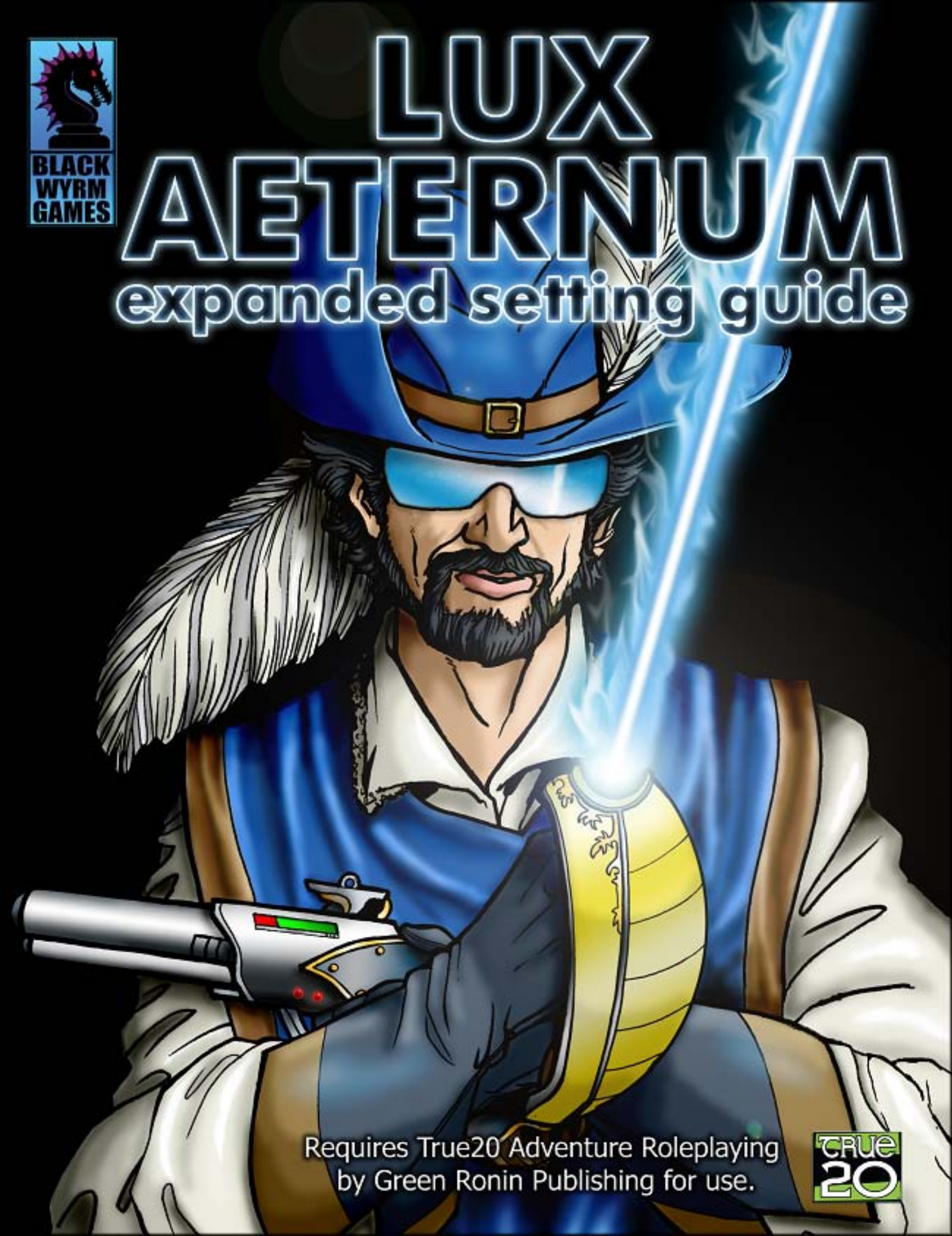




LUX AETERNUM

expanded setting guide



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LUX AETERNUM

expanded setting guide

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For king, country, or corporation, heroes take up their sword and pistol and set sail into the void. The terraformed planets of the home system offer adventure and political intrigue aplenty, while the New Worlds hold fame and fortune for those bold enough to lay claim. Whether you are a treasure hunter exploring ancient ruins, a swashbuckling starship captain fighting pirates in the cold depths of space, or an alien mystic seeking to become one with the Light Eternal, your destiny will be forged in this crucible far from home.

Introduction

Lux Aeternum is a cinematic science fiction setting that strives to evoke the romanticized spirit of the 17th Century Age of Exploration – a time of sweeping changes, social upheaval, and limitless opportunity. Action, drama, and grand adventure are key elements to any grand tale to be told in this setting. The absence of faster-than-light travel limits the playing field to a handful of star systems and allows this finite area to be fleshed out with a level of detail and complexity not possible in a galaxy-spanning saga.

The story begins a couple hundred years from now in a small area of space known as Nexus Sector. Here, humankind has been given a second chance – an opportunity to dwell in peace side by side with advanced alien cultures. But things have gone astray... and the dream is fading. This new Eden has become a crucible in which the mettle of these chosen races shall be sorely tested.

Diversity is another vital element in this setting. Levels of technology and sophistication can vary drastically across the face of a single continent, let alone planet. Swords are as common as guns, and starship combat is more often resolved with boarding parties than impersonal shootouts. There are vastly different alien cultures, brought here over the course of centuries, and each has their own vision of the future. Yet the most heated cultural strife is not between different alien species, but between disparate factions of a single race.

Science struggles with religion to define the seemingly mystical powers that can be called upon in this new and wondrous environment. Pre-Victorian humans, established here centuries ago and flourishing, clash with refugees from the war-torn, cyber-dystopia of 23rd Century Earth. Sentient androids struggle to become more than synthetic slaves. Nations posture and prepare to go to war over the resource-laden worlds of a new star system. And beyond the edge of civilized space, a darkness gathers – a vast but unknown power with evil intent.

About This Book

This document is an extended edition of what appears in the *Lux Aeternum* chapter of the *True20 Adventure Roleplaying* book. It is “rules-light” – emphasizing the flavor and story of the setting while relying on the core rule book for mechanics. This document also focuses on the cultures and locations of Nexus Sector, leaving other aspects (creatures, NPCs, expanded equipment and *Ars Lumina*, etc.) for future supplements and the Narrator’s own imagination.

