MORTALLY WOUNDED: 5 weeks

KILLED: Give it up, chief. That ship sailed the moment your heart stopped.

7.2 :: SKILLED MEDICAL CARE

Characters can heal others or themselves with some basic field procedures for treating wounds. Such attempts don't require a medical kit. Simply roll Medicine skill to treat wounds in the field. A successful roll heals the character up one level: for instance, a successful medicine roll on someone who's wounded

would bring him back to Stunned. A character using a medical kit may add its bonus to the roll.

A character may only attempt to heal a patient once per day. Other characters may also try to help the patient, adding their expertise to the first healer's.

The difficulty of using pure medical skill to heal somebody depends upon the severity of a patient's injury:

Degree of Injury	Difficulty
Stunned/Unconscious	Moderate
Wounded	Difficult
Incapacitated	Very Difficult
Mortally Wounded	Heroic

7.3 MEDKITS

The standard "first aid" kit in the SEPTIMUS universe, the medkit, contains a combination of healing medicines, syntheflesh, coagulants, body chemistry boosters, adrenaline drugs, and computer diagnostic hardware to help treat seriously injured individuals who can't get emergency hospitalization and regen treatment. They are very common on battlefields around the galaxy. When someone administers a medkit to someone, they roll their first aid or technical skill. The difficulty of using a standard medkit depends upon the severity of a patient's injury:

Degree of Injury	Difficulty
Stunned/Unconscious	Very Easy
Wounded	Easy
Incapacitated	Moderate
Mortally Wounded	Difficult

If the medkit use is successful, the character is healed one level; unconscious characters are revived, wounded characters are fully healed, incapacitated characters improve to wounded, and mortally wounded characters improve to incapacitated.

If the roll is unsuccessful, the character remains at the current level. If the roll misses the difficulty by more than 10 points, the medkit has pushed the injured character's bodily functions to their limits and no more medkits can be used on that character for a full day (24-hour period).

A character can have multiple medkits used on him, but each use gets more difficult. For every medkit applied in a single day, increase the level of difficulty of the medkit use by one level.

Once a medkit is used, it is fully expended - characters who expect to heal several characters must carry multiple medkits.

A character can use medkit on himself, but suffers a -1D penalty in addition to any other penalties.

7.4 :: REGEN TANKS

Regen tanks are specialized medical healing vats in which characters may be immersed so they can heal from wounds faster. The attending physician can use the tank's computers to inject surface medicine into the regeneration fluid, inject medicines into the bloodstream or dispense them orally.

Characters must have the medicine skill to use a regen tank. On most planets within the Seventh Empire, only licensed doctors can administer regen treatments. A Very Easy medicine skill is necessary to use a regen tank - regardless of the wound level. If the roll is made, the character will heal - it's just a matter of time.

A character attempting to use a regen tank without the medicine skill must make a Heroic first aid or Technical roll. If the roll is failed, the patient's wound level increases by two (Wounded to Mortally Wounded; Incapacitated or Mortally Wounded to Dead).

If the roll is successful, the healing time is dependent upon the severity of the character's injuries. Wounded characters require 1d hours. Incapacitated characters require 4D hours. Mortally Wounded characters require 1D days.

7.5 :: CHEATING DEATH

In SEPTIMUS, death is rarely final, at least not the first time your character crosses over to the other side. Thanks to the advanced medical technology available, dead characters often can be revived through a variety of means.

REGENERATION: Regen tanks are a common means of healing seriously wounded patients or for bringing back the recently slain. As long as the dead person's body can be retrieved and placed within a regen tank, the person can be regrown and reani-

mated. The process usually takes a full 2 weeks, and it adds 1 Corruption point to the character's total.

ACTIVATING A CLONE: Cloning is the practice of duplicating a living body and keeping it in stasis. When the original body dies, a transmitted signal goes to the static clone, which then auto-animates. This has the advantage of letting the fallen character enter action immediately. Unfortunately, any character points gained by the character since the clone was created are lost. Likewise, recent memories are lost, too. Updating clones can be done, but it is a costly practice. Cloned characters also gain 2 Corruption points upon activation.

PERSONA TRANSFER: A third way of cheating death is to digitize one's personality profile and upload it to a robotic body. This is called a persona transfer, and it is an irreversible procedure. Once uploaded to a robotic chassis, the character is forevermore confined to mechanical bodies. Destroyed robot characters can have their personas transferred to other robot bodies. Every time a persona transfer is conducted, the character picks up 3 Corruption points.

COST AND AVAILABILITY: While there are monetary costs associated with each form of cheating death, in this version of SEPTIMUS, consider each of them open to any character. The GM should implement them as a story element to the adventure at hand. Who is providing this support to the characters, and what will they want in return? Whoever has methods of cheating death at their disposal has great leverage over those who have need of such technology. And in large parts of Septimus, there is no money to speak of, so often times, having revivification technology on hand becomes the one and only form of barter that is worth anything.

8.0 :: CORRUPTION

When characters are revived, or when they use fate points toward evil purposes, they pick up Corruption points. Every character can only take on so many of these before they finally become irrevocably twisted inside, becoming more monster than man. At that point, the character becomes a villainous character to be played only by the GM (often as an enemy to other player characters) and it taken out of play. Some characters are only too aware of Corruption and as such will not employ the various means of revivification technology that earn Corruption points. For some, it is better simply to die than to devolve into something twisted and evil. For others, life is too precious to give up, and they will hang on to it even if it means transformation into a dark parody of their former selves.

DETERMINING CORRUPTION: Every time a character receives a Corruption point, roll 2D. If the result is less than the number of Corruption points the character has, then the character has become Corrupted, and is taken out of the game.

