

ASTRAL MARINE



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ASTRAL MARINE

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ASTRAL MARINE

A NEW CLASS FOR STARFINDER

The astral marines are high-tech shock troops used as terror troops and elite forces. While soldiers defeat the enemy's body, astral marines break their spirit and will to fight. They are the faceless iron wall that an enemy finds themselves hopelessly thrust against. When their opponents break - even a chink in their armor, a small hole in their line, or a missed step - an astral marine is taught to spring into action and widen that gap. Give them an inch and they are trained to take a mile tactically while guarding themselves in a safe, conservative, defensive posture.

Astral marines are unique in that the majority of their training is not initially done in the field but instead though hypno indoctrination and brainwashing. They are *made*, not *trained* - their bodies and minds tampered with to create an

obedient and fearsome warrior. Because of this they are fearless and never tire, able to withstand the loss of body parts without flinching and are capable of standing guard for days at a time. As they grow in skill and experience the training they received is contextualized and evolved; such veteran astral marines are often given officer positions and relied upon to offset the mindless lower rank-and-file's lack of practical experience.

Astral marines are heavy infantry who often employ heavy weapons and armor. They employ uniform equipment and training patterns due to how they are trained and deployed. Astral marines can be "mass-produced", though the process is expensive and requires a large population pool to draw from. These custom-made legions are tailored to their clients' needs and wage entire wars.



TABLE 1-1: THE ASTRAL MARINE

Level	Base Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Class Features
1st	+1	+2	+0	+2	Hypno indoctrination, standard issue equipment, subjugation
2nd	+2	+3	+0	+3	Discipline
3rd	+3	+3	+1	+3	Steel march, weapon specialization
4th	+4	+4	+1	+4	Speciality
5th	+5	+4	+1	+4	Damage reduction (1), slow and inevitable
6th	+6	+5	+2	+5	Discipline
7th	+7	+5	+2	+5	Damage reduction (2)
8th	+8	+6	+2	+6	Speciality
9th	+9	+6	+3	+6	Damage reduction (3)
10th	+10	+7	+3	+7	Discipline
11th	+11	+7	+3	+7	Astral onslaught, damage reduction (4)
12th	+12	+8	+4	+8	Speciality
13th	+13	+8	+4	+8	Damage reduction (5)
14th	+14	+9	+4	+9	Discipline
15th	+15	+9	+5	+9	Damage reduction (6)
16th	+16	+10	+5	+10	Speciality
17th	+17	+10	+5	+10	Damage reduction (7)
18th	+18	+11	+6	+11	Discipline
19th	+19	+11	+6	+11	Damage reduction (8)
20th	+20	+12	+6	+12	Hellmarine, speciality

HP/STAMINA

Hit Points Per Level: 7

Stamina Per Level: 7 + CON Modifier

KEY ABILITY SCORE

An astral marine's life is one of service, dedication, and combat. You can choose either Constitution or Strength as your key ability score.

CLASS SKILLS

Skill Ranks Per Level: 4 + INT Modifier
 Athletics (Str), Engineering (Int), Intimidate (Cha), Perception (Wis), Piloting (Dex), Profession (Cha, Int, or Wis), Survival (Wis)

PROFICIENCIES

Armor Proficiency

Light armor and heavy armor

Weapon Proficiency

Basic and advanced melee weapons, small arms, longarms, heavy weapons, sniper weapons, and grenades

PLAYING THE CLASS

An astral marine is either part of a military organization on detached duty or a "former" astral marine. Such marines are often the "leftovers" of a large conflict, a marine who became disenfranchised, or one who rose above the circumstances of their indoctrination. There are many stories to tell as an astral marine and yours will surely be unique.

INSPIRATIONS

Space Marines (Warhammer 40k), Mobile Infantry (Starship Troopers), Terran Marines (Starcraft), Mandalorians (Star Wars), Spartans (Halo), Sardaukar Terror Troops (Dune), Captain Brink of the Space Marines (Amazing Stories), Rosen Ritter (Legend of Galactic Heroes), Elite Clan Infantry (Battletech), Stormtroopers (Star Wars)

HYPNO-INDOCTRINATION [EX] [1ST LEVEL]

You are immune to mind-affecting effects, but cannot benefit from morale bonuses due to the hypno-indoctrination you receive against fear. Additionally, you must make a Will save (DC 25 - 1/2 character level) to willingly disobey an order from a superior. A person in a legitimate position of authority over you through bond, oath, contract, or willing affiliation counts as your "superior". The morality of one's superior (or their orders) does not change their relationship to the marine.