History

The Story Thus Far

By the 23rd Century, Earth had become a cesspool of pollution and nuclear ruin. While the remaining nations and megacorporations fought over the scraps of “Terra Mortis,” humanity clawed its way across the Solar System in search of territory, resources, and any advantage it could find.

Onto this stage of violence and despair came the Xyr – an ancient alien race who promised to deliver humankind from the brink of extinction. Those who would set aside their hatreds, fears, and technologies of death were invited to join in a grand experiment – to join with other intelligent species and humans who had gone ahead centuries before. Together an alliance would be forged – a union of civilizations from scattered planets – a fraternity of species that would one day inherit the galaxy.

To carry humankind to this new Eden the Xyr brought forth a massive interstellar vessel. The seventh of its kind, this ark took aboard a select million who yearned to abandon the cinders of Terra Mortis and take the decade-long journey towards humanity’s second chance.

But midway between the old home of humanity and the new, something went terribly wrong and the Xyr disappeared from the ark. What exactly happened is a matter of speculation and heated debate. Many claim that some human faction smuggled weapons aboard Ark VII and tried to take control; some suspect that a dark elder race, a rival of the Xyr, may have attacked. Still others are convinced that it is all part of the aliens’ grand scheme to test the mettle of their Chosen. Whatever the reason – the inhabitants of the ark were left to fend for themselves, eventually arriving in Nexus Sector (their new home) without guidance, assistance, or supervision

Three decades have passed and the Xyr have not returned, though many of their automated guardians still go about their appointed duties. Several factions from Earth survived the crossing intact, and have taken root in Nexus Sector – working alongside those who have dwelt here for centuries, both alien and human.

Kingdoms and corporations work to establish their own visions of a perfect society, and the Terra Novan Theocracy has become strong – delving deep into the seemingly-mystical abilities revealed in this new environment. Though some hold to the precepts of peace that were so strongly put forth by the ancient alien race, just as many have broken their vows and fallen back into the habits of avarice and aggressive expansion.

Now conflict is brewing among nations both old and new. Centuries of peace crumble before the inevitability of war. A new trove of uncharted worlds has been discovered around a star at the edge of the Nexus Sector. These worlds are seemingly pristine and home to vast natural resources – resources desperately needed by the home systems if they are to survive the coming conflicts. But voyages to the New Worlds are long and perilous, and dark things lurk at the edge of space – unnamed horrors just realizing that the Xyr no longer protect Nexus Sector or its children.

A “union of civilizations” seems a long way off, but the dream is not yet wholly forgotten. Many opportunities, and many dangers, lie ahead. It will take brave heroes, intrepid explorers, and steadfast leaders to make the dream a reality.



Another Perspective

From the perspective of the Chosen races already here, things went like this:

For thousands of years, the Xyr brought promising races to Nexus System and in this haven let them forge themselves into something better than they were. The Chosen races would either flourish and move on (whether to ascension or other parts of the galaxy is unknown) or perish by their own hand – or by the hand of those they sought to oppress.

In recent history the V'la, Draugmorre, Kyryk, and Humans have been here and things have gone well aside from some civil war among the Draugmorre. Then 30 years ago Ark VII arrived and everything went to hell.

- The great Maelstrom singularity flared and became unstable. There was a tremendous increase in emissions and the poles of the black hole realigned dramatically. The surrounding nebulae shifted, revealing for the first time what lay beyond.
- So it was that new star systems were discovered at the distant reaches of the sector – one virgin and rich in resources, and the other apparently the lair of an evil and avaricious Elder race (the Kor'Diel).
- The Xyr, always aloof, enigmatic, and rare, stopped showing up entirely, though their automated guardians still go about their assigned duties.
- And in the midst of this, Ark VII drifted into Chrysalis System and disgorged millions scared, violent humans who had no regard for the ancient laws of peace and cooperation. Though small compared to the total population of Nexus Sector, they are ambitious and highly motivated – threatening to completely destroy the status quo.

Now everything is in chaos. Former allies stand on the brink of war as factions scramble to make sense (and take advantage) of this new situation.

The Newcomers spread like a pestilence – claiming territories and resources that have been purposely left fallow for centuries. The discovery of the unknown star systems has drawn some attention (and ire) away from the recent human arrivals as different governments decide what to do about the new territory (the New Worlds in particular hold vast amounts of untapped resources – something the inhabited worlds sorely lack). Tensions are high and pirates and privateers are flourishing.

Long buried hostilities are starting to resurface. There are a hundred different theories as to what happened and what might happen in the years ahead. It is a time of change, and great danger – a time of opportunity where all may be won, or lost.

Some Key Elements

The Flavor

The tone of adventures in the *Lux Aeternum* setting is meant to be cinematic and action-oriented. Think *Three Musketeers* or *Pirates of the Caribbean* but with aliens, starships, and mystical powers. Court intrigue and political machinations abound, but so does breath-taking adventure and exploration of the unknown. The setting is rife with the potential for moral dilemmas, tests of character, and cultural conflict. Virtue is an honorable path, but not the only one available. *Lux Aeternum* should be the stage for heroic exploits, death-defying battles, and character-driven roleplaying for those who so desire. There should be feats of swashbuckling and chivalry with a dash of cybertech and mysticism thrown in for flare. Diversity is key and options abound, yet one theme remains constant – high drama and cinematic action.

What's in a Name?

Nexus Sector is a grouping of 4 star systems in close proximity to each other. Two of these (Unity and Chrysalis) contain the “civilized” worlds. The others (E'lan and Pyrrhus) are the distant frontier, home to unimagined opportunity and danger. “Crucible” is what the residents of Nexus Sector have taken to calling their home since the disappearance of the Xyr – for it seems that in this forge the worthy shall be remade while the unworthy burn.

The Ars Lumina

In *Lux Aeternum*, there is something indefinable but powerful that arises from the interaction of sentient minds. Just as a pattern of photons can make a color and a complex arrangement of color can make a picture or a work of art, so can thoughts form sentience and a complex pattern of sentience form a greater thing. This higher order meta-consciousness is called the Lux Aeternum (roughly “Light Eternal”) and the study of it is called the Ars Lumina. It appears to prove life after death, allows the summoning of tremendous elemental forces, and may eventually yield the secret of faster-than-light travel. As such it plays a very important role in the setting and serves as a source of divine mysticism, sorcery, and advanced science (depending on who you ask).

