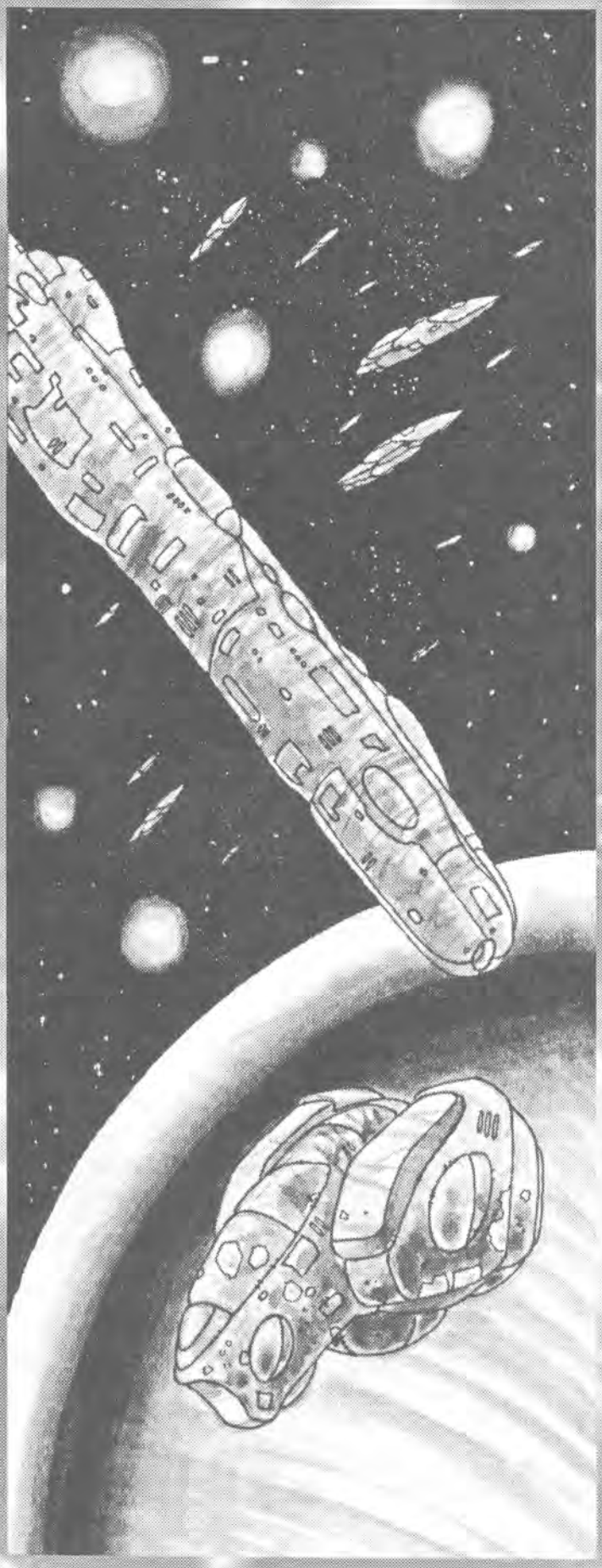
Propaganda Publishing Presents ...

THE SHATTERED SKY

Science-Fantasy Roleplaying Game

Created By Paul Lucas
Illustrated By Christopher Shy & Derek Stevens



The Shattered Sky

Science-Fantasy Roleplaying Game

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Published By
Propaganda Publishing
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Cape Girardeau, MO 63701
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Printed in the U.S.A. by Morris Publishing
3212 E. Hwy 30
Kearney, NE 68847
800-650-7888
Fax: 308-237-0263
http://morrispublishing.com
e-mail: publish@morrispublishing.com

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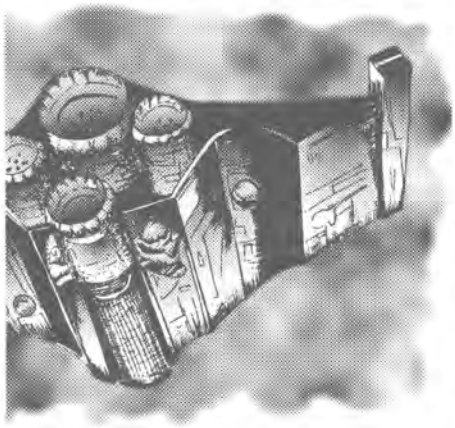
First Printing - June, 1997

Introduction

Twenty-five thousand years in the future, the solar system as we know it is gone. In its place are the slowly-failing remnants of a shattered Dyson sphere, a vast home to the last of the human race, where a small band of survivors desperately tries to reverse the tide of decay and chaos, and where many forces conspire against them. Of these, the most implacable and mysterious are the alien Others, who seek the forgotten secrets of the Sphere for themselves at all costs.

A Dyson Sphere is a vast shell constructed around the Sun with an inner, habitable surface equal to the surface area of approximately one billion Earths.

The Sphere was the human race's ultimate achievement. Unknown millennia ago they disassembled every physical body in the solar system—asteroids, gas giants, comets, moons, and even our homeworld, Earth—to build the Sphere. When they were finished, they had a new Eden, one with near-infinite room to expand and grow and be content.



But no Eden was meant to last forever. Five thousand years ago, the Sphere was shattered by unknown forces. Was it a natural disaster on a cosmic-scale or an alien doomsday weapon? No one knows what caused the Great Cataclysm, only that trillions died instantly as the Dyson Sphere fragmented like an oversized glass egg.

But some of the Shards, as the remnants of the Sphere came to be called, survived, even thrived, in the wake of the disaster. Only now, five millennia later, are the inhabitants beginning to awake to the nature of their world, and seek the secrets long-since lost to them—only to find dark, sinister forces challenging them at every turn.

The greatest reminder of their struggle haunts them every night, as they look up and see thousands of Shards dotting the heavens, their light blotting out the stars beyond, as if the sky itself had shattered . .

In *The Shattered Sky*, players take on the roles of people, both ordinary and extraordinary, as they seek the answers to their heritage. But in this far-off future, "human being" means much more than it once did. Humanity, through genetic engineering, has reinvented itself hundreds of times through the millennia, and has creating dozens of non-human intelligences. Explorers in *The Shattered Sky* will meet a great number of exotic races, both human and non, in their travels.

They will also deal with the enigmatic Matrix, the most powerful tool ever created. It may turn out to be the human race's ultimate salvation, their best weapon against the incursion of the Others. Or the Matrix could itself become the greatest nightmare ever conceived.

A FEW NOTES ABOUT DESIGN

Though this game was written to be as user-friendly as possible in the space allowed, it is not intended for pure beginners to the roleplaying hobby. There are other games designed specifically for this purpose. If you do not know what a player character is, what the dice are for, or why there's no board or playing pieces, then we are encourage you to seek these other games out and return to *The Shattered Sky* when you feel you're ready.

Secondly, the main purpose of this

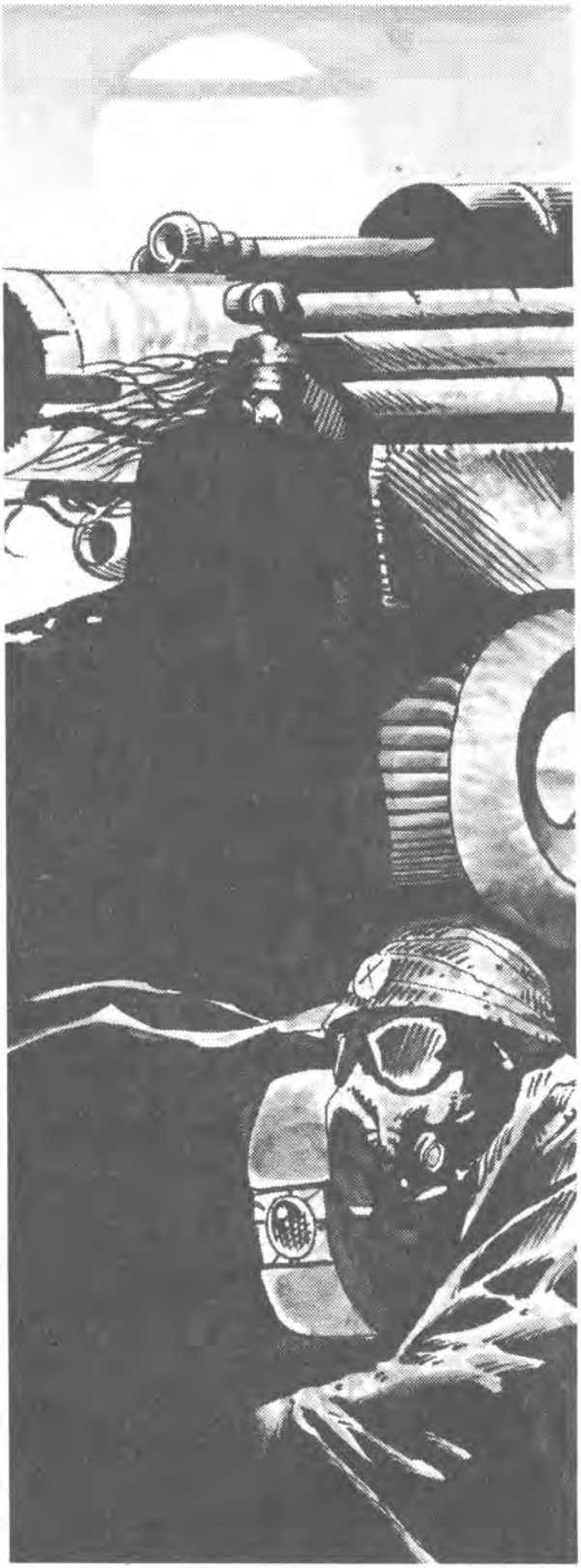
game is to have FUN! The excitement of exploration and alien contact, the puzzles and enigmas along the way, the exotic characters your PC can meet and interact with, the mind-stretching concepts that the players can talk about, is what the game is all about. It is not about dice rolling contests, petty rule details, deep character angst, or hideously morbid world-views. Though the struggle against the Others and the decay of the Shards is a vast and near overwhelming challenge, the players should feel that maybe, just maybe, if they struggle hard enough and long enough, they can ultimately triumph—at least for a little while.

The game system is designed to allow enough adaptability for gamers to apply it to just about any situation, but much is left to the interpretation of the GM and the imagination of the players. GMs are encouraged to freely interpret the rules to suit his campaign.

A word to the math-wary: a calculator is recommended for use during play. The game also makes extensive use of the addition, subtraction, division, and multiplication of one and two-digit numbers. A calculator will make these operations as quick and painless as possible.

Also, the pronoun "he" used herein is a grammatic convenience only, and is not meant to construe any prejudice against either sex.

To play *The Shattered Sky*, you will need this book, a handful of six-sided dice, two ten-sided dice, paper, pencils, a basic-function calculator, a healthy, open mind, and a thirst for adventure.



Support For The Shattered Sky

Propaganda Publishing plans to support *The Shattered Sky* with adventures and sourcebooks, each expanding the game beyond the scope of this small rulebook.

Each will be written and/or overseen by Paul Lucas, the creator of the game, in order to insure all supplements to *The Shattered Sky* remains faithful to his vision as set forth in these pages. Players are encouraged to send us mail requesting specific information on various areas of the game setting.

Chapter One

Characters

Player Characters (PCs) are the heart of the game. The PCs are the center of events in the campaign, and the stand-ins through which the players experience the world of ***The Shattered Sky***. On a more basic level; they, not exotic worlds and strange beings, are the true focus of the game.

The basic procedure for creating a PC for ***The Shattered Sky*** is as follows:

1. Create a character concept.
2. Generate Traits.
3. Calculate Aptitudes and Hits.
4. Select Skills.
5. Decide on character Subplots.
6. Determine account and buy possessions.

CHARACTER CONCEPTS

Before rolling any dice or writing anything on paper, the first thing a player should do is think of a character concept.

Player Characters should be more than just a set of dry statistics; they should be distinct personalities with individual goals and beliefs. Think of your PC as the hero in an ongoing novel or TV series. How interested would your character be if only a collection of dry statistics?

The most intriguing PCs to play are those who are as quirky and as flawed as the people we know in real life. They may be highly skilled and have exotic abilities and backgrounds, but they should also have the same mundane desires and weaknesses as anyone else to keep them human. Perhaps your grim Warrior-Magi PC has a wife and five children whom he loves very much, and is irrationally protective of them. Perhaps your Xenotech professor PC has been a shut-in for most of his life, and dreams of having real adventures without understanding how truly dangerous and terrifying they can be. Perhaps your Outland Explorer PC may act carefree and roguish, but perhaps she has been haunted for years by unrequited love for a man who barely knows she exists.

You may create a character concept on your own, or "borrow" concepts from other sources, such as movies, books, television, comic books, or real life. If you "borrow", however, make sure you change the character just enough to distinguish it from the source material. This way, you will not feel constrained with the source's established history or conventions, and can allow your character room to grow according to your own vision.

You do not have to go too far in-depth in developing your concept. Several sentences or a handful of jotted-down notes, just enough to give you and your fellow players a good idea of who your PC is, is often more than satisfactory.

GM's Role: The Game Moderator (GM) has absolute veto power over a player's character concept. He may disapprove all or part of the concept, depending on the following criteria:

- The concept upsets game balance in some way. A multi-billionaire PC, for example, would eliminate a lot of the challenges that are the fun of the game. Also, PCs with near superhuman abilities (with all Aptitudes above 20, for instance), will also quickly wear out their welcome.

- The concept does not fit into the style of the campaign the GM wishes to run. A psychotic cyborg killing-machine, for instance, might not fit into a campaign whose main focus is exploration and alien contact. ("Gee, Bob, how come you have to horribly eviscerate everyone we try to talk to?")

- The concept is already being used by another player.

TRAITS

Traits are numeric representations of select physical, mental, and social attributes of your character. The higher the number, the better the trait is, and the scale is proportional. For example, a PC with a Strength of 16 is twice as strong as a PC with a Strength of 8.

It is important to note that Traits (indeed, all game systems presented here) are abstractions designed to gauge what a character is capable of doing in the game. They do not necessarily correspond to "real life" conditions, but rather serve as a guideline to help players and the GM visualize the character and his capabilities. A PC with an IQ of 4 (the human minimum) is not necessarily stupid; he may just have a learning disability. A PC with a Strength of 30 (the human maximum) may just be extremely well-toned and conditioned, as opposed to being an overly-muscled troglodyte. A brief definition of each Trait is given below:

In order to facilitate creating your character concept, you should consider the following:

- **Name:** What is your PC's name? Does he have any titles or nicknames?
- **Origin:** Where does the PC come from? What is his homeland like? Do the people there have any mannerisms or traditions that will influence your PC?
- **Family:** What was the PC's family like? Would they be a major influence in his adult life? What was his childhood like?
- **Pivotal events:** In growing up, were there any outstanding experiences or tragedies that would shape his later life? If so, how did he handle it?
- **Occupation:** Why did your PC choose his current profession? Was it something he wanted to do, or was he forced into it? Has he changed professions in the past, and if so, why?
- **Loved Ones:** Who are your PC's current friends and significant others, if any? What kind of relationship does he have with them? Just how deeply does he care for them?
- **Rivals:** Does your PC have any personal or professional enemies? If so, what sparked the conflict, and what is its current status?
- **Personal Touches:** Does the PC have any unusual hobbies? How about minor physical or mental quirks? Does he have any deeply-held spiritual, philosophical, or religious beliefs?
- **Appearance:** What is your PC's physical appearance? What is his age?

PHYSICAL TRAITS

Strength (abbreviated ST): This is how much muscle power the PC can bring to bear at any one time.

Reflexes (RF): This is the character's reaction time and physical flexibility.

Stamina (SM): This is the capacity of the PC's body to endure extended activity and other types of physical distress.

MENTAL TRAITS

Intelligence (IQ): This is the PC's ability to process information and draw logical conclusions.

Education (ED): This is the sum of the PC's accumulated knowledge.

Intuition (IN): This is the ability of the PC to see past the obvious and to draw insight from many disparate sources.

SOCIAL TRAITS

Charisma (CH): This is the PC's presence or force of personality.

Stability (SB): This is how emotionally-balanced the PC is, and how well he can handle stress.

Empathy (EP): This is a measure of the PC's ability to sense and respond to the emotions of others.

ROLLING FOR TRAITS

For the Mental and Social Trait groups, the player will use a 12D6 Dice Pool for each Attribute group. For each Trait in the group, the player chooses the amount of dice he wants to allot to it from the dice pool, the only limit being that each Trait must have a minimum of 2D6 and the combined total equals 12D6. Any combination within these parameters is acceptable. For instance, a player rolls 5D6 for IQ, 4D6 for ED, and 3D6 for IN.

For each Trait, the player takes the highest two results from his roll, adds them together, and multiplies them by two. This will give the PC a range of 4 to 24 for each Trait, averaging toward the higher end of the spectrum. For example, the player chooses a 5D6 Dice Pool for his PC's IQ. He rolls five six-sided dice, and the results are 6, 4, 3, 3, and 1. He adds 6 and 4 together, doubles the result, and ends up with an IQ score of 20 for his PC. The larger your Dice Pool for any one Trait, the likelier it is to end up with a higher score.

Determining Physical Traits depends on a PC's starting age. The older the PC is, the lower his Dice Pool will be for this group. However, this is balanced out by allowing older PCs a greater number of starting skills (see the **SKILLS** section starting on page 11). The physical edge the PCs lose as they get older is made up for in raw experience.

Consult the chart below. The age range for the PC indicates the **Dice Pool** available for his Physical Traits.

The **Maximum Level** represents the highest number obtainable for each Physical Trait for that age group, either through PC creation or experience.

Other than this, the method is the same for the other Trait groups.

Fitting Traits to your Character Concept: The most effective way of doing this is "loading" your Dice Pools to those areas you visualize your PC to be the strongest. If you visualize your PC to be an Olympic-class gymnast, for example, than you may want to load your Reflexes (RF) Dice Pool with 6D6 or even 8D6 to ensure a high score.

However, dice can often be fickle

Physical Traits Dice Pool by Age Range

Age	Dice Pool	Max. Level
18-25	12D6	30
26-35	10D6	24
36-50	8D6	20
51-70	7D6	18
71+	6D6	16

things, and even with loading and gutting, you may not get the results you want. After your initial rolls, you may modify the PC's Trait scores in the following ways:

- You may always lower any score by as much as you want with no penalty, down to a minimum of 4.

- With the GM's permission, you may switch points between scores in the same Trait Group, on a one-for-one basis. For example, a PC rolled a 20 for his IQ and an 8 for his IN. The player sees his PC as much more intuitive than logical, so he transfers 8 points from IQ to IN. This gives the PC a score of 16 for IN and leaves him with an IQ of 12.

- If a player truly bottoms out on the dice (it happens), getting few or no desired results, the GM may take pity on him by allowing him to either start PC creation over or reroll certain Traits so the PC can fit into the player's desired character concept.

Advanced Players: Players who have played the game for a while and are fully familiar with the game system and the style of the ongoing campaign may simply assign scores to Traits when making up a PC, with the permission of the GM. This is restricted by the following rules.

- Before creating the PC, the player should have his character concept approved by the GM and should strive to keep the PC's assigned scores fair and within the limits of the concept. The GM should always be suspicious of any PC with more than three scores above 22.

- The GM, as always, has ultimate veto power on all or part of the PC.

APTITUDES

Traits are designed to be applied to certain special situations and to help the player visualize his PC. However, their most important function is to serve as the basis for the five Aptitudes, which are the heart of the game system.

The Five Aptitudes are Physical, Mental, Social, Technical, and Combat.

Rationale: The reason for using Aptitudes as apposed to Traits for the base of most actions within the game is simple: in performing activities in real life, we rarely use just one aspect of ourselves, such as Strength or Education, to accomplish a task. In fighting a fencing match, for instance, the fencer does not use just his Reflexes. They do play an important part, but not the only one. Many parries and thrusts require raw Strength; if the match goes on for a while, then Stamina becomes a factor.

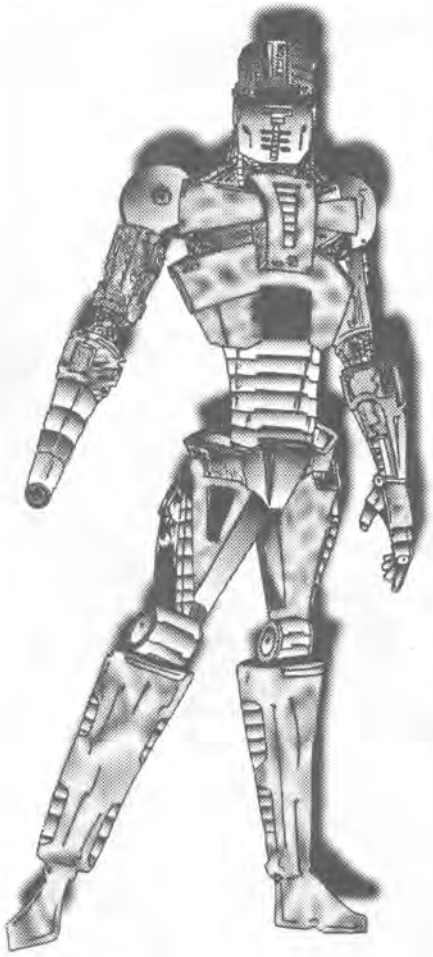
But is that all? The fencer is also using his Intelligence, to analyze his opponent's moves, and his Education, to check those moves against everything he has learned about swordplay. He uses his Intuition to try and anticipate his opponent's next attack.

Even his Social Traits become a factor. He may use his Charisma to intimi-

date his opponent; his Stability allows him to squelch the ever-present fear of being stabbed; and his Empathy allows him to sense his opponent's own fear and perhaps capitalize on it.

And all this weaves together in an intricate balance within the fencer in every single second of the match. Everything he is, thinks, and has learned in his life is dedicated to winning the fencing match.

The use of Aptitudes in the game follows this philosophy. Aptitudes are combinations of different Traits appropriate to a particular kind of task. Not every use of an Aptitude will be as involved as the above example, but it should give you a good idea of their use.



Aptitudes are arrived at by averaging certain Traits.

In calculating Aptitudes, always round to the nearest whole number.

The five Aptitudes are briefly explained below.

Physical Aptitude (abbreviated PA): This is how good your PC is at performing a wide variety of physical activities, such as sports or climbing. The higher a character's PA, the more physically fit he is considered to be. PA is figured out by averaging your PC's three Physical Traits: Strength (ST), Reflexes (RF), and Stamina (SM).

Mental Aptitude (MA): This is how adept your PC is at intellectual pursuits, such as puzzle-solving and the sciences. The higher a PC's MA, the more intelligent and well-educated he is. MA is calculated by averaging your PC's Intelligence (IQ), Education (ED), and Intuition (IN) Traits.

Social Aptitude (SA): Social Aptitude is how well your PC is at handling himself among other people. The higher the PC's SA is, the more popular and well-liked he will be. SA is arrived at by averaging the PC's Charisma (CH), Stability (SB), and Empathy (EM) Traits.

Technical Aptitude (TA): Technical Aptitude is a measure of how well your PC can handle machines, computers, and other complexities of modern life. The higher a PC's TA, the easier it will be for him to handle tasks that require a great deal of concentration and manual dexterity. TA is calculated by averaging your PC's Reflexes (RF), Intelligence (IQ), and Education (ED) Traits.

Combat Aptitude (CA): Combat aptitude is a measure of both your PC's raw battle instincts and natural fighting ability. The higher the CA of your PC, the more likely he will be able to walk away from a fight. CA is the most complex Aptitude to calculate, mainly because combat is often a very complex activity that requires a person to draw upon a great many resources at once. CA is the average of two times the PC's Physical Aptitude, one times his Mental Aptitude, and one times his Social Aptitude. In more mathematical terms, ((PA x 2) + MA + SA)/4 = CA.

For example, a player with a PC who has a PA of 18, a MA of 16, and a SA of 12 calculates his PC's Combat Aptitude. Two times his PA is 36. Adding this to 28 (the sum of his MA and SA, 16 + 12) he arrives at the sum of 64. Dividing this by four, the CA of the character turns out to be 16.

Aptitudes and Character Concept: The best way to fit Aptitudes to your character concept is to manipulate the PC's Traits to give you the desired results. See the Traits section (starting on page 7).

Hits: A PC's Hits represents how much physical damage he is capable of sustaining. Hits are calculated by multiplying PA by five, resulting in a range between 20 and 150. Hits are more fully described in the Combat section (starting on page 20).

SKILLS

Traits and Aptitudes represent your PC's natural talents. Skills are his learned abilities.

Skills are measured by level, ranging from 1, the lowest, to 10, the highest. The higher the skill level, the more adept the PC is at that ability or that field of knowledge. Levels 1 and 2 represent amateur ability; levels 3 and 4 are intermediate ability; 5 through 7 indicates professional levels; 8 and above represents complete mastery of the skill. For how Skills are used in the game, see the Game System chapter (starting on page 19).

Starting Skills: The amount of available Skill Levels a PC starts out with depends on his starting age. The older the PC is, the larger Dice Pool for skill levels he will receive, but the lower his Dice Pool for his Physical Traits will be (see Traits section). Unlike the Dice Pool used to determine Traits, however, the player adds all the result in the pool for the result. For instance, a PC has a 5D6 Skill Dice Pool. The player rolls a 5, 4, 4, 2, and 1. He adds these all together, and ends up with 16 starting Skill Levels for his PC .

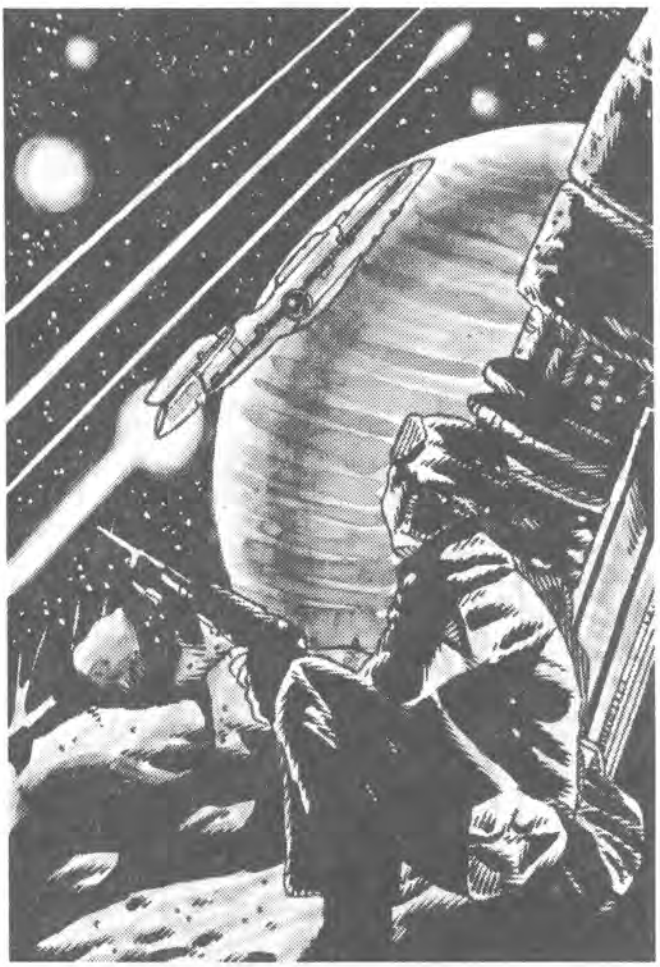
The Table at right indicates the Dice Pool starting **Skill Levels** the PC will receive, depending on age group.

The **Maximum Skill Level** represents the highest level the PC can achieve in any one particular skill during PC creation only; once the PC is in play, he may advance past this level normally through experience.

Advanced Players: As with Traits, players who have played in enough sessions to be completely familiar with the game system and the GM's campaign can simply choose his number of starting skills. However, this should only be done with the GM's permission.