LIVING WITH IT: Because people can be raised from the dead, warriors in SEPTIMUS often are prone to extreme risk-taking prior to gaining any Corruption points. After all, for many, the reality of Corruption does not sink in until after the first or second time they are revived, and can feel their Corruption levels accumulating.

NOTE: In the full version of SEPTIMUS, there are other methods of becoming corrupted. These usually include overloading oneself with various types of genetic modifications and alien enhancements. For the sake of brevity, these are not included in the Fire and Forget version of SEPTIMUS.

9.0 :: CHARACTERS

There are four pre-generated characters that come with this game. They are all Newcomer characters, who have recently arrived to Septimus and have only recently gotten drawn into the dark machinations of the Sindavar Extent and the Newcomer resistance against it. Prior to their arrival in Septimus, these four characters had little to do with each other, but once thrust into the crosshairs of danger, they must learn to work together, to put their different motivations to a common cause, and to keep each other alive.

Full rules for creating many additional character types can be found in the full version of SEPTIMUS. Or, you can pick up a copy of D6 SPACE (currently available from West End Games) and use the character generation rules there to create more varied characters for use in SEPTIMUS until you get your hands on a full copy of the game.

There are four characters here for your use. They are:

FREEMAN, a tired space captain.

SARNETH, a jaded noble from the Seventh Empire.

KILGORE, a hard-bitten professional soldier.

and

NEWSOME, a galactic scout looking to explore Septimus.

FREEMAN

DEXTERITY 2D+2

Gunplay 3D

Brawling Parry

Dodge 3D

Grenade

Heavy Weapons

Melee Parry

Melee

KNOWLEDGE 3D

Alien Races

Bureaucracy 3D+1

Cultures

Languages

Planetary Systems 4D

Streetwise

Survival

Technology

MECHANICAL 3D+2

Astrogation 4D

Beast Riding

Vehicle Operations 4D

Starship Gunnery 5D

Starship Piloting 5D

Starship Shields 5D

PERCEPTION 3D+1

Bargain

Command

Con

Gambling

Hide/Sneak

Search

STRENGTH 2D+1

Brawling

Climbing/Jumping

Lifting

Stamina

Swimming

TECHNICAL 3D

Computer Programming/Repair

Demolition

Robot Programming/Repair

Medicine

Vehicle Repair

Security

Starship Repair 3D+1

Physical Description: Freeman is a middle-aged man with graying hair and a metal eye-patch bolted into his skull from an old injury during a ship disaster. He wears a long, worn overcoat and heavy boots he's kept from his days as an asteroid miner. He is a grizzled figure whose hard life on starships is really starting to show.

Personality: Freeman is a pragmatic guy who will somehow do the right thing when he must. He is just looking to make a buck for himself, but he finds that increasingly, this thrusts him into the role of being a leader, something he's not always happy about. Still, he has the heart of a hero, and his friends all know it.

Background: Freeman grew up on starships, mostly on merchant runners, though he did serve briefly in the planetary navy in the system where he was born. Most of his adult life, he has captained the Argosy, a tired old freighter that has run cargo and passengers all over the Seventh Empire. His run to Septimus is likely to be his last, and Freeman knows it.

Connection with Other Characters: The other characters have all booked passage on the Argosy, so Freeman's relation with them is a purely financial one. Once things get rough, however, Freeman will assume the role of tactical leader, though always willing to bow to the superior wisdom of those more skilled than he.

Role in the Party: Nominal leader, but also the ace pilot.

A Memorable Quote: "Somebody get the shields up, wouldja! I finally paid off my loan on this hunk of junk!"

Equipment: Pistol (Damage 3D, Ammo 8), Protective Vest (+1 to Strength rolls for resisting damage), handheld datamate (+1D to Computer rolls)

Special Abilities: Freeman has undergone genetic modification so his brain naturally picks up and receives all radio frequencies. This gives him the ability to communicate his thoughts to anyone using a comlink. He also has been modified to breathe any atmosphere, as well as underwater. He can hold his breath for 15 minutes.

Fate Points: 1

Character Points: 2

Corruption Points: 2

Wound Status: Healthy

SARNETH

Physical Description: Sarneth is a tall, thin male with nearly albino features. Cosmetic modification to his eyes give them a silver appearance. He is dressed in the latest Imperial fashions.

Personality: Sarneth is the archetypical spoiled brat. Even though he is an adult, he acts like a kid when challenged to do things he does not like because he has lived a life of privilege. He thinks everything is owed to him and he answers to nobody. He is smart enough to realize, however, than when things get dangerous, he'll have to play ball with his fellow shipmates if he wants to survive.

Background: Sarneth is an effete nobleman from one of the hundreds of aristocratic families vying for power
within the Seventh Empire. He realized the party was over and decided to rob his family treasury and flee with it to Septimus. The dangers of the disintegrating Empire horrify him, as he has never lived outside his familial estate. He does not know what he plans to do once in Septimus, but he figures his money and his social standing will carry him.

Connection with Other Characters: Fellow passenger.

Role in the Party: He's the moneyman, and the guy who's likely to talk the group out of trouble.

A Memorable Quote: "What? I'm not touching that. It'll ruin my suit."

Equipment: Dueling sword (Damage 3D), throwing knives (Damage 2D), fine Imperial clothing (other characters can use this to try to disguise themselves as nobles), three doses of megastim (a recreational nanoserum that boosts speed for three rounds per dose. When active, the user gets an additional free action per round).

Special Abilities: Sarneth has been genetically modified so that he can see in the dark as well as along a variety of energy spectrums. Add +1D to all Perception-based skill or attribute rolls.