The Xyr

These mysterious benefactors are an ancient race – masters of both “normal” science and the Ars Lumina. This is, in fact, exactly what makes them an “elder” race for it has allowed them to evolve beyond the physical. No-one knows what a Xyr looks like. They speak directly into the mind and usually interact only through wisp-like minions. These “wraiths” appear as bright points of light (when they wish to appear at all) and have daunting psionic abilities, but no real sentience or will of their own.

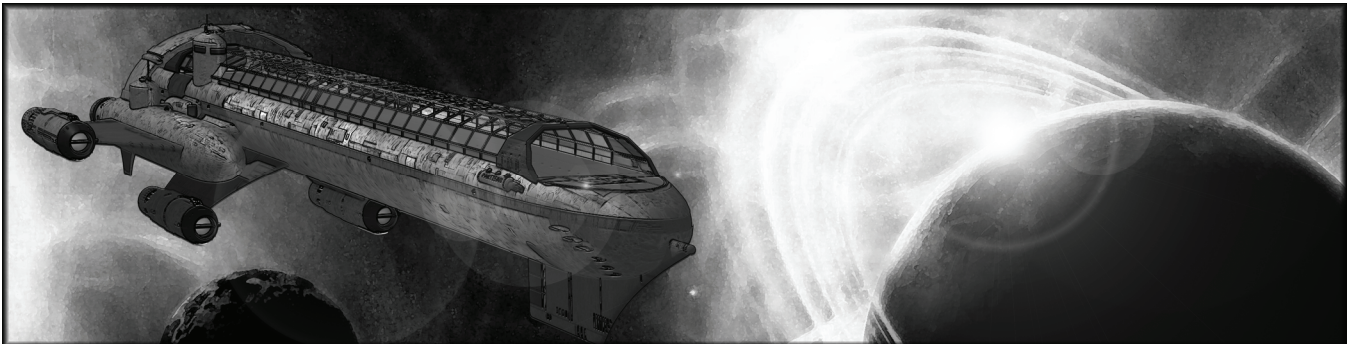
The Xyr are also responsible for the construction of Nexus Sector. They created a multitude of habitable worlds in the star systems orbiting the Maelstrom singularity. Over the millennia, they have sought out lesser sentient races to bring to this haven. Here these “Chosen” are instructed to live in peace and cooperation – working towards the day when they too will ascend to the next plateau of consciousness.

Without faster-than-light travel (which seems possible only for ascended races), most civilizations would form, rise, and fall without ever encountering alien life. Even with thousands of such cultures in the galaxy, the distance between the stars is just too great. Another real purpose of Nexus System may be just to bring potentially compatible races together, as much as to help them flourish. One might note that the current Chosen races are all very similar with regards to their environmental requirements and intelligence.

The Accord

The Accord is a tradition of peace that outlaws certain weapons – those which kill indiscriminately. The people brought here by the Xyr were expected to live in relative peace, focusing their efforts on bettering themselves and their society while they learned about other species and slowly moved towards an understanding of the Lux Aeternum. The Xyr were adamant that technologies capable of genocide not proliferate within Nexus Sector. Towards this end, they have created guardians to seek out and eradicate those who create or use such forbidden technologies (including nuclear, fusion, antimatter, and biological weapons technology). The Xyr themselves are masters of gravitic technology and have given irreplaceable components to the Chosen so that they may have the power they need, and ships to cross the void, without the potential for easy weapons, rampant pollution, and resource depletion.

The long standing tradition of peaceful coexistence has also given rise to the Prohibition Against Collateral Damage. This doctrine severely limits personal weapons that could harm an unintended target. Ranged weapons are taboo and considered cowardly by many. So it is that swords have become more popular than guns – though in the chaotic times of recent years, this preference is shifting.



Timeline

For reference, some key events in the history of Nexus Sector are listed below.

Years ago	Terran Year AD	Event
100,000		Estimated time of Xyr ascension
30-40,000		Estimated time of collapsing for most of the micro-stars in Nexus Sector
25,000		Estimated Terraforming complete in Nexus Sector
20,000		Oldest ruins found in Nexus Sector date back to this time period
2,000 to 20,000		Various alien races are brought to nexus Sector, remain for many centuries, then disappear – leaving little evidence.
1620	650	Tzacaulli (pre-Aztec, Central American Humans from Teotihuacan) arrive
1200	1030	V'la arrive
1110	1120	Tzacaulli disappear
1006	1224	Brood of Song (Draugmorrian first wave) arrives
824	1406	Kyryk arrive
530	1700	Founders (European and Ottoman Humans) arrive
498	1732	Concordium is opened for joint colonization
455	1775	Terra Novan Theocracy founded
450	1780	Tetrarchy of the Chosen founded
306	1924	Brood of Steel (Draugmorrian second wave) arrives
189	2041	Xeos and Dyryd are colonized
121	2119	Draugmorrian civil war starts and finishes.
120	2110	K'ndaros subsystem is opened for colonization
30	2200	Newcomers (Humans from the 23 rd Century) arrive. The Xyr disappear. The Maelstrom shifts. The New Worlds and System IV are discovered.
25	2205	The Brood of Steel leaves Valaquentarsis and colonizes the moons of Cymbeline.
20	2210	First contact with Kor'Diel minions in Nexus Sector (near the ruins of Ark VII)
10	2220	The Tetrarchy tries to annex the K'ndaros subsystem but fails (due to Tonshu intervention).
5	2225	First occurrence of shanghaied Synthetics used as Kor'Diel infiltrators for terrorist activities.
0	2230	Current year (starting year for a typical campaign)

Cultures

There are many different alien races scattered across Nexus Sector. Even though each has several varied and distinct cultures, they are grouped by race for description here.

The Chosen

“The Chosen” is a term used to refer to the Draugmorre, Humans, Kyryk, and V’la as a whole. These races were selected by the Xyr to begin anew in Nexus Sector. There is evidence of other races that were chosen long ago – who came here, dwelt for centuries, and then died out or somehow moved on. The term is not usually used to refer to these precursors, nor does it encompass the E’lanari (who are assumed to be natives). While Synthetics are sometimes lumped in as part of “Humanity,” they are not technically a Chosen race.