Sidebar: GMing Hypno-Indoctrination

As a GM how you choose to employ the hypno-indoctrination class feature says a lot about the tone of the game you want to run. Speak with your astral marine player about how they want to employ this. If they are down for a "gritty horrors of war" game, maybe have an immoral general commanding the astral marine (possibly from the shadows) to do wicked deeds. If the astral marine wants to downplay this, maybe they are a free agent whose only "superior" is a fellow player who their character trusts (and the player trusts out of game); envoys and other social characters work great for this role. When employing tactics that exploit this class feature, it should be rather dramatic and not everyday - not everyone knows about the exploitable flaw in an astral marine's hypno-indoctrination.

STANDARD ISSUE EQUIPMENT [1ST LEVEL]

You are issued standard weapons and equipment. You may exchange them at any outpost of their government for a fresh set, so long as they were expended while on assigned duties. When refreshing your supplies you receive 10x the weapon's maximum capacity in ammunition



TABLE 1-2: STANDARD ISSUE EQUIPMENT

Level	Primary Firearm	Sidearm	Armor	Melee Weapon
1st-5th	Hunting Rifle	Tactical Semi-auto Pistol	Hidden soldier armor	Survival Knife
6th-10th	Autotarget Rifle	Advanced Semi-auto Pistol	Vesk overplate I	Tactical Knife
11th-15th	Combat Rifle	Elite Semi-auto Pistol	Vesk overplate III	Ultrathin Dagger
16th-19th	Advanced Gyrojet Rifle	Tactical Gyrojet Pistol	Vesk monolith II	Zero-edge Dagger
20th	Gyrojet Rifle Paragon	Elite Gyrojet Pistol	Vesk monolith III	Molecular Rift Dagger

for all weapons. The nature of your standard issue equipment is dependent on your astral marine level and specializations and changes as you level. You may request any equipment from a lower level if they wish. A GM is the final arbiter of what piece of standard issue equipment is appropriate for an astral marine to receive. Selling standard issue equipment is a crime and anyone caught selling their standard issue equipment or who owns standard issue equipment is liable to get shot, imprisoned, or at the very least charged 10x the amount it is typically worth. Standard issue equipment is easily identified as being such and microscopic serial numbers detail who it was issued to. Because of the gear you are provided, you begin play with only 1/10th of your normal starting credits.

SUBJUGATION **[EX] [1ST LEVEL]**

At the end of your turn you can make a free Intimidate check to demoralize all creatures you damaged during your turn. Roll once and compare the result against all creatures you damaged this turn.

DISCIPLINE **[EX] [2ND LEVEL]**

Your strength comes from your fearlessness and absolute discipline in the face of the enemy. This continued training in warfare is represented by you gaining a discipline at 2nd level and every 4 levels thereafter.

See the "List of Disciplines" section later in this class entry.

STEEL MARCH **[EX] [3RD LEVEL]**

An astral marine may "march". Marching is a special type of move action. While marching, you must move at least 10 feet (2 squares) and must always move in a straight line towards enemies and end as close to them as possible. A marching character moves at half their speed (minimum 10 feet). A march can be made towards an enemy even if you don't have line of sight to the creature so long as you are aware of the enemy's presence (Example: You can march to an airlock you just saw your foe flee behind. You, however, could not march over a ridge if you hear noises that could possibly be the bandits that you suspect are lying in wait for your party).

While marching you can also draw a weapon. If a march is made through difficult terrain, you suffer no additional reduction in movement speed (though you are still subject to other environmental hazards). A march may not be made through obstacles that prevent you physically moving forward (a wall, a table, etc) nor through squares that contain creatures (other than helpless creatures). You cannot take a 5-foot step or another move action on the same turn you've marched. You may take a full round action to "double march" which allows you to march up to normal movement speed.

WEAPON SPECIALIZATION **[EX] [3RD LEVEL]**

You gain Weapon Specialization as a bonus feat for each weapon type this class grants you proficiency with.

SPECIALITY [4TH LEVEL]

Astral marines are trained for specific roles so they can fill gaps in the combat needs of their organization. At 4th level and every 4 levels thereafter, you pick a specialty - a unit typing that gives you a small bonus under certain circumstances and training on certain kinds of equipment. This equipment becomes standard equipment they can request.

DAMAGE REDUCTION [EX] [5TH LEVEL]

At 5th level, you gain DR 1/-. At 7th level, and every odd level, this damage reduction rises by 1 point. Damage reduction can reduce damage to 0 but not below 0.

If you gain damage reduction from another source, this damage reduction stacks, but only grants half the normal amount.

Example: Frank is an 11th level astral marine with the Enhanced Resistance feat granting him DR. The feat grants him DR 1/-, and his damage reduction class feature improves this by +2 (half of his normal DR 4/-), for a total of DR 13/-.