Fate Points: 1

Character Points: 2

Corruption Points: 3

Wound Status: Healthy

DEXTERITY 3D+1	PERCEPTION 4D
Gunplay	Bargain
Brawling Parry	Command 6D
Dodge	Con
Grenade	Gambling 4D+1
Heavy Weapons	Hide/Sneak
Melee Parry 5D	Search
Melee 5D	**STRENGTH 2D+2**
KNOWLEDGE 3D+1	Brawling
Alien Races	Climbing/Jumping
Bureaucracy	Lifting
Cultures	Stamina
Languages	Swimming
Planetary Systems	**TECHNICAL 2D**
Streetwise	Computer Programming/Repair
Survival	Demolition
Technology	Robot Programming/Repair
MECHANICAL 2D+2	Medicine
Astrogation	Vehicle Repair
Beast Riding 4D	Security
Vehicle Operations	Starship Repair
Starship Gunnery	
Starship Piloting	
Starship Shields	

KILGORE

DEXTERITY 3D+2

Gunplay 6D

Brawling Parry 4D

Dodge 4D

Grenade 4D

Heavy Weapons 4D

Melee Parry 4D

Melee 4D

KNOWLEDGE 2D+2

Alien Races

Bureaucracy

Cultures

Languages

Planetary Systems

Streetwise

Survival

Technology

MECHANICAL 2D+2

Astrogation

Beast Riding

Vehicle Operations 3D+2

Starship Gunnery 3D

Starship Piloting 3D

Starship Shields

PERCEPTION 2D+1

Bargain

Command

Con

Gambling

Hide/Sneak

Search

STRENGTH 3D+2

Brawling 4D

Climbing/Jumping

Lifting

Stamina

Swimming

TECHNICAL 3D

Computer Programming/Repair

Demolition 4D

Robot Programming/Repair

Medicine

Vehicle Repair

Security

Starship Repair

Physical Description: This guy is big and muscular with hardly an ounce of fat on him. His head is shaved, and a military UPC code has been tattooed to the back of his skull. He has warpaint lasered across his face, identifying him as a member of the now-defunct military unit, Folsom's Furies.

Personality: This guy is all business. He is a soldier without any more wars to fight, so he is going to Septimus. Part of him hopes it is a nice DMZ where he can finally retire. But his gut tells him that this is just another battlefield, and his gut is never wrong.

Background: Kilgore's personal history is a mystery to him ever since a near-fatal explosion left him a full amnesiac nearly five years ago. He has rebuilt his skill set and some memories, but he really doesn't have a very good idea of who he is or what he has done. He knows he is a professional soldier with a lengthy combat record, but that's it.

Connection with Other Characters: Fellow passenger on the Argosy. When things get tough, though, he falls
in and becomes the commensurate team player. He's not out for glory; he's out for survival for himself and his teammates.

Role in the Party: Firepower and a level head during
trying times.

A Memorable Quote: "Stay frosty, and conserve your ammo, and we might get out of this thing in one piece."

Equipment: Battle rifle (Damage 4D; autofire gives one extra free attack per round), three grenades (Damage 8D; blast radius gives +2D to Grenade skill rolls), dagger (damage 2D), blast charge (damage 16D; can destroy almost anything up to a portion of starship hull).

Special Abilities: Kilgore has been genetically modified so his skin is a hard, protective hide that gives +1D to all Strength rolls for resisting damage. He also has a snipervision modification in his eyes that reduces the range of all gunplay targets by one, so a target at long range is treated as being only at medium range.

Fate Points: 1

Character Points: 2

Corruption Points: 4

Wound Status: Healthy

NEWSOME

Physical Description: A young, attractive woman whose extensive scouting appearance have begin to wear down her natural good looks. She wears a suit o scouting armor at all times and has an intricate pattern of small tribal scars surrounding her right eye socket, a reminder of a stint she served with the noble savages of one of the Imperial fringeworlds some time back.

Personality: Newsome doesn't say much, but when she does, it's usually something important. Her quiet nature belies an intense curiosity and an explorer's spirit. She is a bit of a loner, and prefers to go off in advance of the group when possible.

Background: Newsome grew up on one of the Imperial outworlds and learned how to rough it early on. She became an Imperial Scout charged with surveying the fringeworlds of known space, where she had many adventures - some of which she's rather forget. When the Empire began crumbling, she quit her commission and went to Septimus in the hopes of finding a quiet spot for herself on the surface.

Connection with Other Characters: Fellow passenger on the Argosy. She once ran across Kilgore when he was with Folsom's Furies, and knows a bit about his past, including a brief, failed romantic relationship between the two of them. She does not know about his memory loss and assumes he is merely being cold towards her.

Role in the Party: Advance scout, stealth operator.

A Memorable Quote: "Ah, this is nothing. Should have seen the time I got marooned on an asteroid back on Threnellia."

Equipment: Scouting armor (gives +1D to Strength rolls for resisting damage; stealth field gives +1D to hide/sneak rolls; power servos give +1D to lift as well as climb/jump rolls, and +1D to brawling damage; retractable talons can cut for 2D damage). (Note: Any dodge attempts Newsome tries in her armor, as well as other special moves, require her to make a vehicle operations roll.) Carbine (damage 3D, ammo 20). Three medkits.

Special Abilities: Newsome has no modifications of any sort, preferring to rely on external technology.

Fate Points: 1

Character Points: 2

Corruption Points: 3 (she's died before)

Wound Status: Healthy

| DEXTERITY 2D+2	PERCEPTION 2D
Gunplay 4D	Bargain
Brawling Parry	Command
Dodge	Con
Grenade	Gambling
Heavy Weapons	Hide/Sneak 2D+1
Melee Parry	Search 2D+1
Melee	**STRENGTH 3D**
KNOWLEDGE 4D	Brawling
Alien Races	Climbing/Jumping
Bureaucracy	Lifting
Cultures	Stamina
Languages	Swimming
Planetary Systems	**TECHNICAL 3D+1**
Streetwise 5D	Computer Programming/Repair
Survival 5D	Demolition
Technology	Robot Programming/Repair
MECHANICAL 3D	Medicine 5D
Astrogation	Vehicle Repair
Beast Riding 4D	Security 3D+2
Vehicle Operations	Starship Repair
Starship Gunnery	
Starship Piloting	
Starship Shields	

10.0 :: FLIGHT OF THE ARGOSY

This is a pre-written adventure for you to run the four characters from the previous section through. It should give you a good idea of what kind of action and adventure this game is all about. It should also provide you with some basics for expanding the game on your own.