The Chosen races are species that were selected by the Xyr to come to Nexus Sector and inhabit the worlds prepared millennia before. Over the centuries, the Xyr have sought out many young civilizations and brought groups here to settle and live in peace. Exactly what happened to these precursors is a mystery, but currently there are four chosen races inhabiting Nexus Sector:

- **Humans** have been brought here at least twice before. Pre-Aztec ruins are all that remain of the first wave. The second group, known as the Founders, is still present and flourishing. The most recent immigrants are the Newcomers – the refugees from 2200 AD. Unique among the races present, humankind also has created synthetic beings, sentient androids who are used as soldiers and slaves.
- The **Draugmorre**, or dragon-men, are winged reptilian humanoids. One brood studies technology while the other delves into the mysteries of the Eternal Song (their version of the Lux Aeternum).
- The **Kyryk**, small and industrious for the first several decades of life, these shelled humanoids later transform into larger, armored warriors with an instinctive drive to protect the clan and destroy its enemies.

- And lastly the enigmatic **V’la** – jellyfish-like invertebrates who can travel on land by commandeering a bipedal host.

There are two major divisions of Draugmorre – those devoted to mysticism (the Brood of Song) and those devoted to science (the Brood of Steel). Humans likewise fall into two very distinct camps – the Founders who were brought from 17th Century Earth and the Newcomers arriving from the ruins of Terra Mortis (Earth 2200 AD).

A Kyryk is born as a small industrious humanoid and later transforms into a large and aggressive defender – “an armadillo that becomes a rhino” is a common human comparison. The V’la are constant in their appearance and have no dramatic divisions within their culture.

Relations

The following are some generalizations about how the Chosen races relate to one another. Individuals vary greatly, so these notes are more to set the background tone of the relations rather than guide how a specific person is supposed to interact.

Founders get on well enough with all of the other Chosen races, though with a bit of an isolationist approach. Much like the renaissance Europe considered the orient, Unity System (which is the home of the Tetrarchy – a coalition of Chosen planets) is looked upon as a source of trade and knowledge, but there is no desire to import the culture or peoples of that area. “Alien” travelers and tourists are welcome in Chrysalis System (home of the Terra Novan Theocracy), but – if the Founders have anything to say – it will always remain firmly under human control.

It is ironic that the group with which Founders get along most poorly are the Newcomers – who are themselves human. Earth and its cultures have changed drastically since the Founders left and so it is very difficult for either group to mesh with the other. There are certainly exceptions, but the rule is that the two groups have a great deal of trouble interacting with, or even understanding the motives of, the other. Synthetics are a particular conundrum, seen as everything from curious constructs to unholy abominations.

There has always been stress between the Theocracy and the Tetrarchy, and in the last few decades it has grown far greater. These are the two “superpowers” in the crucible and it may be inevitable that they come into conflict. But with even greater, and far more sinister, powers lurking on the horizon such conflict could spell the doom of both nations.

The prior occupants of Nexus Sector met the Newcomers with caution and suspicion and many of their fears were borne out. The paranoia, greed, and simmering violence of the unguided arrivals went against everything the other Chosen were trying to achieve. Luckily their numbers were few and scattered and so they were not an immediate threat.

The alien Chosen had more immediate concerns and so did not invest heavily into dealing with the Newcomers one way or the other. The Founders made an effort to welcome these new humans but were just as glad to see the majority head for unclaimed space rather than move into Terra Novan towns and cities.

On the positive side, the Newcomers had a drive to expand and explore that was all but missing before their arrival. Even the Founders, brought from the great Western Age of Exploration, had expanded their domains as far as they desired and were now seemingly settled into a stable routine of working towards enlightenment through contemplation and peaceful coexistence.

So while the Newcomers may have been the spark that lit the fires of greed and violence in this crucible, they also helped to rekindle the ambition and curiosity which set the current era of exploration into motion. This drive to expand and explore, especially with regards to the New Worlds, may give the Chosen the resources and strength they need to survive the coming darkness.

The Draugmorre are the opposites of the Kyryk in many regards, which may be exactly why the two races were thrown together into Nexus Sector. While being very different culturally, they are similar enough physiologically to survive in the same general environments. Each often finds the motives and actions of the other to be completely unfathomable.

The Draugmorre get on well with humans, for there are several parallels between the two. Of the alien cultures present, the humans and dragonmen are perhaps the most compatible.

The industrious Kryrk and enigmatic V’la often have trouble understanding each other – the one colorblind and the other communicating through shifting hues. Even translated, the V’la language is rich with color references which the Kyryk do not generally understand.

Humanity: Founder

These humans arrived in Nexus Sector half a millennium ago. Taken from Earth throughout the 14th to 17th Centuries, they founded the cities on Terra Nova and the theocracy that now rules most of Chrysalis system. Their culture is a mix of Elizabethan, Ottoman, and high technology blended together over the intervening centuries.

Personality

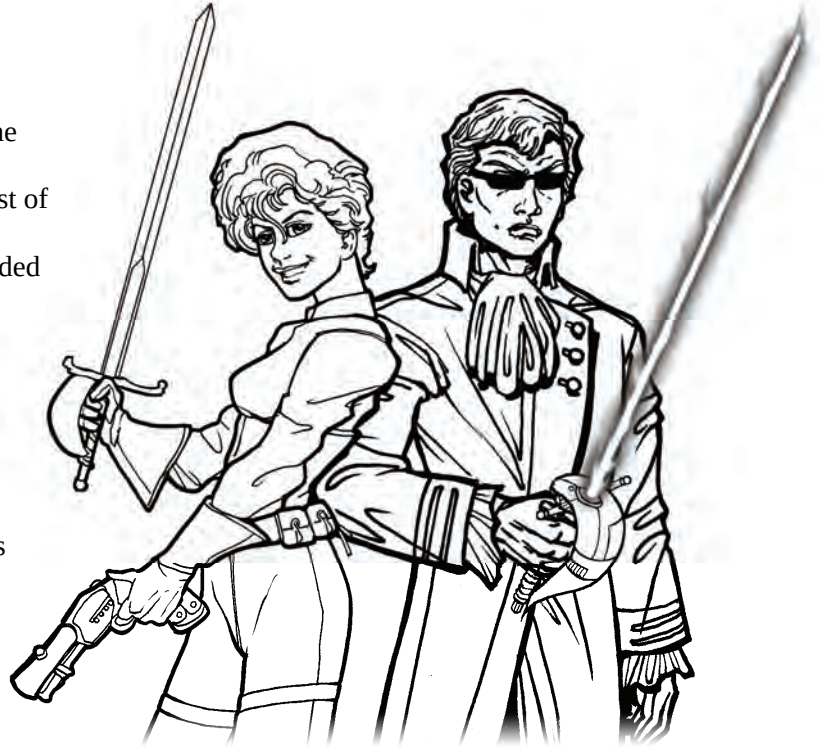
The archetypical Founder is adventurous, artistic, and devout – the epitome of the great explorer striving to expand the boundaries of knowledge and culture. Centuries in Nexus Sector have helped to reinforce the positive traits and to encourage a sense of cooperation and a desire to work towards the improvement of the self and society. Still, any type of personality can be found among these (or any) people.