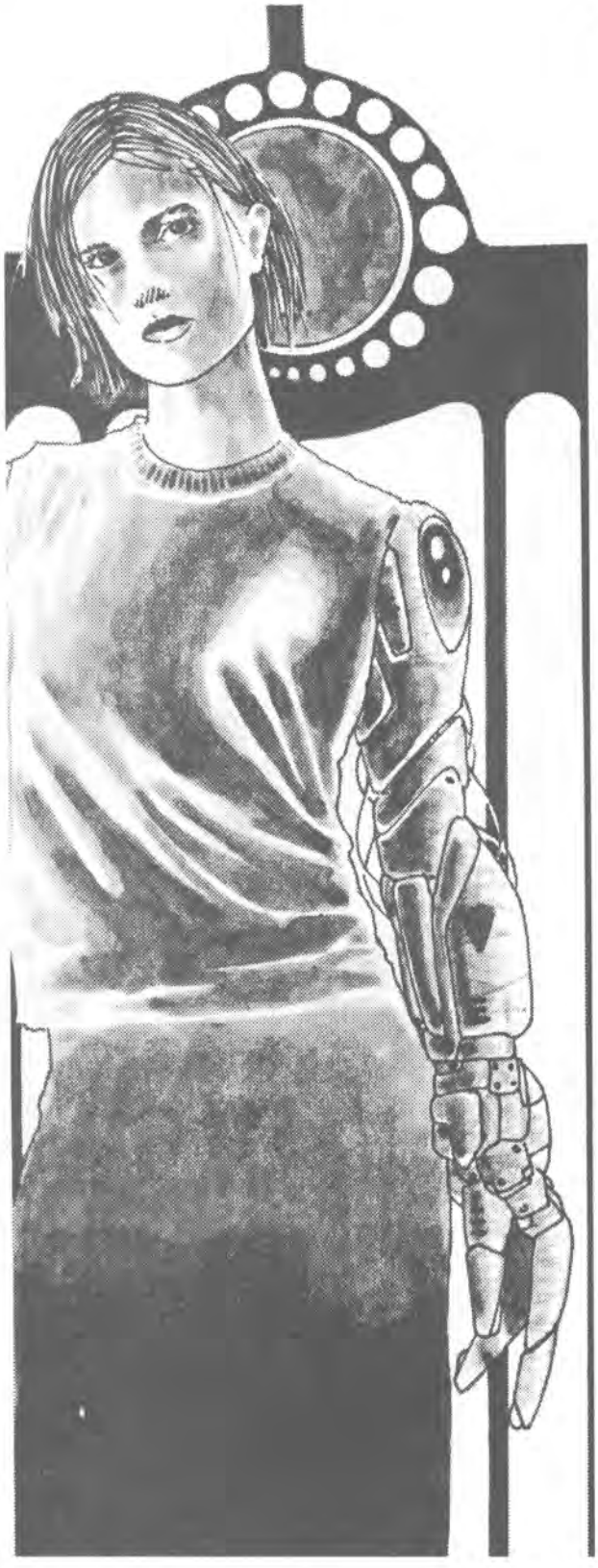
Choosing Skills: After the total skill levels are determined, the player then chooses the skills for his PC and assigns the skill level he desires for each skill. The skills chosen should reflect the PC's concept. A PC doctor, for instance, should have high levels in the Medical and Biology skills. An underworld hitman PC should have high levels in Stealth and Combat Aptitude skills. And so on.

The player may choose any combination of skills and levels, as long as they fall within the following



Starting Skill Levels by Age Group

Age	Skill Levels	Max. Level
18-25	3D6	5
26-35	5D6	6
36-50	8D6	7
51-70	12D6	8
71+	15D6	10



restrictions:

- The total skill levels do not exceed the rolled Dice Pool limit.
- The choice of skills should make sense for your character concept. A PC who has been low-tech barbarian warrior all his life would be unlikely to have Computer or Xenotech skills, for example.
- Depending on the GM's campaign, he may disallow certain skills or some skills above a certain level. The true nature of the Matrix may not be known to the PCs, for instance, so he may limit the Matrix Manipulation skill to level 2 or lower.

Skills are divided into the Aptitude groups to which they apply. Many of the specific applications of the skill are left up to the GM's discretion, depending on circumstances. See the Game System chapter (starting on page 19) for further details.

PHYSICAL APTITUDE SKILLS

Acrobatics: This is the ability to tumble and perform feats of gymnastic expertise.

Climbing: This is the ability to climb sheer surfaces and tall standing objects.

Endurance: The PC is able to keep up intense physical activity for extended periods of time. The skill level is the number of hours the PC can keep up the activity with no penalty (i.e., no skill check needed). However, for every hour the PC exceeds this limit he must make a successful skill check or collapse in exhaustion. The activity attempted must be something the PC already has a skill in (climbing, running, swimming, etc.).

This skill also applies to combat, and the skill level represents the number of extra rounds the PC can keep up combat activity beyond normal fatigue limits with no need for skill checks. For every round thereafter, he must make a skill check to continue. Again, the activity attempted must be something the PC already has a skill in (martial arts, marksman, etc.)

Equestrian: This is skill at mounting, using, and controlling one particular kind of riding beast (horse, yak, camel, etc.–player's choice.)

Jumping: The PC is trained at leaping heights and distances. Level 1 assumes the PC can

jump 3m horizontally and 1.5m vertically with a successful skill check. For every level thereafter, the PC can add half a meter to the horizontal distance and one-tenth of a meter to the vertical distance that can be attempted.

If the PC also has the Acrobatics skill, he can make assisted jumps, provided he has the proper resources at hand (vaulting pole, a conveniently-placed wall, etc.) If he makes a successful skill check at both skills, the distance that can be jumped is doubled.

Running: The PC is accomplished at running for speed, or sprinting. In order to run for distance, this skill must be combined with the Endurance skill.

Swimming: The PC is adept at maneuvering in an aquatic environment.

Weight Lifting: The PC is accomplished at repeatedly moving great loads. Each skill level represents 30 kg the PC can lift with no need for a skill check; every 30 kg thereafter requires a check.

MENTAL APTITUDE SKILLS

Biology: The study of life sciences.

Bureaucracy: This is the ability to correctly fill out paper-work, cut through red-tape, and deal with civil, military, and corporate bureaucracies.

Cartography: The ability to accurately read and make maps.

Chemistry: The study of the composition and reactions of elements and compounds.

Finances: The PC is adept at handling and investing money.

Gambling: The PC is accomplished at many of the familiar games of chance. This does not mean he is adept at cheating at them, but does allow him to spot cheaters himself.

History: The study of past events.

Hypnotism: The ability to put a willing subject under hypnosis to assist in memory recall or to plant post-hypnotic suggestions.

Language: The PC is fluent in one foreign language of the player's choice. This can also includes any ancient language of the Known Nations.

Law: The PC is familiar with the various laws and codes of the Known Nations.

Linguistics: This is the study of the nature of language and speech structure. With this skill, the PC can decipher unknown languages and unlock language-based codes. In order to have this skill, however, the PC must have a level 3 in at least three different foreign or ancient languages.

Mathematics: All characters are assumed to be able to perform basic math operations. This skill involves higher levels, such as algebra, calculus, and transfinite mathematics.

Matrix Manipulation: This is the ability to call upon the Nanotech Matrix to undertake certain tasks. A person with Matrix Manipulation is able to organize his thoughts in sequences the Matrix will recognize as programming code. This often requires intense concentration, often accompanied by mnemonic gestures or phrases. The higher the level of skill, the more likely the PC is to pull off any attempted manipulation. See the Matrix section (starting on page 53) for more details.

Perception: The ability to notice subtle features of the surroundings.

Physics: The study of basic universal structures and forces.

Psychology: The study of the mental processes of intelligent beings.

Research: This skill allows the PC to conduct scientific research or to invent new technology. A PC may use this skill to improve upon a type of rifle, for example, or research the cure for a disease. The PC must have other skills appropriate to his research project (Medical and Biology for the disease research, for example, or Mechanics and Rifle for the weapon modification.) If the skill roll is successful, the modification is successful or the research yields positive results. If it fails, the PC may try again with no penalty.

The time increment for a research pro-

ject is determined by the GM, but he should be aware that most such projects take months or years. For minor projects, three to six months is a good rule of thumb. The GM may have the PC take major projects in stages (i.e., one skill attempt for finding the disease pathogen, another to discover how it is transmitted, a third to develop a vaccine, etc.) for very involved projects.

Each research project takes up one training slot of the PC, and this slot cannot be used for skill/Trait improvement until the project is finished or abandoned.

Sensory Focus: This is a very difficult skill to learn, as it requires a willing teacher of at least level 5, a rare find indeed (once past level 5, a character can develop the skill on his own). The GM may disqualify this skill from PC generation if he feels no teacher is available.

A PC with this skill is able to focus past confusing sensory input and his own mental limitations to concentrate on one sense exclusively, greatly heightening its sensitivity. This does not allow the PC to sense things a human normally could not (the infrared spectrum, for example), but does allow him to act on clues which would normally be too subtle for him to detect. On a successful skill roll, his sense of smell could pick up faint traces of a woman's perfume in a garbage heap, for example, or his sense of hearing could pick out his enemy's quiet breathing in a dark room. Since there are a great number of ways to apply this skill, most of its uses are left to the GM's discretion.

It is possible, with high levels of this skill, that a blind or deaf PC could function just as well, if not better, than other, non-handicapped PCs.

Sophontology: A kind of catch-all

descendant of anthropology, this is the study of sentient beings, their interactions, and their cultures. As humans are no longer the only sentient race around, a great deal of effort has gone into studying and classifying the nature of other races. Sophontology is an invaluable skill when making first contact with a strange race or trying to understand alien ways and societies.

Tracking: The ability to follow the subtle clues left behind by the passage of individuals or animals.

Xenotech: This is the study of the exotic Builder technology and remnants thereof found all over the Shards. A PC with this skill will be familiar with cutting-edge theories about the nature and workings of UTSite, teleport nodes, the Matrix, gravitics, and a whole slew of other ancient technologies. In order to have this skill, however, the PC must first have at least a level 2 in Electronics, Mechanics, and Metallurgy, and level 4 in Physics and Chemistry.

SOCIAL APTITUDE SKILLS

Animal Training: This is expertise in the raising and training of animals.

Disguise: Disguise actually has less to do with elaborate make-up and costuming, though this is included in the skill, than it does with acting and suspension of disbelief. PCs with disguise are accomplished role-players, who can adopt the persona of a stranger as easily as they put on the stranger's features with a latex mask.

Interrogate: This is the ability to glean information from an unwilling subject. This does not necessarily mean torture, but rather asking probing and revealing questions and putting the subject off his guard, like good interview reporters.

Leadership: The ability to command attention, compel obedience, and inspire others.

Network: This is the ability of the PC to work through his personal, social, and professional contacts.

Seduction: This is the ability to charm members of the opposite sex.

Street Smarts: The ability to survive in the urban underworld. A PC with this skill will know how to make connections, procure contraband, and gain "shady" information.

TECHNICAL APTITUDE SKILLS

Art: The PC is schooled in one of the classical art forms (painting, sculpture, etc.–player's choice.) This can also include design art, such as mechanical drawing and architecture.

Carpentry: The ability to cut and shape wood.

Communications: The PC is familiar with the use of the many different types of communication technology.

Computer: The PC can operate and program a computer.

Demolitions: The PC can assemble, set, and disarm explosives.

Drive: The PC can operate ground vehicles.

Electronics: The PC can build and repair electronic systems.

Forensics: Actually a combination of several different disciplines, this is the ability to gain clues from a crime scene or a victim's body.

Forgery: The ability to create false but legitimate-looking documents, including currency or artworks. The PC must have an equivalent level in Art (mechanical drawing for documents, the appropriate school for art.)

Locksmithing: The PC can build, repair, and pick locks.

Mechanics: The PC can build and repair mechanical devices.

Medical: The PC can render emergency and long-term medical care to the ill and wounded. The PC is also knowledgeable about drugs, and can assist in births. The GM should impose appropriate task penalties if the PC is tending to a member of an unfamiliar species.

Pilot: The PC is familiar with flying his choice of aircraft (propeller-driven, jet-driven, helicopter, helistat, or spacecraft). All other craft are piloted at half the skill level.

Remote Operations: The ability to use and control remote operated vehicles and equipment.

Robotics: The PC is familiar with the operations and repair of various robotic units and subsystems.

Sailing: The ability to handle a sailing craft.

SCUBA: The ability to properly operate aqualungs and other underwater equipment.

Security Systems: The ability to build, repair, and defeat various mechanical and electronic security systems.

Sensors: The ability to properly use and glean information from electronic sensors.

Stealth: The ability to move about undetected.

COMBAT APTITUDE SKILLS

Archery: The PC can use bows and crossbows.

Heavy Weapons: This skill includes most direct-fire heavy weapons, including grenade launchers and plasma projectors.

Martial Arts: This is skill in any one of the great many styles of unarmed combat. The player should chose the style of martial art he wants his PC to specialize in (karate, tae kwondo, judo, boxing, etc.)

Melee Weapon: The PC is adept at using a particular class of melee weapon of his choice (sword, staff, sack of doorknobs, etc.)

Pistol: The PC is adept at using standard, gauss, and laser pistols.

Rifle: The PC is adept at using standard, gauss, and laser rifles.

Thrown Weapon: The PC is skilled with using small throwing weapons (knives, shurikens, etc.).

SUBPLOTS

Subplots are features of the PC that do not necessarily correspond to game statistics. They allow the player to give his PC more depth and to

further flesh-out his character concept. In the course of a campaign, the GM should use subplots as an ongoing feature in the game, to enhance player interest, to serve occasionally as an adventure hook, and to help the PC grow as a character.

Every PC should have two subplots, both chosen by the player. More than two subplots may be chosen at the GM's discretion, and the GM may veto any Subplot he feels is inappropriate.

Some subplots may eventually be neutralized over the course of a campaign. A PC who discovers an ancient treasure vault may alleviate his Poverty subplot, for example. If this is the case, the GM may introduce another subplot for that PC, either at his discretion or at the player's suggestion.

The list of possible Subplots are given below. This is by no mean a complete list, and the GM may add new Subplots as he sees fit.

Some of the Subplots listed below involve detailed NPCs of one sort or another. The PC should create the general character concept for the NPC mentioned, but it will be up to the GM to ultimately flesh him or her out and play the NPC in the game.

Addiction: The PC is plagued by an addiction of some sort. This may be to drugs, smoking, gambling, or some other self-destructive crutch. The subplot should be about the PC eventually dealing with his addiction, and the PC may have to constantly fight the temptation of it over the course of the campaign.

Adrenaline Junkie: The PC loves danger and excitement, and will often put himself at risk with little or no provocation.

Children: The PC has one or more NPC children whom he must look after.

Companion: The PC has an NPC sidekick who will follow him where ever he goes. This NPC's loyalty is beyond question.

Compulsion: The PC has adopted some behavior or affectation that he obsesses over.

Contacts: The PC has several highly-placed NPC contacts in various institutions, agencies, or organizations.

Criminal Past: The PC has committed crimes in the past and wishes them to be kept secret. He may have served time for them, or he may still be hunted by authorities.

Day Job: The PC has a mundane occupation besides adventuring, and needs it to make ends meet.

Death: The PC is dealing with the recent death of someone close to him.

Divorced: The PC has one or more ex-spouses.

Enemy: The PC has a powerful and/or vengeful NPC opponent.

Exile: The PC has been cast out of his homeland for real or imagined crimes.

Extended Family: The PC has a large birth family (parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins, siblings) all of whom can act as contacts, allies, drains on income, or major irritants (GM's discretion.)

Family Inheritance: The PC receives a financial or material stipend from the estate of a dead relative. The inheritance may come with unusual circumstances in order to claim it ("seek out the Dark Flyers of the Opal city") or it may itself spark an adventure (the PC finds a mysterious map in the chest he inherited).

Flirtatious: The PC loves the company of the opposite sex, and seeks to use his charms on them as often as possible. This could lead to a lot of romance-related problems.

Handicap: The PC has a handicap of some sort. He may be blind, have a learning disability, or be missing an arm, for example. He may find ways of compensating (the Sensory Focus skill for the blind PC, prosthetic for the amputee), or he may simply deal with his condition as it is.

Hobby: The PC has a hobby that takes up a great deal of his finances and leisure time.

Infatuation: The PC is hopelessly in

love with an NPC who won't return his affections, and may not even know he's alive.

Lover: The PC has a romantic companion of the opposite sex for whom he cares deeply.

Mistake: The PC has committed some horrible mistake in the past, which he will always regret and will do anything to set right.

Patron: The PC works for a wealthy, influential, and/or powerful NPC.

Pet: The PC has an animal companion. The pet will accompany the PC as often as possible, and may know a number of useful tricks. The pet's loyalty to the PC is absolute.

Phobia: The PC suffers from a debilitating fear.

Poverty: The PC is perpetually poor, and has limited material resources.

Pregnant: The PC has just learned she is pregnant. How far along the pregnancy is and what complications may arise is up to the GM.

Religion: The PC is devoutly religious, and the tenets of his faith will color his every decision.

Spouse: The PC is married to an NPC.

Superstition: The PC believes in the supernatural to some extent, and will be a staunch believer in luck charms and bad omens.

Temper: The PC is prone to violent outbursts with little provocation.

Wealth: The PC is affluent. This does not necessarily represent more available cash; the PC's fortune may be tied up in investments, property or tax shelters. Also, his available skills may suffer because of the sheltered life he's led, at the GM's discretion.

ACCOUNT

To determine a PC's starting account, the GM should take the PC's highest level of occupational skill (i.e., the skill with which he is most likely to use for making a living– Mechanics for an engineer, Medical for a doctor, and so on.) and multiply it by 1000. This represents the amount of credits (the monetary unit of the Known Nations, abbreviated C) he currently has saved. For example, a scientist PC with a Physics skill of 5 would have C.5000 in the bank. He may add an additional C.1000 for each level of Finances skill he possess. PCs with Wealth and/or Inheritance subplots can change the multiplier to C.10,000 per skill level, at the GM's option. PCs with the Poverty subplot has a C.100 multiplier instead.

During PC creation only, a player may exchange skill levels for an additional C.1000 in his account.

EQUIPMENT

The last part of PC creation is picking out possessions. Most PCs are assumed to have at least the bare minimum needed for survival in everyday life–an apartment, an adequate wardrobe, ID, furniture, etc. Depending on their concepts, some PCs may have considerably less (a fugitive from justice may be forced to sleep in alleys and wear cast-offs) or considerably more (a wealthy playboy may own a mansion and own several stylish modes of transportation), as determined by the GM on a case-by-case basis. As a general rule, the GM should allow certain items of equipment vital for a PC's concept (a struggling free-lance pilot may own an old, beat-up helistat, for example.)

As for other equipment, the player should consult the equipment lists (starting on page 48) in Chapter Five and purchase whatever personal gear he wants with the money in his account.

Some players may want to purchase very unusual items for their PC–medical insurance, a mobile laboratory, or a gross of super-glue, for example. The availability and cost of these items is completely up to the GM.

Chapter Two

Game System

GENERAL

Game systems are what you make of them, and *The Shattered Sky* is no exception. On the most basic level, the rules herein are meant as guidelines only, the numbers and probabilities providing the GM and players a general idea of what is possible in the game in any given situation. The GM should always feel free to interpret or modify these rules as he sees fit, to better fit them in his campaign.

For example, statistics for weapons are very generalized; the GM may wish to add more "realism" to them, so he introduces different makes and models of the same weapon type, each with a unique damage ratios, range, weight, and so on. Another GM may think that combat damage is too-devastating for PCs, and may downgrade the damage ratios accordingly.

TASKS

Tasks are used whenever a PC attempts to do anything significant in the game. The same system is used for all tasks in the game, including combat, repairs, seduction, bribery, running, and so on.

The procedure is as follows: take the appropriate Aptitude score that the task applies to; add 10 to this number for each level of applicable skill. The result is the target number that must be rolled under, using percentile dice, to succeed at that task. If the number rolled is higher than the target number, the task attempt fails. For example, a PC with a CA of 15 and a Pistol skill of 3 would have to roll 45 (15 + (3 x 10)) or below to successfully shoot a target. In the first round, he rolls a 39, hitting his intended target. In the next round he shoots at the same target again but this time rolls a 74, indicating a miss.

Task Modifiers: The conditions surrounding the task attempt adds to or subtracts from the difficulty the character will have in successfully completing it. **A Task Modifier represents these conditions by adding to and subtracting from the calculated Target Number for the task attempt.** These modifiers fall into the following categories, from best to worst:

- Optimal: +50 to target number
- Favorable +25
- Normal +0
- Unfavorable -25
- Catastrophic:-50

The GM should apply these modifiers as he sees fit, depending on the prevailing circumstances in the game.

An example of using Task Modifiers: A PC repairing a radio in a fully-equipped repair shop would be under Optimal conditions, and the PC would add 50 to his target number. Repairing the radio while on the road with an Electronics repair kit would be Normal conditions, and the PC would use the straight target number.

Repairing the same radio while wounded in the middle of a battlefield, equipped with only a ballpoint pen, would be Catastrophic conditions, and the PC would subtract 50 from the task's target number. Any task whose Target Number is reduced below 0 cannot be attempted.

These numbers are guidelines only; the GM may use increments between these extremes as he sees fit, depending on circumstances.

Unskilled Attempts: A PC may attempt to perform a task even if he has no skill, at the GM's discretion. The Target Number is the PC's unmodified Attribute or Trait. For example, a PC has a TA of 15 but no Electronics skill, and tries to repair a radio under Normal conditions. His target number would be 15, equal to his TA.

Time Allotment: The time each task takes to be completed is determined by the GM. A successful task roll using the relevant skill can give the

PC an accurate approximation of how long the job will take.

Automatic Results: A roll of 01 (1) always succeeds. A roll of 00 (100) always fails.

Contests: When a PC is pitting himself against another character in a specific contest of some kind (Strength vs. Strength by arm wrestling, Reflexes vs. Reflexes in a foot race, Thrown Weapon skill vs. Thrown Weapon skill in a game of darts, etc.), both character make the appropriate skill roll. Whichever character scores the highest without going over his target number wins. If there is no winner, then the contest is either declared a draw or the participants keep going until one wins.

COMBAT BASICS

Tasks: All combat tasks, from punching an opponent to unjamming a rifle, from shooting a tank with a rocket to dogfighting with jets, are covered by the standard task system as presented above.

Rounds: Combat is broken down into time increments called Rounds. Rounds are 5 seconds long.

Initiative: The order in which characters attack in a single combat round goes from the highest skilled character to the lowest skilled. The skill used for initiative determination must be one the PC is actively using. For example, if the PC has a Pistol of 3 and a Long Sword of 5, but has his pistol in hand, so his initiative will be 3. The highest initiative number always goes first, and only after those characters perform their actions can the characters with next-highest initiative perform their actions, and so on.

Opportunity Fire: This is an exception to the initiative rule. Anytime a PC readies a ranged weapon to cover a small, specific target area, and an opponent crosses the set line of fire, then the PC gains automatic initiative over that opponent.

For example, during one round a PC kneels and aims his rifle at an empty doorway. The next round, he is still in position, and an enemy emerges from the door. The PC gains automatic initiative over the emerging character, even if that character has a higher active skill.

Drawing: A PC may draw and attack in the same motion only if 1) he has the appropriate weapon skill, 2) the weapon is readily accessible, and 3) he succeeds at an additional skill roll that round (one for drawing, one for attacking). If the Draw roll is failed, the PC still draws the weapon with no incident, but must wait for the next round to

attack.

Reloading: Reloading most weapons takes 1 round, unless otherwise specified.

Surprise: The GM alone can determine if a target is surprised. If surprise is achieved, then the attacker receives one full round of attacks before the defender can react.

Multiple Actions: A PC is allotted one action per round, unless the player specifically states he is attempting more than one action that round. The combined actions must be something that can be realistically accomplished in 5 seconds, and GM must decide if it is possible under the current circumstances. Each additional task attempted receives a -25 penalty to the Target Number. The total number of action that can be attempted in a single round is equal to the PC's CA divided by 10, rounded to the nearest whole number. This gives a range of 1 to 3 possible actions per round.

Movement: A lightly encumbered human is assumed to be able to move about 5 meters per round crawling, 10 meters per round walking, 20 meters per round jogging, and 30 meters per round running. The GM may modify these movements depending on circumstances, and penalize attack Target Numbers (-10 for jogging, -15 for running) accordingly.

Fatigue: A character can engage in combat for as many rounds as he has Stamina points before fatigue forces him to stop and rest.

For example, a PC with a Stamina of 12 will be able to fight continuously for 12 rounds before exhaustion overtakes him. The amount of time the character needs to rest in order to continue is up to the GM. The Endurance skill may affect this limit.

ATTACKS

The Attack Task: The attacker calculates his normal attack task (CA + weapon skill, plus or minus any conditional modifiers) to determine his target number. For unarmed and melee weapon combat, subtract from this number the defender's modifier. This modifier is the defender's unmodified CA. The Target's CA modifier represents the character's attempts to block, dodge, and otherwise avoid getting hit by the attack.

For example, a PC is attacking an NPC with a sword under Normal conditions. The PC's CA is 15, and his Melee Weapon skill is 3, which gives him a target number of 45. The GM assumes the NPC won't just stand still with three feet of razorsharp steel swinging at him, so the GM consults the NPC's CA, which is 10. This results in a modifier of -10 to the attacker's target number. The PC must therefore roll 35 (45-10) or below on percentile dice to hit the NPC.

Firearms attacks cannot be modified in this way (ever try to block a bullet or dodge a laser beam?)

Inactive Defenders: If a defender is not moving or otherwise not trying to actively prevent an attack, then his CA does not count toward the defender's modifier.

Parries: Parries are active blocks of an unarmed or melee weapon attack.

They are handled as per contests; see above. The character must either have Melee Weapon or Martial Arts skill. Gunfire cannot be parried.

Evasion: If a PC is doing nothing but evading attacks in a single round, he may double his CA for that round for the purpose of subtracting from the attack target number.

Cover: Partial concealment of the defender, including lying prone, adds -10 to the attacker's target number. Full concealment adds -30.

Range: If a weapon is fired within the range (under the MXR column) listed for it on the Weapons Chart, there is no penalty. If it is fired beyond the range listed, the PC receives a -25 to his target number. If it is fired at a target beyond twice the listed range, the penalty is -50.

DAMAGE

Damage: Damage is the amount of physical harm a character sustains from an attack. **Damage is measured by damage points, which are subtracted from a character's Hits total.** Damage points from any single attack are determined by subtracting the rolled result of the attack from the target number. This result is then multiplied by the damage ratio of the weapon.

For example, the target number for an attack, after all modifiers, is 45. The player rolls a 30, indicating a hit. Subtracting 30 from 45, we obtain a result of 15. The damage ratio for that weapon is 3:1, meaning that 3 points of damage are delivered for every point of difference. Thus, the attack does 45 (3 x 15) points of damage to the defender. A 1:3 ratio weapon, in contrast, would do 5 (15 x 1/3, or 15/3) points of damage.

Unarmed Attacks: Weapons have damage ratios listed for them on the Weapons Charts in Chapter Five. For unarmed attacks, the damage ratios are as follows:

Punch, slap, hand strike, head butt-1:10
Kick, knee, elbow-1:8
Jumping kick, jumping punch-1:6
Throws-1:5

Martial Arts skill can increase these ratios by one step per level of skill. For example, a PC with Martial Arts skill of 2 can increase the punch damage ratio to 1:8 and the kick damage ratio to 1:4. Increasing the damage ratio of a martial arts attack is always optional.

Armor: Armor reduces the damage ratio of an attack. Each type of armor is rated according to Armor Value, or AV. Each AV rating represents one level in reduction of the damage ratio of a weapon. An AV-1 armor, for example, would reduce a 3:1 ratio to 2:1, or a 1:5 ratio to 1:6. AV-3 armor would reduce a 3:1 damage ratio to 1:2 and a 1:5 ratio to a 1:8 ratio.

Most armors of AV-2 and above will prevent penetration by small arms fire, preventing blood loss. AV-4 armor will prevent penetration by smaller support weapons and grenade shrapnel.

Consciousness Levels: Anytime a PC receives damage that drops his Hits total below half, he must make a Consciousness roll or else succumb to his wounds. This is determined by rolling his CA + 50. If he succeeds, he can function normally; if not, he drops unconscious for 2D6 minutes.

The next danger point comes at one-fourth his Hits total. In order to avoid unconsciousness, he must roll his CA + 25. If failed, he falls unconscious for 2D6 hours.

The last danger point is at one-eighth of his Hits total. A roll below his straight CA must be made or he falls unconscious for 1D3 days.

For example, a PC has a CA of 15 and a Hits total of 80. He is hit by an attack that delivers 40 damage point to him, reducing his Hits total to 40, which is half his original total. He must roll 65 (15 + 50) or under to stay conscious. When his hits drop below 20, the roll is 40 (15 +25) or below to stay conscious. When his Hits reach 10, he must roll 15 (his straight CA) or below.

Death: A Character is dead if he reaches 0 Hits. Immediate medical attention and favorable conditions may occasionally result in resuscitation, but don't count on it.

REALISTIC DAMAGE

The following are presented as voluntary options to the damage rules above. They will add a more "realistic" and deadly dimension to combat, but will also add another layer of complication to the game.