The adventure consists of several ACTS, each of which are broken down into a number of SCENES. As the GM, try to think of this entire thing like a movie or a novel plot, but take care - even though the course of actions has been somewhat preordained here, characters can and do try to take the adventure off in a direction different than from what you or the adventure writer ever considers. This is something to be encouraged. As the Gm, it is not your job to harsh on the players and foil their every action until they do what they are "supposed" to do. As the Gm, your job is to react to the players' actions in such a way that keeps the action of the game going while making sure that everybody (yourself included!) is still having fun. Remember, this is a game, so to some degree it is an exercise in competitive imagination. But if anybody in the game feels like they are being forced out of their comfort zone, then something is wrong. As the Gm, it is your job to fix it.
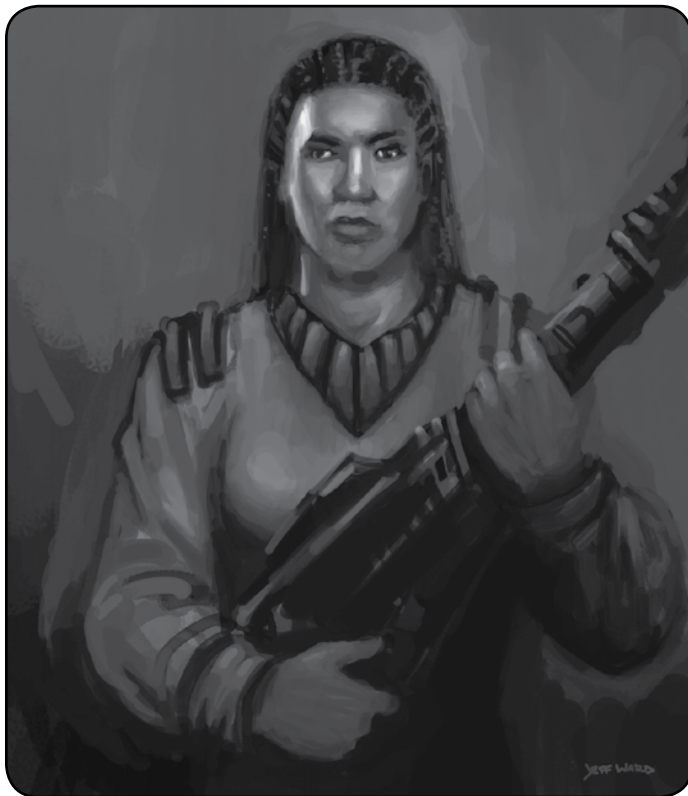
Remember, this adventure is just a skeleton of a plot on which to hang your adventure. Lots can be added to this, taken away from it, and modified to suit your purposes. As the GM, feel free to tinker with this until it suits your purposes. As players, know that this is just a starting point for your GM. Do what feels right to you as a player and as a character. Don't do anything that you know will disrupt the fun of everybody else. But don't just go with the flow all the time, either. Take a chance, roll the dice, and be a hero.

ACT 01: PLANETFALL

For many months, the signs have been everywhere that the Seventh Empire's halcyon days are over. With the collapse of hyperspace has come a disintegration of Imperial authority everywhere. Trade routs have collapsed. Military patrols have withdrawn to the Imperial core worlds. Aristocratic families refuses to protect their subjects any longer. Entire star systems are seceding from the Empire and are not being challenged by it. And in this, there is a certain desperation, too, as people realize that the vast, interconnected galactic civilization they had depended on for so long is now gone, and they are on their own. Entire worlds have fallen into riot as its citizens fight for whatever resources they can get. Other worlds have quarantined themselves from the rest of the galaxy, hoping to ride things out on their own. Everywhere is the search for a safe haven, so when news of the worldsphere Septimus his the com lines, just about anybody who had a ship or who could get passage on one headed towards the end of the galaxy, where this fabled place was supposed to be. Along the way, many succumbed to hyperspace anomalies, pirate attacks, or other mishaps as they had to stop at troubled worlds for resupply, only to have the chaos on those worlds prevent liftoff. It has not been an easy trip to Septimus, but for the captain and passengers of the small freighter Argosy, the trip is almost over.

The Argosy is captained by a veteran spacer named Freeman, who has taken along with him three passengers - the noble Sarneth, the mercenary Kilgore, and the scout Newsome.

As you enter the star system where Septimus lies, a transmission comes across the ship's com screens. It is the face of a military official who identifies himself as a representative of the Sindavar Extent, the governing body of the worldsphere Septimus. The official says that the Extent welcomes all visitors, and that the virtually unlimited surface area within the Sphere, as well as the equally unlimited production capabilities of the capital city, Arcopolis, allow all visitors to enjoy lives of peace, plenty and prosperity without any of the

hardships or uncertainties facing Imperial life in the rest of the galaxy. The official notes that all incoming ships are welcome to land anywhere on the surface, but the Extent respectfully requests that captains first land in Arcopolis, so they may register the ship and receive any repairs or resupply they might need.

At this point, Captain Freeman will inform the other characters of the transmission. Anybody inclined can try to make a moderate Con roll against the transmission. Success will reveal that the official is not being entirely honest, but about what remains a mystery.