There is still a great deal of diversity within the Founder culture, and a great variation in wealth, power, and social standing. Not everyone can afford to be adventurous – many must make due working diligently in order to provide for themselves and their families.

History

In the year 1350 A.D. a great plague was sweeping across Europe and western Asia. Thousands upon thousands perished due to the Black Death. During these dark times, the minions of the Xyr began to appear secretly to groups and individuals. 100,000 people from across Europe and the Ottoman Empire accepted their offer of salvation and boarded the great ship known as “Ark V” – their disappearance going unnoticed in this time of rampant death and mass graves. Once aboard the Ark, these volunteers were put into stasis while more recruits were collected.

Between 1400 and 1700 A.D. tens of thousands of humans were slowly recruited – many from the new colonies in the Americas, as there whole towns could disappear with none suspecting extraterrestrial involvement. Once at capacity, the Ark returned to Nexus Sector and the world that would become known as Terra Nova.



Guided by the benevolent but enigmatic Xyr, these colonists quickly set to building their vision of a perfect society. In the half millennia since their arrival, those now known as the “Founders” have spread across several worlds. Their population has increased well into the millions and many of the cultures of humanity have grown and flourished in this new environment.

It should be noted that there is archeological evidence of pre-Aztec settlements on some worlds, but none of the people remain. It seems many cultures, both human and alien, have been bought to Nexus Sector over the millennia. Whether they moved on or perished is unknown.

Culture

It is important to keep in mind that the Founders had no contact with Earth, or knowledge of what transpired there, after they left. They never experienced the Industrial Age, computers, the space program, or any of the scientific or social advances that occurred after the 17th Century. Instead, they learned from the Xyr and their dealings with the other Chosen. Given gravitic technology, they never developed winged aircraft. With the prohibitions against violence, weapons technology never advanced beyond the pulse guns provided by the other races. Founder starships still vaguely resemble 16th Century galleons as this is simply what a “ship” is supposed to look like to them.

While Founder technology has diverged, so has their social advancement. Compared to the modern human arrivals, Founder society seems very stratified. There are stronger class distinctions and an expectation that the children will do as their parents did.

Women have achieved some equality but in a segregated sense. Certain societal roles and occupations are traditionally assigned to one gender or the other and these lines simply are not crossed. Government, religion, and art are the only areas where either gender can freely hold a position. So while either a man or woman may be magistrate or a priest, you will not find a female soldier or male teacher (at any level) in usual Founder society. Remuneration and prestige for equivalent work is equal for both sexes no matter what the occupation – whether it is a gender-specific job or one of the mixed gender roles mentioned above.



To the humans arriving from Elizabethan Earth, the teachings of the elder race regarding the Lux Aeternum appeared to prove the existence of both a soul and an afterlife as well as the possibility of an omnipotent consciousness watching over all. These revelations initially caused great theological chaos as various religions came to terms with this new world view. In the end, a great conclave was held to discuss and ratify a unified dogma. The result was the Unified Church of the Divine Truth (more commonly known as the Unified Terran Church). This establishment later formed the basis of the Terra Novan Theocracy, which currently rules much of the Chrysalis star system.

To this day, there are still many who hold faithfully to the old religions of Earth after finding a way to reconcile their beliefs with the existence of the Lux Aeternum. There are also new cults and cabals that sprung up based on the Ars Lumina or radical mixtures of the new arts and the old beliefs. While tolerant of most faiths, the Unified Terran Church is clearly the faith of the majority and does not share governmental power with any other denomination.

Architecture & Style

While creating their new society, the colonists from Earth strove to preserve much that was good about their former home. This tradition has been preserved and has flourished given the advanced technology available and can be clearly seen in the typical architecture of Founder cities. Gothic, Renaissance, and Baroque styles serve as the basis – but they are greatly expanded given the technology available, and hundreds of years of experimentation.

Skyscrapers soar as tall as any modern Earth city, but the facades are ornate – reminiscent of the greatest cathedrals of Europe and palaces of the Middle East. Arches, flying buttresses, and other gothic adornments are employed even though they are not necessarily required for support. Spires and gargoyles, minarets and crenellations, are all common. Facades are typically made of stone or plastic composites formed to look like stone.

Towns and residential structures are not usually so grand, but they still evoke a sense of the finest common establishments of the Italian Renaissance and Elizabethan eras. On Khaldun, architectural evolution has been similar, except that Ottoman and Byzantine styles were the basis. Buildings are lower and domes prevalent, but the sense of grandeur and modern mixed with antiquity is the same.

Dress has evolved in a similar vein – Elizabethan and Byzantine styles adapted to synthetic materials and mixed with common technology. Formal and business attire is, of course, far more complicated and ornate than what is worn by the common laborers and peasantry. Here tunics, robes, and other simple styles have remained unchanged for centuries.

Physical Aspects

Description

The Founders were European and Ottoman. There were a small number of Native American and African colonists brought along, but almost no representatives from other ethnic groups. There are still some groups that display the “typical” appearance of their forefathers, but the great majority of Founders have a thoroughly blended heritage and a coloration and build that is a handsome mix of European and Middle Eastern stock.