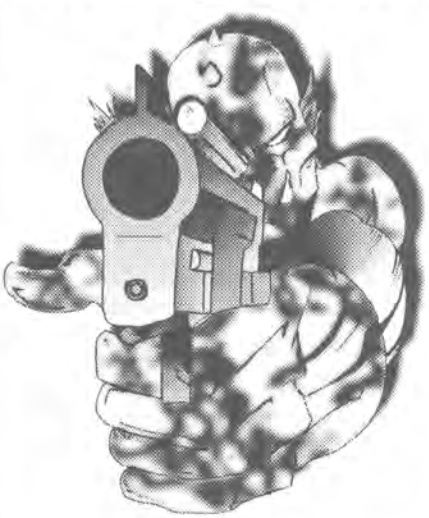
Shock: If the PC ever receives damage equal to half his remaining hits in a single round, then he must make a roll to avoid entering shock. This roll is made at PA + 50. If he enters shock, he receives an automatic -30 to all his task rolls, in addition to any other penalty, until he is properly treated. He will also lose an additional 1 point of damage per round until treated. Using the example above, a PC with a PA of 20 loses half his Hits (40) in a single attack. In order to avoid going into shock, he must roll 70 (20 + 50) or under.

Blood Loss: The GM determines if any attack is severe enough to warrant keeping track of blood loss. Basically, if a penetrating or slashing weapon hits and does at least 10 points of damage in a single attack, then the PC receives damage equal to one-tenth of the initial damage per round until his wounds are treated. For example, a PC is hit with a battle axe that does 20 points of damage; every round thereafter, the PC will lose 2 damage points from blood loss until his wounds are bound. Lasers, extremely hot material, and plasma projectors never cause blood loss even though they may penetrate the body.

Stun: Certain blows, weapons, and chemical agents cause Stun Damage. The GM determines if Stun Damage applies, but can usually be inferred from blunt weapon damage, especially to the head, or attacks from chemical agents such as CS gas. The PC is not unconscious if affected, but dazed and can take no coherent action. If hit by something that causes Stun, the PC must roll his straight PA to avoid the effects. If failed, he is stunned, but may try each succeeding round to snap out of it, his chances improving by +10 per round. For example, a PC with a PA of 20 is hit in the head with a brick. The GM determines he may be stunned, the player must roll 20 or under to avoid the effects of Stun. If he fails the first round, the next round he can add +10 to the Stun roll, so he must roll 30 or below. The next round he can add another 10, and so on.

SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS

Area-effect Weapons: Shotguns, plasma projectors, and explosives all have area-effect damage. Those weapons will have a Blast Radius listed for them. An attack roll is made by the PC against every target in the blast radius of the weapon, each target hit taking damage according to the damage ratio



for that weapon. The GM determines exactly which targets are within the blast radius and which aren't.

Automatic Fire: A weapon on full auto-fire can attack a number of adjacent targets (those clustered together in a relatively close area), depending on how many rounds are in a burst. The GM will determine which targets are close enough to be included in the burst. Consult the table below, which represents the maximum targets that can be hit with any one burst.

Burst Size	Number of Targets
3	2
5	3
10	4
25	5
50+	10

Each weapon capable of firing bursts has a burst capacity listed for it. The PC attacks each target individually, and this does not count against his allotted actions per round. However, for each target above one, the PC's attack target number decreases by 5, to a minimum of his straight CA.

For example, a PC's attack target number of 45, but is spreading his burst arc to include three targets. Since three targets is two more than one target, his target number decreases to 35 (45-(2 x 5)).

The PC can opt to train auto-fire at one target only. If this is the case, that one target is attacked the number of times indicated on the table, but with no penalty to the target numbers. For instance, a PC is firing a chain gun at a single NPC; the chain gun has a burst capacity of 50, meaning that NPC is subjected to 10 attack rolls from that weapon in a single round, all at a 3:1 damage ratio. Ouch.

Poison: There are many thousands of poisons, all of which have very different effects on a target. Poisons may come from an attack, from tainted food, or from the environment. Generally, a poison, once in the victim's body, will deliver damage at predetermined intervals. One poison may do 1D6 damage points per round, while another may induce a 10 points per hour. Some poisons may simply induce unconsciousness or a constant Stun effect. The GM should customize the poisons he use to individual circumstance.

HEALING

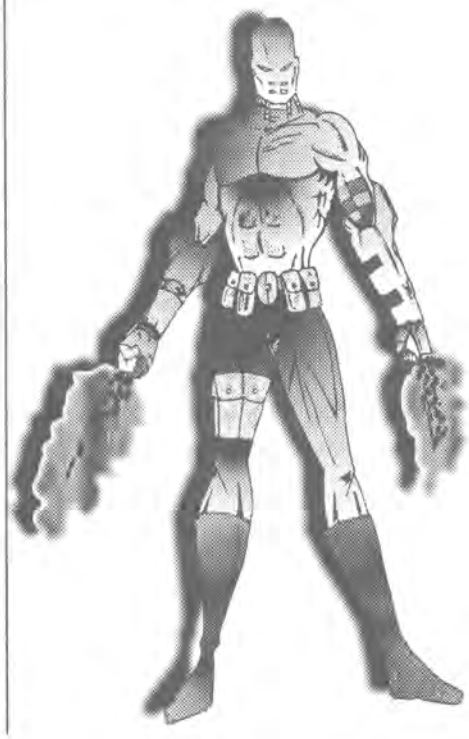
A PC can recover 1 point of damage per day naturally. First aid by an attending character (requiring a Medical skill roll) will double this. Full medical facilities will heal 5 points per day. Certain drugs and spells may also enhance this.

Stopping blood loss or arresting shock requires 1D3 rounds and a Medical skill roll. Waking up an unconscious character also require a Medical skill roll and a stimulant of some kind.

EXPERIENCE

PCs can improve themselves in the ongoing game through experience. Unlike other RPGs, however, ***The Shattered Sky*** does not use an experience point system. Succeeding at a task, winning a fight, and gaining a treasure should be rewards in their own right. Instead, like in real life, the characters in the game can improve themselves only through hard work and study. This is represented by training slots. Each PC receives a number of training slots equal to his MA, divided by 10, rounded up. This results in one to three slots per PC. For each slot the PC may train in one new skill, hone a skill he already has, or improve a Trait score.

Improving Skills: To pick up a new skill or improve an existing skill, the player tries to roll under the PC's unmodified Mental Aptitude (MA). If successful, the PC gains the new skill



or level. Each level of skill represents one month of learning time per attempt. An attempt to learn an Electronics skill level of 3 would take 3 months, for example. If the attempt fails, the player may try again at the end of this time, with a cumulative +10 to the roll per attempt. For example, a PC declares he will try to learn the Swimming-1 skill. His MA is 15. He makes his first attempt one game month after his announcement. He rolls a 74, which is higher than his MA of 15, so he fails for that month. He tries again one game month later. This time, he must roll 25 (15 + 10) or below to succeed. He rolls a 31, indicating once again he's having trouble learning the skill. Another game month goes by, and he receives another +10 to his roll, making his target number 35. This time he rolls a 04, and finally succeeds in learning the skill. The player may then write Swimming-1 on his character's sheet.

New skills always start at level 1. No level may be skipped over. Level 2 must be successfully obtained before the PC can go on to level 3, and so on. If two training slots are devoted to a skill, then the PC can make two attempts in that time interval.

Learning a new spell functions the same way as learning a new skill, except that intermediate levels do not have to be learned first. See the Matrix chapter.

Improving Traits follows a similar procedure. In order to improve a Trait, the player must roll the current Trait number or below on percentile dice. If successful, the Trait improves by 1. Each attempt represents 1D6 months. Unlike training for skills, however, the target number does not improve with each attempt.

Aptitudes cannot be changed directly; they can only be improved through improving their controlling Traits.

Research projects may also take up training slots, as per the skill description.

Aging: PCs grow older and as they do they will gradually lose their physical edge. PCs make aging rolls starting with the age of 40, and every 2 years thereafter. The PC must make an unmodified PA roll or automatically lose 1 point to each Physical Trait. If the roll is successful, the Trait remains the same. Training, as described above, may offset losses. If at any time a PC's Physical Traits exceed his age limit's, as per the Max. Level column on the Physical Traits Chart in Chapter One, then they automatically drop back down to that level.

SHIX
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Chapter Three

Basic Concepts

The Shattered Sky makes use of a number of exotic concepts. This chapter is designed to introduce GMs and players to those concepts as well as give them a general overview of the campaign world.

Technology: Technology in the game is divided into three general categories. The first is known technology, or the furthest extent of technical advancement achieved by the late 20th century. This includes the familiar territory of cars, computers, TV, rockets and so on. The "home base" setting of the game, the Known Nations, uses a great deal of this familiar technology, and should help the players ease into the more exotic aspects of the game by providing them with a comfortable starting point.

The second type is projected technology. This takes current technological trends and projects them as realistically as possible into the future. This is the realm of many familiar science-fiction conventions, such as laser guns, genetic manipulation, talking computers, hovercars, fusion power, and so on. Projected technology is in limited use by the Known Nations and by the space-faring Cephalopods. Projected technology should at first be used sparingly, but then become more prominent as the campaign goes on to provide futuristic hooks for the players.

Imaginary technology is the third category. This is technology so advanced that it seems magical. These are advancements that may not be available for a great many centuries or millennia, if ever. These include gravity manipulation, matter conversion, UTSite, nanotechnology, and teleportation. Imaginary technology, especially in the form of Builder artifacts, should be used sparingly in an ongoing campaign, to avoid upsetting game balance and to preserve the sense of wonder of the game.

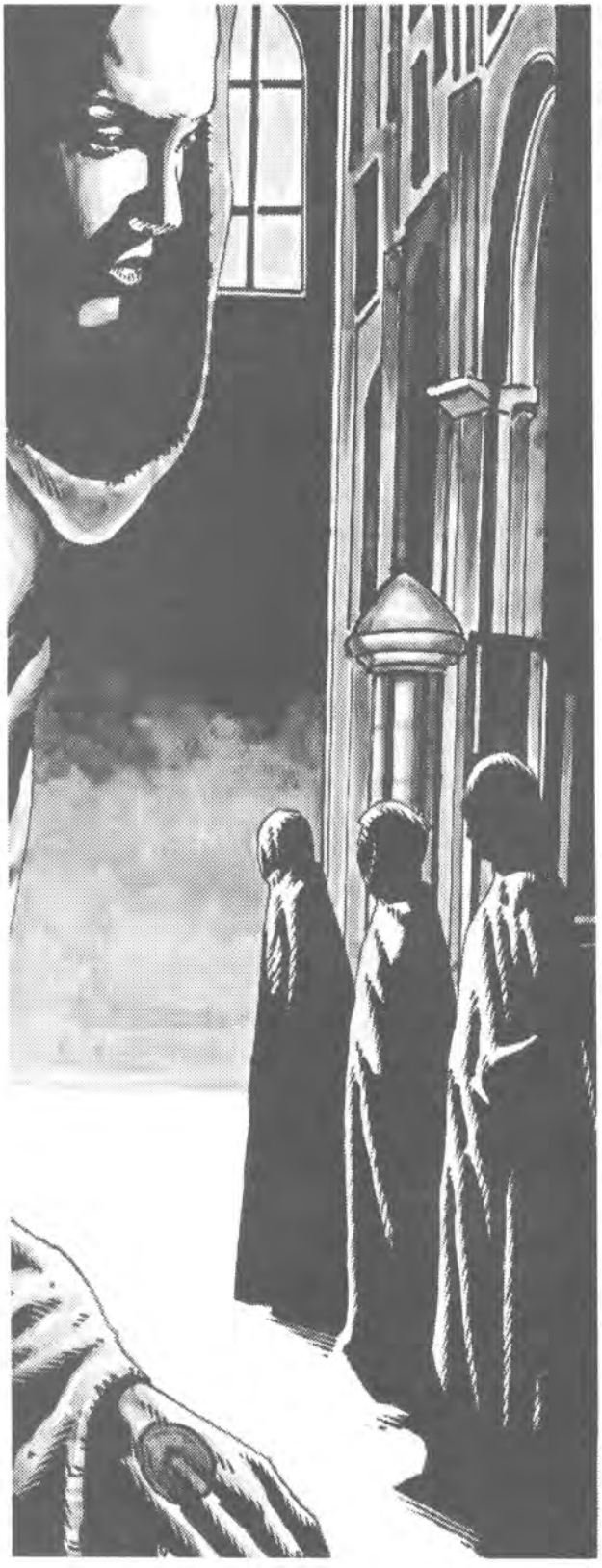
Advancement Levels: In order to simplify technological references, *The Shattered Sky* uses a short-hand system of Advancement Levels (abbreviated AL), which keep track of when a technological innovation is generally introduced into a society. Several different codes are used.

PH stands for prehistoric technology, or tools which were available to humankind before recorded history. This is Stone Age technology, typically identified with primitive hunter-gatherer societies, but also includes some very important developments such as agriculture, animal domestication, and the harnessing of fire. The vast majority of human existence (200,000+ years) was spent at the PH level.

Numbered ALs roughly correspond to the technical development paralleled by a certain century in human history. AL 20, for example, would represent 20th-century technology, while AL -5 would represent the 5th century BC, the era of the Greek city-states. Numbered ALs will range between -30, about the time of earliest Mesopotamian cities, to 25, which is about the comprehensible limit of projected technology. Known technology in the form of prototypes reaches to early AL 21, with projected technology mostly occupying ALs 21 through 25.

BR is the code for Builder-level technology. Builder science was so advanced that it seems magical by our standards. On the numeric scale, this would range from 26 to 100 and beyond, and includes all imaginary technology.

Some historical eras, such as the 19th and 20th Centuries, represent continuous exponential leaps in technology, and the latter parts of those centuries differed greatly from their beginnings. The letters E and L are sometimes used with numeric AL codes, to identify which part of the century is referred to. For example, AL 20E would represent the early 20th century, circa 1900-1930. AL 20L would mean late 20th century, circa 1970-2000.



Using ALs: ALs are used in two general ways: to determine the overall technical level of a culture, and to imply the general performance characteristics of a piece of equipment.

An AL 10 culture, for example, would have medieval-level technology as per 10th-Century Earth, and using this the GM can easily determine things such as its defensive capabilities (crossbows, catapults, and foot soldiers) and chief modes of transportation (horses and medium-sized sail ships). An AL 21 culture, in contrast, can assume to have nuclear weapons, guided missiles, jet aircraft, and advanced computers.

For equipment, the GM can follow similar guidelines. An AL 17 rifle, for example, can be assumed to be a black powder, breach-loading, one-shot weapon. An AL 20 rifle is probably semi-automatic with a 5-round clip and perhaps a telescopic sight. An AL 20 computer may be 50-meg desktop with a keyboard interface, but an AL 24 computer may be a 500-terabyte implanted chip that can directly interface with the user's brain.

The GM should be advised that ALs are meant as loose guidelines only. The real history of technical advancement was very complex and often very chaotic. Any number of variations can exist beyond what Earth experienced. For example, cannons weren't invented until AL 14, but all the components needed to develop them became available over a thousand years earlier, at AL 4. The converse of this can also be true; a culture may have AL 24 architecture and medicine, but may have never developed nuclear science (AL 20L).

Also, ALs are not a short hand for cultural development. Just because a society uses the same type of tools as a certain era from history does not mean it will have a similar culture.

THE BUILDERS

The Builders are so named because it was they who constructed the Sphere and all its wonders. In the age of the Shards, the Builders are often spoken of with mythic overtones.

THE SPHERE

The most important concept of the game is the Dyson Sphere. First proposed in 1960 by scientist Freeman Dyson as a way of detecting advanced extraterrestrial civilizations, this idea involves constructing a gigantic shell around a star to trap all of its energy output and provide

the builders with a near-inexhaustible energy supply.

The Sphere can serve one other important purpose besides as energy source—living space. If the Sphere is constructed with a radius of 93 million miles, the distance between Earth and the Sun, the inner surface will receive just the right amount of sunlight needed to support life. This inner surface, if outfitted with gravity generators, would be able to hold soil, water, and a breathable atmosphere. Such a sphere would have vast a habitable area if the entire inner surface was used—just under one billion times the surface area of Earth.

But the Builders, being mere humans and equipped with limited (but very advanced) resources, had to opt for a more limited option. Even though they disassembled the entire solar system, they did not have enough raw materials to make the entire Sphere a solid, habitable surface, lacking the means to generate so much soil, bedrock, oxygen, and so on. Instead, most of the Sphere, about 60%, was given over entirely to energy-gathering, using micron-thin material, similar to that once considered for solar sails, to trap sunlight. Another 10% of the Sphere was used for support framework. This left about 30% of the surface of the Sphere for use as habitable space. This still represents a mind-boggling huge area—nearly 300 million Earths.

However, the Habitats, as they came to be called, were not all concentrated in one area or band, but were spread widely over the breadth of the Sphere. Many represented different factions of peoples and races, while others were built to house unique environments. The larger Habitats, like the one that would become the MegaShard, were constructed to be vast life laboratories and common ground for the many sentients inhabiting the Sphere.

This decentralization of the Habitats later proved to be very fortunate, as the Great Cataclysm would have no doubt completely destroyed any huge conglomerated habitat.

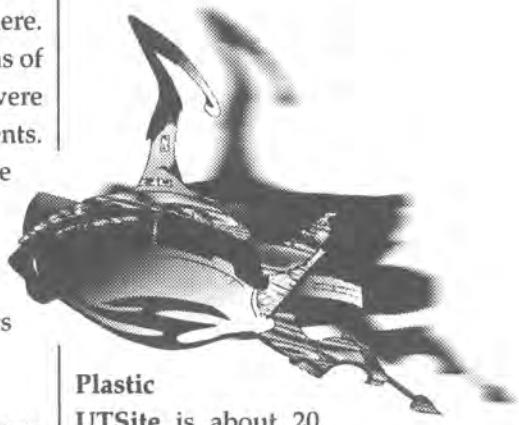
SHARDS

Shards are what the debris of the Sphere is called in the wake of the Cataclysm. The word is also used to describe the surviving habitats themselves.

The Sun is surrounded by a vast belt of debris from the Sphere, one million kilometers wide and about 100 million kilometers deep. This debris field is often referred to as InterShard space.

UTSite

The UTS in UTSite stands for Ultra-Tensile Strength, and refers to a certain class of Builder materials that are extremely resistant to deformity. Though UTSite comes in many variations, there are two basic types: plastic and metallic.



Plastic UTSite is about 20 to 50 times more resilient than carbon steel, and is believed to be composed of molecularly aligned carbon filaments. In game terms, it has an AV of 10. It is called "plastic" because it has the same light-weight and texture as common industrial plastics. A special, hard-to-synthesize chemical catalyst known as Resin X is needed to mold plastic UTSite. Many loose Builder artifacts are made up of plastic UTSite.

Metallic UTSite is much more mysterious, and vastly more resilient. It is 50,000 times more resistant to deformity than carbon steel. It is made of iron that has the range of the "strong" nuclear force of its nuclei enhanced so that it helps to bind individual atoms together, but how the Builders were able to do this without completely collapsing its atomic structure is unknown. Metallic UTSite must be powered or else it reverts to normal but very radioactive iron with an intense burst of gamma rays.

Metallic UTSite composes most of the main structural framework for the

Sphere and the Shards. It is very rare to find any loose examples of Metallic UTSite, though a great deal of its by-product—radioactive metal—litters many artifact sites and InterShard space.

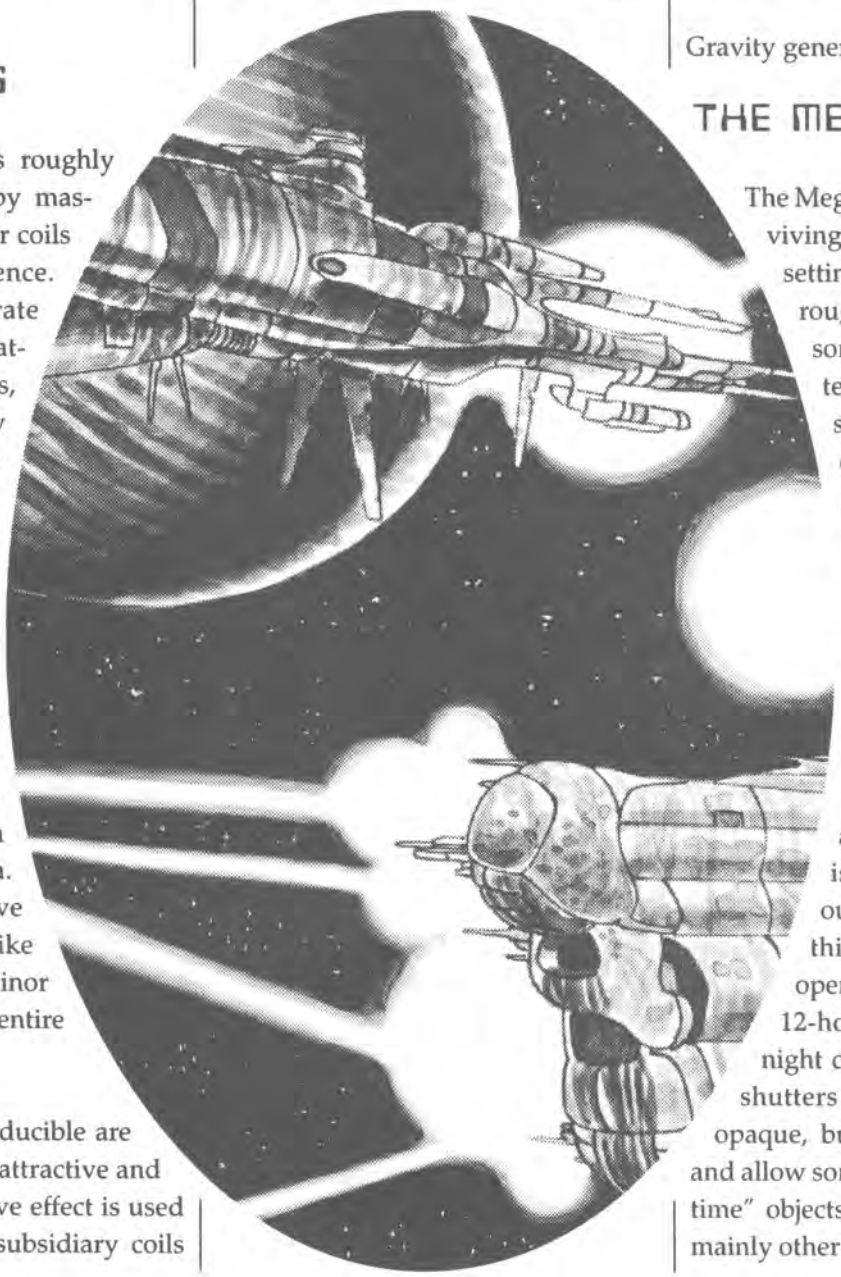
Plastic UTSite is AL 24. Metallic UTSite is AL BR.

GRAVITY GENERATORS

Each habitat Shard is roughly circular, surrounded by massive particle accelerator coils along its circumference. These coils accelerate ultra-high density matter at near-light speeds, generating gravity fields in roughly the same manner spinning magnets generate electromagnetic fields. By modulating the matter flow and velocity, each Shard's coil systems are able to produce and pinpoint artificial gravity fields anywhere in their immediate area. Thus the Shards have uniformly Earth-like gravity, with some minor variations, over their entire flat surface.

The gravity fields producible are actually of two kinds–attractive and repulsive. The repulsive effect is used very rarely. Smaller, subsidiary coils sometimes nullify the gravity field generated by the main coil over small portions of the Shard, usually done at the behest of its maintenance systems or humans using the Matrix. Very rarely, the main coil will generate a unified repulsion field to deflect debris that might impact the Shard and damage it. This powerful field can deflect anything smaller than the Shard itself. When this is done, normal gravity will momentarily "blink" off on the Shard, often causing all sorts of chaos for the inhabitants. However, this is now a rare occurrence, as most of the Sphere debris has settled into stable orbits in the millennia since the Great Cataclysm.

Gravity generator coils are AL BR.



THE MEGASHARD

The MegaShard is the largest surviving habitat, and the main setting for the campaign. It is roughly circular, measuring some ten million kilometers, or about 254 earth-spans, across. Girdling its circumference are massive gravity generator coils, as described above.

The uppermost layer of the Shard is a millimeter-thick metallic UTSite canopy, about 100km above the habitable surface. The canopy is transparent. On its outer skin are millions of thin shutter units, which open and close to produce a 12-hour day and 12-hour night cycle on the Shard. These shutters are not completely opaque, but will blot out the sun and allow some of the brighter "night-time" objects to be seen in the sky—mainly other Shards. The shutters also

double as solar energy collectors when they are in their closed position.

The next layer of the Shard is the atmosphere, which is identical to Earth's in composition and is able to produce the same random weather patterns. The Builders decided early on not to include weather-control, and therefore all Shards experience unregulated, "natural" weather.

The layer of soil on the Shard runs between 1 and 3 meters deep, covering a layer of silicate bedrock some 500m deep.

All the climates ever found on Earth are found on the MegaShard, including deserts, forests, jungles, tundra, oceans, rivers, swamps, and so on. The oceans are usually not more than 200m deep.

At the very bottom of the silicate bedrock layer is a vast maze of nanite causeways, only a few centimeters wide. Though very thin, these causeways are the veins and arteries of the Shard, regulating erosion and resource replenishment via the nanotech Matrix.

An interface layer comes next, completely sealed off from the inhabitants behind an impenetrable metallic UTSite barrier. This layer contains auxiliary gravity generator coils, the power distribution network, auxiliary computers, and the primary UTSite energizers. It is in here than the primary gravity field of the gravity generator coils is focused.

The next layer is a 1000m thick maze of maintenance tunnels, access corridors, and auxiliary machinery. This is commonly referred to as the Underworld. Gravity here is inverted in direction from that of the surface; the direction that is "up" on the surface is "down" in the Underworld, and vice-versa. The Underworld is mostly airless, though some pressurized chambers are maintained through automated systems.

The outermost layer of the Shard is a one-meter thick coating of metallic UTSite. This layer is occasionally broken by massive airlocks that serve the Spaceports scattered throughout the Underworld.

The walls at the rim of the MegaShard reach from the Underworld to the canopy, and are one meter thick metallic UTSite. Encircling the inner rim on the habitable surface is what is referred to as the Nano Sea, which is about 10 km wide. The MegaShard's Sunward surface is sculpted with a slight bulge in the center, and tapering down toward the edge. The angle is so slight and runs over so much distance that very few inhabitants are even aware of the slope. As the lands on the Shard erode, they are pushed toward the Nano Sea, which is a composed almost entirely of nanites. The nanites break down the debris falling into the sea and transport the material back along the nanotech causeways back to the center, where they create new land masses, seabeds, and so on, according to their programming. These emerging landmasses slowly but inexorably displace the rest of the land toward the Nano Sea, perpetuating the cycle. The whole process is exceedingly gradual and slow, and is not noticeable to the inhabitants since everything around them moves with them. The entire cycle from center to rim takes over 500,000 years, a sign that the Builders constructed the Sphere to last for a long time indeed.

There are no seasons on the MegaShard.

NANOTECHNOLOGY

Nanotechnology gets its name from the scale on which it operates—billionths of a meter, or nanometers, the scale of viruses and molecules. Nanotech comes in many forms, but the most useful is that of a nanotech robot, or nanite. These are independent machines which use individual molecules for working parts—and even with a million such parts they are still smaller than a human blood cell. More detailed information on nanotech and its consequences for the inhabitants of the Shards is found in the Matrix chapter.

Nanotech systems are the backbone of Shard maintenance. Nanites are active at all levels of the Shard, working together by the uncounted trillions toward cohesion of the maintenance systems as a whole as well as maintaining ecological balance on the surface of the Shards.

Scattered through the Shard bedrock are "element nodes", places where the

Builders cached certain useful materials for future use. The inhabitants of the Shards make use of these, mining them for valuable materials, such as iron, titanium, silver, diamond, and so on. The nanites will always replenish these with materials from the Nano Sea, though sometimes the processes may take many decades. Each such node will typically yield several hundred to several thousand tons of material.

TELEPORTATION

Teleportation is perhaps the most fanciful of all the concepts discussed here, because, popular TV shows aside, there is no solid theoretical foundation that such a thing will ever be possible. The teleportation system in the game utilizes extradimensional geometry, side-stepping our universe by temporarily diverting matter into another. In order to work, the teleport system must have both a fully operational transmitter and receiver. It takes a lot of power to operate, something that is fortunately in no short supply on the MegaShard. However, other, smaller Shards may not have the energy reserves to operate the system efficiently, if at all. The teleported objects are still subject to the light-speed limit; in other words, the system is not truly instantaneous, but is limited to the speed at which the transmitter Node can communicate the command to retrieve the teleported object to the receiver Node. To the teleported object, however, it will seem as if no time has passed.

The further the object is teleported, the more energy is required. Teleporting objects interstellar distances was beyond the scope of even the Builders' capabilities.