At this stage, the characters have the opportunity to make the hyperspace jump into Septimus. Obviously, the rest of this adventure is predicated on the ship successfully jumping into Septimus and landing in Arcopolis, per the official's instructions. Should the group decide not to do these things, the GM will have to determine the subsequent events as the characters either try their luck elsewhere in a chaotic galaxy, or as they pursue their fortunes on the vast, alien unexplored surface of Septimus, where strange life forms and the remnants of an advanced alien civilization serve to both challenge and enrich those with the skill and luck to plunder the ruins of the past.

Assuming the party jumps into Septimus and lands in Arcopolis, they are treated to a once-in-a-lifetime view. Inside the sphere, there is the view of a vast Earth-like surface expanding in every direction. A distant star sits in the middle of the endless sky, bleaching out the view of the opposite side of the sphere. Below, incredibly huge supercontinents are surrounded by oceans large enough to drown a thousand planets. Truly, there is enough space here to allow the entire galaxy to live here.

The ship receives another automated signal fro the Extent welcoming you to Septimus and directing you to land at a special Newcomer dock within the Arcopolis landing district. Freeman steers the Argosy towards the city, but before long, a flight of Extent star fighters appears and escorts the freighter to the surface. This immediately sends chills up your spine, as an armed escort shouldn't be necessary to land at a friendly port. What's worse, when the ship gets within a few hundred klicks of the surface, a dominator transmission is beamed to the ship, taking the manual controls offline and enforcing an unwelcome autopilot onto the Argosy.

Captain Freeman has been in this kind of position before, but only when attacked by pirates or commandeered by unfriendly Imperials. Things do not look good.

As the ship approaches the landing district, you see the massive sprawl of Arcopolis stretch out below you. The city must easily cover the equivalent surface area of a dozen planets, and the closer you get, the more you

can see individual arcologies - megascrapers capable of housing a million people or more. Equally massive industrial complexes cover the surface, churning out endless lets of machines, vehicles and other technology.

The Argosy slows to a hover and gently touches down on the landing pad, and through the ship's viewports, you don't see any people at all, just throngs of thousands and thousands of robots hustling about, doing the work of the spaceport. The ship lands and the hatch automatically opens. A message comes across the Argosy's com for all passengers to exit the ship immediately, leaving behind any weapons.

At this stage, characters can either try to shoot their way out of the ship...but to where? Or more likely they can simply go along quietly. They can try to bring along cargo from the ship's hold and hide their weapons in it if they like, requiring a successful moderate Hide roll.

Once outside, the characters are greeted by a robot drone with a viewscreen for a head. On it appears the image of the same Extent official who came on the Argosy's screens outside of Septimus. You figure this is either a pre-recorded message, or perhaps a purely artificial greeting program.

The official greets you and asks you to follow the robot to immigration processing, which sounds like an ominous euphemism for detention. Unsure of where to go or what to do - perhaps this could all be a big misunderstanding you have, and the Extent really doesn't mean any harm - you follow the greeter robot and board a hover car big enough to accommodate your party, the robot and your cargo. The car leaves the landing area and flies up to an altitude of about a thousand feet, merging with a steady stream of other traffic, giving you an impressive view of the city around you.

As you fly into the heart of Arcopolis at near-Mach speed, the robot gives you a pleasant litany of touristy facts about the city - how many people live here, what is produced (everything!), and so on. The whole thing feels like artificial propaganda, though, and when the robot gets to the bit about how all Sindavar citizens are fitted with the latest nanotechnology to "optimize their organic living experience," you realize that you are in for way more than you bargained for. When the robot notes that the party has been lucky enough to receive these "upgrades" free of charge - for everything in the Extent is free - that is your cue to take things into your own hands. You know if you make it into this processing center, you will never come out the same. You will be fitted with some kind of brainwashing or worse, and you are not about to go down without a fight. It's time to get the hell out of here. Now.

ACT 02: BACK TO THE ARGOSY!

The characters can overpower the greeter robot in the car without difficulty. However, the car is in autopilot, and the only way to gain manual control over it is to override the internal computer controls. This requires a difficult Computer roll; characters can use character points to try to hack into the car's computer. Or, more than one character can get help, adding 1D to the highest Computer skill involved in the attempt. The party can make three attempts to hack into the car's controls before the car arrives at Immigration Processing. Once the car is there, the party will be surrounded by enough Extent guard robots to make escape impossible, so they had better gain control of their car quickly.

Once the car is under manual control, decide which character will pilot it. Within moments of taking over the car, four Extent patrol cars will zoom out of the traffic and try to box in your car. As soon as they get into position, they will transmit a fresh dominator signal to the car's controls to regain control of it.

PILOT CHALLENGE: For whoever is driving the car, the goal is to stay ahead of the chasing Extent cars long enough to return to the landing district. This will be resolved as a kind of combat between the pilot and the four chase cars. Every round, the pilot and the chase cars all roll for initiative by rolling their Pilot skills. The chase cars have pilot 3D. Compare the initiative numbers; the competing pilots go in the order in which they rolled.

During the hero pilot's turn in the round, he can make a pilot roll against one of the chase car's pilot skill. If the hero succeeds, then he loses that chase car in traffic. If the hero succeeds by less than 5 points, the chase car will return to the chase within 1D rounds. If the hero succeeds by 6-10 points, the chase car falls far enough behind to be out of the chase for good. And if the pilot beats the chase car by more than 10 points, then the chase car actually crashes into something (passing buildings, other robot cars, etc.) and is destroyed. Booyah! Once the hero pilot loses all four chase cars, the chase is over.