SLOW AND INEVITABLE [EX] [5TH LEVEL]

Due to careful stepping, an increased awareness due to your slower speed, a solid sense of balanced, and the special training you have received, you've become more difficult to deter. While marching you gain a bonus on all Reflex saves equal to your Constitution modifier and an equal bonus to your AC against attacks of opportunity. In addition, after making a march you gain a +1/4 circumstance bonus on attack rolls made until the start of your next turn.

ASTRAL ONSLAUGHT [EX] [11TH LEVEL]

When you make a full attack, you can make up to three attacks instead of two attacks. You take a -6 penalty to these attacks instead of a -4 penalty.

HELLMARINE [EX] [20TH LEVEL]

When you successfully Intimidate a creature the creature is paralyzed for rounds equal to your key ability score modifier. The creature may attempt a Will save (DC 10 + your total ranks in Intimidate) start of each of their turn to end the effect prematurely. This is a mind affecting emotional effect.

DISCIPLINES

The following are astral marine disciplines. You may take each only once unless otherwise noted. If a discipline grants a bonus feat you do not need to meet the requirements.

BIOLOGICAL CONTROL (EX)

You can make a Fortitude save at the start of your turn to suppress the effects of any poisons or diseases you are currently suffering from. The DC of this check is equal to the save DC of the biological agent with the highest DC currently affecting them. This also allows you to control basic biological cycles on a superficial level: allowing you to force your hair to stop growing (or grow at twice the normal rate), to cause your nails to stop growing, to turn off your digestion tract temporarily, to make yourself feel not hungry temporarily, etc.

BREACH (EX)

You gain Improved Initiative as a bonus feat. In addition, you can choose to go first during a round if you marched on your last turn. This is decided at the start the the turn and can only be done once per minute.

BLOOD IN THE WATER (EX)

If you caused HP damage to a creature during your turn, the DC to demoralize that creature is reduced by -4 until the start of your next turn. You must be at least 10th level to take this discipline.

CONSTANT ADVANCE (EX)

Once per round, as you march you may reload your weapon or charge a boost weapon as part of the same move action.

CREEPING BARRAGE

After marching, you gain a $+1/4$ th circumstance bonus to AC against attacks of opportunity made when you fire ranged weapons until the start of your next turn. You must be at least 6th level to take this discipline.

DOGGED PURSUIT

After marching, you gain Step Up and Step Up And Strike as bonus feats until the start of your next turn. You must be at least 6th level to take this discipline.

EXTREME CONDITIONING (EX)

You only need to eat or drink 1 days worth of food and water per week and require only 3 hours of sleep per night to get a full night's rest.

GRUNT WORK (EX)

You can do the physical labor of up to three people and double your carrying capacity.

MACHINE BREAKER (EX)

Constructs and machines that are mindless are not immune to fear effects you cause. Androids and other creatures with the constructed racial trait (or similar) do not get their racial bonus against fear effects you cause.

PUSH BEYOND PAIN (EX)

You gain a +2 morale bonus on saves against fatigue and exhaustion effects. In addition you add 10 to the number of rounds you can hold your breath for before you need to make Constitution checks to avoid drowning or suffocating. Finally, you gain a +4 morale bonus on saves to continue running for protracted periods of time (as is the case with the "local movement" rules).

SCARE STIFF

When an adjacent creature suffering from a fear effect attempts to move away from you, as a reaction you may attempt a special Intimidate check to demoralize them. If you succeed, the creature loses the action and remains adjacent to you. You must be at least 10th level to take this discipline.

SPELL BREAKER (EX)

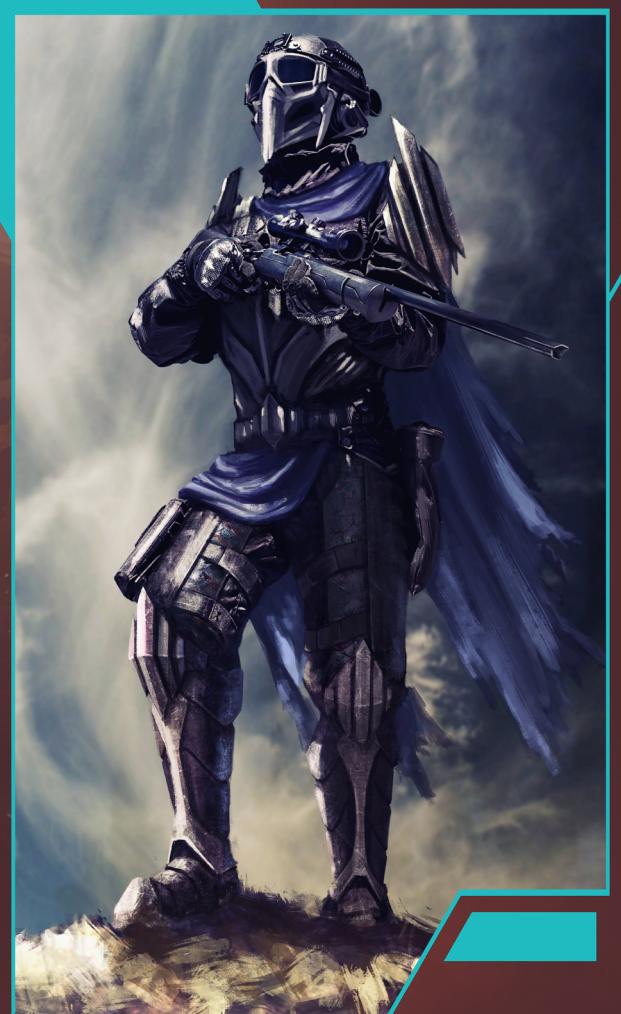
You gain Spellbane as a bonus feat. In addition, when you march the bonus this provides increases by $+1/4$ th your astral marine level (minimum +1) until the start of your next turn. You retain this feat and its benefits even if you gain a spell-like ability.