BIO-ENGINEERING AND UPLIFT

Bio-engineering is the ability to manipulate the genetic make-up of living creatures. Uplift is the advanced ability to use bio-engineering to create tool-using, sentient beings from non-sentient life forms.

The Builders used these two techniques to create hundreds, possibly thousands, of new intelligent races. It was always one of humanity's great dreams to meet and talk with non-human intelligences. When the prospects of discovering them among the stars faded, the human race created them instead.

The first method of doing so was to modify humans. These new races are called human variants, and range from mild (Orcs) to radical (Centaurs) modifications to the basic human design. Some of these new races were patterned after creatures of myth; the Centaurs and Orcs are prime examples. Others include Dwarves, Werewolves, Pixies, and Merpeople.

The second method was in uplifting mammals, humanity's closest cousins. At first they stuck to animals that were already semi-sentient, such as chimpanzees and dolphins, but quickly moved on to other species. Dogs, cats, ferrets, horses, whales, rhinos, bats, and a great many others were uplifted.

Humans also uplifted other vertebrates, such as lizards and birds, but far fewer of these were created than other types of sentients.

Far more common are invertebrate Uplifts. These come in two varieties: individual intelligences, such as the Cephalopods, and communal intelligences, such as the Spider Swarms. Of all the Uplift species, these are farthest removed from Baseline Humans, and often have wildly divergent patterns of thought and logic.

The Builders also used bio-engineering to create many new, non-sentient life-forms. PCs can expect to encounter many strange, exotic creatures and plants never dreamed of by their 20th Century ancestors.

Bioengineering capabilities begin at AL 20L. Uplift is possible at AL 25.

Chapter Four

History

Interstellar travel was a dead end.

When the human race first reached out from its one small world into space, they saw themselves as the inheritors to the stars. However, over the centuries, despite all their efforts and dreams and scientific advancement, the distances between the stars turned out to be too vast for even human cleverness to conquer. They did try, sending out sleeper ships and ramjet probes and experimental gravitic hyperdrives. Some of them even succeeded, reaching the nearer stars, but the investment in such craft turned out to be far greater than any monetary return they could ever deliver. Eventually, interstellar travel became nothing more than an easily-forgotten fad.

But space travel within the solar system flourished. Every major terrestrial body orbiting the sun was colonized, and terraformed according to the human race's vision. Mars blossomed with forests and seas; Venus became a harsh but beautiful desert; the moons of the gas giants became homes to vast artificial habitats; thousands of wheeling colonies dotted the solar system, sparkling like diamonds in a chandelier. For a very long time, humanity was content with these, and quietly pursued its everyday business.

But it eventually became clear to many that this state of affairs could not last forever. Population pressures and energy needs were growing at exponential rates. With the stars forever out of their reach and the worlds available to them growing ever more limited, what were they to do?

THE TEN-THOUSAND YEAR PLAN

No one knows exactly when or how the decision to build the Dyson Sphere was arrived at; only that it was made, and the destiny of the human species changed forever.

The Sphere took nearly ten millennia to construct and the descendants of the Builders were still refining and adding to it right up until the Cataclysm. All the planets and bodies in the solar system, from massive Jupiter down to the smallest comet in the Oort cloud, were disassembled and used as raw materials. The construction of the Sphere required the development of technologies nearly God-like in their powergravitic generators, matter conversion, nuclear force manipulation, teleportation, and the Nanotech Matrix.

Once the Sphere was complete, humanity had a new home–one with near-unlimited living space and the energy output of the entire Sun to draw upon. The human race enjoyed the Sphere for many millennia, and a golden age flourished. The sphere seemed a new Eden.

But, like all Edens, it was not meant to last.

THE GREAT CATACLYSM

Five thousand years ago, the unthinkable happened.

The Sphere shattered.

The exact cause of the Cataclysm is unknown. Some suggest a natural impact with a massive object falling out of interstellar space; maybe a small planet, or perhaps even a quantum singularity. Others suggest a vast, Sphere-wide war, with the destruction of the Sphere as one last hideous act of violence or sabotage. With the recent incursions of the Others, however, a growing minority believe that the destruction of the Sphere was engineered by sinister beings from outside of human experience . . .

Trillions of sentient beings died in the first second of the disaster, as the shockwaves ripped their way back and forth across the Sphere, centrifugal force shredding the internal framework apart. Material designed to withstand direct hits by asteroids twisted and parted like wet cardboard. The modular habitats, each housing billions of people, died by the thousands in those first few seconds.

THE AGE OF SHARDS

The habitats that survived the Cataclysm still had many trials ahead of them. The debris of the shattered Sphere filled solar space, and catastrophic impacts were common. Many of the support systems keeping the habitats operating had suffered great damage, and cascade failures spelled the end of millions of unsuspecting people in the affected Shards.

Many of the survivors became too preoccupied with simple survival for much advanced knowledge to survive. A great many reverted to primitive barbarism, fighting wars with spears and bronze swords in the shadow of diamond-filament cities and towering teleport nodes. It seemed that humankind was doomed to a long, lingering death wallowing in fatal ignorance as the Shards slowly but inexorably failed one by one.

THE KNOWN NATIONS

The area now called the Known Nations was a particularly fertile region of the MegaShard. It was inhabited by survivors of the Cataclysm who, against all odds, retained recordings of advanced technological knowledge in the form of a grand Library constructed to preserve the few printed texts that had sur-

vived into the age of the Builders. Shortly after the Cataclysm, an illiterate, mystical priesthood sprung up around this Library, fanatically preserving every book and machine therein without really understanding what they protected.

It continued this way until about 500 years ago, when the ancient Boreleans, still in their nomad-warrior stage, invaded the Library. The knowledge-priests fanatically defended the fortress-like Library, but were eventually overwhelmed. The Boreleans were on the verge of torching the building when their leader, Thorena the Jackal, ordered it preserved.

What exactly prompted the legendary warrior to preserve the Library is unknown, but its effects on Borelean society became profound in the decades afterward. Unlike the defeated priests, the Boreleans had no qualms with actually reading the books and applying what they learned. Their society advanced quickly, and black powder firearms and triangular-sailed ships were in wide-spread use by the time Lyssa the Fox, Thorena's heir, assumed her mother's Throne of Skulls. With such technological advantages, Borelea's road to empire was assured.

The Boreleans used their new weapons to conquer an immense swath of territory, about equal in size to all of ancient Earth. However, trying to hold so much territory in an iron fist wore away at their limited resources, and less than two generations after Lyssa, the Borelean empire fragmented into dozens of warring nation-states. The core of the empire remained, but dwindled steadily in the ensuing centuries. Its most humbling blow came just 100 years ago, when the new, upstart nation of Destiny, led by the descendants of the old Library priests now calling themselves the Church of the Sphere, seized the Library for itself. The possession of the Library by Destiny greatly angered the Boreleans, and a number of wars and "incidents" involving the attempted recapture of the city have punctuated the last century.

THE MODERN ERA

Destiny, Borelea and the other, less powerful nations that grew in their shadow would probably have continued in their cycle of petty warfare indefinitely if the people of Teranesia had not stumbled onto the entrance to the Underworld.

Located on the remote island of Malachon, home of the Spider Swarms, the entrance led into a vast maze of tunnels in the outer layers of the Shard. The true impact of this discovery did not dawn on the Teranesians until they discovered the Spaceport, containing over three dozen Builder-era spacecraft.

The people of the Known Nations had suspected the nature of their world for quite some time, but unfortunately the scale of distances on the MegaShard and their own technical limitations prevented them from ever fully exploring beyond their immediate environs. But access to the spacecraft and their first tentative steps into space confirmed the reality of their situation, especially after the discovery of the vast number of dead or failing Shards.

The leaders of the young nation were unwilling to bear the responsibility of keeping such an awesome discovery secret, despite the tremendous advantages it could bring them over their rivals. In an unprecedented move, the President of Teranesia, Wilhelmina Sakura, called a meeting of representatives from every major power then known—the Known Nations, the Magi guilds, the Mind Dancers, and leaders from every significant religious, corporate, and political organization—to show them what Teranesia had found and its inescapable consequences. Like the other Shards, the MegaShard would someday fail as well—perhaps in a hundred years, or a thousand, or perhaps in the next few seconds—with no warning whatsoever. And they and everything they knew would die with it.

This meeting was called the Underworld Council, and many in the Known Nations consider it to be the watershed event in their history. Its revelations set off a firestorm of controversy and political upheaval that took nearly two years to quell. In the end, all the major powers in the Known Nations agreed that their only hope for survival lay in cooperating and pooling their resources to explore the MegaShard and beyond, to find the answers they needed to preserve their world.

That was thirty years ago. The current year is 545, marking the number of years since the ancient Boreleans first captured the Library. A new Nation—Zalon—has arisen in that time and joined the others in their quest. Science and technology have benefited greatly from full international cooperation, especially in Borelea, Destiny, Kylea, and Teranesia. A great deal of territory surrounding the Known Nations has been explored, and a much larger area, out to about 20 earth-spans (about 800,000 km), has been mapped by aerial survey. Many previously unknown races, most surviving at the subsistence level, have been contacted.

Also contacted were the advanced, space-faring Cephalopod clans, octopi Uplifts who survive by scavenging parts and organics from dead Shards. Some clans are friendly and trade with the Known Nations, while others are vicious pirates who attack human spacecraft at every opportunity. For many years, many considered the Cephalopods to be the Known Nations' greatest stumbling block on the path to its ultimate goals.

Until the peoples of the Known Nations began learning of the Others. Who or even what the Others are is completely unknown, but explorers have encountered their agents and Machiavellian schemes with increasing frequency over the past decade. And the Magi report faintly detecting something hideously alien interfacing with the Matrix very far away . . .

But despite these obstacles, or perhaps because of them, the sense of purpose of the Known Nations has begun to change in recent years—away from simple survival to that of destiny. Many citizens now believe it is the destiny of their people to one day reunite the races of the shattered Sphere and perhaps even rebuild it, to reclaim humanity's long-lost legacy. And heaven help anyone—or anything—that gets in their way.

Chapter Five

The Known Nations

The Known Nations provide a stable "home base" for adventurers in *The Shattered Sky* , a place where the PCs can rest between missions, gather new equipment, meet new patrons, interact with "normal" people, and occasionally have nonexploration-related adventures.

The area occupied and thoroughly explored by the Known Nations (abbreviated KN in popular usage) roughly covers about that of the surface area of Earth, with established outposts up to three times that distance.

THE NATIONS

Borelea: The oldest and largest of the Known Nations. Borelea was forged from many disparate nomad tribes, united under the imperial vision of the legendary warrior Thorena the Jackal.

An obscure, unconfirmed legend has it that when Thorena conquered the Library, she ordered it spared when a textbook cover depicting an Amazon warrior from Greek mythology caught her eye. In the years afterward she voraciously devoured the histories of the great empires of ancient Earth–the Greek city-states, the Roman Empire, the Mongol Dynasty, the American Hegemony–as soon as they could be translated. She saw herself and the empire she was forming as the one true heir to their glorious legacy, and sought to make her people over in their image.

Borelea, as an empire, flowered and dwindled as the centuries passed. However, the sense of destiny and ancient heritage that Thorena instilled in her people is still very much alive in modern-day Borelea. The nation is currently a representative democracy with a powerful free-enterprise economy, patterned after the American model. It is economically the strongest of the Known Nations.

Capital: Lara
Advancement Level: 20+

Destiny: Destiny is dominated by the Church of the Sphere, a sect that believes the Builders were the divine agents of God, and everything surviving from that era is holy. The Church believes all advanced knowledge is sacred, and has sought the secrets of the Sphere even before the Underworld Conference. Their thirst for scientific knowledge and ancient artifacts, combined with their current possession of the Library, has resulted in Destiny becoming the technological leader of the KN.

Destiny is a religious oligarchy headed by the church's High Council. The Church is idealistic and mostly benevolent, though it is plagued by a complex bureaucracy and constrained in many areas by religious dogma.

Capital: Alga
Advancement Level: 21

Fanda: A small constitutional monarchy whose main industry is trade along the Finger Sea. It has recently initiated a far reaching program aimed at catching the country up to the technical level of the more advanced Nations.

Capital: Tarlenheim
Advancement Level: 20

Kylea: Kylea once completely dominated the Diamond Sea, until Teranesia won its independence from

it some 33 years ago. Kylea is an old constitutional monarchy, and is tottering under a huge, complex bureaucracy. Kylea fields the most powerful navy in the KN, and the tensions between it and Teranesia have resulted in more than a few skirmishes involving contested islands.

Kylea has never quite gotten over losing Teranesia, and its economy is still showing signs of the loss decades later. Kyleans especially resent the loss of national prestige to Teranesia in the wake of the Underworld discoveries.

Capital: Ariel
Advancement Level: 21

Mordava: This mountainous region splintered from Borelea 200 years ago, and is made up of fiercely independent female dominant clans. Mordava is the last bastion of absolute female supremacy in the KN. It is a dynastic monarchy.

Capital: Diana
Advancement Level: 20

Rosstan: An ancient kingdom that predates even Borelea, this small, isolated monarchy is quite content to proceed with its everyday business as it always has, and is the nation least occupied with exploration efforts.

Capital: Clausen
Advancement Level: 19+

Technocracy of Lyra: Formed by one of the splinter groups of knowledge priests fleeing from the capture of the Library, this nation is headed by the Order of the Mind Dancers. The Mind Dancers are a mysterious and esoteric sect dedicated to fully tapping the potential of the human mind. During a long and bloody period of vicious civil wars, an ambitious warlord convinced the Mind Dancers to aid him against his enemies. However, it was the Mind Dancers who ended up using him, and eventually seized control.

Though Lyra is not advanced technologically, its inhabitants boast that it is by far the most advanced nation sociologically. The Mind Dancers have, over the centuries, changed it over into their version of a perfect society. Every citizen is placed into his or her niche according to individual merit and talent, and education emphasizes open-mindedness and diverse philosophy. Each aspect of Lyran life is presided over by an Optimization Council, which oversees administration and resource allocation. The Lyran government is built on a hierarchy of these councils, headed by the Grand Council, whose members are all Mind Dancer Masters.

Expect to learn a lot more about the Mind Dancers in a future sourcebook.

The Mind Dancers themselves do not seem to have any real psychic powers, despite rumors to the contrary. Rather, their advanced training with mnemonics, hyper-assimilation and sensory focus make them seem psionically gifted to the unwary. At least, that's what they tell everybody . . .

Capital: Optimus
Advancement Level: 19+

Teranesia: This vibrant and ambitious nation is made up of nearly a thousand islands dotting the Diamond Sea, as well as some recently-acquired mainland colonies. It won its independence from Kylea after a very bloody and protracted war 33 years ago.

Three years after independence, the Teranesians discovered the entrance to the Underworld, the only one known in KN territory. To this day, they are still exploring the vast array of tunnels below.

In controlling access to the Underworld, Teranesia also controls the Spaceport, which many see as the second greatest asset in the KN after the Library. Though the Underworld conference guaranteed that the relic spacecraft found there would be split evenly among the nations, Teranesia controls all support and resupply facilities. This monopoly gives them tremendous influence in space affairs.

Teranesia is a participatory democracy, with candidates picked by computer according to merit and community service records. Teranesia is also aggressively expansionistic, having set up colonies in the outlands and even on a neighboring Shard.

Capital: Tera
Advancement Level: 21

Xi: During the height of the Borelean Empire, a school was established to study and promote the practice of Matrix manipulation. When the Empire receded, the school remained an independent center for civilization, and its influence slowly spread from this central point. Today Xi's rulers are still called Professors, and they form a ruling council that administrates to Xi. They are elected by an exclusive "Board of Review," made up of the leaders of the 27 most powerful Magi guilds. Though the council tries repeatedly to distance itself from the feuding politics of the many Magi Guilds, these guilds still hold tremendous influence on Xian policies.

Xi has the greatest concentration of Magi in the KN.

Capital: Delta
Advancement level: 20

Zalon: Zalon is the newest addition to the KN, barely twenty years old. When the Teranesians were fighting for independence, they petitioned help from the most powerful warlord of this outlying region, Zalon III. Zalon lent his army to Teranesia, which eventually emerged triumphant.

After the war and the upheavals caused by the Underworld Conference, Zalon called upon Teranesia to help him unite the warring clans of his region to form a true nation. The Teranesians agreed, reasoning that a stable political entity that far into the Outlands would facilitate exploration efforts. The decision to help Zalon was highly controversial throughout the KN, but thanks to Teranesian technical and logistic help, Zalon III conquered and domesticated a sizable chunk of territory in just five years.

Zalon today is a dynastic empire, headed by Zalon III's direct heir, Zalon IV. The current ruler is presiding over the economic boom that the influx of foreign technology and capital have brought his nation, and enjoys the overwhelming support of the nobility and gentry. A great many of its people are illiterate and still live at the subsistence level, but Zalon IV is establishing programs to deal with these problems.

Ten years ago Zalon absorbed a ruined ancient city (X3) into its territory and set about rebuilding it. The city was named Elysium, and is now used as a major nexus point for expeditions into the Outlands.

Zalon, unlike the other Known Nations, is traditionally a patriarchal society.

Capital: Corrum
Advancement Level: 15

FEATURES OF THE KNOWN NATIONS

Matriarchy: The ancient Boreleans adhered to a strict religious dogma that stated that only those who were capable of bearing life had any right to take it. Thus, only females could arbitrate life and death.

An enthusiastic and highly-disciplined female-warrior culture emerged from this philosophy, the same culture that Thorena the Jackal and Lyssa the Fox propelled into a vast empire. In this society, men were relegated to second-hand citizen status as child rearers and household caretakers, and often treated like property by their wives and lovers.

Motherhood was considered a privilege and an honor; usually enduring the life-giving agony of childbirth in complete solitude was a requirement for an officer's commission.

However, this fanaticism has eroded over the centuries along with the decline of the empire and the rise of technical society. Today, men are usually considered equal citizens—on paper, at least. Unfortunately, a great deal of deep-seated prejudice still exists between the sexes in the old Borelean territories, which include all the Known Nations except Zalon. Women still hold most of the positions of real power, and men often find a "glass ceiling" in society when it comes to job opportunities and income. Destiny, Teranesia, and, surprisingly, Borelea itself are the most progressive nations concerning men's rights; Mordava is the most backward.

The Library: The Great Library is the single most important resource in the KN. It was created by the Builders as a repository to preserve books created before electronic media came to completely dominate human civilization. It contains over one million copies of ancient texts, all carefully reproduced on long enduring synthpaper. The vast majority of preserved volumes are from the 19th, 20th, and early 21st centuries of ancient Earth, from the height of the printed media era.

No doubt the Builders considered the Library a frivolous project, considering the near-infinite amount of data the Matrix could supply them at a whim. However, the Library proved an invaluable resource to the KN, giving them access to technical knowledge that would have taken them many millennia to accumulate otherwise.

Today, the Library is owned by

Destiny, but that nation allows free access to it by anyone willing to fill out the appropriate paperwork and pay the proper tithe to the Church. Damaging the Library or any of its books is considered a capital crime in all the Known Nations.

The people of the KN have always considered the Library as somewhat magical, a repository of endless knowledge that they can always draw upon. However, the leaders of the most advanced Nations are becoming aware that they are reaching the limits of the technical knowledge contained within the ancient texts, and that very soon they will be completely on their own.

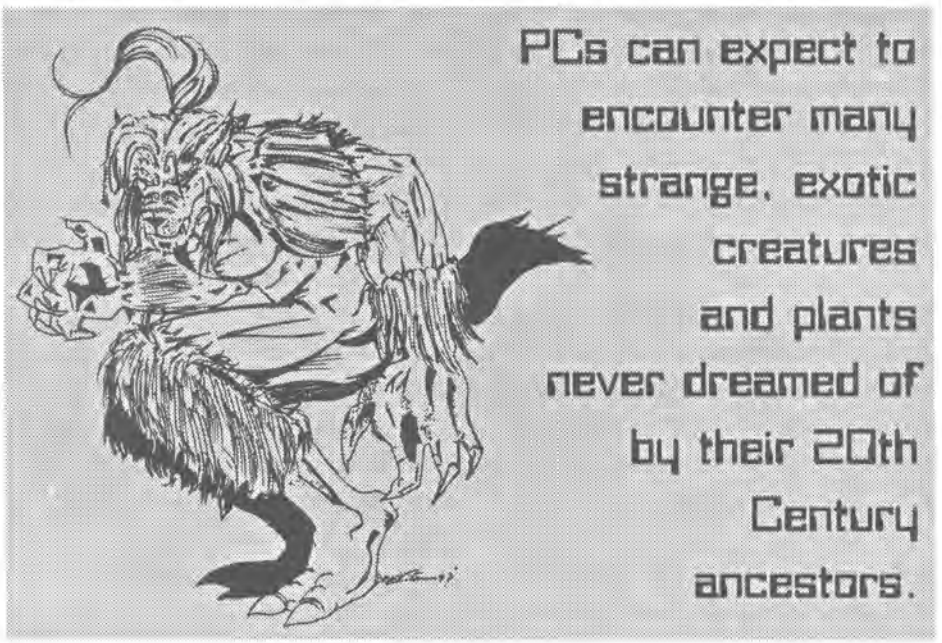
Earth Fads: Because all the texts in the Library are reproduced from those of ancient Earth, the people of the KN know a great deal about Earth history up until the mid-21st century. As a result, a great many of fads, both social and technical, have sprouted up over the years mimicking lifestyles of different Earth eras.

Rivalry: Even though the Underworld Conference of 515-517 has resulted in unprecedented international cooperation, many old grudges still fester among the member states of the KN. The most prominent of these include:

- **Borelea/Destiny:** Destiny captured the Library away from Borelea in 441, a loss of prestige that the Boreleans have never forgiven. Currently the two countries are involved in a political and ideological tug-of-war over leadership of the KN, as both believe themselves best capable of leading the other nations in discovering the Builders' secrets.

- **Kylea/Teranesia:** Wounds from Teranesia's war of independence are taking a long time to heal between the two powers, especially since Teranesia's rise to prominence in the wake of the Underworld discovery.

- **Mordava/Everybody Else:** Mordava is kind of the angry stepchild of the KN, strictly adhering to what it views as traditional ways, but what everyone else views as outdated and repressive practices. Female supremacy is the law of the land, strictly enforced, and ancient family clans and their whims dominate daily life. Most Mordavans are suspicious of foreigners, and more than a few exhibit outright xenophobia.



RACES OF THE KNOWN NATIONS

There are four sentient races commonly found within the borders of the KN: Baseline Humans, Orcs, Centaurs, and Spider Swarms.

Baseline Humans:
These are human beings as nature created them. They are just as ambitious, argumentative, and diversified as their 20th-century ancestors.

Baseline Humans (or just "humans" in common usage) are by far the most populace race in the KN, composing over 90% of the population.

Orcs:
Orcs are a mild human variant race.

They have the same basic body structure as Baseline Humans, but have pointed ears, prodigious jaws, a slight greenish tinge to their skin, and very robust builds.

Orcs are thought to be distant descendants of a strain of humans genetically-bred for combat. They have superior muscle mass, superior reflexes, substantial tolerance to injury, and an infrared sense, similar to a shark's, located in the tips of their ears. Orcs have a relatively short lifespan, averaging 50 years.

Orc society and tradition is very disciplined in nature, with an emphasis on honor and duty. The Orcs believe that the soul is forged from a mystical, ethereal metal, and that the trials of life temper this spirit-metal into its purest form. There are a great many Orc adventurers and mercenaries in the KN, all of whom seek spiritual perfection through physical adversity.

Honor and courage are everything to an Orc. Most Orcs will fight fair whenever possible, will never break their word except under the most dire circumstances, and will willingly sacrifice themselves for friends and family.

Marriage ceremonies are rare in Orc society; a mutual exchange of vows at any time is considered binding for life. Orc children are highly disciplined and are taught the art of fighting from an early age. They are encouraged to engage in difficult pursuits and rough games to help temper their souls.

Orcs are the second most populous race in the KN, composing about 8% of the population. They originate from the area around the Finger Sea, but over the centuries they have spread themselves widely over KN territory. They are openly welcomed in most human communities, and human/Orc marriages are fairly common.

Orc Characters: When creating an Orc character, add three to the final results of each of his Physical Traits. For example, for an Orc PC a player rolls a 14, a 12, and a 20 for his three physical Traits. He adds three to each number to end up with final scores of 17, 15, and 23. No Orc character can be older than 50 during character generation, and suffers aging roll every year instead of the two year intervals for human characters. The range of their infrared sense varies with the intensity of the heat source, but can usually detect an uncamouflaged human at ten meters. This sense is non-visual and does not allow them to see in the dark.

Any Orc PC must adhere to the Orcs' code of honor whenever practical, as outlined above, or be a reviled outcast from his people.

Centaurs:

Centaurs are living proof that at one time biogenetic engineering went though as many fads as 20th-century clothing.

Centaurs are a radical human variant race. They look exactly like the centaurs from classical mythology—the upper half of a human and the lower half of a horse. However, their horse-halves are not nearly the size of an adult horse—more like half-grown ponies. Thus, most Centaurs have an eye-level similar to that of the average human.

An adult Centaur can gallop up to 60 kph for short bursts, and have remarkable endurance. Centaurs, because of their large body mass and relatively high metabolism, literally eat like horses, packing away three times the daily food intake of an average human.

Centaurs come from a low-tech, hunter-gatherer society concentrated in the "southern" portions of Kylea, Xi, and beyond. Their traditional society is very mystical, emphasizing the existence of a dream-world every bit as real as our own and enforcing strict harmony with nature. They have trouble accepting that the "nature" they so revere is actually a sophisticated man-made ecosystem, and this revelation has caused quite a rift in their culture. The Centaurs have a number of Magi shamans who serve as priests and community leaders, using independently discovered (and low-level) Matrix spells.

Centaurs have had only minimal impact on the affairs of the KN, and most tribes simply wish to be left alone. However, some clans have actively sought to integrate themselves into KN society, and have begun to disseminate themselves

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widely in the region. Today, Centaurs are only just becoming a common sight in the nations outside Xi and Kylea. There is even some talk of uniting the diverse Centaur tribes and forming a tenth Known Nation, but the theological rift forming between the traditional mystics and the nouveau technical Centaurs may make this impossible.

Centaur Characters: Add 5 to the Centaur's final Stamina (SM) score. Because of their increased body mass, multiply the character's PA by 6 instead of 5 to calculate Hits. Because of cultural conditioning, Centaurs have a hard time dealing with high-technology. They must spend double the amount of points during character creation on high-tech skills (electronics, computers, etc.), and they need twice the normal amount of time to learn new high-tech skills or levels once the character is in play.

Centaurs have a unique unarmed combat style called Hoof Fighting, which for game purposes is considered a Martial Arts option. As the name implies, this involves using their horse-hooves for striking in combat. A front kick by an adult centaur has a damage ratio of 1:5. A rear kick does 1:3. Double kicks double the damage.

Spider Swarms:

Spider Swarms were discovered on Maiachon Island thirty years ago, having evolved a very sophisticated society in complete isolation. Whether their presence on the island with the only known entrance into the Underworld is a coincidence or not is unknown.

A Spider Swarm consists of 8 to 20 tarantula-sized spiders. Each spider has a special bio-engineered organ that functions as a short-range radio. Exactly how this metal-rich organ functions has baffled KN researchers. Each individual Swarm has its own frequency to communicate among its component-bodies, and can adjust frequencies on a limited basis to talk to other Swarms.

Within a Swarm, the spiders use these organs to network with each others' minds. One spider alone can never be sentient, but eight or more with their brains working in unison exhibit human level intelligence. The optimal number seems to be around 12, but some Swarms as big as 20 have been reported. Their radio-organs have a very short range, and the component bodies have to stay within about 10 meters of each other to maintain cohesive sentience.

Swarm component-bodies have important differences from real spiders beyond their radio-organ. They have larger, much denser brains than their natural cousins, making single, unconnected component-body about as intelligent as a housecat. Their legs have articulated barbs on the end, to facilitate manipulating objects. Their eyesight is much improved over that of normal spiders, able to distinguish individual shapes and features of an object.

Spider Swarms are a very alien form of intelligence compared to baseline humans, and their thought-processes follow a very divergent pattern of logic from ours. They can literally split their attention in as many different directions as they have component-bodies, and tend to take the welfare of a group much more seriously than even the most dedicated human. Swarms not used to dealing with humans will often seem cold and vicious, casually willing to sacrifice individuals—spider or otherwise—without a second thought to benefit the whole group.

Spider Swarms have found themselves readily accepted by KN society, despite the protests of some fanatically xenophobic fringe groups. Though strange by any human standard, they are surprisingly philosophical and thoughtful. Many have proven their worth time and again on vital missions, and many Swarms are prominent citizens of Teranesia.