Physiology

It’s assumed that the reader is fairly familiar with the basic physiology of humans regarding environment, lifespan, senses, and so forth. Little has changed for the founders except that better medical technology has increased the average life expectancy to approximately 100 years. The Theocracy has been very conservative with regards to medical technology and so there have been no miraculous advances beyond preventing or curing illness and healing injuries.

Cloning, cybernetics, in-vitro fertilization, and many other medical technologies that Newcomers find commonplace are shocking and abhorrent to the typical Founder.

Humanity: Newcomer

The Newcomers are humans brought to Nexus Sector in 2200 AD. Collected from the dystopia of Earth and its nearby colonies, they were promised a second chance but then abandoned to make their own way in a strange land. Though many are very like Founders in physical appearance, they differ radically in culture and philosophy.

Personality

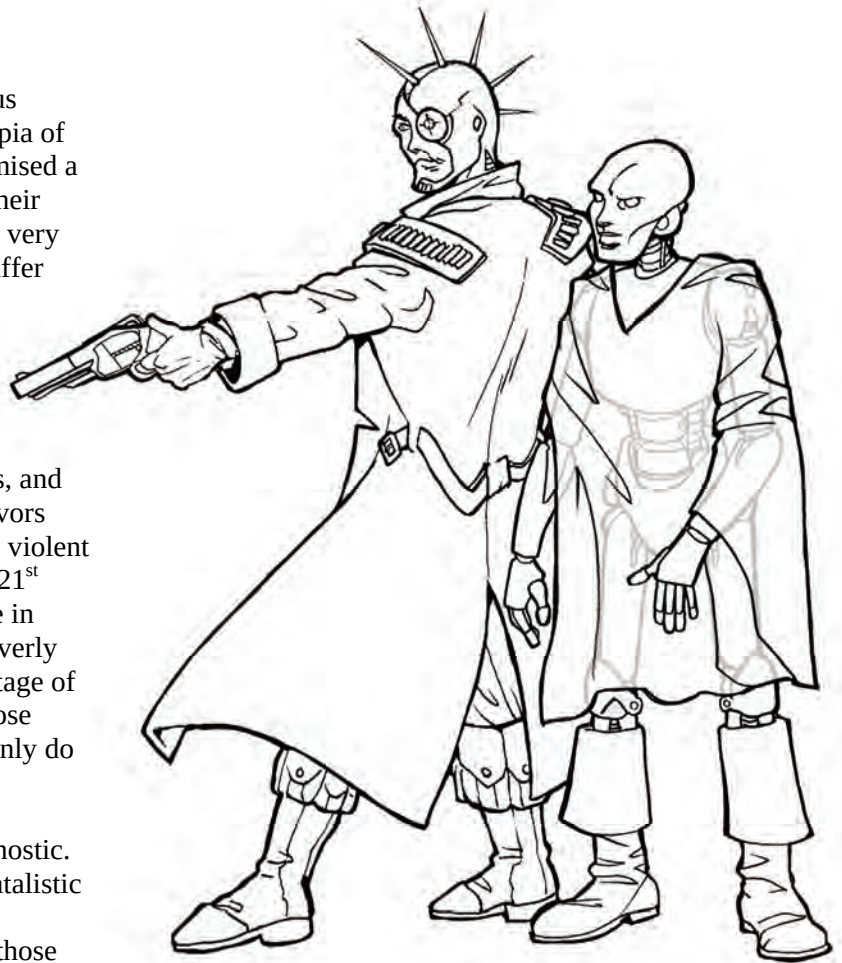
Compared to a Founder, a typical Newcomer is hard, bitter, faithless, and greedy. Of course these are broad stereotypes, and exceptions abound. But as a whole, the survivors from the ruins of Earth are an embittered and violent lot. Even the most enlightened people of the 21st Century learned to be ruthless and aggressive in order to survive. The weak, complacent, or overly compassionate perished or were taken advantage of by the stronger and more ambitious. Even those sworn to live in peace believe that they can only do so from a position of strength.

A majority of Newcomers are atheistic or agnostic. Many of the older generation suffer from a fatalistic and pessimistic world view that is only now beginning to subside. Younger Newcomers (those born since the arrival in Nexus Sector) do not usually have such an inbred moroseness, but they are often pragmatic and ambitious with little regard for the welfare of others.

Newcomers work hard, live hard, and will fight tooth and nail to hold on to what is theirs. Generosity and compassion are met with distrust and suspicion. Wealth and power are the measure of a person as they see the world clearly divided into the “haves” and “have nots.”

History

By the middle of the 22nd Century, Earth had become a poisoned ruin. Radiation, pollution, and plague (both natural and synthetic) had ravaged the planet, killing off just about everything outside of the fortress cities and domed enclaves. “Terra Mortis,” Dead Earth, it is called by those who have left it behind.



Beyond Earth, millions dwelt in colonies scattered throughout the Solar System. Great industrial stations orbited Jupiter and Saturn, domed and subterranean cities struggled to survive on Mars and Luna, small independent enclaves mined the asteroid fields and ice rings. Mega-corporations ruled and in space continued the wars that left the homeworld in ashes.

The situation was bleak, and then the Xyr made their presence known. Near the middle of the year 2184 AD, their massive interstellar vessel (later dubbed “ARK VII”) entered the Solar System and made its way towards Earth. Envoys of the Xyr (the incorporeal lights known as “wisps”) appeared openly to many diverse groups on Earth and throughout the system – offering salvation to those who would give up the ways of greed, hatred, and violence that were the doom of man.

Over the next several years, groups (including entire towns, communes, and corporations) and individuals were selected and brought aboard the great ship. Ark VII departed the Solar System early in 2190. The transit took nearly 10 years, delivering the first Newcomers to Nexus Sector on the first day of 2200 AD.

As has been told elsewhere, the crossing from Sol to Nexus did not go well. When Ark VII entered the small singularity at Proxima Centauri, the ship was rocked by multiple explosions, there was widespread power loss, and the minions of the Xyr shut down for a time. Those that awoke could not say what had happened and reported that no Xyr were available to provide instructions.