During any of the chase car's turn in the round, each of them can make a piloting roll against the hero pilot. If they beat the hero pilot, they will have partially boxed in the hero pilot, reducing his Piloting skill die code. If one car has the hero car boxed in, the hero's die code for his pilot skill reduces by -1D. If two cars box him in, the pilot skill goes down by -2D. If three box him in, it goes down by -3D. Needless to say, once the hero pilot starts getting boxed in, it will become increasingly hard for him to resist getting boxed in further.

Once all of the remaining chase cars have the hero car boxed in (whether it's all four or just one), then the cars will attempt to override the hero car's controls. The base Computer skill for the chase cars is 3D. Each additional car that boxes in the hero car after the first one adds another 1D to the total Computer roll. Any of the passengers or the pilot of the hero car may use their Computer skill to counter the chase cars' attempt to override the controls.

PASSENGER CHALLENGE: During the chase, the passengers in the car may try to shoot out the communications nodes houses on the hoods of the chase cars. Hitting these with any gunshot will be a tricky affair, since both the hero car and the target will be traveling at high speeds, and the chase cars are built pretty well.

Shooting at the com nodes of a chase car requires a difficult Gunplay roll. The Strength of the nodes is 2D+1. When a node is destroyed, the car can no longer participate in the overriding of the hero car's controls.

Likewise, the passengers can try to shoot out the control vane of the chase cars. This is a small transceiver protruding from the vehicle that allows it to receive remote piloting controls from the central computers within Arcopolis. Hitting the control vane of a chase car is a very difficult Gunplay task. But the Strength of the control vane is only 1D. If you destroy the control vane, the chase car spins out of control and crashes in a dramatic fireball.

CRASH LANDING: Once the chase cars are dealt with, the hero car will arrive at the landing district shortly afterwards. However, just when things look like they are going for the party, the city's grid defense network comes to life. A large, retractable gun turret slide out of its housing near the landing district, targets the hero car and blasts it with a single shot that disables the car's engine. The car will lose altitude quickly, but the vehicle cannot avoid crashing on a different landing pad than the one the Argosy touched down on.

At this point, if the Pilot makes a very difficult Pilot roll, the hero car will land roughly, but the passengers will not be hurt. If the pilot fails the roll, then everybody in the car will take some damage when they crash. If the pilot fails the roll by 5 points or less, everybody in the car takes 1D damage. If the pilot fails by 6-10 points, everybody takes 2D damage. If the pilot fails by 11-15 points, everybody takes 3D damage. And if the pilot fails by 16+ points, everybody takes 4D damage.

Any characters who are knocked out or incapacitated by the crash will have to be carried by their comrades or left behind. Leaving characters behind dooms those characters to capture and assimilation within the Sindavar Extent. Any character who does this and

survives the adventure gains a Corruption point for their callous disregard of a fellow adventurer's life.

The heroes will have 3 rounds to administer medical care before they will be set upon by a patrol of Extent guard robots. After those three round, the next act of the adventure will begin.

ACT 03: LIFTOFF!

As the characters dust themselves off from their crash, a detachment of eight security robots rush onto the platform and begin opening fire on the heroes. There are two ways out of this pickle: to either shoot your way out or to make a mad dash off the platform and to the next platform over, where the Argosy is currently docked.

SHOOT IT OUT: If the characters decide to fight, then they can lie behind the wreckage of their car and shoot. The car provides -3 worth of coverage, meaning that the guard robots will have the results of their Gunplay rolls reduced by 3 while shooting at any character hiding behind the car.

At the beginning of the shootout, the heroes and the robots are at long range. Each round, the robots will close by one range increment, so by round two, they will be at medium range, by round three they'll be at short range, and by round four, they'll be at point blank range. The robots will stay at point blank range until the battle is over.

Sarneth the nobleman does not have a firearm on his person. He does have three throwing knives, but they will be small comfort against the guard robots. Unless another character gives Sarneth something to fight with, the noble's options will be limited. This might entice him to...

RUN LIKE HELL: This might be a better option if one or more of the characters has been taken out of action and cannot be revived before the shooting starts. Any character can make a dash for the next platform, but doing so means running across open ground while being fired upon by the guard robots. To clear the platform, the heroes must make a moderate Run roll. If they beat the roll by 1-5 points, then they will clear the platform in 3 more rounds of straight running. If they beat the roll by 6-10 points, they will clear the platform in 2 more rounds of straight running. If they beat the roll by 11-15 points, they clear the platform in 1 more round of running. And if they beat the roll by

16+ points, then they manage to bolt from the platform in record time, clearing it that very same round.

Every round the heroes are running, they will be subject to enemy crossfire. Typically, two guard robots will target each player. If at some point some characters are running and some are fighting, the guards will double up on shooting characters as much as they can, saving one guard robot each to fire upon runners. Each round the runners are on their feet, they will be shot at. The runners can make a Dodge roll to avoid getting hit while running. This is a simple case of moving fast and staying healthy. Any character who makes it to the next platform can either leave the Scene or they can duck behind cover and open fire on the remaining guard robots. Shooting from the exit terminal at the edge of the platform gives the heroes -6 worth of cover, meaning that the result of any Gunplay rolls the guard robots make toward such characters will be lowered by 6.

GUARD ROBOTS: The guard robots all have a Strength of 3D, Gunplay of 4D and Dodge of 2D+1. They carry standard energy rifles that fire blue, arcing bolts that do 3D in damage. The guns are plugged into the robots for limitless ammo. A gun can be removed from a fallen robot and still retain 15 shots, after which it will be out of power. These robots are fairly dumbed down security models, so their primary actions will be to fire and advance. As soon as they have lost half of their number, they will both shoot and dodge each turn, reducing their die codes for those actions by -1D.