Spider Swarms have created on their

home island vast, sprawling communities composed entirely of webbing silk, housing thousands of Swarms. When they live away from Malachon, they will often build silk mini-cities in apartments or houses. Spider Swarm society adores many things human, especially music and television. Aware of their status as an uplifted race, they view humans in a kind of awe as their creator-race, just as many KN humans see the Builders as semi-divine. Humans, in turn, have adopted a kind of "big brother" attitude toward the Swarms, feeling the need to guide their societal and technical development. Swarms will often defer to human judgement in most decisions of consequence.

An individual Swarm intelligence can breed with itself and survive as a unique entity, replacing old component-bodies with young ones, for up to a century before inbreeding forces the break-down of the link-mind. In order to produce a new, independent Swarm, two Swarms will mate, their offspring forming the mind-link while still within their egg-sacs.

Swarm webbing silk is highly prized in the industrial sector, as the silk is twice as strong as steel cable of the same thickness and 15% more flexible.

Spider Swarm Characters: Roll Traits and calculate Traits, Hits, and Skills as normal for human characters, then divide Traits, Aptitudes, and Hits by 10. This represents the abilities of any one of the Swarm's individual component-bodies. A Swarm character starts out with 9-19 (2D6 + 7) component bodies. No matter how many component-bodies it contains, a Swarm cannot exceed human-level intelligence. Swarms cannot swim and will drown in more then 10 cm of water if unaided. Swarms eat either live prey or, when around squeamish humans, a specially prepared blood-nutrient "soup." Most mammals—humans included–taste pretty disgusting to them.

A bite from a Swarm spider does 1:10 damage plus poison, which does 1D3 damage per round for 2D6 rounds.

Spider Swarms PCs should be rare, one to a PC group at most. Players with Swarm PCs are expected to role-play out the Swarm's alien intelligence and behavior whenever appropriate.

Nomads:
Every few decades, a Nomad race will pass through KN territory. These are usually humans or human variants, though occasionally an uplift race is encountered. They are almost always low-tech (AL-5 or below, often PH), and will stay for a few years, trading as they slowly make their way through KN territory. Nomads for the most part are tolerated as long as they do not cause any major trouble.

ECONOMICS

The Known Nations run on a free-enterprise, capitalistic economic system very similar to that found in 20th-Century North America. One of the less-celebrated outcomes of the Underworld Conference is the adoption of a universal currency in most of the Known Nations–the Credit, abbreviated C. The Credit has as much buying power as the American dollar circa 1990.

Corporations are wide-spread, but have nowhere near the amount of power and influence the multi-conglomerates of the late 20th Century enjoyed. They are kept in check by wary governments and influential labor unions (the peoples of the KN did learn some lessons from Earth history).

TECHNOLOGY OF THE KNOWN NATIONS

General: For centuries now, the peoples of the Known Nations have relied almost exclusively on the Great Library as their primary source for technical knowledge. As a result, a great deal of the technology, including vehicles, architecture, computer ware, weapons and so on, resembles their counterparts on ancient Earth. Anything the GM can find in a contemporary catalog will probably have a close analog in the KN.

Power: Most energy production is either from hydroelectric, wind, or solar energy sources. A handful of nuclear fission plants have been constructed, and some research into fusion is being made. There are no fossil fuels on the MegaShard. Most vehicle fuels are either hydrogen or

methanol. Teranesia is making controversial plans to tap energy directly from the power grid of the Underworld.

Transport: Internal combustion automobiles, fueled by hydrogen or methanol, are the norm, but battery-powered autos are becoming popular. Hovercraft, both land and sea versions, are becoming commonplace in the more advanced Nations. Air transport is by far dominated by helistats, though airplanes, jets, and helicopters do see a good deal of short-range use.

Weapons: Twentieth-Century style firearms dominate the field of personal weapons, though newer, hi-tech gauss and laser weapons are making serious inroads into the market. Plasma projectors are just beginning to see use as military support weapons. Hovercraft tanks and APCs are starting to replace tracked and wheeled fighting vehicles. Fighter jets and helicopters still dominate air warfare, with massive carrier helistats common. The scarcity of uranium has limited nuclear weapons in the KN to a few hundred, and these are usually reserved for space combat.

Space: The more advanced nations have fielded some homemade spacecraft, all relatively short-range and limited in capability. Space tech is still dominated by the relic Builder spacecraft discovered in the Spaceport thirty years ago.

Medicine: Medical technology stagnates behind most of the other fields, thanks mostly to the Matrix and its ability to repair the human body at the command of a Mage. Doctor-Mages are in high demand. Non-Matrix first-aid and disease control is about at the mid-20th Century level.

Miscellaneous: Robotics and cybernetics are still infant technologies. Genetics is progressing fairly well, though nowhere near the level of the Builders, and gene manipulation is still completely dependent on the Matrix. Materials technology, thanks to the Matrix, is able to produce lightweight, high tensile strength composite materials in great quantity, and room temperature super-conductors are just beginning to see popular use. Communications is mainly by radio, and long-range communications must be bounced off the transparent UTSite barrier 100km overhead, a practice not yet fully developed. Computers are commonplace, and wrist-comps are becoming very popular.

EQUIPMENT

The equipment here represents a sampling of tools and devices readily available to the PCs within the boundaries of the Known Nations. Generally, a device whose AL exceeds the AL of the nation it is being sold in will be more expensive than the listed price.

Most of the pieces of equipment listed here are self-explanatory. Most have close 20th Century equivalents, and GMs who require more detail can look up their real-life performance in the appropriate reference material. Some of the more obscure devices are marked with an asterix (*) and are given more detail following the equipment listings.

Cost is given in Credits. Weight is given in kilograms. Range is given in meters, with a "T" denoting its thrown range. MAG stands for magazine capacity. Recoil (REC) denotes the strength of the weapon's recoil; a character who is not properly braced may receive a penalty on his next attack, at the GM's option. A B in parenthesis (B=x) represents the weapon's burst capacity.

Item	Cost	WT	DAM	RNG	MAG	REC	AL
Melee Weapons							
Knife	5	.3	1:5	15 (T)	-	-	PH
Short Sword	40	2	1:3	-	-	-	-10
Long Sword	125	5	1:2	-	-	-	-5
Hand Axe	10	1	1:3	5 (T)	-	-	PH
Battle Axe	500	10	1:1	-	-	-	10
Club	5	3	1:4	-	-	-	PH
Mace	45	8	1:2	-	-	-	10
Staff	12	2	1:5	-	-	-	PH
Spear	10	2.5	1:3	30 (T)	-	-	PH
Halberd	100	15	1:1	-	-	-	15
Chainsaw	125	5	4:1	-	-	-	20
Archaic Range Weapons							
Sling	1	.1	1:5	40	-	-	PH
Blowgun	10	-	1:10	10	-	-	PH
Boomerang	5	3	1:5	30	-	-	PH
Shuriken	1	.1	1:5	20 (T)	-	-	14
Short Bow	50	2	-	100	-	-	PH
Long Bow	150	5	-	200	-	-	14
Compound Bow	250	5	-	250	-	-	20
• Arrow	1	.1	1:3	-	-	-	PH
Lt. Crossbow	150	5	-	125	-	lo	11
Hvy. Crossbow	300	10	-	300	-	med	15
• Bolt	1	.1	1:1	-	-	-	11
Blackpowder Pistol	200	3	1:3	30	-	med	15
Blackpowder Rifle	300	8	1:2	100	-	med	15
Shotguns							
Small Bore	100	5	2:1	30	5	med	16
Lrg. Bore	150	8	4:1	20	5	hi	16
Auto (B=3)	450	10	2:1	20	30	hi	20
• Note: Double-barrel shotguns double damage if both barrels are discharged at once. Sawed-off shotguns have a RNG of 5.							
Firearms							
Derringer	500	1	1:3	30	1	lo	19
Revolver	100	1	1:2	100	6	lo	19
Magnum Revolver	300	1.5	2:1	100	6	hi	20
Sm. Auto Pistol	200	1	1:2	100	8	lo	19
Med. Auto Pistol	225	1.2	1:1	100	8	med	19
Magnum Auto Pistol	400	2	2:1	100	8	hi	20
Carbine	200	3	1:2	125	6	lo	19
Sm. Civ. Rifle	250	4	1:2	150	5	lo	18
Lg. Civ Rifle	1000	6	1:1	250	5	med	19
Assault Rifle (B=3)	500	5	2:1	1K	30	med	20

EQUIPMENT NOTES

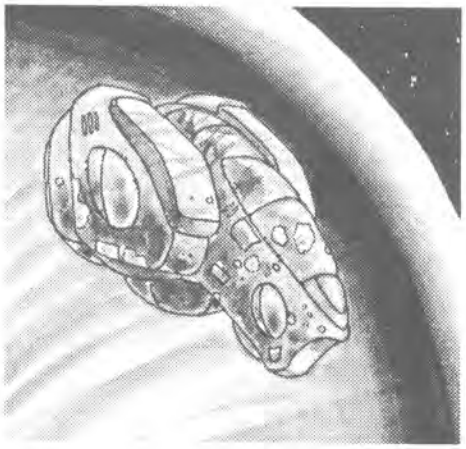
Equipment notes are in alphabetical order.

AAR: This stands for Advanced Assault Rifle. This weapon has a lightweight, sturdy frame, utilizes caseless ammo, has an integral electronic telescopic sight, a built-in laser designator, slung-under 25 mm grenade launcher, and a digital readout.

Anti-Polymer Spray: Each use of this spray will dissolve approximately 1m-square area of most commercial and industrial plastics. It can also neutralize the effects of Molecular Bonder and Friction Nullifier.

F/B Grenades: These are Flash/Bang grenades. These are grenades with a low explosive yield but which generate a blinding light and a deafening roar when detonated. Designed to incapacitate a target through sensory overload without killing him.

Friction Nullifier Spray: One use of this spray will create a 1m x 1m area of glossy, metallic sheen that is com-



pletely frictionless. It will break down naturally within 24 hours or can be neutralized with Anti-Polymer.

Helistat: This is an advanced form of lighter-than-air craft, distantly related to the zeppelins of the early 20th Century. They use a rigid, aerodynamic, composite-laminate frames to contain compartmentalized bladders of non-flammable helium for a lift agency. They are outfitted with advanced articulated prop engines, usually deployed in pairs flanking the main lift frame, that can either provide extra lift or lateral motion. A personal helistat measure ten meters along its major beam. A Cargo Helistat measure 80 meters long, and can carry up to 100 tons. Explorer helistats are monster vehicles, measuring up to 300m long, designed for long-range exploration of the MegaShard surface.

Hoverdrone: These are small, robotic hovercraft. They are usually used for ground surveillance, but can be outfitted to deliver cargo or act as a remote weapons platform.

Matrix Interface: This very experimental computer hardware contains a captive Matrix Swarm that transfers commands fed into it via the computer to the larger Matrix in the environment. These are often very dangerous, as commands are often misinterpreted by the captive swarm. PCs should use these at their own risk.

Molecular Bonder: This is an advanced form of super-glue. It can be

Item	Cost	WT	DAM	RNG	MAG	REC	AL
Firearms Continued							
SMG (B=5)	300	2.5	1:1	100	30	med	20
AAR (B=5)*	2500	4	3:1	2K	50	lo	21
Automatic Weapons							
Small Support Weapon (B=5)	1000	10	1:1	1K	200	hi	19
Heavy Support Weapon (B=10)	3000	22	3:1	2K	200	ex	20
Chain Gun (B=25)	12.5K	25	4:1	5K	5K	ex	20+
• Note: All of these weapons must be either tripod, vehicle or hardpoint mounted.							
Gauss Weapons							
Pistol (B=3)	2500	3	1:1	1K	30	lo	21
Carbine (B=3)	4000	4.5	2:1	2.5K	30	lo	21
Rifle (B=5)	7500	8	3:1	4K	50	lo	21
Lasers							
Pistol	5000	5	2:1	2K	100	-	21+
Wrist Laser*	8500	4.5	2:1	1.5K	50	-	21+
Rifle	10K	10	4:1	5K	200	-	21+
Plasma Weapons							
Dispersed*	50K	10	5:1+	50	25	hi	21+
Beam*	250K	15	10:1+	3K	25	ex	21+
Grenade Launchers							
Rifle-mount	100	1	-	100	1	lo	20
Blooper	250	3	-	300	1	med	20
Six-shot	500	6	-	300	6	med	20
Auto (B=3)	800	8.5	-	250	20	hi	20
• Note: There are different launchers for each size of grenade.							

Grenades

HE stands for High Exposive. HEAP stands for High Explosive, Armor Piercing. Anti-P stands for Anti-Personnel.

Item	Cost	Wt.	BR	DAM
25mm HE	10	.1	5	1:1
25mm HEAP	15	.1	.5	3:1
25mm Flechette	12	.1	15	1:2
25mm F/B*	15	.1	1	1:1 + stun
25mm Smoke	5	.1	-	Obscurement
40mm HE	20	.2	10	2:1

Grenades Continued

Item	Cost	Wt.	BR	DAM
40mm HEAP	45	.2	1	4:1
40mm Anti-P	20	.2	25	1:1

Weapon Accessories

Item	Wt	Cost	AL	Notes
Telescopic Sights	.2	200	19	
Silencer	.1	200	20	
Flash Supressor	.2	300	20+	
Laser Sight	.5	1500	20+	1km range

Space Equipment

Item	Wt	Cost	AL	Notes
Pressure Suit	15	10k	20	AV: 1; 8 hrs. dur.
Hazardous Environment Pressure Suit	40	25K	21	AV: 4; 8 hrs. dur.
Rescue Ball	5	250	20	8 man-hrs. dur.
Pressure Tent	25	2.5K	21	32 man-hrs. dur.
Backpack Maneuvering Unit	12	5K	20+	250 burns, or 1 hr.
Suit Patches	2	20	20	8 patches/pack
Portable Airlock	15	5K	21	3m x 3m x 2m

Undersea Equipment

Item	Wt	Cost	AL	Notes
SCUBA Tank	2.5	750	20-	1 hr. dur.
Air Compressor	10	150	19+	
Rebreather Unit	4	2K	20+	4 hr. dur.
Artificial Gill	5	5K	21	18 hr. dur.
Wet Suit	1	50	20	
Dry Suit	3	200	20+	
Face Mask	.5	30	20	
Deep Operations Suit	60	100K	20+	

Exploration Equipment

Item	Wt	Cost	AL	Notes
Explorer Jumpsuit	3	200	20	AV: 1
Cold Weather Clothing	5	40	PH	
Sleeping Bag	3	40	PH	
Backpack	2	45	PH	
Toolbelt	.5	25	-5	
Rope	5	10	PH	30m coil
Plastic Cable	1	40	20	30m coil
Spider Silk Cable*	.1	200	21	30m coil
Grapnel Hook	3	15	10	
Tarp	1	10	PH	
Tent	5	40	PH	fits 2

neutralized by Anti-Polymer.

Plasma Projectors: These are very advanced forms of firearms, and are the closest weapon technology has come to recreating the "blasters" of science fiction. Basically, a pellet of hydrogen fuel is super-heated inside a magnetic bottle within the weapon until it achieves a plasma state, about 5000° Celsius. This plasma is then ejected from the weapon in one of two ways–widely dispersed, like an exhaust plume of a jet engine, or tightly constricted into a "beam," like high-pressure water squirting through a narrow aperture. The latter usually "splashes" when it hits a solid object, hence its blast radius. These weapons are only just becoming available in the Known Nations, and usually only to elite troops.

Pliable LCD Display: These are bendable, foldable display screens that can be attached to any surface. They can be folded or rolled up for storage.

Rifle Scopes: Telescopic scopes, in game terms, adds 1 to the attack target number for every two powers of the scope, rounded down. A 6x scope, for example, would add +3. The attacker gets this plus only at ranges beyond thirty meters and only if the attacker takes one full round to line up the shot properly. Scopes can easily be knocked out of alignment, and require an hour or more on a firing range to re-adjust.

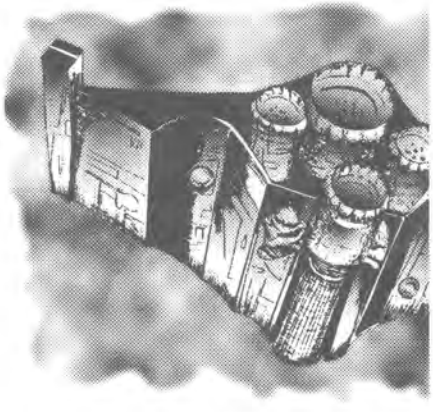
Spider Silk Cable: This is rope made from spider webbing silk, usually

from unbonded Swarm spiders bred for the sole purpose of producing the silk in quantity. Spider silk is twice as strong as steel cable of the same thickness and 15% more elastic.

Wrist Comp: This is a small, modular, multi-purpose computer that fits over the lower wrist like an oversized bracelet. They are fairly advanced, AL 21 computers, and are used for a wide variety of functions.

Wrist Laser: A favorite firearm among covert operatives. These are easy-to-operate, easily-concealed weapon with the barrel running along the upper forearm and the trigger nestled in the palm. This configuration is only possible for lasers, which do not have to worry about complications like recoil or ammo feed. The power pack for the laser is usually clipped onto the belt, with a power feed running under the clothes and along the length of the arm.

Zeppcam: A small remote device consisting of a small helium airframe, a battery-powered rotor, and underslung video camera. Used for aerial recon.



Exploration Equipment Continued

Item	Wt	Cost	AL	Notes
Modular Cabin	10	500	20	fits up to 6
Water Purifier	5	200	19	2 ltrs. per hr.
Flashlight	.3	10	20	4 hr. dur.
Torch	.5	2	PH	1 hr. dur.
Oil Lantern	2	25	-5	2 hr. dur.
Electric Lantern	1	40	20	6 hr. dur.
Gas Mask	.5	50	20	

Sensors

Item	Wt	Cost	AL	Notes
Binoculars	1	50	18	up to x40 mag
Light Intensifier Scope	2.5	2500	20+	
Thermal Imaging Scope	3	5K	20+	30m range
Motion Sensor	1.5	2000	21	30m range
Chemical Analyzer	2.5	8K	21	
Radiation Sensor	3	100	20	50km range
EM Scanner	2	250	21	100km range
Portable Radar	10	1800	20+	10km range
Shotgun Microphone	3	1000	20	500m range
Laser Microphone	5	2200	20+	5km range
Ultrsound Scanner	2.5	4K	21	1m range; scans object interiors
Sonar Imaging Goggles	3	5K	21	100m range

Tools

Item	Wt	Cost	AL	Notes
Crowbar	1.5	5	-5	
Misc. Power Tool	2	100	20	
Gas Torch	5	100	19	DAM: 2:1
Laser Torch	8	1500	21	DAM: 3:1
Molecular Bonder*	.1	10	20	Tube w/50 uses
Friction Nullifier Spray	.2	100	21	Can w/50 uses
Anti-Polymer Spray	.2	1000	21	Can w/25 uses
Asbestos Spray	.1	100	21	Fire-proofs; 10 uses

Tool Kits

Item	Wt	Cost	AL	Notes
Basic Tool Kit	5	150	10	
Carpentry Kit	20	500	15	
Mechanics Kit	50	2000	20	
Electronics Kit	5	2500	20+	
Lockpick Set	1	100	19+	

Communicators

Item	Wt	Cost	AL	Notes
Hand Com Unit	1	75	20	5km range
Com Unit Booster	2.5	150	20	Adds 100km range
VA Headset	.1	200	20+	1km range
Subvocal Unit	.1	200	20+	attaches to Comm unit
Radio Relay Tripod	5	350	20	1000km rng.

Recorders

Item	Wt	Cost	AL	Notes
Camera	.5	30	20	
Instant Camera	.5	35	20+	
Video Camera	1	1000	20+	
Tape Recorder	.5	20	20	

Computers

Item	Wt	Cost	AL	Notes
Calculator	.1	10	20	
Wrist Comp*	.5	5K	21	
Laptop	1	1000	20+	
Desktop	5	2200	20+	
Mobile Mainframe	25	25K	21	
Pliable LCD Display*	2.5	1000	21	up to 5mx5m
VR Interface	5	3500	21	
Matrix Interface*	40	500K	21+	VERY experimental

Medical Equipment

Item	Wt	Cost	AL	Notes
First Aid Kit	5	10	19	
Field Medical Kit	5	500	20	
Mobile Med Center	500	40K	20	requires vehicle
Surgical Kit	1	200	20	
Medical Multi-scanner	3	2000	21	
Cryogenic Suspension Chamber	500	100K	21	non-mobile

Explosives

Item	Wt	Cost	AL	Notes
Dynamite Stick	.5	25	19	DAM: 2:1; BR: 5m
Plastic, 1kg	1	100	20	DAM: 4:1; BR: 10m

Explosives Continued

Item	Wt	Cost	AL	Notes
Thermite Charge	2	80	20	DAM: 5:1; BR: 1m
Demolitions Kit	25	1000	20+	

Remote Vehicles

Item	Wt	Cost	AL	Notes
Zeppcam*	5	250	21	Range: 5km
Sm. Hoverdrone*	1	400	20+	Range: 1km
Lg. Hoverdrone*	30	2500	20+	Range: 200km
Remote Operations Control Module	10	800	21	

Ground Vehicles

Item	Wt	Cost	AL	Notes
Motorcycle	150	3K	20	
Car	2000	10K	20	
Truck	6K	25K	20K	
Open ATV	2000	8K	20+	
Exploration ATV	40K	200K	21	
APC	30K	120K	20	
Tank	50K	500K	20	

Water Vehicles

Item	Wt	Cost	AL	Notes
Canoe	50	200	PH	
Sm. Sailboat	1000	2000	-5	
Lg. Sailboat	50K	250K	15	
Sm. Powered Boat	500	1000	19	
Lg. Powered Boat	40K	100K	19	
Sm. Hovercraft	10K	10K	20+	
Lg. Hovercraft	50K	250K	20+	
Sm. Submersible	12K	30K	20+	

Air Vehicles

Item	Wt	Cost	AL	Notes
Hang Glider	25	100	19	
Sm. Helicopter	3K	100K	20+	
Lg. helicopter	20K	650K	20+	
Sm. Airplane	2K	40K	20	
Lg. Airplane	10K	40K	20	
Lear Jet	8K	250K	20+	
Personal Helistat*	1000	7500	21	
Cargo Helistat*	20K	100K	21	
Explorer Helistat*	500K	75M	21	

Chapter Six

The Matrix

The Matrix is the most mysterious, most powerful, and by far the most feared legacy of the Builders. It is the basis for Magi "magic" and is the one technology that ultimately allows the continuing maintenance of the Shards to be possible.

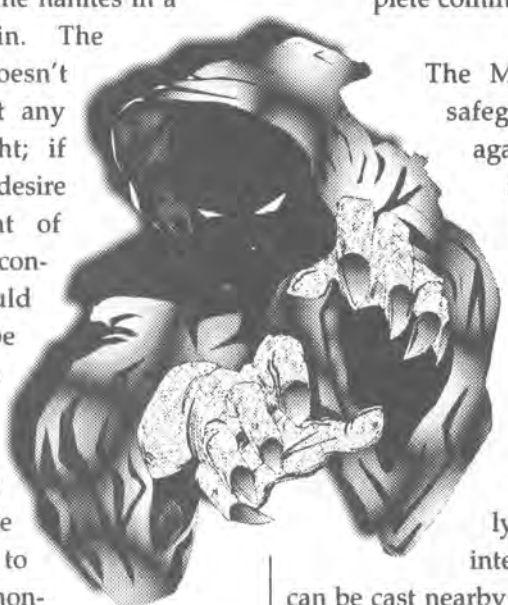
Individual components of the Matrix are called nanites, robots so tiny they use individual molecules as their component parts. Even with millions of such parts, they would still be no bigger than a virus.

They are designed to perform a vast variety of tasks at the molecular level, including the assembly and disassembly of matter atom by atom, and generating and storing energy through chemical bonds. Working together, the nanites can form a powerful computer, able to store bits of data on the atomic level.

The nanites are self-replicating and self-repairing. They are found **everywhere** on the Shards, in every rock, every cloud, every plant, every living being, lying dormant and quietly replicating themselves until they are called upon to perform a specific task.

This is the Matrix, a vast, Shard-wide network of quadrillions upon quadrillions of nanites, who are charged with maintaining the systems of the Shards and doing the biddings of their human masters from the molecules up. The Matrix can be found everywhere in the Shards, from the outer shell of the Underworld to the blood stream of every living being. They have little noticeable impact on the environment until they are called upon to perform some task.

The versatility of the Matrix is near-infinite, but so is its potential for abuse. With this in mind, the Builders created a number of safeguards into the Matrix systems. The most significant of these is its programming code of organized thoughts, sensed and transmitted by the nanites in a sentient's brain. The Matrix doesn't respond to just any random thought; if so, every petty desire and resentment of the human subconscious would instantly be made manifest by the Matrix, and civilization would be wiped out in a single night. In order to avoid these "monsters of the id," its original engineers created an elaborate, highly-disciplined system of thought patterns as a command language. The user must train his mind to think certain very specific thoughts in precisely the right order to activate the Matrix. Using these often requires a great deal of concentration as well as a number of mnemonic strategies to get all the required thoughts into precisely the right sequence.



The various Magi guilds have slowly been rediscovering this forgotten programming code (individual programs are traditionally referred to as "spells") over the centuries, and though they have made impressive progress, they estimate they have recreated less than 10% of the complete command structure.

The Matrix also has a safeguard built-in against directly harming sentient beings. Unless otherwise specified, no life-threatening Matrix spell (Combust, Disassemble, etc.) can be directly cast onto a living intelligent creature. It can be cast nearby to indirectly cause damage, however (Combusting a nearby tree, Disassembling a support post, etc.).

Matrix as Computer: Each nanite is

capable of storing data like a computer memory chip. Since there are hundreds of trillions of nanites per acre and they can all network together all over the Shard, the Matrix represents the most powerful computer ever built by the human race. It has near-infinite data storage and processing capacity, and functions as the "central computer" of the Shard, maintaining and coordinating all vital systems. Though not sentient by normal standards, the Matrix represents a kind of artificial intelligence far beyond current technical understanding.

Weirds: The Matrix is not perfect. The nanites have two major limitations: limited lifespans, usually measured in hours or days (hence the need for constant replication), and mutations resulting from bit errors in replication. The vast majority of these mutations render the nanite non-viable, but occasionally one will survive long enough to replicate itself. Usually, these are not a problem, as the Matrix is big, versatile, and intelligent enough to destroy mutant nanites as soon as they appear. But every once in a great while a mutant strain will temporarily resist efforts by the mainstream nanites to exterminate it, and grow to dominate a small region.

These regions are called Weirds. Weirds are usually restricted to a few kilometers at their largest and last at most a few dayss before the mainstream nanites overwhelm it. Most Weirds look perfectly normal, and are undetectable unless specifically scanned for or a Mage casts a spell within its boundaries. However, a select few Weirds are obvious even to a casual observer, as the mutant nanites change the environment according to their skewed programming. One such Weird effect may be as harmless as purple trees and pink grass, or as hideous as animating corpses or random water-to-acid bursts.

Spells in Weirds have unpredictable results, as the mutant nanites will interpret the commands in their own way. A Combust spell in a Weird might result in a harmless flash of light, or the entire Weird might go up in a huge fireball. The exact effects of a spell cast in a Weird are left up to the GM.

In the entire history of the KN, there have been only seventeen confirmed Weird sightings, the longest of which lasted 72 hours. Some

permanent Weirds are rumored to exist around remote artifact sites, for reasons unknown.

Dead Zones: Nanites aren't indestructible; though hardier than organic microbes, they can usually be destroyed by many of the same means: fire, powerful chemical agents, energy weapon fire, explosions, massive impacts, and so on. Small regions can also be shut down by Mage spells. These effects result in Matrix Dead Zones, where all the nanites are depleted or weakened and spells won't work. These are usually temporary, as the Matrix will seep its way back into the Zone within a few weeks.

Placement of both Weirds and Dead Zones within a campaign are left entirely up to the GM.

THE MAGI

The Magi are those who study the Matrix and how to manipulate it. It is a very old practice, created thousands of years ago from the few surviving tidbits of thought programming to survive the Cataclysm. Only recently within the last half-century has the true nature of the Matrix been discovered by Guild researchers.

GUILDS

There are hundred of different Mage Guilds, each with its own agendas and traditions concerning the nature of the Matrix and how best to manipulate it. They can be split into two general types, however:

The Mystics, who follow the traditional ways that sprang up while the peoples of the KN viewed the powers of the Matrix as truly supernatural. Mystics still cling to the old ways of spells and rituals and spirit-callings, when the Matrix was still thought of as traditional magic.