Ark VII emerged from the Maelstrom into Nexus Sector but was drifting without guidance. After a time, one of the habitation spheres detached and began the journey towards Terra Nova (where it eventually landed). The remaining inhabitants crowded aboard the second sphere to detach as it became clear the remaining pair were too damaged to do so. This second sphere ended up stuck in the al'Ghazali asteroid field and most of the inhabitants were offloaded over the course of many months.

Culture

Newcomer "culture" is a tapestry of hundreds of different cultures (ethnic, national, and corporate) from Terra Mortis. Many survived the journey intact and many have blended in the intervening years. What they have in common is that they all came from the polluted, war-torn wasteland of Earth and the Sol system. They followed the promise of a new Eden and then were abandoned by their benefactors. While some have stayed the course of peace, most have fallen back into their traditions of paranoia, greed, and ruthless expansion (if they don't claim it, a rival will).

Prior to the arrival of the Xyr, humankind on Earth was just beginning to unravel the first mysteries of the Lux Aeternum (though they still do not comprehend its source). Psychic and psionic abilities had developed to the extent that they could be scientifically verified and reproduced. With training and chemical conditioning, a very small percentage of the population could develop mental abilities

before seen only in science fiction. These powers were, of course, harnessed by the corporations and governments to advance their own agendas and wage war against their rivals – putting into motion a psychic arms race.

Newcomers tend to view the power of the Lux Aeternum with a scientific eye – seeking to formulate and quantize what the Theocrats take on faith. This is yet another source of friction between the two groups.

Synthetic beings – androids, replicants, and biomorphs – were very common in the pre-Xyr solar system. They were used as slaves and soldiers, given no rights or status even though advanced designs show undeniable signs of true sentience. Most were programmed against rebellion, or equipped with failsafes so that they could be instantly shut down should they become too independent.

Architecture & Style

Most Newcomer architecture exists in the void. Space stations, colonies, and ships are built to be rugged and functional. Little regard is given to aesthetics. Plastic, metal, and armored glass are the common materials used. Much of the style and technology would seem familiar to a current-day reader.

When they do get the chance to construct actual buildings, the style generally reflects the culture of those doing the building. As hundreds of modern Earth cultures are represented among the Newcomers, few settlements look the same. In general though, they favor a modern, urban feel (as there were very few rural communities left on Terra Mortis). Concrete, glass, and steel (when available) are the preferred materials.

Newcomers typically dress in a wide variety of fashions. Denim, chrome, and rubber are prevalent as function over fashion is the rule of thumb. They are used to grungy, durable clothes and only the extremely wealthy and corporate types bother with real fashion.

Physical Aspects

Description

The Newcomers have representatives from every culture and ethnicity found on Terra Mortis so it is difficult to describe a “typical” Newcomer. The first arrivals could have been identified by their poor health, haunted expressions, and dejected demeanor. But after three decades in Nexus Sector this is no longer the case – especially among the younger generation who has no memory of their former homeworld.

Physiology

Most of the humans brought aboard Ark VII were suffering from malnutrition, radiation sickness, or any number of diseases and maladies common at the time. Much of this damage was repaired during the transit so that those who disembarked in Nexus Sector were not carrying anything which would endanger the other Chosen. Some were too sick to be fully restored but are still a lot better off than they would have been had they remained behind. Even among second generation Newcomers, bio-engineering and cybernetic enhancement are common – rivaled only by the Brood of Steel.

Sleepers

Some of the volunteers brought aboard Ark VII were put into cryogenic sleep for the journey and were not awakened on schedule due to the problems encountered during the transit. Each habitation sphere held about 100,000 such “sleepers.” An initial push was made to awaken these people but the effort dwindled as the expense mounted. About a quarter were initially woken up and integrated into the new societies. A thousand or so are awoken each year by the Samaritan’s Guild – a joint venture between the Theocracy and the consul of New Berlin. These people are free to seek out relatives or go their own way from Terra Nova. Many others have been awoken by less reputable institutions and found themselves sold into slavery, or used as spare parts or fodder for experimentation. Thousands more remain asleep in their cryogenic coffins, wherever they are currently being stored. Rumors even suggest that hundreds of such capsules are still aboard Ark-VII; sealed away in unreachable chambers as the Ark drifts towards Pyrrhus System.

Story-wise, if a player wishes to be a young Newcomer who still remembers Terra Mortis, then he or she is most likely a recently thawed sleeper. From their perspective they got on board the Ark just days ago. The horrors of the homeworld, and the promise of a second chance, are still painfully fresh.



Draugmorre (DROG-mor)

The proud Draugmorre are winged reptilian humanoids who prefer to dwell in ornate floating citadels. At first glance, they look like gargoyles or dragonmen. In Nexus Sector there are two main Draugmorrian factions – the Brood of Song, well versed in the mystic arts – and the Brood of Steel, focused on technology and cybernetics.

Personality

It is generally accepted that might makes right. If one does not have the strength to enforce one's will, then they should probably keep their opinions to themselves. The strong rule, the weak serve, and the wise guide the strong.

Draugmorre, at least those with even a modicum of honor, have a preference for “built-in” weapons. To defeat a foe using an external tool (like a gun) shows the greatness of the tool more than the user. Sorcery, on the other hand, comes from within the user and so its power is a reflection on the wielder. With the advent of cyberwear, this doctrine was expanded to include technology permanently embedded in (or grafted to) the wielder. Though it may seem strange to a Terran, a Draugmorre feels pride at using a cyber limb with a built-in gun but shame at using a normal gun carried in a holster. Some might even use their claws and teeth before giving the glory of the kill to a mindless tool.

History

The Draugmorre are from a world known as Skoryndar (SKOR-in-dar). This was (and probably still is) a small planet covered in lush jungles and quicksilver seas of liquid metal. Its yellow star is just one of a dense cluster and so the sky is home to a dozen other small suns and is never truly dark.

It is clear that Skoryndar was once inhabited by other advanced beings as there are the remnants of a crude gravitic power grid buried in the planet's mantle. Even after hundreds of thousands of years, this grid is still functioning at a low level – and this is what gave the Draugmorre their first citadels of floating steel. When a particularly strong bolt of lightning strikes the seas (composed of a hot amalgam of iron and strange alloys) it can magnetize a sizable volume of metal. The glob of liquid metal then electromagnetically pushes away from the subterranean power grid and ends up hovering hundreds of meters in the air as it cools and solidifies. These iron burgs drift with the wind for a few days or weeks – slowly descending as they lose their charge.