SUPERHUMAN PAIN TOLERANCE (EX)

You gain 5 additional Stamina points. This stacks with Toughness. You must have either the extreme conditioning or push beyond pain discipline before selecting this one.

TERROR TROOPER (EX)

Astral marines are trained to break not only the defenses and bodies of their foes but their will to fight as well. You add $1/2$ your class level as an insight bonus on all Intimidate checks.



UNIT COHESION (EX)

If an ally fired a range weapon while adjacent to you since the end of your last turn you gain a +2 circumstance bonus on attack rolls against whatever that ally targeted. This lasts until the end of your turn.

WILL BREAKER (EX)

Any time you successfully impart a fear effect on a creature the level of fear it imparts increases by 1 step (shaken > panicked > cowering). This has no effect on effects that cause a creature to cower.

SPECIALTIES

Each of the following options gives you the option to replace some piece of your standard issue equipment with something described on either Table 1-3:

Weapon Specialties (Primary Firearm), Table 1-4: Weapon Specialties (Sidearm), Table 1-5: Weapon Specialties (Melee Weapon) or Table 1-6: Armor Specialties in the column with the same name as the specialty. If your specialties would cause your standard issue armor to have more armor upgrades than your armor has upgrade slots for, you choose which upgrades are installed when you requisition the armor. If multiple specialties replace the same weapon slot, you choose which weapon you receive when you requisition your weapons.

ALPINE SCOUT

You gain a climb speed equal to your land speed. In addition, you gain a +2 bonus on Athletics checks made to jump. You must have 3 ranks in Athletics to select this specialty.

AQUATIC TROOPER

You gain a swim speed equal to your land speed. In addition, you gain a +4 bonus on Fortitude saves against pressure caused by extreme depth. You must have 3 ranks in Athletics to select this specialty.

ARCTIC TROOPER

You treat cold conditions as one step lower than normal (extreme cold > severe cold > cold > normal). In addition, you ignore the difficult terrain effects of deep snow and ice. All your standard issue armor comes equipped with a thermal capacitor as described on Table 1-6: Armor Specialties under the "Arctic Trooper" heading.

COMBAT ENGINEER

You gain Barricade as a bonus feat. You must have 3 ranks in Engineering to select this specialty.

COMBAT PILOT

You gain the Sky Jockey as a bonus feat. You must have 3 ranks in Piloting to select this specialty. While this specialty does not grant you a vehicle or ship you may be assigned one for particular missions.

DEMOLITION MARINE

The DC to avoid a grenade you throw is increased by 2.

DROP TROOPER

You are first to the fight, being deployed orbitally into hot zones in powered armor to establish a beachhead. You suffer the heaviest fire from the enemies' defenses and, as such, drop troopers are given powerful titan shields to protect themselves. Drop troopers use a trick where they deploy their titan shield on their feet as they drop and fire over it as they land. This allows you to install jump jets or jetpacks on powered armor and utilize them without a penalty. You must have the mobile infantry and jump trooper specialties to select this specialty.

ESCORT GUARDIAN

You gain Bodyguard as a bonus feat. This specialty typically is used to protect VIPs and requires a mastery of decorum and ceremonial weapons. You must have at least 3 ranks in Culture to select this specialty.

HEAVY GUNNER

You gain a +2 insight bonus on attack rolls made to provide covering fire and harrying fire while using a heavy automatic weapon. Additionally, the bonus to AC you provide your allies from these actions is increased to +4 (rather than +2).

INFERNO MARINE

The range of flamethrowers you use is increased by 10 feet.

JUMP TROOPER

You gain a +2 insight bonus on Acrobatics checks made to fly. All your standard issue armor comes equipped with jump jets or a jetpack as described on Table 1-6: Armor Specialties under the “Jump Trooper” heading.