The Technists are those Magi who fully embrace the Matrix for what it is. They approach Matrix manipulation as a science, and tend to use the Matrix in ways never envisioned by the traditional Mystics, such as using Sound System and Radiation Burst.

There is a growing rift between the Mystic and Technist factions, and many believe it is only a matter of

Some Mystic Guilds include:

- **Necromancers**, who specialize in spells of terror and reanimating the dead.
- **Seers**, who specialize in scrying and sensory-enhancing spells.
- **Ecstasy Mages**, a very small and highly secretive order who practice ecstasy magic and other illegal forms of Matrix use.

Some Technist Guilds include:

- **Artificer's Guild**, who use the Matrix to create hi-tech materials and unusual items.
- **The Order of the Crimson Skull**, a centuries-old guild whose main goal is political and economic unification (under their guidance, of course) of the other guilds. It administers to a number of lesser guilds, and has recently incorporated.
- **The Order of the Twilight Rose**, a formerly mystic order that now spearheads scientific research into the Matrix.

time before open hostilities erupt.

Mage Characters: Generate a Mage PC like any other PC. However, the Mage also has access to spells. Spells are acquired in the exact same manner as skills, both during PC creation and through game experience. Each spell has a level listed for it, indicating its equivalent level of skill for the purposes of the PC acquiring it. For example, a PC learning the Shock spell during the game, which is level 3, must roll for it as if he were trying to learn a level 3 skill (below his MA, +10 for each successive try, every three months). However, he does not have to pass through any intermediate levels to obtain it. The PC does not have to learn levels 1 or 2 in order to obtain the Level 3 Shock spell. During PC creation, three skill levels from the PC's Dice Pool must be spent to acquire that particular spell.

No Mage may learn a spell whose level exceeds his current level of Matrix Manipulation skill. In order to learn higher level spells, he must first raise his Matrix Manipulation skill to that level.

A Mage may cast a total number of spell levels in one twenty-four hour period equal to his current level of Matrix Manipulation skill with no penalty. Beyond this limit, the Mage suffers 1 point of damage for every spell level he casts in that period. For example, a Mage PC has a Matrix Manipulation skill of 10. He casts Wave of Oblivion, a level 10 spell, once with no penalty. He casts a Wave of Oblivion an hour afterward, receiving an automatic 10 points of damage upon completion of the spell.

CASTING SPELLS

Casting spells often require one or more mnemonic devices of some sort, which varies from guild to guild. These memory-enhancing methods can range from a series of rhymes or customized incantations, elaborate hand gestures, physical object like wands or rings, or even a combination of all three. The Mage uses these mnemonics to help get the sequence of thoughts patterns exactly right in order to initialize the Matrix into action. The casting time varies from spell to spell.

Interrupted or botched spells usually have no harmful consequence, as the Matrix will simply abandon the spell. But once in a great while (a result of 00 on a spell-casting roll) a programming mutation may occur, where the Matrix misinterprets the intentions of the Mage. These mutant spells can have widely varying and dangerous effects, determined by the GM, including but not limited to fizzling out, escalating out of control, or creating a Weird.

SPELL DESCRIPTIONS

Starting on the next page, spells are listed according to level, indicated in parentheses. The description contain the most common application, as well as casting time and duration. Unless otherwise specified, the range of a spell is anywhere within a Mage's immediate sight.

CREATING NEW SPELLS

The previous list is only a sampling of what the Matrix is capable of. The GM is encouraged to add his own spells to the game, using the above list as an inspiration and guideline. Some suggestions for new spells include:

- **Improvements and variation on listed spells.** For example, higher-level versions of *Heal* could repair more damage more quickly, and a variant version of *Sound System* could emit eardrum-shattering sonic attacks.

- **Technology-mimicking spells.** The Matrix can duplicate the functions of most machines at one level or another. For example, a Mage may use a spell to assemble trillions of nanites to act as a huge wall display screen, perhaps to supplement a *Scry* spell.

- **Folklore-Mimicking Spells.** The Matrix can duplicate or simulate most feats of "magic" recounted in classical folklore, fairy tales, and fantasy novels. Fireballs, species-to-species transformations, talking tea pots, and so on are all within the Matrix's capabilities.

Data Dump (1):
The Mage orders information from the Matrix to be downloaded either into a previously prepared computer or into his own mind. It can also be used to download information from a computer into the Mage's mind using the Matrlx as an intermediary. The Matrix database works just like any other computer network; the Mage needs to know the proper code to access any particular file. Each Mage has his own particular code (a "true name" in Mystic Guild circles), and can only access files under the codes that he knows. The Builder knowledge that is assumed to still be within the Matrix has so far proven inaccessible, locked away behind hideously complex and advanced codes.

Glamour(1):
Glamour allows minor, cosmetic alterations to a person's features. Level 1 glamours can change eye and hair color, darken or lighten skin color, add or subtract fat cells to alter facial features, and other minor effects. The effect will last until another *Glamour* is cast on the subject.
Casting time: 30 seconds.

Initialize(1):
Activates any previously *Saved* spell cast by the Mage that is currently held in potential by the Matrix.
Casting time: 5 seconds.

Matrix Analysis (1):
This spell allows a Mage to detect Dead Zones and Weirds within a 1km radius.
Casting Time: 5 seconds.

Perception Shift(1):
This causes the Nanites to form micronthin semi-organic film over the eyes, similar to nictitating membranes on birds. The caster uses these to gain telescopic vision up to 5x power. The Mage may dissolve the membranes at any time, and can use them for up to one hour before suffering eyestrain.
Casting Time: 60 seconds.

Radio Link(1):
The nanites form a small, short-range radio in the Mage's ear, tuned to one frequency chosen by the Mage. This radio has a range of 1km, and may be boosted by normal devices. The spell lasts for 4 hours before the nanites wear down. **Casting time:** 60 seconds.

Sound System(1):
The surrounding Matrix forms into microscopic, ultra high-quality sound speakers. These may be used as a PA system, or to amplify sound such as the Mage's voice. The sound will seem to be sourceless, coming from everywhere at once. Many Mages use Sound System to play their own personal theme music during combat. The spell lasts for 1 hour.
Casting time: 30 seconds.

Light(2):
The nanites liberate their stored energy as visible light. This effect is not mobile unless cast on movable objects. The spell will affect up to a 30m square area and is as bright as daylight. Light lasts for 30 minutes.
Casting time: 60 seconds.

Scramble(2):
Similar to *Light*, except the nanites emit their energy in the form of broad-frequency radio waves, jamming most low-powered communications. Lasts for 30 minutes. Affects a 1km radius area.
Casting Time: 60 seconds.

Trace(2):
The Mage causes the nanites in any target touched to form a small radio beacon that can be followed by standard electronic methods. This beacon has a range of 1km and lasts 13hrs.. The Mage may also use *Radio Link* to track the target.
Casting time: 5 seconds.

Heal(3):
The Mage causes the nanites in the target's body to dedicate themselves to repairing wound damage. The target of the spell gains double his normal Hits over the next 24 hours. However, during that time, the recipient must double his normal intake of food and water to supply the nanites with enough organic building materials. If the recipient fails to do so, the spell does not work and the character must make a roll to avoid entering Shock, as described in the Combat section.
Casting time: 30 seconds.

Hologram(3):
The nearby nanites form many microscopic holoprojectors. These projectors working in concert can create a static but real-looking holographic image of anything the Mage specifies, up to 3m cubed volume. The image will last up to 1 hour.
Casting Time: 60 seconds.

Move Object(3):
The Mage uses the local Matrix to move any one loose object massing up to 100kg up to 100 meters in any horizontal direction. Basically, billions of nanites gather under the object and piggy-back it around. Objects move at a rate of 2m/ second.
Casting time: 5 seconds.

Shock(3):
The Mage causes the Matrix to deliver a massive electrical shock to any one target in the Mage's immediate sight. The Mage's spell roll acts as an attack roll in this case, and the target gets no defense modifier (the nanites in the target's own body cause the shock). The damage of the attack is 1:5 plus stun, and will never be lethal.
Casting Time: 5 seconds

Improved Perception Shift(4):
As per the normal *Perception Shift* spell, but the film formed over the eyes allow the Mage to also see into the IR spectrum.
Casting Time: 12 minutes.

Igor(4):
This spell creates a semi-intelligent, coherent nanoswarm, which places itself exclusively at the Mage's disposal. It is about as intelligent as an average dog. This swarm can move and manipulate objects that mass up to 5kg, and will understand most basic commands of the Mage. Typical uses for a swarm are to fetch an object, clean a room, stir a pot, push a button, and so on. The Swarm itself is invisible to human eyes, and it will appear as if the objects are moving by themselves. The *Igor* will not attack any living creatures, and cannot assemble/ disassemble matter. It will last for 1 hour.
Casting Time: 2 minutes.

Major Glamour(4):
As per the normal *Glamour* spell, but can affect much more substantial changes, such as overhauling facial features, promoting hair growth, and adding or subtracting up to 10 kg of body fat (in the proportions desired by the Mage).
Casting time: 1 hour.

Anatox(5):
This spell flushes out all poisons in a target's body in about fifteen minutes, including alcohol and drugs. The spell flushes the toxins out through urine, and the target will have an overpowering urge to "use the facilities" at the end of the fifteen minutes.
Casting Time: 30 seconds.

Combust(5):
Causes all nanites in a one-meter square area to self-destruct and release their energy as heat. Causes a momentary flash of heat of about 1200° Celsius, hot enough to ignite most non-metals. This spell cannot be cast on a living being, but anyone within 3m of the blast will receive 3:1 damage.
The Mage uses his casting roll as the attack roll, and all normal defense modifiers apply.
Casting Time: 15 seconds.

Ecstasy(5):
This spell causes the brains of humans, human variants, and most mammal uplifts touched by the Mage to produce an excess of pleasure-inducing endorphins. The target will be nominally helpless, lost in the sensation, for 3D6 minutes. This spell is supposed to enhance sexual pleasure, but all too often it is employed as a form of addiction and mind control. Use of this spell is illegal in all nine Known Nations, and is often punishable by death.
Casting Time: 5 seconds.

Enhanced Heal(5):
Similar to the normal *Heal* spell, but will triple the healing rate for 24 hours.
Casting Time: 60 seconds.

Heat(5):
Similar to a *Light* spell, but the nanites give off their stored energy as low-level heat. Will increase the temperature of a 30m square area by up to 25° Celsius. The spell will last for 1 hr.
Casting time: 30 seconds.

Perception of Others(5):
This spell must be cast in conjunction with *Trace* and *Radio Link* spells, and is limited by their duration and range. This spell allows the Mage to perceive everything through the senses of the spell's recipient. This conveys any superhuman senses the target may possess. Most often, the Mage will use this spell on a loyal pet, such as a cat or a bird.
Casting time: 60 seconds.

Save(5):
Using this spell, the Mage can hold another spell "in potential" in the Matrix, able to call it up at a moment's notice in conjunction with an Initialize spell. The Mage casts the spell to be *Saved* as usual, but holds off on final activation and uses the *Save* spell instead. At any one time, the Mage can save any combination of spells equal in levels to his current level of Matrix Manipulation. The spells thus *Saved* can be held in potential indefinitely, until discharged or replaced. The spell counts against a Mage's daily casting limit only when it is finally discharged along with an *Initialize* spell.

Water to Acid(5):
The Mage commands nanites in a nearby source of water to combine the hydrogen and oxygen in the water with the nitrogen in the air, forming HNo3, or Nitric acid. The spell can convert 100g of water into 10g of concentrated acid, after bubbling and frothing for 1D3 rounds while the chemical reaction takes place. This acid will do 2D6 points of damage in the first round of contact, and 1D6

points per round for 2D6 rounds thereafter. This spell cannot be cast on the body fluids of a living being. The acid can be safely stored in glass containers.
Casting Time: 60 seconds.

Boris(6):
A more intelligent and longer-lived version of an *Igor* nanoswarm. A *Boris* is about as intelligent as a chimpanzee, and can perform complex tasks, such as driving a vehicle or taking dictation. The swarm is considered to have a PA and TA of 20 for the purposes of performing tasks, and will last for 2D6 hours.
Casting Time: 3 minutes.

Inhibitor(6):
This spell inhibits any one particular nonorganic chemical reaction from taking place in a 30m-radius area. It can be used to stop gunpowder from igniting, for example, or glue from forming bonding agents. The Mage is required to also make a successful Chemistry roll for this spell to succeed. The effect will last up 4 hours.
Casting Time: 30 seconds.

Levitate(6):
Using this spell, the Mage causes the Matrix to interact with the Shard's gravity control system to neutralize gravity over an area up to 30 square meters. This field of negated gravity is inherently unstable, however, and will fail after 3D6 minutes.
Casting Time: 3 minutes.

Assemble (7):
This spell requires a tremendous amount of concentration and preparation time. *Assemble* instructs the Matrix to construct any single object from the molecules up. However, the instructions to the nanites must be very specific, down to the molecular level (often requiring a Chemistry roll plus several hours to prepare for the spell), and the Mage must guide the entire construction process. The Casting Time of the spell is five minutes per 100g mass of the object, and a spell roll must be made every interval. The base materials needed for the assembly must be on hand.

Command Other(7):
The Mage plants a powerful suggestion in the target's mind. The command must be relatively simple, like "open the door" or "attack the guard," and may be tied into a specific time up to twenty-four hours in the future, such as "at sunset" or to a specific condition, such as "when the gunfire starts." The command cannot be anything obviously self-destructive or go against deeply-held beliefs of the target. Casting this spell requires a contest matching the Mage's spell roll versus the target's SA + 25. If the target wins, he uses his willpower to overcome the suggestion, but cannot do anything else for that round. A character can be under the influence of only one Matrix-induced suggestion at one time.
Casting Time: 25 seconds.

Disassemble(8):
The opposite of *Assemble*, this commands the nanites to disassemble any one material object or portion thereof up to 10 kg mass. Because of the safeguards built into Matrix, this will not work on any living being.
Casting Time: 60 seconds per 10 kg mass.

Remote Activation(8):
The Mage uses this in conjunction with another spell, in order to cast a spell and hold it in potential in the Matrix until a previously-specified condition is met. For example, a *Shock* spell may be cast on iron bars in conjunction with *Remote Activation*, and activated only when a living being touches the bars. There is no limit to the distance or time period for the conditions stated for this spell.
Casting Time: 60 second.

Scry(8):
The Mage uses the Matrix to form hundreds of microscopic electronic "bugs" around any area he wishes to spy on. This spell must be used in conjunction with *Radio Link*, and the Matrix feeds the received image directly into the Mage's mind. The area may be anywhere the Mage is aware of, but the radio range of the "bugs" will only be 1 km. The range can be boosted by normal electronic means.
Casting Time: 60 seconds.

Caliban(9):
This is an attack-capable form of a *Boris*. The *Caliban* swarm will attack at the command of the casting Mage as if it had a CA of 25 and a Martial Arts skill of 5. It will do 3:1 damage per round, and can ignore all but fully sealed full-body armor. It can perform any normal task a *Boris* can, and has the same lifetime.
Casting Time: 5 minutes.

Radiation Burst(9):
Similar to the *Combust* spell, but instead of releasing heat, the nanites self-destruct to release a concentrated burst of high-frequency radiation. This burst has a blast radius of 5m and does 5:1 damage, using the Mage's casting roll as a combat roll. The burst also emits a strong electromagnetic pulse that will knock out all unshielded electronics in a 100m radius for 2D6 rounds.
Casting Time: 30 seconds.

Matrix Activation(10):
This spell reactivates all deactivated nanites within a 100m radius.
Casting Time: 3 minutes.

Matrix Shutdown(10):
This spell commands all nanites within a 100m radius, including those within living beings but excluding the Mage himself, to power down and respond to no commands until reactivated.
Casting Time: 5 seconds.

Wave of Oblivion(10):
This extremely powerful spell is known only to a few Mages. It creates a "wave" of nanites 30m wide that will move and disassemble every physical object in a straight line 1000m long, leaving only a swath of monatomic dust in their wake. The wave travels at 5m/sec. This spell will affect living beings. Anything or anyone caught in a *Wave of Oblivion* is irretrievably destroyed.
Casting Time: 60 seconds.

Chapter Seven

Exploration

Exploration is vitally important to the KN's goals. Many are convinced that the answers the KN needs are out there somewhere; it's only a matter of going out and finding them. To this end, a great deal of the KN's resources are tied up in many long-range exploration effort in the Outlands, the Underworld, the Teleport Nodes, Space, and Other Shards, all outlined in their own sections following.

However, there are some important aspects of the profession every fledgling explorer should be aware of.

Patrons: Most expeditions are usually sponsored by one or more patrons. Exploration isn't cheap; an expedition to even a few earth-spans away represent a considerable investment in time, money, resources, and manpower.

Patrons take many forms, such as scientific institutes, private corporations, national governments, wealthy individuals, noble families, and so on. Each will have its own motivation for backing an expedition. A science institute may want to set up a remote station to gather climatological data; a corporation may want to investigate a rumored site of valuable Builder artifacts; a bored millionaire may simply want to do something worthwhile with her fortune. The GM should set a specific agenda for each patron that hires the PCs.

Patrons in the game give the party easily-defined goals ("We're going to artifact site X18 to investigate the disappearance of an earlier expedition") as well as providing equipment, vehicles, and additional manpower the PCs could not otherwise afford.

There are free-lance explorers who own their own vehicles and set their own agenda, but these are rare and usually restricted to wealthy adventurers who gained experience on earlier patron-backed missions.

Explorer Organizations: There are several Public and private groups who are dedicated to furthering the cause and providing for the needs of explorers, which is becoming an increasingly high-profile profession. Most experienced explorers belong to at least one group or another. Some are listed below:

Explorer Organizations

- **The Magellan Foundation:** Fee: 100,000 C/year. This group is a famous and rather exclusive "adventurers club" and contains some of the most famous explorers in the KN, including superstar Joanna Singh, who led the first expedition into the Underworld. It selects only a dozen new members per year, and actively patrons "pet project" expeditions by its members. The Foundation used to be exclusively female, but recent lawsuits have forced it to very reluctantly open its doors to male explorers.

- **Wacky Wang's Explorer Discount Club:** Fee: 500 C/year. Members of this commercial club receive a 15% discount on all purchases at the Wacky Wang's Discount Warehouse chain, which caters to Outland expeditions and explorers.

- **Explorer Action Committee (EAC):** Fee: 50 C/year. This groups has a very large membership, and considers itself the primary advocate and spokesman for explorer concerns.

Roles: Getting the PCs involved in an expedition can take several different directions, depending on the nature of the various PCs. Some character concepts may not seem at first lend themselves well to standard explorer roles. Some suggestions for working in PCs are detailed below:

PCs Inc: The party may also choose to incorporate itself and hire out on a team basis. The party will be paid as a whole, and profits will have to be split according to some previously-made arrangement among the PCs. Specialist teams, such as experienced mercenary units and contact teams, are always highly sought after.

TELEPORT NODES

Teleport Nodes are Builder artifacts scattered throughout the Shards. They resemble huge, 30m diameter metal

- **Old Standbys:** Pilots, scientists, engineers, doctors, xenotechs, Mages, and experienced command personnel are always in demand for expeditions.

- **Mercenaries:** If a PC can fight in any capacity, he may be hired as security personnel. Some expeditions into known hostile territory may also include a number of ship's troops carried specifically in case of combat.

- **Accountants:** Expeditions are expensive things, and the larger ones will carry along financial advisors and resource management experts to help trim costs and material waste along the way. Some expeditions going to previously-contacted cultures may bring along trade representatives.

- **Grunts:** If all else fails, a PC may be hired on as a low ranking non-com whose major duties will be to swab decks, fetch the captain's tea, dig toilet trenches, and so on. Someone has to do the dirty work.

globes, with several acres of support machinery surrounding them. Both the globe and the machinery are made of UTSite, and are sealed against the elements—and, so far, against KN scientists. The Nodes have two control panels: one on the outside of the globe, to control access to the interior, and one on the inside, to set coordinates and activate the Node.

The Nodes allow instant teleportation between points, from one Node to another. Using the Node is as simple as stepping inside, sealing the globe, punching in coordinates, and hitting the start button. There is no sensation of transition; one moment the user is at one Node, the next he at another, perhaps millions of kilometers distant or perhaps even on another Shard.

How exactly the Nodes work is unknown. In fact, even how to operate them effectively has turned out to be a major challenge for researchers. Apparently they use a coordinate system beyond the standard three physical dimensions, involving mathematics the KN has yet to discover. Only a few locations can so far be reliably accessed through the Nodes, and even those are not guaranteed from one day to the next.

Two Nodes have so far been discovered, both on the edge of KN territory. They are being intently studied by international teams, and access to them is restricted to official personnel and approved volunteers.

Exploring via the Nodes:
The Node researchers always need volunteers to enter a Node and test new destination coordinates. The Nodes can only be activated from inside the sealed, 30m wide globe, and most of the volunteers never return. Researchers postulate that most simply cannot reactivate the Nodes or enter the correct return coordinates, sometimes ending up even further into the Node network. Most volunteers are therefore supplied with all the equipment they will need to

- **The Long Trek Home:** The PCs are Node volunteers, and end up elsewhere on the MegaShard. They can't use the Node to return (they risk ending up on another Shard if they try), so they set about working their way overland back home, with many encounters and adventures along the way. The GM should put them at a minimum of 100 earth-spans away to give them a truly epic, years-long journey.

- **Node Hoppers:** The PCs are hired onto a very unusual but extremely well-equipped Node expedition. The group is to include several Node experts, and the expedition is to "hop" from one Node to another every couple of days, after noting where they end up, trying to map the full extent of the Teleport Network. As there must be a finite number of Nodes, the experts believe that they will (theoretically) eventually end up back at the KN, though not before a substantial interval. The party will visit thousands of still-operational Nodes over the years, and encounter a great number of alien cultures and races.

- **Node Refugees:** The party is working at one of the Node sites when representatives from a race never before encountered arrives via the Node. They are fleeing from a horrific war in their homeland with what they describe to be "demons," who may be minions of the Others. They plead to the KN for help. They are low-tech, AL-5 at most, but know the return coordinates to their home, which they gleaned from an ancient, sacred text. This text, along with a set of reliably-accessed coordinates, are probably enough to prompt the KN into hiring the PCs to return with the newcomers to investigate.

survive on their own for an indefinite period of time, as most can never expect to see the KN again.

Yet the Node sites never lack for volunteers. Many criminals opt for Node exile in place of execution, but these are given only the bare necessities for survival. Many adventurers are drawn to the Nodes, as finding a stable, reliably-accessed set of coordinates that one can return from will garner rewards of many millions of credits.

If the GM wants a campaign where the PCs are completely on their own, cut off from the KN, the Nodes are probably the best means of achieving it. Some adventure ideas are listed in the sidebar on page 63..

THE UNDERWORLD

The underworld is a vast maze of maintenance tunnels, machinery, recycling systems, and cargo bays found under the habitable surface of the MegaShard. The tunnels run about 100 kilometers deep, right to the outer layer of UTSite, and cover the entire breadth of the MegaShard.

The only known access to the Underworld is found atop the single mountain on Malachon Island in the Diamond sea, consisting of an ancient maintenance station and an array of large elevators. These pass through the mountain and bedrock strata before arriving at the inner levels of the tunnels. The elevators descend as far as the Spaceport, at the bottommost level.

Exploring the Underworld:
The Underworld consists of many millions of miles of tunnel. It is almost entirely airless, though a few pressurized and well-supplied chambers have been found, maintained by automatic systems. Remains of other explorers, many not human, have also been found mummified in some of the chambers, accompanied by mysterious artifacts. Some researcher postulate that a technical civilization may exist far down the tunnels, one that may have never seen the light of the sun.

Gravity is inverted in the Underworld. The direction that is

up on the surface is down in the Underworld. Researchers believe this to be a peculiarity of the Shard's gravity generators, which are apparently located in the interface between the surface strata and the tunnels.

Exploring the tunnels of the Underworld requires special consideration, such as portable life support systems and lighting in the eternal dark of the tunnels. The main means of exploration are huge, environmentally sealed, twelve-man ATVs, which can operate independently for months at a time.

Some Underworld Adventures are outlined below:

THE OUTLANDS

The Outlands are the portions of the MegaShard surface that have yet to be explored by the KN.

The Outlands represent a habitable surface of nearly a half-million Earths, of which less than 18 have been mapped by the KN, and even less thoroughly explored. So vast an area represents a number of unique challenges for explorers.

Because of the huge expanses involved, distances in the Outlands are usually measured in earth-spans, which is the distance around Earth at the equator, about 40,000km.

A great many races, both human and non, inhabit the Outlands, scattered

- **Wanderers:** The PCs encounter a group of 100 or so baseline humans outfitted with advanced but apparently patchwork vacuum equipment, including spacesuits, pressure tents, air recyclers, and so on. They may also possess makeshift laser weapons and/or Builder artifacts at the GM's discretion. They will act surly and even hostile at first, but friendly relations can be established with some effort. They are nomads who have long-since adapted to life in the airless Underworld, wandering from pressurized area to pressurized area in a millennia-old pattern, living off of Builder food dispensers and a long-established tradition of cannibalism, a custom necessitated by their very limited resources. They are currently moving away from KN territory, not to return for decades, but are willing to exchange any knowledge they have for vital supplies.

- **Probe:** The PCs encounter a large, insect-like robot apparently exploring the tunnels just as they are. It is nuclear-powered, and may be decades away from its mysterious home base. It is neither of KN nor Builder make, but a Xenotech can estimate it is about AL 23. After about an hour of observing the ATV (and ignoring any humans sent out to investigate it), the robot approaches and begins to methodically disassemble the vehicle. This act is not malicious but seems motivated instead by curiosity. The PC must stop it, either through communication or force, before their only means of survival is taken apart.

- **Castaways:** The party stumbles onto a small auxiliary spaceport, about 1/10 the size of the one under Malachon island, complete with a number of pressurized support chambers—and inhabitants. Three years ago, a band of Cephalopods stumbled upon the airlock and entered, only to discover they couldn't get back out again. Their supplies are hideously low, and though their clan has traditionally been hostile to the KN, they begrudgingly beg the humans to somehow deliver them from this high-gravity, waterless hell. There are twelve surviving Cephalopods.

across its breadth in secluded enclaves and fledgling civilizations. So far no race contacted thus far by the KN has an AL above 10, but many believe it is only a matter of time before they come across another post-industrial society on the MegaShard.

The Outlands are also dotted by numerous ruined cities, crashed vehicles, and other Builder artifact sites, usually designated by an X with a number following, such as X1, X2, and so on. They are numbered in order of discovery. These artifact sites are considered to be of great importance to the KN, mainly because of the Builder artifacts occasionally recovered from them. Most sites, however, have long since been stripped of anything useful over the last 5000 years. Many of the artifact sites are also populated by Outland tribes or races, making them potentially hazardous to approach.

Exploring the Outlands:
The KN has thoroughly explored the Outlands out to a 3 earth-span radius, and mapped via helistat drones Outlands from 12 to 20 earth-spans away.

Of all the various theaters of exploration, the Outlands are by far the easiest to traverse and have received the largest portion of the KN's resources. The Outlands are explored primarily through enormous, long-range helistats, high-tech lighter-than-air craft designed to be completely autonomous for years at a time. These hold crews of 50, plus as many mission specialists.

Some Outland adventures are outlined on the next page.

SPACE

Space is the most daunting frontier to the KN, as it is rife with a great many unknowns. Many consider it to be a very inhuman place no self-respecting sentient should ever enter. In fact, no one in the KN had ever seen true stars until Joanna Singh stumbled upon the Spaceport (the light from thousands of nearby Shards dominates the night sky on the MegaShard.)

The Spaceport is a huge, 5 km-cubed chamber with numerous airlocks located directly "below" Malachon Island. It has three huge, 500m-across airlocks and a number of pressurized chambers for crew support and ship maintenance.

Space exploration is spear-headed by the 37 Builder space craft discovered along with the Spaceport. These are 300m-long, 50m-wide cylindrical spacecraft that can hold crews of up to 1000. Each ship has a link to the MegaShard's gravity generators, which allow it to maneuver around the Shard up to a distance of one million km without engaging its main engines. Their main drives appear to be highly-efficient anti-matter powered plasma rocket, and the main

powerplant is a matter/ anti-matter annihilator. Gravity on board is simulated by rotating the ship about its long axis, creating earth-like gravity along the outer hull via centrifugal force.