GET IN THE SHIP: Once the heroes make it to their own landing pad, another patrol of eight robots await them at the foot of the ship's landing pad. There is no running around this; the characters need to blast their way through. The combat for this scene is like in the previous one. There is some cover in the form of loose cargo crates (offloaded from the Argosy) that the characters can get behind if they make an easy Run roll. (The crates provide cover of -3 to enemy Gunplay rolls). Likewise, the robots themselves have cover of -3 being around the landing struts of the Argosy.

Outnumbered and outgunned, the heroes have the cards stacked against them in this battle. There are, however, other options.

One is that Freeman can try to remotely link to his ship's security system. (It is up to the GM to let the player behind Freeman know this or not; you might just want to hang on to this tidbit until the Freeman character starts fishing for options besides straight combat). This requires a Easy computer roll, and if successful, Freeman will be able to link up with his ship through his internal comlink ability. Once through to the ship, Freeman can patch into a retractable security gun that will extend from a hidden hatch and open fire on the guard robots. The security gun does

4D damage, has fire control of 4D (meaning it has the equivalent of a 4D Gunplay skill) and can fire three times a round without penalty. The security gun rolls for initiative as if it were another character in the party. What's more, the security gun does not suffer coverage penalties since it can autotarget around the obstacles the guard robots are hiding behind.

Another option is Sarneth can try to get an Extent official on a comlink and Command him to call off the robots. Sarneth can use his regal stature to convince the official manning the platform that this has all been a horrible mistake and that the robots need to cease fire at once. This requires a difficult Command roll, but if Sarneth makes it, the robots will stop shooting. At that point, the characters will be expected to report to the landing pad's control office on the far side of the pad immediately. Naturally, the heroes will want to get inside the Argosy and blast off. To do so before the robots get wise to the deception, have each hero make a moderate Run roll. Those who make it jump on board the ship before the robots can take action. Those who fail are still outside when combat renews. They are only one action away from getting on board the ship, but by then, they will be at point blank range to the robots, and very easy pickings, Gunplay wise. If Freeman has boarded the ship already, he can reactivate the security gun and give aid to whoever is still outside. Once the final hero is in, the Argosy's hatch will close and Freeman will begin liftoff procedures. The hapless guard robots outside will blast away at the ship's hull to no avail.

At this stage, Freeman or somebody else can have up to three Computer skill rolls to deactivate the landing codes uploaded to the ship. Once these are defeated the Argosy will power up and lift off. If, after the third try, the heroes fail to unlock those codes, a grid defense gun will come online at the platform and blast the engines of the Argosy until the ship cannot lift off any more. After that, the Gm can determine subsequent events - such as the heroes shooting/running their way off the platform and onto another, where they might find another ship under lockdown, steal it, and fly to freedom.

EPILOGUE: FREE AND CLEAR

At this point, this brief little adventure has come to an end. The heroes have escaped the Sindavar Extent's mysterious clutches (for the moment), but their future is far from certain. They still must make it into the deep space of the worldsphere to consider them-selves away from Arcopolis, but what then? Will Extent starfighters lie in wait to blast the Argosy to smither-eens? Will the Argosy find fellow Newcomer ships with which to band and fight the Extent/ Or will the Argosy simply fly to the far side of the Sphere, touch down, and take its chances in the wilderness there? The possibilities are endless for advancing this adventure differently from this point. Any further gameplay can either extrapolate from the information given in this book, or you can refer to D6 SPACE for more detailed information on starships, robots alien worlds, and all of the other goodies you might need to flesh out the universe of SEPTIMUS on your own. Or, you can simply hang on until the full version of SEPTIMUS comes out later this year, and you can use the information there to carry on this adventure to logical extensions.

In the meantime, this might be a good time to reward the players for their performance thus far. Use the character point guidelines given earlier in this book, but because this adventure was a fairly short one to this point, no character should receive more than 8 character points. Likewise, keep track of the usage of any fate points and determine if they should be given back, if additional fate points have been earned, or if any-body has done something worthy of earning a Corruption point. (The Argosy has a regen tank on board, so any slain characters who are brought back to the ship may be revived, but at a cost of 1 Corruption point.)

In addition, we'll provide a few more adventure hooks below for how you might extend the adventure you have started here. Good luck, and have fun!

B**ROTHERS IN ARMS**: Once out in space, and having fought off a patrol of Extent starfighters, the Argosy is free to go where it likes within the worldsphere. As it travels closer to the sun, though, it will notice that there is a series of small planets orbiting the sun in a single orbital track. These planets are the home of the Newcomer rebellion, where dozens of ships like the Argosy have made their home. Most have had similar run-ins with the Extent, and these hardy spacers have made a home for themselves on the inhospitable worlds within the inner orbit of Septimus. The Newcomers will accept the Argosy's crew as their own following a few successful bouts of diplomacy. But becoming part of the Newcomers has challenges of its own, including quelling a breakaway faction within its own ranks consisting of a large pirate fleet from the outside that would rather raid Newcomer settlements than work to a common cause. These pirate ships needs to be destroyed, their bases infiltrated, and their leaders brought to justice.

GOING BACK: As part of the Newcomer rebels, the heroes might be asked to help with a little rescue mission. Several ships from the outside have been caught in Arcopolis and weren't as able as the Argosy to es-

cape their fate. The Newcomers wish to send a strike team to Arcopolis under the guise of a freshly arrived ship. Only this one will be heavily armed, full of soldiers in power armor, and fighting vehicles. The idea is to land as instructed then leave the ship guns blazing, creating enough of a diversion on the landing pad until the rest of the strike team can make it to other landing platforms, hijack the ships there and leave with them. Whether the crews are on board or not is up to the GM, as is the possibility of rescuing these crews from various immigration processing centers.