MARINE SCOUT-SNIPER

You can move up to half your speed and take the aim action necessary to fire at your full sniper distance while using sniper weapon.

MOBILE INFANTRY

You gain Powered Armor Proficiency as a bonus feat even if you do not meet the prerequisites. In addition, you increase the base speed of any powered armor you wear by 10 feet. At higher levels it may be appropriate to request alternative powered armor as the situation demands.

PLASMA MARINE

Any enemy damaged by a plasma weapon you fire has their KAC reduced by -2 for a number of rounds equal to your Constitution modifier. You must be at least 7th level to select this specialty.

RAD TROOPER

All your standard issue armor comes equipped with a radiation buffer. In addition, you add +2 to the save DC of radiation effects you create. Finally, you don’t expose yourself to radiation when you roll 1 with weapon with the radioactive special quality. Please note that this specialty uses equipment from the Starfinder Armory.

SCHIFFJAEGER

You are trained to use massive artillery pieces designed to take down vehicles. The title of “schiffjaeger” is reserved for an astral marine who has fired a killing blow on a capital ship, though most anti-armor squads are simply referred to as schiffjaegers. They often man shipboard weapons or are deployed in the field to destroy enemy armor. Once per day per key ability score modifier you can grant your weapons the penetration special quality on all attacks you make that round as a free action. In addition, you gain a +2 insight bonus on attack rolls made with ship-scale weapons. You must have at least 2 of the following specialties to select this specialty:

demolition marine, heavy gunner, plasma marine, rad trooper. If you select the IMDS Missile Launcher in place you also get 10 missiles with it of a sort defined by Table 1-3: Weapon Specialties (Primary Firearm).

SHOCKTROOPER

You are the tip of the spear when it comes to breaching enemy lines. You gain a +2 insight bonus on Initiative checks and can turn on a forcefield as a reaction or swift action (rather than a standard). All your standard issue armor comes equipped with a forcefield as described on Table 1-6: Armor Specialties under the “Shocktrooper” heading.

VOID MARINE

You gain a +4 bonus on Acrobatics or Athletics to move in zero-g.



**TABLE 1-3: WEAPON SPECIALITIES
[PRIMARY FIREARM]**

Level	Heavy Gunner	Inferno Marine	Marine Scout-Sniper	Plasma Marine	Rad Trooper	Schiffjaeger
Replaces	Primary Firearm	Primary Firearm	Primary Firearm	Primary Firearm	Primary Firearm	Primary Firearm
1st-5th	Squad Machine Gun	Ifrit-class Flamethrower	Tactical Shirren-Eye Rifle	-	Electromagnetic Radcannon	-
6th-10th	Light Machine Gun	Salamander-Class Flamethrower	Advanced Shirren-Eye Rifle	Red Star Plasma Cannon	Electromagnetic Radcannon	-
11th-15th	Medium Machine Gun	Hellhound-Class Flamethrower	Elite Shirren-Eye Rifle	Yellow Star Plasma Cannon	Neutron Radcannon	IMDS Missile Launcher (Tactical Missiles)
16th-19th	Heavy Machine Gun	Firedrake-Class Flamethrower	Paragon Shirren-Eye Rifle	White Star Plasma Cannon	Rapid-decay Radcannon	IMDS Missile Launcher (Advanced Missiles)
20th	Paragon X-gen Gun	Phoenix-Class Flamethrower	Warpshot Shirren-Eye Rifle	Blue Star Plasma Cannon	Rapid-decay Radcannon	IMDS Missile Launcher (Advanced Missiles)

**TABLE 1-4: WEAPON SPECIALITIES
[SIDEARM]**

Level	Combat Engineer	Demolition Marine	Void Marine	Drop Trooper
Replaces	Sidearm (Gain 10 extra energy packs)	Sidearm (Gain 5 grenades)	Sidearm	Sidearm
1st-5th	Batteries	Frag Grenade I	Corona Laser Pistol	-
6th-10th	High Capacity Batteries	Frag Grenade II	Aphelion Laser Pistol	-
11th-15th	Super-capacity Batteries	Frag Grenade IV	Parallax Laser Pistol	Titan Shield
16th-19th	Ultra-capacity Batteries	Frag Grenade VI	Zenith Laser Pistol	Titan Shield
20th	Ultra-capacity Batteries	Frag Grenade VIII	Zenith Laser Pistol	Titan Shield

**TABLE 1-5: WEAPON SPECIALITIES
(MELEE WEAPON)**

Level	Aquatic Trooper	Escort Guardian
Replaces	Melee Weapon	Melee Weapon
1st-5th	Tactical Spear	-
6th-10th	Sentinel Spear	Red Star Plasma Doshko
11th-15th	Buzzblade Spear	Yellow Star Plasma Doshko
16th-19th	Zero-edge Spear	White Star Plasma Doshko
20th	Gravity Spear	Blue Star Plasma Doshko