- **X31:** X31 is an ruined Builder city 12 earth-spans away that was catalogued by a remote helistat drone a year ago. It is unusual in one very important aspect: the drone detected radio signals in an unknown language emanating from the city. The PCs are part of the year-long expedition to reach X31 onboard a fully equipped explorer helistat. The helistat is met by hostile resistance by the natives at the city, who brandish advanced (AL 21) firearms. However, they seem more intent on frightening the airship away than destroying it. Careful negotiations can establish a dialogue, and the party learns that X31 contains an entrance into the Underworld, and access to another Spaceport. This spaceport has already been discovered by a clan of Cephalopods hostile to the KN, and they have been trading technology to the natives in exchange for organics. Of course, the Cephalopods have warned the natives about the "evil" KN and its airships, urging them to shoot on sight if they ever spotted one.

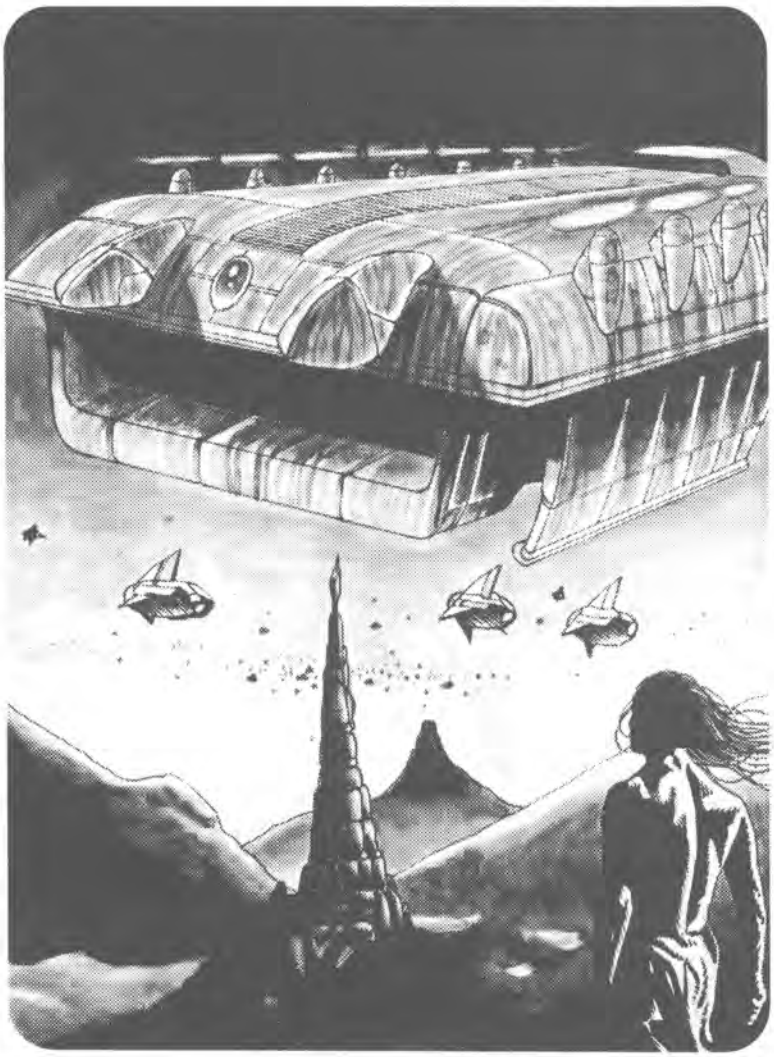
- **Nuclear Warlords:** Just before the turnabout point for a deep Outlands expedition, the crew of the PCs' helistat spot a great many nomad encampments—thousands, in fact. Upon investigating and contacting the nomads, the PCs learn that they are part of a massive wave of refugees fleeing an area less than a half-earthspan away. There, a nascent high-tech culture is using its newly devloped nuclear weapons to blackmail all the nearby peoples into paying exorbitant tribute to its leaders. These self-styled warlords have already made good on their threat of annihilating uncooperative cities more than once. If the PCs investigate, they find a resource-poor AL 20 culture, nestled between a mountain range and a great desert, whose people are more than willing to use their new-found power to finally bring some long-overdue prosperity their way. They also have no qualms about capturing the party's helistat and kidnaping the PCs to learn the KN's technological secrets. The PCs may have to find a way to escape or stymie the warlords' ambitions.

- **Dogfight:** The PCs are sent out on an expedition to learn the fate of a helistat that never returned. The party eventually discovers that the missing helistat was captured by a mutinous crew who are using the advanced craft to reign terror over nearby peoples. The PCs must track down and confront the renegade helistat, the adventure culminating in a tense aerial battle between the PCs' craft and the rogue.

- **The Periphery Expedition:** The PCs are hired onto a fleet of three top-of-the-line explorer helistats, lavishly equipped and supplied, assigned a very unusual goal: to reach the near-edge of the MegaShard, some 150 earth-spans away, and report back. Roundtrip travel time is approximately 20 years, but anyone who survives the trip will be very richly rewarded. Along the way the PCs will encounter a great number of alien cultures and races, have many adventures, and probably learn a great deal about the workings of the MegaShard at the Nano Sea (see Chapter Three starting on page 27).

Unfortunately, most of the ships' main systems are sealed behind inaccessible UTSite casings, leaving their interior workings a mystery. The ships have no built-in weaponry, though the KN have equipped them with missiles and some experimental hydrogen bomb-pumped X-ray laser submunitions.

Borelea, Destiny, Kylea, and Teranesia have all fielded home-made spacecraft of various designs and capabilities, but their limited range has so far handicapped their wide-spread use.



The Cephalopods.

The primary spacefaring race among the Shards, at least as far as the KN is aware of, is the Cephalopods, octopi Uplifts who found their way into space shortly after the Cataclysm. Their mastery of their environment has become so complete that they can no longer survive outside of microgravity without special precautions.

Physically, they resemble their smaller non-intelligent cousins, but have a larger body cavity to better house their increased brain size. Like the Spider Swarms, their neural tissue was engineered to be denser than mammalian brains in order to avoid making their larger brains too ungainly for their body proportions. They breathe water and air equally well, though they are far more graceful in water than out of it. Their tentacles are very dexterous and are easily the equal of human hands for manipulating tools. They are carnivorous, feeding mainly on a diet of cultivated krill, and retain the chameleon abilities of their animal ancestors. A Cephalopod will often unconsciously change skin color to match his mood.

Cephalopods are a very alien form of intelligence. Like the Swarms, their thought processes are very tangential to what humans assume to be logical. Cephalopods are very territorial. They do not lay claim on material objects like humans, but rather they claim to own the space surrounding them at any one moment. The higher a Cephalopod's social standing, the more space he can claim. Anyone entering that space must completely submit or face vehement or even violent reactions. A true measure of a 'Pod's status is not his material things but rather how many of his fellow 'Pods have submitted to him within his space.

Cephalopods are generally greedy and paranoid. Many in the KN have attributed this to cultural factors, as a result of living for millennia in a very harsh and resource-poor environment. In fact, excess material wealth is an alien concept to the 'Pods, who readily share everything necessary among their clan.

Cephalopod society is made up of hundreds clans, whose population is composed of about 90% "spaceless" serfs who serve within the territorial spaces of the "noble" 'Pods. Each Clan

is completely independent, and have wildly varying agendas. Some clans are friendly to the KN, while some will attack a KN ship on sight.

Cephalopod technology is a crazy patchwork of various ALs, ranging from AL-10 metalworking to AL 24 computers to Builder artifact sensors. Each ship is unique in appearance and will have wildly varying capabilities. The interiors of the ships are water-filled and have tight, cramped corridors fitted for the Cephalopods, making them inaccessible to humans.

Cephalopod Characters:
Cephalopods are not recommended for PCs. For NPCs, roll Traits as normal, but halve the final results of ST and SM. Also, multiply PA by 3 instead of 5 to obtain Hits. All 'Pod characters are at home in microgravity and underwater, and suffer 1 point

- **Hijacking:** Mordavan extremists hijack a relic spacecraft and take off into deep InterShard space. The PCs are crew aboard this ship and are taken prisoner by the Mordavans. The hijackers are fanatics who use the ship to seek out some hidden sanctuary among the Shards, where they can start a colony of their own that will follow what they consider to be the one true way of life. The PCs will have to figure a way to escape or retake the ship, and make their way back to the MegaShard.

- **Cephalopod Pirates:** A particularly vicious Cephalopod clan has made it their mission to destroy the KN's presence in space. One relic spacecraft and several home-made KN vessels have already fallen prey to them. The PCs are hired onto the multi-ship task force assigned to track the pirate clan down and neutralize it by any means necessary. The bulk of the adventure will be the weeks-long hunt for the pirates, followed by a vicious, decisive space battle, and a climactic assault landing on the pirates base of operations, a long-dead habitat Shard. This scenario should be used if the GM feels the party needs a good knock-em-dead, take-no-prisoners fight.

- **Echoes from the Great Dark:** The KN has detected a strange radio source some ten billion kilometers away, on the very edge of solar space. The PCs are hired on to the relic spacecraft assigned to investigate the object, a round-trip voyage of over three years. The crew will spend most of the transit time in cryogenic suspension, where they will age very slowly and be awakened when the ship arrives at its destination.

  The object turns out to be an automated Builder space station housing an extremely sensitive gravity-wave detector. For centuries now, it has been picking up powerful alien gravity-wave signals from galaxy M-31, over two million light-years away. But this signal has somehow also corrupted the station's central computer, which is now a very alien entity controlling a very mutated Matrix on board the station. The interior of the station has mutated into a bizarre, half-alive alien landscape, and the computer is near-incomprehensible, often seguing into an indecipherable alien language. The PCs will only be on the station a short time before they are forced to flee for their lives as the alien computer system becomes aware of their presence and uses its Matrix (which cannot be accessed by outsiders) to drive them away.

of damage per hour they are in a gravity field greater than .5 g without a special harness. Cephalopod equipment cannot be used easily by humans and vice-versa.

Space Combat:

Space combat is not like what is portrayed in most movies or TV programs; there are no screaming dogfights, dive-bombing laser barrages, or closely-knit fleets of capital ships. The reality is much more akin to submarine warfare, with lone ships fighting hours-long duels of nerves across many tens of thousands of kilometers.

The most important part of a space battle is stealth and detection. Space offers a vast volume to hide a relatively small ship in, and this is made much more difficult by the many millions of Shards in the debris band around the sun. Ship crews can spend days searching for a suspected hostile bogey, scanning for the scale equivalent of a dust-mote in a football field.

- **The Dreamer Shard:** The PCs craft visit a small, intact habitat Shard, about the size of Europe, but after docking at its Spaceport they find they cannot leave again. Making their way to the habitable surface, they find a terrifying madhouse of a world. The landscape is a horrific blend of organic and inorganic, the dead walk the land, and the living hide in terror. The PCs will also witness "waves" of transformation, rearranging the landscape and sometimes the people around them at random intervals, with some very disturbing consequences. One wave of change, for example, may rearrange an individual so that his intestines are on the outside of his body, while another may meld several housecats to a tree.

  The PCs will eventually discover that the entire Shard is over-run with a Weird, and that Weird is keyed to the mind of one individual, known to the locals only as the Dreamer. The Dreamer is apparently quite mad, and the landscape reflects his constant, twisted nightmares. No one knows who the Dreamer is, or even if he is aware of what he's doing.

  In order to escape, the PCs must find the Dreamer and have him try to return the Shard to normal. The "normal" Matrix within each PC will protect them from the waves of change–at least for a short while.

- **The Depths of Atlantis:** A mysterious force is killing off the Mantas of the Atlantis Shard. The PCs must find the source of these attacks and stop them, exploring Atlantis' vast underwater environment in the process.

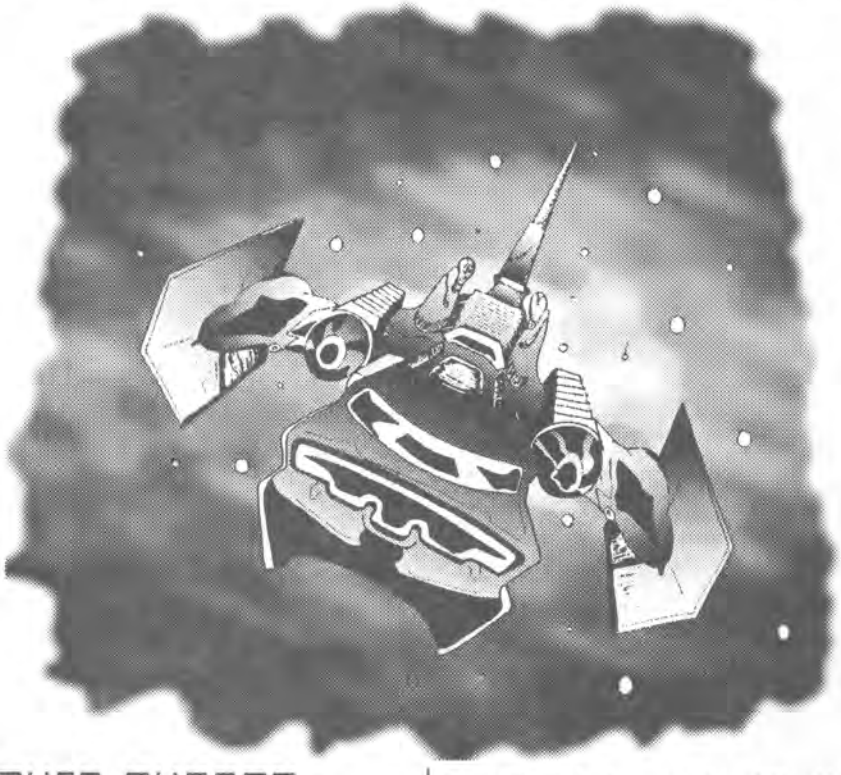
- **The World of Clouds:** The PCs encounter a very unusual environment–a spherical Shard nearly half an earth-span across with no artificial gravity. The interior is pressurized and life-supporting, with a rich and diverse zero-gravity ecology and many adapted life-forms. A strange, multi-species culture has emerged on the World of Clouds, centering around a loose guild of traders called the Cloud Merchants. When the PCs arrive, the AL-16 culture of the Cloud Merchants will be in awe of the high-tech strangers, and many different factions will try to court them for political gain. But a fanatically religious cult wants the PCs dead, as the party's news of the world beyond the wall of the Shard doesn't jibe with the cult's inflexible doctrine of an eternal paradise beyond the boundaries of their Shard.

The ship that achieves the first confirmation and sensor lock will gain a tremendous advantage over any other ship still out there chasing sensor ghosts.

The scale also involves many difficulties with using weapons. Even the most powerful lasers will be too dispersed after more than a few thousand kilometers to do any real damage, though they can still be used to blind an enemy ship's visual sensors. Space combat must be fought with missiles, usually armed with nuclear warheads pumping an X-ray laser at close range or propelling a cloud of high-velocity shrapnel. But even after the target is acquired and the missile is launched, it may be many hours before the weapon is close enough to the enemy craft to detonate with any noticeable any effect. And the enemy craft will, of course, be executing countermeasures, such as launching decoys, firing intercept missiles, and engaging evasive maneuvers, while also trying to acquire your ship and launch its own missiles.

Space battles in the game should not be reduced to tactical exercises with dice rolls and hex-grids. It is too complex and harrowing for anything so simple. Rather, the GM should anticipate any space combat in the game and construct a scenario for the battle ahead of time. These battles should be played out for dramatic effect, and may generate some good role-playing opportunities during the battle as the crew tries to deal with long hours anticipating instant, painful death that could come at any moment. The PCs can be kept busy during such battles by piloting the ship, scanning with sensors, manning anti-missile lasers, tending to damage control, and so on.

Some Space Adventures are outlined on page 69.



OTHER SHARDS

Exploring other Shards is the main purpose of KN space exploration. InterShard space is littered with quadrillions of bits of debris from the shattered sphere and thousands of surviving habitats, all potential sites for Builder artifacts and recoverable knowledge.

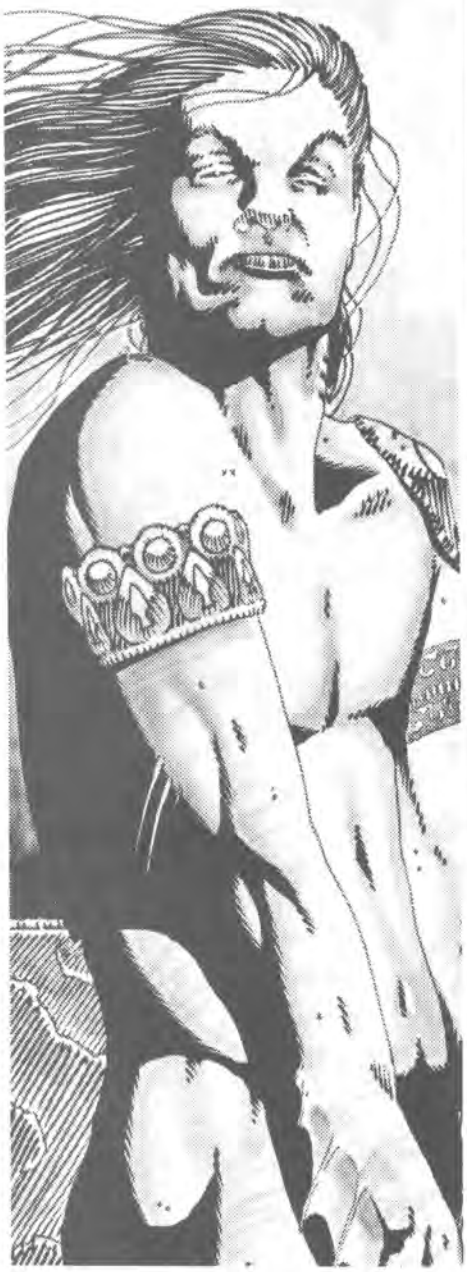
In the past thirty years, KN spacecraft have visited hundreds of debris chunks and 25 habitat shards, 14 of which were dead or failing. Teranesia has set up a small outpost on the nearest surviving Shard, dubbed Atlantis. The Shard is small, about a halfearth-span across, and is completely filled with ocean with no land masses. It is dotted with numerous underwater cities easily accessible through the Shard's Underworld. Atlantis is inhabited by various uplifted species of manta rays, called Mantas, and aboriginal humans who subsist on the automatic systems of the underwater cities. Teranesia hopes to expand this outpost, dubbed X0, into a full-blown colony in the coming years.

Some Adventures in other shards are outlined on page 70.

Chapter Eight

The Others

The Others are a mysterious alien presence among the Shards that has only recently come to the attention of the Known Nations. Who or even what the Others are is a complete unknown. But it has become increasingly obvious that their goals are at odds with the goals of the Known Nations—and that they have the means to seriously hinder if not altogether stop further exploration efforts.



What motivates the Others is unknown. Some postulate, however, that they want the secrets of the Sphere for themselves and are unwilling to share.

The true identity of the Others is up to the GM to decide for his own campaign. They may be true aliens, born under a far-distant star who have, somehow, learned the secret of interstellar travel and now seek to subjugate and colonize the Shards for themselves. They may be humans or uplifts who have further experimented with genetic engineering, turning them into monstrous super-beings. The Others could be an artificial intelligence that has evolved along very alien lines in isolation since the Cataclysm. The Others could even be a Matrix Weird that has evolved a communal intelligence and against all odds has survived and prospered against the mainstream Matrix. The renegade Weird could be working to subsume the rest of the Matrix to its programming, and sees the pesky humans as a hindrance to its plans to completely dominate the Shards. The Others could even be a combination of all the above, a true Legion of Doom to pit against the heroes of the Known Nations.

What the Others should always be, however, are mysterious and canny foes for your player characters. They should almost always work through henchmen and dupes, and should only very rarely, if ever, directly confront the party. The GM should strive to maintain the identity and motives of the Others as mysterious as possible. They should never be sees directly, but should always be hinted at by the party's more tangible foes. They should always be presented as a far-off scratching noise or a fading shadow, the darkest enigma in a world already overflowing with shadowy mysteries.

Exactly what schemes in the Campaign the Others are involved in is up to the GM. Some possibilities could be:

- The Others are backing many of the hostile Cephalopod clans, providing them with technical and material assistance, and may be pressuring the more human-friendly clans to fall in line.

- The Others may have enslaved, or are in the process of conquering,

sections of the MegaShard. It may even be, at the GM's discretion, that the Others hold sway over the entire MegaShard except for the relatively small section surrounding the Known Nations' zone of exploration, inevitably forcing the KN into an desperate war for survival once the truth is known.

This option, however, would make for a very dark and depressing campaign.

- The Others may be trying to find a way to corrupt the Matrix to their alien way of thinking, creating a plague of Weirds and Dead Zones over a large region of the MegaShard.

- The Others may be trying to quietly infiltrate and gain control of the Known Nations through political and economic means. This option could lead to a "shadow-war" campaign within the Known Nations, as the PCs pit themselves against the organizations, both secret and overt, the Others are using as fronts. Are the Mind Dancers really their pawns? Are the Spider Swarms really the KN's allies? Why are so many Magi disappearing around the Finger Sea?

- The Others may be engaging in radical bioengineering projects, creating monstrous races and beings to use against the humans and their allies.

The mere presence of the Others in a campaign should keep the PCs constantly on their toes. A seeming minor incident might be part of a much larger conspiracy. Was their discovery of that Builder artifact truly just a coincidence? Can the disappearance of three explorer helistats around artifact site X39 be attributed to just hostile natives? And was that mysterious blip on the edge of solar space really just a sensor ghost?

Chapter Nine

GM's Section

NPCs

Non-Player Characters (NPCs) are one of the major keys to running a successful campaign. If the NPCs that populate your world are dull and lifeless, so too will your campaign be.

Creating NPCs: Like PCs, most NPCs of note should start with a concept, and should have an individual personality. Exactly how much detail you want to put into an NPC will vary from situation to situation. If the NPC is an enemy thug who is likely to be easily trounced by the PCs, then it isn't wise to develop many details beyond a few relevant combat abilities. On the other hand, Subplot NPCs (NPCs with direct bearing on a PC subplot, like a daughter or a husband, for example) need to be as fully fleshed-out as any PC.

Creating interesting NPCs often can be accomplished using three simple techniques: going against type, borrowing shamelessly, and mixing and matching.

The first technique involves frustrating your players' expectations of an NPC in a particular role. Always have a character in a familiar situation do or be something totally at odds with the expected stereotype. Make that hulking bodybuilder a Shakespearean scholar instead of a dumb jock. Make that secretary a savvy black marketeer instead of a gossipy airhead. Make that priest a mafia don instead a compliant saint.

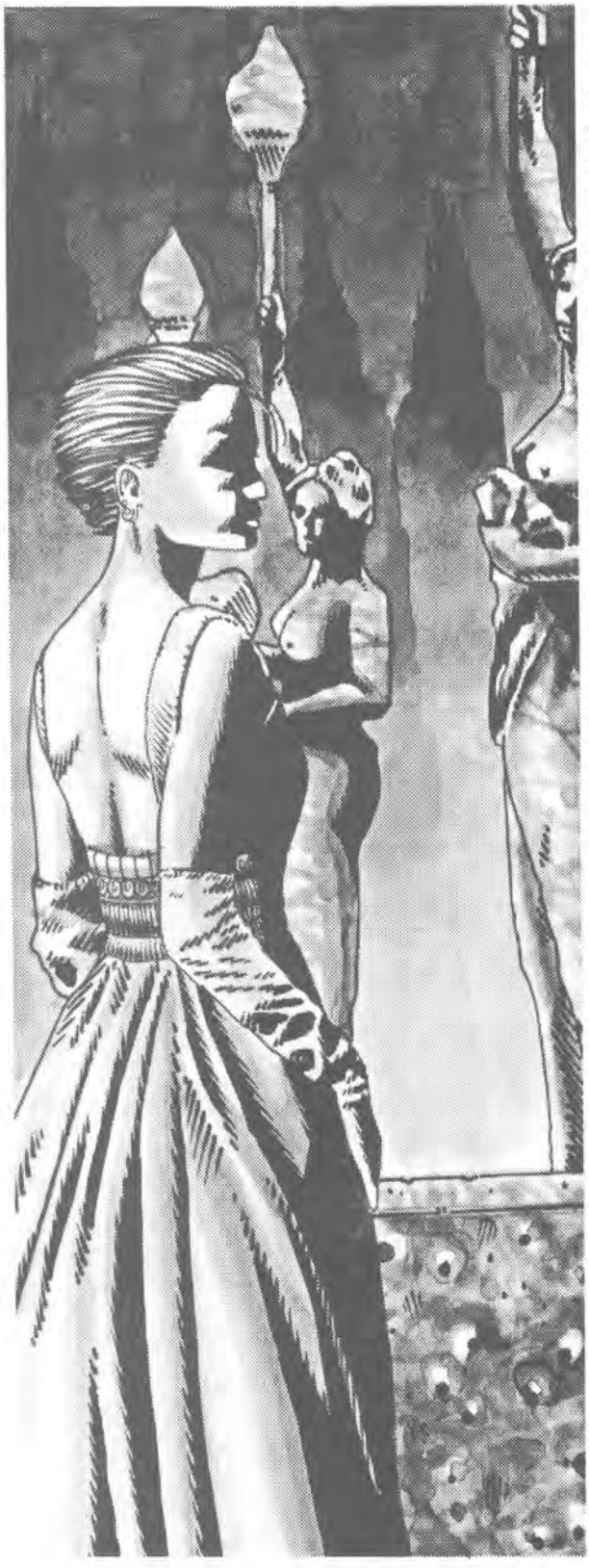
The second method, borrowing shamelessly, is indispensable. Over the course of a typical campaign, the party will encounter hundreds of NPCs. In order to fill out most niches, the GM will have to "borrow" characters from other sources—real life, movies, books, TV, and so on. The GM should make a list of the characters he would like to run as NPCs and introduce them in the appropriate situation. Just make sure to make a few superficial changes, like name and appearance, so that the players won't instantly recognize them and know what to expect. So your campaign needs a dashing thief? Why not use Robin Hood? Need a quartet of brave soldiers? How about D'Artagnan, Athos, Porthos, and Aramis? Need a scheming villain? How about Mordred? The possibilities are endless.

The last method involves mixing and matching traits, appearances, and quirks in new ways to create a new and unique character. The more wildly mismatched the NPC's attributes are, the more interesting the character becomes. You might want an NPC who is brave, ugly, and likes jazz music, for example, or one who is a tall, handsome, politician prone to kleptomania. These odd combinations can act like springboards when further expanding on the NPC. Why is the politician a kleptomaniac? Has he kept it secret from the public? Does he use his good looks or position to get away with his crimes? Let your imagination run wild.

Most good GMs will use a combination of these techniques to create truly unique, memorable NPCs.

NPCs as Continuity: Reuse your NPCs as often as practical. Meeting familiar faces is the best way of reinforcing the continuity and believability of your campaign world. This is especially true if the party keeps revisiting the same locales or keeps getting into the same situations. The PCs will expect to see Monica, their favorite waitress, whenever they visit their favorite nightspot, or look forward to working with Detective Morgan again if they're investigating a crime in Elysium. This works for villain NPCs, too, providing they can defy the high mortality rate of bad guys in RPGs. The party may groan when they learn that the evil Radcliffe has once again escaped certain death to bedevil them again, but the presence of their old, familiar foe will help to add to the excitement of the game.

E



NPCs as Companions: It is inevitable over the course of the campaign that PCs will "adopt" certain NPCs as best friends and sidekicks and such. Companion NPCs will become part of the party's "team", hanging out with them, traveling with them, contributing to group's success, and so on. These NPCs need to be the most detailed and well-played in the game, as they will have near-constant interaction with the PCs throughout the campaign.

Companion NPCs can become invaluable assets for the GM. If the party seems intent on embarking on some stupid or destructive course of action, the GM can have a Companion NPC act as the voice of reason. If the party is stuck as to what to do next or just can't seem to get an important clue, the GM can provide the information through a Companion NPC ("Hey, guys, look at this cryptic writing on the wall!"). If the party is losing a desperate fight, one or more Companion NPCs can act as the cavalry without straining plot credibility too much. Companion NPCs can also provide a lot of the real emotion associated with intense parts of the game. The GM can show just how much danger the party is in by having a Companion NPC display unreasoning terror ("Gee, Jurgens is whimpering in the corner and clawing his eyes out. Is that bad?") or can emphasize loss or love or just about any other emotion appropriate to the situation. Most players, whether they'll admit it or not, care what happens to a long-running Companion NPC and will often act sympathetic, sparking good role-playing encounters.

NPCs in Combat: In order to make the GM's job easier during combat, easily the most complicated part of the game, the "reality rule" for NPC wound damage is recommended. In short, a successful attack that would take down a person in real life should also take down an NPC in the game. Your PCs may be able to stand up to multiple gunshot wounds and keep on dishing out damage, but they're the heroes of the game—that's what they're supposed to do. But the NPCs they fight should often be much more mortal, and fall down if they get shot, stabbed, blown up, and so on.