OPEN FIRE: The time has come for the Newcomers to strike back at the Extent, so it has assembled a small army of ships, armor, vehicles and troops to land on the surface near the edges of Arcopolis and to attack one of the massive industrial centers there. The objective here is simple: to destroy the mammoth facility by breaching its outer walls, fighting to the core processor, demolishing it and leaving as the entire facility melts down and eventually detonates. If this works, it will sting the Extent and destroy a considerable piece of enemy hardware. It will also let the Extent know that it too, must be on the defensive. Standing in your way is an army of Extent robots at least three times your number, forcing you to fight intelligently and with cunning so you can prevail.

THE ARCHIPELAGO: Between the inner worlds of the Newcomer rebels and the surface of the worldsphere is a ring of asteroids known as the Archipelago. Here, many small communities of Newcomer settlers have staked their claim, wanting nothing to do with either the Extent or the Newcomers who oppose them. However, it is rumored that on one of these asteroids is a hidden archive of data on the Sindavar Extent. Since the Argosy's brush with them, the heroes have been plagued by questions. Who are these people? What do they really want? What is life really like under their rule? This hidden data archive might provide answers to all that. The Newcomers want it as much-needed intelligence on their enemy. The Extent has also learned of it and is sending a team of highly trained human assassins to extract the information themselves (some jobs, it seems, are too important to be left to robots). And your heroes are caught in the middle, as are the poor scroungers in the asteroids soon to be caught in the crossfire. What side do you choose?

ENDLESS FRONTIER: You have decided to leave the war with the Extent far behind you and strike out on your own elsewhere on the worldsphere. There is so much surface area here that you could easily set your ship down someplace far from Arcopolis and never been seen or heard from ever again. However, life on the surface is not easy either. Although the environment is familiar and welcoming, the resources of the Argosy are limited, and sooner or later, you will have to find your own sources of food, water and energy, amid the wild range of hostile life forms roaming the surface. And what's worse, you will soon run afoul of settlers who have come here before you, living on the remnants of their broken technology, and who have reverted to a kind of low-tech savagery. They want your ship, your supplies and your hides. But a ship malfunction prevents you from taking off once again, so you must confront these noble savages and see if you can't find some way to defeat them or live alongside of them. Maybe these new enemies have other enemies of their own you are not yet familiar with...

SEVEN CITIES: While exploring the surface of the worldsphere, you accidentally pick up com traffic from Arcopolis that seems to be directed to Extent cities outside of Arcopolis itself. This is most interesting, since you were under the impression that there was only one Extent city within the Sphere, and Arcopolis was it. If this radio traffic is to be believed, Arcopolis is just one of seven cities, each as grand and extensive as Arcopolis. Only these seven cities don't all seem to be in league with each other, and from what you can gather, they are really ruled by autonomous artificial intelligences - perhaps breakaways from the Steel Dream that governs the Extent! If you could make contact with one of these rogue intelligences and gain its allegiance, you would have a powerful means with which to oppose the Extent or to at least create a safe haven of your own liking within Septimus. But the intelligences of the Steel Dream are a strange and alien lot, and none have successfully managed to locate one, let alone negotiate with it. After all, what can an artificial intelligence want that a mere human could provide?

ANCIENT SECRETS: As your explorations of Septimus take you further and further across the surface, you come across the strange ruins of what seem to be an alien city, almost entirely overgrown by vegetation. You set down and enter the complex, and soon discover a series of weird chambers powered by fractured alien crystals that give off a strange sort of energy. Days of experimentation and tinkering finally reveal to you that this whole place is some kind of transformation chamber, and to those of you who have the courage to step inside one of these chambers and power it, an alien metamorphosis awaits. But what will become of those who risk all for the sake of gaining alien strengths? What horrible side effects await the foolhardy? Or are these devices the means by which humanity can evolve into something greater than itself? Something able to glean the true secrets of Septimus and those who built it? Step inside, brave adventurer: the future awaits!
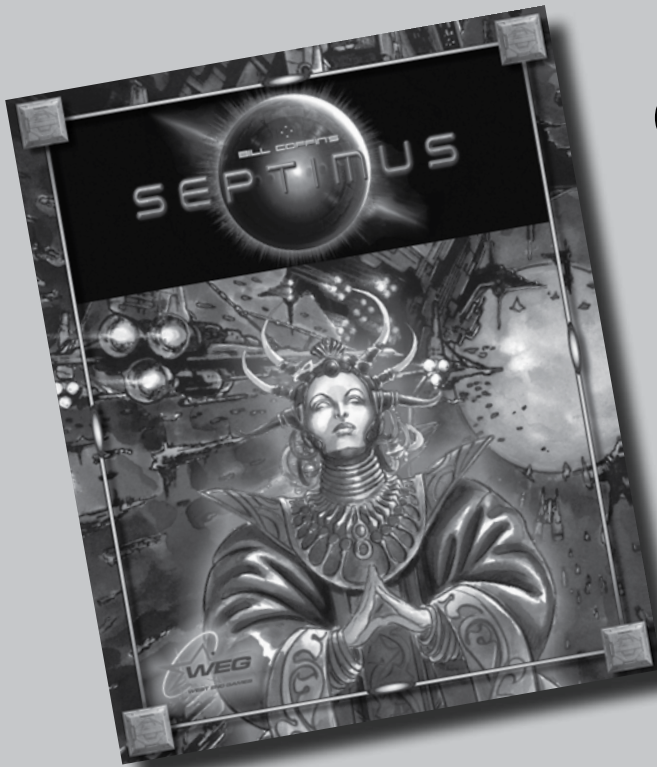
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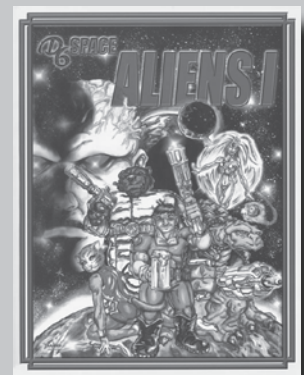
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