TABLE 1-6: ARMOR SPECIALITIES

Level	Alpine Scout	Arctic Trooper	Combat Pilot	Jump Trooper	Mobile Infantry	Shocktrooper
Replaces	None	None	Armor	None	Armor	None
1st-5th	Grappler (Cable Line, Titanium Alloy)	Thermal Capacitor Mk 1	D-Suit I	Jump Jets	-	Forcefield (Brown)
6th-10th	Grappler (Cable Line, Titanium Alloy)	Thermal Capacitor Mk 1	D-Suit II	Jetpack	Battle Harness	Forcefield (Purple)
11th-15th	Grappler (Cable Line, Adamantine Alloy)	Thermal Capacitor Mk 2	D-Suit IV	Jetpack	Battle Harness	Forcefield (White)
16th-19th	Grappler (Cable Line, Adamantine Alloy)	Thermal Capacitor Mk 3	D-Suit V	Jetpack	Jarlslayer	Forcefield (Red)
20th	Grappler (Cable Line, Adamantine Alloy)	Thermal Capacitor Mk 3	D-Suit VI	Jetpack	Warmaster's Harness	Forcefield (Prismatic)

ALTERED OR REPLACED ASTRAL MARINE CLASS FEATURES

For any level at which an archetype provides an alternate class feature, an astral marine who takes the archetype alters or replaces the listed class features.

Multilevel [2nd, 6th, and 18th Levels]: You don't gain a discipline.

Multilevel [4th and 12th Levels]: You don't gain a specialty.

9th Level: You don't increase the amount of DR you gain a 9th level.

MYSTERIOUS SPACE BOUNTY HUNTER

Theme: Bounty Hunter

You're a rogue bounty hunter who always gets your man.

Ability Scores

Our mysterious space bounty hunter is as deadly as they are crafty. They have high Dexterity and Wisdom while keeping a respectable Constitution score.

Disciplines

- Breach
- Extreme Conditioning
- Superhuman Pain Tolerance

Specialties

- Alpine Scout
- Jump Trooper
- Inferno Marine

Skills

- Intimidate
- Perception
- Piloting
- Sense Motive

HEAVY GRUNT

Theme: Mercenary

You are a soldier's soldier, a career grunt with a pension for using heavy weapons.

Ability Scores

The heavy grunt cares about its ability to come home after the job is done (you don't get paid if you aren't around to collect the paycheck) so he has high Constitution and Dexterity as he needs to be able to shoot with his massive weapons.

Disciplines

- Heavy Gunner
- Plasma Marine
- Schiffjaeger

Specialties

- Constant Advance
- Creeping Barrage
- Grunt Work

Skills

- Athletics
- Intimidate
- Perception
- Survival

ZEALOUS CRUSADER

Theme: Priest

You are the front line in religious expansion, heading the charge. The faithful are shielded beneath your welcoming arms, while the heretics should flee or be crushed underfoot.

Ability Scores

You want a strong Constitution since you're going to be shot a lot, while a good Charisma will bolster your Intimidate skill.

Disciplines

- Machine Breaker
- Terror Trooper
- Will Breaker

Specialties

- Escort Guardian
- Heavy Gunner
- Shocktrooper

Skills

- Culture
- Intimidate
- Mysticism
- Sense Motive

PSYCHIC POWERED MARINE

Theme: Scholar

Archetype: Phrenic Adept

You lend your raw psychic might and knowledge of the occult to the aid of your fellow marines. Some may not trust you but all will respect you.

Ability Scores

The psych power marine has great Intelligence and Constitution. Its psychic powers are based on the classes key ability score (Constitution in this case) so it is important to keep that high and their Intelligence will help supplement their lack of skill points.

Disciplines

- Spellbreaker
- Terror Trooper

Specialties

- Mobile Infantry
- Plasma Marine

Skills

- Engineering
- Intimidate
- Mysticism
- Perception

HOW DO THEY FORM?

Edmund Burke said that the only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing and that is the truth. Like in our day, large scale organizations commit heinous crimes when their citizens become complacent. Economies of scale (i.e. “the bigger they are”) result in an increase of corruption due to a diminished capacity for oversight, more moving parts, and more external relations influencing the organization. In space, where distances are vast, populations are isolated, and danger lurks in every shadow and behind every star, the birth of an evil empire is almost assured. Empires spread along trade networks and borders and the necessity of trade for survival ensures that strong trade networks will develop. When they do arise dislodging them is difficult due to a monopoly on trade that, if cut off, will harm or kill the population it cuts off.

WHAT ARE THEIR NORMS?