In game terms, assume that NPCs will always be neutralized, due to shock, bloodloss, pain, etc, after taking 20 damage points. The GM can also assume they always fail their consciousness and shock rolls. This should apply to both good guy and bad guy NPCs, unless the GM wants to make an exception for individuals like major villains, monsters, or companion NPCs. Using this "reality rule" will

save the GM a lot of number-crunching during a battle, allowing him to concentrate on the more cinematic aspects of the fight like deciding on tactics, describing explosions, and mimicking screams of agony.

However, if the GM ever wants to really give the party a good, knock-down, drag-out fight, he should allow the party's opponents to ignore the "reality rule" and stick strictly to the game system. There are few things PCs fear more than meeting someone as tough as they are.

HANDLING MAGI

Magi are easily one of the most problematic PCs to handle. At first they seem to have an enormous advantage over the other PCs–the ability to directly manipulate the Matrix.

However, this isn't the case. The Matrix chapter detailed a number of limitations on Magi. Their spells are learned at the cost of other, perhaps more vital, skills. Casting more than a few spells per day causes them physical harm. The Matrix has built-in safeguards against abuse. However, if you still feel that Magi characters are too powerful, here are some more suggestions on how to restrain them:

Guild Limitations: The guild the mage PC belongs to may have very strict rules of conduct, to which the PC must adhere to without fail or face retribution. The guild may also limit the PC's choice of spells, depending on their ethos.

Anti-Mage Tactics: Many soldiers and police in the KN are specifically trained to deal with Magi, and know how to effectively use conventional weapons and tactics against them. Gas and F/B grenades can be used to break their concentration. Lightning-quick, relentless, overwhelming assaults are used to ensure a Mage doesn't have the opportunity to cast a spell. (Auto-grenade launchers loaded with anti-personnel grenades referred to as Mage-Toasters by military forces.) Magi, because they are considered so dangerous, will always be tar-

geted first and most heavily by an opposing force in any combat situation.

Weirds and Dead Zones: As a last resort, the GM may have an adventure take place in a Weird or Dead Zone, screwing up or completely neutralizing the PC Mage's powers in one fell swoop.

CREATING NEW RACES

In any campaign with a heavy emphasis for exploration, the GM will eventually come across the problem of creating new races and creatures for the party to meet and interact with. Making a believable and compelling new race may seem like a daunting task, but it can made much easier by following a few simple steps: choosing a base stock, choosing an angle, and elaborating on biology, psychology, and culture.

Base Stock: The first step is to choose a base genotype for your new race. This can be human or any type of animal. The GM can look through an encyclopedia or wild-life guide and choose whatever looks intriguing. For variant human races, the races of mythology can serve as inspiration, as well as many of the humanoid races depicted in various science fiction works.

Angle: An angle is the one aspect of the race that immediately distinguishes it from the other races of the Shards. In other words, the angle is a characteristic unique to that race, a hook to immediately grab the players' attention. The Orcs' sense of honor is an example of an angle, as are the Centaurs' mysticism, the Spider Swarms' communal intelligence, and the Cephalopods' weird territoriality and zero-gravity aquatic environment.

Coming up with a unique angle for each new race is not always easy. It can be something as simple as a strange custom, such as bowing after each sentence, or something profound in their biological makeup, like having to regurgitate digestive enzymes onto their food to make it edible.

Other angle examples include:

- The race has a taboo against eating in public. They consider eating a vile but necessary activity, much the same way humans view waste excretion, and always eat in solitude.
- One sex is unintelligent.
- The race may undergo a radical physical metamorphosis at some time in their lives.
- The race may have ancestral memories that can be passed on genetically from one generation to the next.
- Individuals may have two or more radically different personalities.

This is by no means a complete list. The GM may want to wait on coming up with the race's angle, as detailing the race's other aspects can serve as inspiration.

Biology: The GM does not need any degrees in evolutionary biology to detail the new race's physiology. Game situations rarely, if ever, call for that amount of detail. Instead, determining the biological aspects of the new race can be broken down into basic questions pertaining to the physical structure and needs of the race. These considerations are as follows:

- **Appearance:** What is the overall body structure of the race? What is the average size of an individual? What kind of skin or body covering does it have? Where are the major organs, appendages, and so on? Are there any unique features that are readily apparent?

- **Manipulators:** How does the new race manipulate their environment? How many appendages are devoted to manipulation?

- **Mobility:** How does the new race move? How many of their appendages are devoted to mobility? Can they swim, fly, or burrow?

- **Senses:** What senses does the new race depend on? Do they possess any super-human senses? Are their senses handicapped in any way?

- **Diet:** What does the new race eat and how does it go about getting nourishment? What kind of metabolism do they have?

- **Sleep:** Does the new race sleep? If so, when, and for how long?

- **Lifespan:** How long does the new race live? How fast do they mature?

- **Reproduction:** By what manner does the new race reproduce? How are offspring born? How are they raised?

- **Defense:** Do members of the new race have any natural defenses? Are some members better or more poorly armed than others?

As many races in *The Shattered Sky* are animal uplifts of some kind, a great deal of this information can be readily found in encyclopedias and guidebooks. How closely the new race adheres to the biology of their base stock is completely up to the GM.

Psychology: Psychology in race creation can be boiled down to one word: motivation. What motivates members of a race, beyond simple survival, to do what they do? Humans are often motivated by the need for moral beliefs, social status, and their emotions, for example.

A great deal, but not all, of a race's way of thinking will stem from its biology. Humans are often galvanized into action by parental instincts of protection, for example. Beings with radically different physiologies will usually have radically different patterns of thought. A race that lays eggs and then abandons them will have little or no concern for their young. A nocturnal desert-dwelling predator will view the need for food gathering very differently from a complacent, tree-dwelling fruiteater. The predator may have to constantly hunt for his food and may be one kill away from starvation; the tree-dweller may have a constant surplus of food and will give food-gathering a fairly low priority.

Another consideration in a new race's psychology is the nature of their intelligence. Most races in the game are assumed to have human-level intelligence. However, this does not mean that they necessarily have to think like humans. There are as many different ways of interpreting the world as there are different ways of living in it. Spider Swarms and Cephalopods both represent radically different world-views.

Culture: Culture is an enormously complex entity, but for purposes of the game it can be broken down into the following considerations:

- **Technology:** The Advancement Level of a society is the single most important aspect of its culture. The party will react much differently to an AL 5 culture than to an AL 25 culture. Technology has a much more profound affect on the character of a society than most members are willing to admit. The development of gunpowder weapons, for example, slowly eroded away at the invincibility of the castle and the feudal system that evolved with it. Industrialization caused a shift in population away from the countryside and into cities. Computers and satellite communications created a truly global community in the late 20th Century.

  Also, the more advanced a race is, the more powerful it tends to be, and the more influential it can

become in the campaign. An AL PH culture will have little effect on Known Nations policy, but an AL 20 culture, like that described in the "Nuclear Warlords" scenario in Chapter Seven, will change the KN's entire exploration strategy in that section of the MegaShard.

- **Economics:** This is the distribution and management of resources within the society. Economics for a new race does not necessarily have to involve human-style money systems, though these are widespread among the Shards. The GM should decide how wealthy the culture is as a whole (does it have access to a great number of resources? Is the culture struggling by on the subsistence level?), and how that wealth is distributed among the members of the race.

- **Leadership:** How does the new race govern itself? Generally speaking, there are only five forms of government: anarchy (no government), figurehead (monarch or dictator), committee (council, senate, etc), consensus (true democracy) or combination (one part of the culture is governed by a figurehead, while another is headed by a committee, for example.) Each form, however, has a great many variations. Committees, for examples, may be hereditary along birthlines, or committee members may choose their successors, or they may be elected.

- **Morality:** There are some things that everyone in the culture condemns as bad or praises as good. Most human societies, for example, condemn murder and incest, but praise community service and self-sacrifice. The GM should decide on what the new culture will embrace as moral behavior and what it won't.

  The GM should note, however, that human morality is not universal. What is morally repugnant to one race may be desirable or even essential to another. Spider Swarms, for example, use incest and inbreeding to perpetuate themselves as individuals.

  Whatever religious beliefs the race may have falls under this category, but not all cultures will have religions.

- **Openness:** How receptive is the race's culture to new ideas, traditions, and methods? How do they treat outsiders?

- **Aesthetics:** This encompasses the art appreciated by the race. What does the race consider beautiful and desirable? How much importance do they put in art and its practice?

- **Traditions:** What kind of traditions has the culture evolved? Do they expect strangers to participate rituals?

ANIMAL ENCOUNTERS

In game terms, animals can usually be described by Hits, Attacks, and Skill equivalents.

For Hits, the GM should compare the animal's size to a human's and assign comparative Hit totals. The average human has 70 hits. A squirrel, which is about 1/10 the size, would have about 1/10 the Hits total, or 7 Hits. An elephant, which is about ten times the size of a human, would have ten times the Hits, or 700. The GM may adjust final Hits totals depending on the overall toughness of the animal, its tenacity, and other factors. In combat, use the "reality rule" for animals as for NPCs, except in special circumstances.

Attacks are the animal's natural weapons and defenses. The exact damage done depends a lot on the nature of the defense and the animal's size. A bite from a housecat and a bite from a bengal tiger will have very different damage ratios. The GM should assign damage ratios depending on the size of the creature and the nature of the attack.

Skill equivalents are the behaviors of the animal that closely resemble human skills. These will include attacks, stealth, tracking, and so on. A bengal tiger, for example, would have an Unarmed Combat equivalent of 5, a Stealth of 5 and a tracking of 8. All animals are assumed to have a Combat Aptitude of 25. Some animals

will also have natural armor.

Animal motivation can be reduced to two basic concerns: survival and reproduction. Animals will usually only attack humans if one of these two motivations are involved; they might be hungry and pounce on a lone human (survival instincts), or it might perceive the humans as rivals in its territory and attack (mating instincts).

All the animals found on ancient Earth can be found on the Shards, and including many long-extinct species. The Builders were masters of biogenetic engineering, and they used their skill to recreate many lifeforms. Bioengineered dinosaurs, dodo birds, sabretooth tigers and such have been spotted on the MegaShard, albeit in small numbers. Some friendly Cephalopod clans have reported entire Shards overrun with such creatures.

BUILDER ARTIFACTS

Debris from the Age of the Builders litter the Shards. Occasionally, one can find a useful, still functioning artifact. Because of their sophistication and power, working Builder artifacts are greatly coveted and highly sought after.

Builder technology is so advanced that it borders on the magical. The Builders discovered and made use of advanced physical laws that are unknown to the 20th Century (and the Known Nations), allowing them to accomplish seemingly impossible feats. The artifacts that the GM introduces to a campaign should reflect this; they should always seem bizarre, miraculous, and very mysterious. The GM should let his imagination run wild when creating Builder artifacts; they can be as bizarre or as off the wall as he can imagine, within the following limitations:

- **The artifact does not seriously hinder game balance.** The more powerful you make an artifact, the more limitations or dangers

you should build into it. A disentigrator pistol, for example, will quickly wear out its welcome if it has unlimited charges. However, if it had only ten shots and discharged dangerous levels of radiation with each use . . .

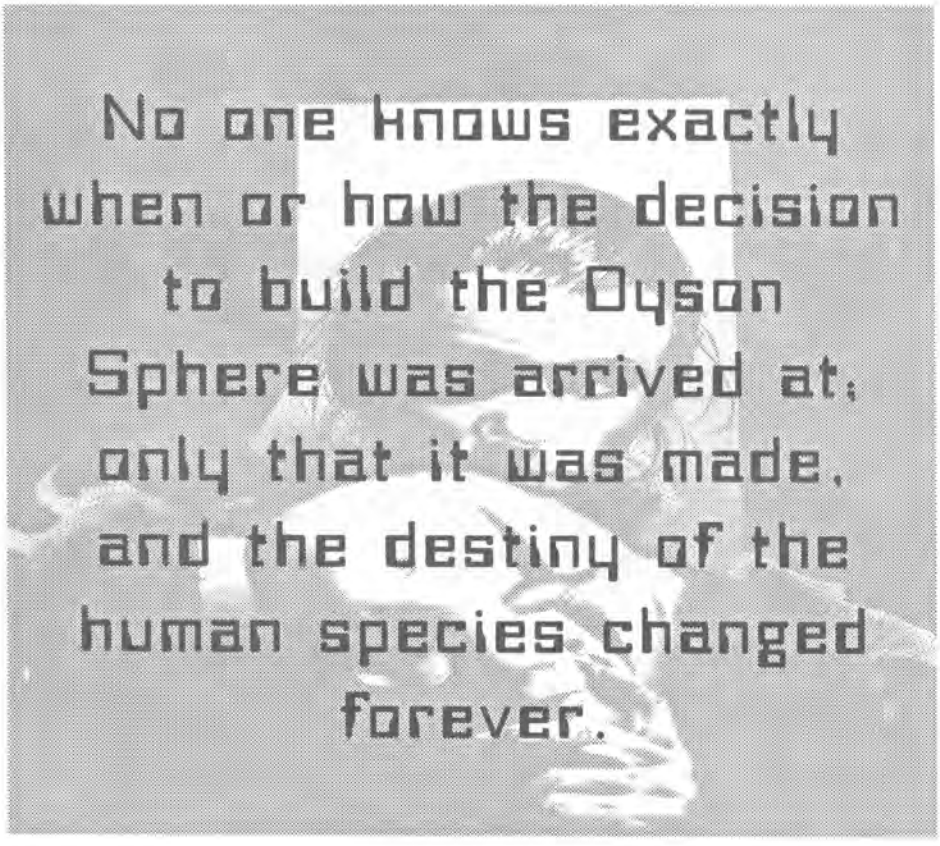
- **The artifact should not duplicate anything either the Matrix or Known Nations technology can readily do.** An AL BR lighter might look pretty impressive, but in the end it would just be a lighter.

Some Builder artifact examples include:

- **UTSite Staff:** This is a thin, two-meter-long tube of metallic UTSite, powered by some unknown internal power source. It is mundane in every way except that it is indestructible.

- **Impossible Circlet:** A small, finger-sized ring whose circumference is exactly equal to three times its diameter, no matter how it is measured. The holder of the ring may shunt objects within 100 meters into a small pocket dimension for storage. Up to 1000 kg at a time may be so stored, and it needs to recharge for 1D6 hours after each use. Looking through the center of the ring has strange effects on a human's mind, and may require a sanity check or such to keep that person from going temporarily insane. Anything pushed through the center of the ring disappears forever, including fingers.

- **Holopen:** This thin, 10-cm metal stick will leave trails of glowing light in the air that lasts 2D6 hours. Messages can be written anywhere, on a wall, on a watery surface, or floating in the middle of a hallway.



The Known Nations require that every functioning Builder artifact be registered with the proper government authorities (a long and expensive process), and the more powerful artifacts will be confiscated by government agents. Possession of an unregistered artifact is considered a very serious crime, often punishable by long prison sentences, fines, and confiscation of assets. However, there is a booming black market specializing in unregistered artifacts for anyone willing to take the risk.

A SENSE OF WONDER

This is the single most important element a GM can bring to his campaign. *The Shattered Sky* was designed to be a playground for ideas, a place with near-infinite room where the GM can let his imagination run wild when it came to making up adventures. Any sort of weird race, exotic locale, or exciting situation can exist among the Shards. The only limit is imagination. Good luck and good adventuring!

The Shattered Sky • Character Sheet

Player: _____

Character Name: _____

Race: _____ Age: _____ Sex: _____

Birthdate: _____ Birthplace: _____

Relatives: _____

_____

Citizenship: _____ Occupation: _____

_____

Yearly Income: _____ Savings: _____

Character Illustration

Concept: _____

Physical Description: _____

_____

Personality/History: _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

TRAITS

Physical

ST: _____ RF: ____ SM: ____

Mental

IQ: _____ ED: ____ IN: ____

Social

CH: _____ SB: ____ EM: ____

HITS

Full: _____

1/2: ____ 1/4: ____ 1/8: ____

Subplots: _____

_____

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_____

Equipment: _____

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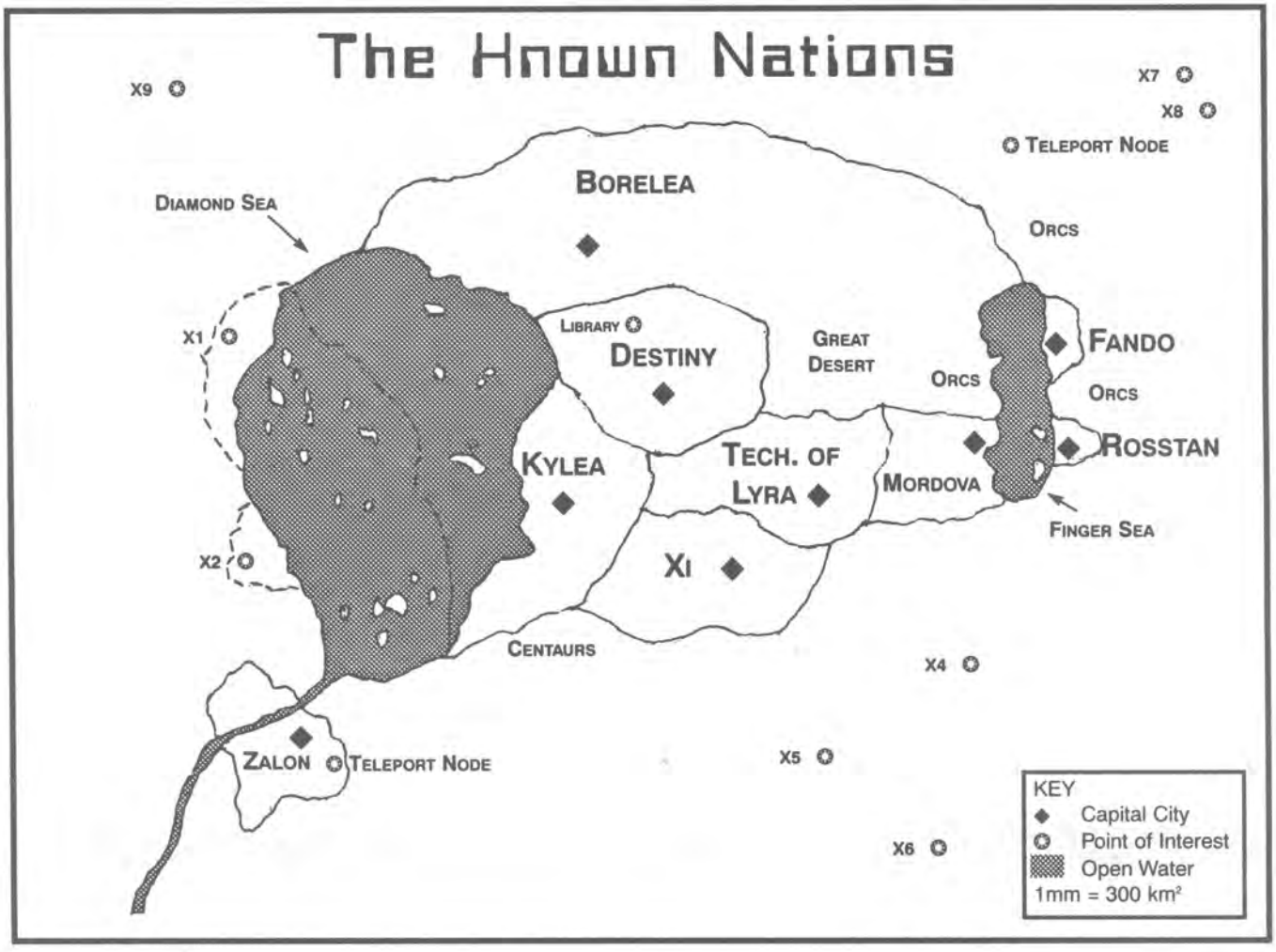
Training Slots: _____ _____ _____

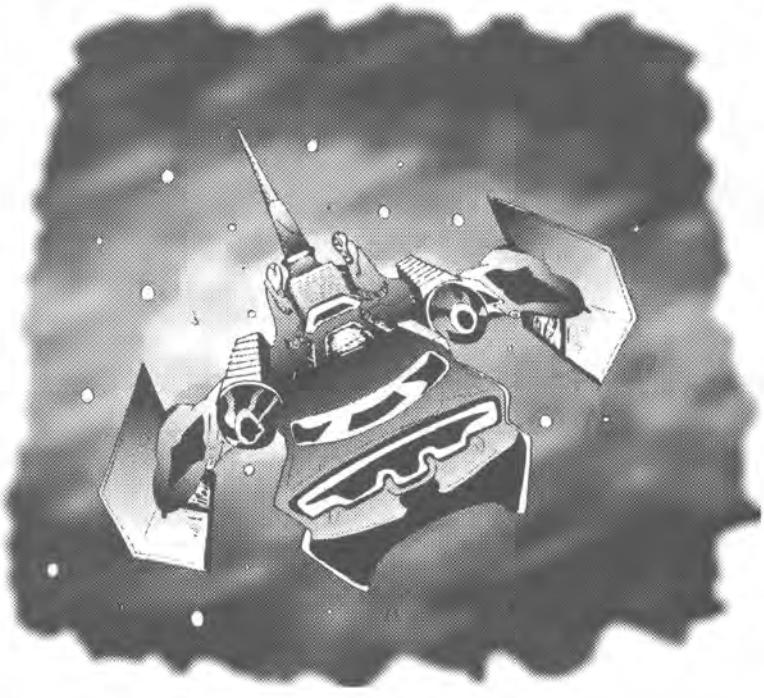
APTITUDES

PA: _____	MA: _____	SA: _____	TA: _____	CA: _____
PA SKILLS	**MA SKILLS**	**SA SKILLS**	**TA SKILLS**	**CA SKILLS**

SPELLS

NOTES





We hope you've enjoyed ***The Shattered Sky***!!! A lot of work has gone into this game and we're hoping it shows.

If you have any questions or comments about ***The Shattered Sky***, feel free to drop us a line at:

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Cape Girardeau, MO 63701
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Thanks for supporting us through your purchase of ***The Shattered Sky***.

About The Creators

Paul Lucas was born thirty years ago in upstate New York, in the dullest town on Earth (he went to school in the first). After ending his school career five years ago, he set out to become a freelance writer under the delusion he can someday become independently wealthy doing so. Besides ***The Shattered Sky***, his work has appeared in magazines such as *Challenge*, *Spectrum!*, *Shadis*, *Faerywoods*, *Star*Anthology*, and two as-yet-unpublished novels.

Born in Kentucky, **Christopher Shy** is an illustrator who's credits include **White Wolf Game Studio**, *The Familiar* and **New Millennium Entertainment**. He is the author of two short stories, as well as a soon to be published graphic novel entitled *Varpath*. Recently he is the concept artist for the PC based **Kinesoft**. He currently resides in Illinois.

Derek T. Stevens is 26 years old, married to his lovely wife Sarah, and has a beautiful daughter, Alexis, who is four. ***The Shattered Sky*** is his first published game book and he is currently illustrating several *Lost Worlds* books for **Greysea LLC** and **Propaganda Publishing**. He is a graphic arts major at Southern Illinois University Carbondale with hopes of one day becoming a major comic book artist.

Gina Marie Fischer has a B.S. in Psychology but is currently employed as a convenience store clerk which she considers the primary reason she is attending graduate school for her Masters in Counseling. She currently resides in Missouri with Philip (below) and their four cats, Max, Tippy, Scamp and Shadow.

Tim Simon holds a Master of Arts degree in English from Southeast Missouri State University and actually used it teaching Navy seamen onboard U.S. combat ships in the Arabian Gulf and Caribbean–eating sushi in Tokyo, Peking Duck in Hong Kong and smoking Cuban cigars from Columbia in the process. He is the divorced father of daughter, Kiersten Rhianne, and presently wastes his time playing internet *Diablo* whenever his damn ISP is working.

Philip J. Reed, Jr. is a complete moron who spent a few too many hours roleplaying in high school. He is the production manager for **MidAmerica Farm Publications**, a very boring agricultural publishing company, and the main idiot behind **Propaganda Publishing**. He has written for **West End Games**, designed *Government-Funded Robot Assassins from Hell!* and *Treasure Hunters* for **Propaganda Publishing**, and is currently handling the layout on *Usagi Yojimbo* for **Gold Rush Games**.

The Shattered Sky

GM SCREEN

You've got the rulebook, now grab the screen! The ultimate defense for a GM surrounded by players, this GM Screen includes a 24-page adventure to get your campaign of ***The Shattered Sky*** off to a good start.

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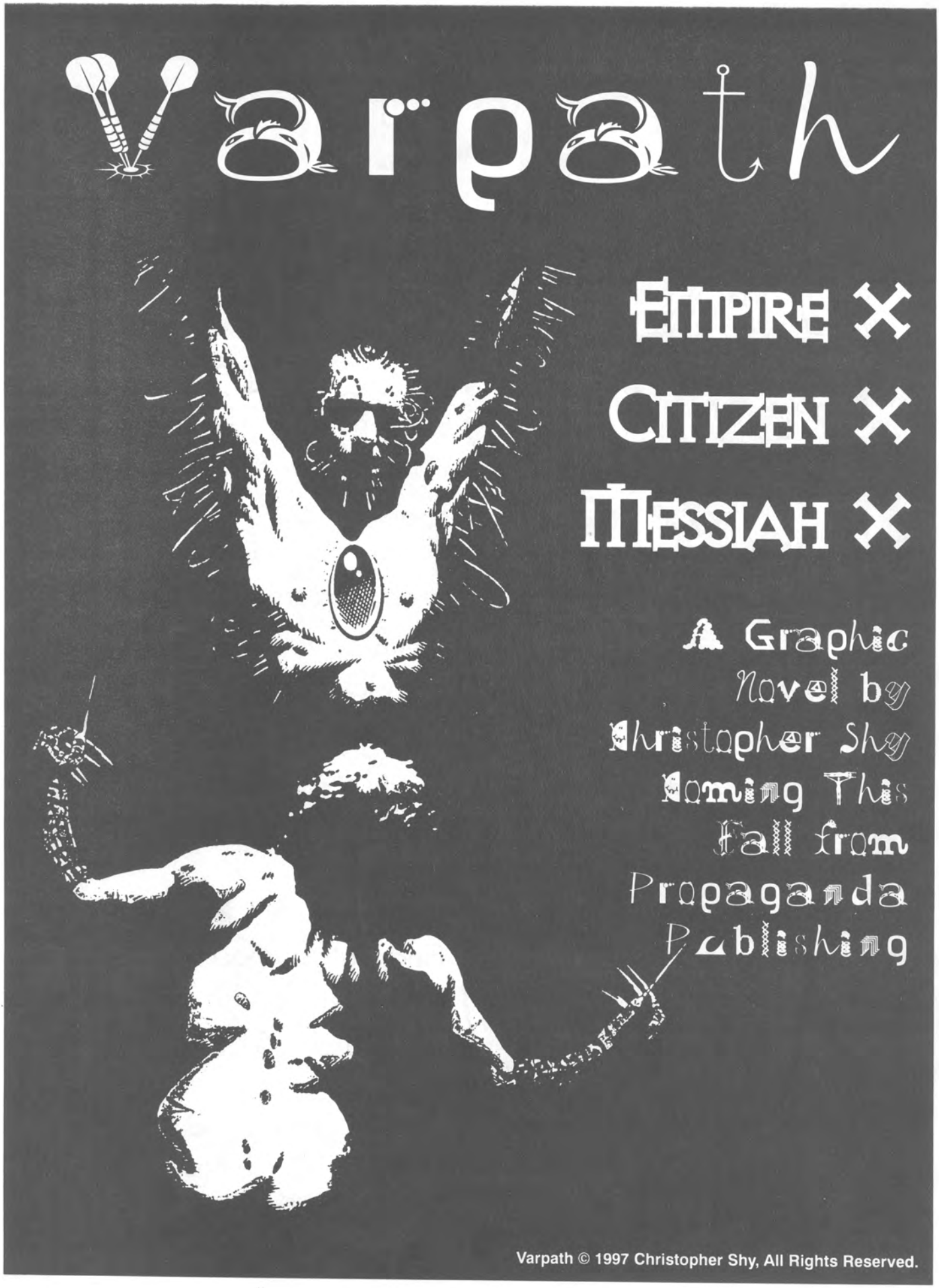
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The Shattered Sky

Twenty-five thousand years in the future, the solar system as we know it is gone. In its place are the slowly- failing remnants of a shattered Dyson sphere, a vast home to the last of the human race, where a small band of survivors desperately tries to reverse the tide of decay and chaos, and where many forces conspire against them. Of these, the most implacable and mysterious are the alien Others, who seek the forgotten secrets of the Sphere for themselves at all costs.

Propaganda Publishing
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Cape Girardeau, MO 63701
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PGP 9000
$16.00 U.S.