The core of any evil empire is the “us vs them” mentality, an emphasis on security over personal freedom, harsh punishment for breaking laws, and dictatorial control over the dissemination of information. Evil empires will often engage in cults of personalities for their leaders, cults of “action” or a deviation to a narrative or plot about their fate or destiny. The core of “us vs them” aligns the population against a threat or enemy and allows the empire to take radical action on behalf of the citizenry against the “other”. In Rome the idea of “*virtus*” (lit. “virtue”) was linked to the idea of being Roman or like a Roman and the “barbarians” were the “other” that needed to be conquered and eliminated. In Warhammer 40k the Imperium expressly has the mantra, “Suffer not the alien, the heretic, or the mutant to live” - othering everyone but “pure” humanity and allowing them to take steps to eliminate them even at the expense of human lives, morality, legality, and their vaunted “purity”.

EVIL SPACE EMPIRES IN FICTION

The following are iconic examples of evil space empires in fiction: The Galactic Empire (Star Wars), The Imperium of Man (Warhammer 40k), Galra Empire (Voltron), The Necromonger Empire (Riddick), Goa’uld Empire (Stargate SG-1).

AN ASTRAL MARINE’S RELATION TO EVIL SPACE EMPIRES

The primary tools of control that an evil empire uses are fear and violence. Astral marines are masters of both and become the core threat to keep people in line. While not all astral marines are evil (or stay evil), they are created for evil means to achieve evil ends. Astral marines are designed to be terrifying, loyal, and effective at combat. The larger the empire the more enforcers, like astral marines, the empire will need. To create such a big force with a unified vision, set of tactics, and to keep costs down an empire must standard equipment and training. The Romans did it, the Galactic Empire did it, and it’s almost a requirement to deploy a large unified force in any instance. Ideological unity is something they strive for and recruitment of astral marines can be summed up in three qualities: ideological dedication, physical prowess, and moral flexibility. Very few people are capable of extreme violence and an even smaller percentage will shoot to kill in anything other than a life-threatening situation; a recruiter of astral marines looks for those sort of people or people who can be crafted into the killers they need. In summary, astral marines are the tools of fear and violence needed to keep those on top in power via the control of the populace.

EVIL SPACE EMPIRES IN RED SECTOR

In Red Sector the only true “evil space empire” is the Thaunik Empire. They perpetually seek conflict to fuel their civilization and organize their entire culture along military lines. There may be local, planetary or system-scale, evil space empires but the disorganized and expansive area known as Red Sector isn’t fertile ground for them due to the rampant mistrust and omni-present mutual defense treaties. An evil space empire would have to fight off many enemies if they wanted to expand within the space controlled by the League of Worlds.

SETTING NEUTRAL EVIL SPACE EMPIRES

The following are a number of setting neutral evil space empires that you can drop into your game. We have included empires across a spectrum: some are small and despotic while others are large and sadly corrupt bureaucracy without the means to control their moving parts.

THE IRON FIST OF GRIMNAR

Simply called “The Fist” by those crushed under its iron rule, the Iron Fist of Grimnar is a local power that controls a continent on the surface of an industrialized world. They are primarily concerned with the interests of its core provinces, the so called “heartland” of Grimnar, and the people who have historically lived there. They have a strong military who continues campaigns of war against nearby regions under the auspices of getting more resources and “civilizing” the people who live there. This has been going on for hundreds of years and despite the rest of the planet’s more intergalactic mindset The Fist is focused exclusively on domestic politics and their view does not extend beyond the planet itself.

Because of their domestic focus and short sighted policies they are concerned with things like the acquisition of copper mines other countries have rather than trade with space elves for magical faster than light travel and nanobots that can cure cancer. When they need something they strong arm other nations for it or outright steal it with the aid of their extensive spy network and terror troop corp who commit highly illegal commando raids on the laboratories of other countries. Sooner or later the rest of the world will wise up and band together

and eliminate the Iron Fist of Grimnar but ethnic, religious, and social divides keep the other countries on this planet from uniting against them. The Fist is aware of this and exacerbates the divides through control of the media and economic aid to key allies.

Anyone beyond the heartland are second class citizens and entry into that inner caste of heartlanders is only possible through imperial appointments, adoption, or marriage. Adoption is a common trait for senior leaders to do for subordinates they feel will increase their prestige and influence. Many non-heartlanders serve in the military, since a lifetime of loyal and unquestioning service means that your children will be welcomed into the heartland if you die with glory.

A council of elected senators and military leaders rule Grimnar under a “Speaker of Grimnar”, a senior councilman who is considered the “first among equals” and is elected by their peers for a period of 10 years. This post, while nominally elected, is given to a long line of dictators who have unlimited political power. The elections are rigged so the council is nothing more than a rubber stamp on the dictators power. Still, despite this and the unchecked aggression that they employ the economics of the heartland are booming and is something of a paradise for its citizens. However, a small percentage of the population (less than 10%) enjoy this privileged life and the cost to the surrounding world is atrocious; constant bloody wars, terror campaigns, the financing of coups, corruption, and even assassinations of political rivals within the party.

Goal: Prosperity for the heartland, the “civilizing” of lands beyond their control, glory to the Speaker of Grimnar.

Alignment: Lawful Evil

Methodology: Bloody military conquest, terror campaigns, media control

Leadership Style: Nationalist Dictatorship

THE MIDNIGHT EMPIRE

The Cult of Midnight started as a revivalist movement that gave new life to an ancient religion known as the Church of the Seven Worships. It gained grass roots support among the working class who adopted the message of empowerment and self-determination. As it grew in influence it became perverted by those who wanted to push an exclusionary agenda and within a century it was a tool for a facist government that spanned two systems.

Today the Church of Seven Worships is dominated by a small, political, oligarchical sect within the church known as the Midnight Order who is charged with policing the “moral integrity of the faithful”. Their unchecked investigatory and punitive powers give them unlimited power in deciding who is “in” and who is “out”. To be a leader in the Midnight Order you must be a member of the sect and only those who are members of the sect are considered for leadership positions.

The name “The Midnight Empire” comes from a belief that the universe is in a “dark time” but that the time will soon end and an age of light will begin where the true believers will inherit all the wicked people had. This belief empowers and justifies the many evil acts that the Midnight Empire commits as they believe they are just weeding out the “unjust and wicked” who don’t follow their faith. They see it as their moral responsibility to kill those who don’t follow their beliefs as this will bring about the end of the dark times sooner. In the eyes of the Midnight Empire it’s “convert or die”.

The theocracy still has champions of the truth teachings of the faith: charity, self-determination, and empowerment of the weakest and a small rebellion has formed to overthrow the control of the Midnight Order.

Goal: The ending of the “dark times” by the forced conversion or elimination of the wicked and the unjust (as defined by the Midnight Order).

Alignment: Neutral Evil

Methodology: Extremist religious and expansionist policies achieved by military might.

Leadership Style: Oligarchical Theocracy

UCIC

The composite corporate entity known as “Инвестиционная Корпорация Неограниченного Капитала” is an endlessly wealthy corporation that owns a staggering amount of capital. It can buy and sell planets like penny stocks and gains and loses more in a year than most systems see in a hundred. It is not a formal “empire” in the political sense but the governments of a thousand worlds bow to the demands of UCIC due to the economic power they control. Like other multi-system entities (MSEs) UCIC is a key player in keeping trade and travel open between worlds and to be cut off from their network would plunge anyone they embargo back to the dark ages.

The history of UCIC is murky and convoluted, it is an amalgamation of hundreds of companies who, in turn, are the results of mergers themselves. There is no one “original” company or founder and UCIC maintains separate divisions, child companies, and affiliated bands. Though in Common it is referred to as “UCIC” as it’s name in common translates to the “Unlimited Capital Investment Corporation” though they prefer “ИКНК” or their full dwarven name (it is pronounced “Investitsionnaya Korporatsiya Neogranichennogo Kapitala”).

They are the de facto overlords of the client worlds who use their trade, investment, travel, infrastructure, and private military services. To enforce their will they have hundreds of corporate bureaucrats known as “директор” (“direktor” or “directors”) who visit worlds and “advise” the governments there. Each has a legion of the *морские пехотинцы* (morskiye pekhotintsy) or “black marines” who are unflaggingly loyal to the company. They have a private space navy that rivals many in existence and their *морские пехотинцы* are widely regarded as some of the finest soldiers (and the most efficient killers) in the galaxy. They are famed for their black armor, expensive equipment, and ruthlessness. In the last hundred years not a single *директор* has come to harm under their protection and anyone who has tried to lay a finger on them has been blasted by their excruciating pain cannons... or worse.

The company isn't "evil" and rarely has malicious intent but, when your assets are spread across a thousand worlds in hundreds of systems and reside in every niche and market, it's hard to care about the "little things". There just isn't enough corporate bandwidth to combat all the instances of corruption, cruelty, and mismanagement that careful oversight would fix. UCIC does things like fund charities and pays out large settlements when improprieties are discovered but a company that large just isn't aware of most of the wicked things that go on. At the end of the day UCIC cares about one thing; profit. If that means wiping out an endangered species on the 3rd moon of Korsik Prime so they can see growth in their food production division, so be it.

Goal: Shareholder profit and industry dominance

Alignment: Lawful Neutral

Methodology: Corporate takeovers, market dominance, embargos, monopolies

Leadership Style: Board of Directors/ Corporate Bureaucracy

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