Those that land in the sea are re-absorbed. Those that touch down on land eventually decompose in the acidic rain or are slowly devoured by the plants and bacterium that have evolved to take advantage of the phenomenon.

The early Draugmorre used these floating burls as safe havens on which to live – moving from one to the next as the need arose. As they advanced, they learned to tap into the Eternal Song to maintain the magnetic charge and create permanently floating citadels. These became city-states, small nations unto themselves whose borders and territory changed with the prevailing winds.

There is other evidence of a pre-Draugmorrian civilization. While there are no ancient cities, there are buried expanses of synthetic rock that might once have been foundations. Most telling of all, however, is the DNA of the Draugmorre themselves. It was clearly tampered with ages ago – resulting in both increased intelligence and the particular physiology that allows them to fly (Draugmorre are the only 6-limbed creatures on Skoryndar). The Draugmorre do not care to speak of their earliest history.

Of course, given the fierce pride of the Draugmorre and the rule-by-might culture, warfare became common. But the dragon men also mastered the arts of diplomacy and Machiavellian subterfuge. The political history of the Draugmorre is a chaotic tapestry of alliances, betrayals, and constantly shifting boundaries. City-states and broods would join together against a mutual foe only to turn on one another once that threat was removed. No single confederation ever ruled more than a fraction of the planet.

These wars were initially fought with tooth and claw, then primitive sorcery was thrown into the mix as the first spell singers joined the Celestial Choir (as they called the Ars Lumina). This developed for centuries but eventually the upper boundaries of the art were reached. Apparently, at least near Skoryndar, there was a limit to the power that one could call upon and a maximum complexity of incantation which could be wrought. Slowly technology caught up until it too could provide weapons equal to (and then better than) the most powerful magic.

Perhaps the only thing that prevented the race from warring to extinction was its own innate ego. They saw themselves in their enemies and so were reluctant to destroy what could instead be captured, enslaved, or ransomed. The “Art of War” encouraged conflict that emphasized strategy and finesse over brute force destruction and slaughter. Only those who showed cowardice or true incompetence were purposefully killed. So it was that the fighting did not cause massive death or sweeping destruction. But perhaps without the true horror of unchecked war, there was no real incentive to seek a lasting peace.

The Xyr first arrived on Skoryndar when magic and technology were about equal – though mysticism had been stagnating for a century while technology continued to advance. The Elders, through their minions, offered to take a selection of the populace to a place where they would not be limited in their pursuit of the Ars Lumina. The most powerful spell chanters took their broods and departed – taking most of their accumulated lore with them.

The society that was left turned away from the Celestial Song and focused its attentions wholly on technology, but otherwise society continued on as before. Conflicts arose as states and coalitions moved into space and sought to claim the resources within range of their sub-light cruisers. When the Xyr returned 700 years later, the Draugmorrian society had conquered its home system and realized that they could go no further. So it was that many more choose to depart with the Xyr when they made this second offer.

While they have done well, even with the conflicts between Song and Steel, many Draugmorre in Nexus Sector hope to return to their ancestral home once they have achieved ascension and mastered faster-than-light travel. Though there are none alive here who were born on Skoryndar, a detailed history, and a sense of obligation, has been preserved.

Culture

Whereas the Kyryk and Humans were “rescued” by the Xyr and brought to Nexus Sector, it seems that the Draugmorre were brought simply because they were advancing in the study of the Ars Lumina so quickly. Their society was not on the verge of collapse, and it likely still flourishes in the home system. They had, however, reached a plateau in their mystical studies – a limit to what they could accomplish with the art. The Draugmorre in Nexus Sector have been able to move beyond that limit (due either to Xyr influence or the greater energies present here).

Now why the Elders would bring a new batch of tech-centric Draugmorre here to interfere with the mystical studies of the first wave is unknown. It may have been an attempt to keep the original arrivals in touch with their home culture. Or it may be that ascension can only be achieved through a mastery of both the Ars Lumina and advanced technology. Whatever the case, it caused a great deal of upheaval in Nexus Sector – strife which still simmers to this day.

The Broods

The first wave a Draugmorrians were those dedicated to mastery of the mystical arts. Originally over a dozen broods, they soon joined into single large collective that would become known as the Brood of Song.

In a similar manner, the groups and individuals that came to Nexus Sector in the second wave became known as the Brood of Steel. Having long ago abandoned sorcery, these dragonmen instead embrace technology. There is a fair amount of animosity between these two groups – magic versus science – and open warfare has occurred in the past. Without the Xyr present, such conflict may again erupt.

In addition to the Brood of Song and the Brood of Steel, there are a couple dozen lesser broods in the sector. Together they account for perhaps a fifth of the Draugmorre present. Some are these are vassals of the major broods, or even other minor broods. Some are dissenting groups that have splintered off from the main groups. While they may hold sway over a region of a planet or moon, they have little impact on the direction of the race or the overall political landscape of Nexus Sector.

Religion

The Draugmorre have no religion and have been atheistic for millennia. Their earliest recorded history speaks of gods. But the myths tell of how these gods abandoned the people of Skoryndar and so were unworthy of worship. With their early understanding of the Eternal Song, they developed the belief that the souls of the deceased became one with the natural energies of the universe. While this sounds like church dogma, it was not looked upon as a divine philosophy. Rather, like the use of spells and arcane rituals, it was simply considered the natural way of things – but a way separate from the theorems of hard science.

Still, this lack of a judgmental deity (or pantheon) enforcing moral rules may have had a lot to do with the decadent, hedonistic culture that flourished in the early history of the Draugmorre. The lack of a coherent afterlife may also have helped shaped their respect for life and reluctance to kill. It almost certainly fueled their great interest in life extension – initially through magic and later through science.

Architecture & Style

With a Draugmorrian the more intricate, complex, and baroque the better. The worth of a thing can be measured by the time and wealth invested, so detail and precious materials are the measure of a constructed thing. This holds true for everything from personal attire, to building architecture, to starships.

There is a difference between the Broods of Song and Steel, however. Where the former uses gold and precious gems, the latter will use chrome or rare alloys and memory crystals. While synthetic, these materials are just as valuable as their naturally occurring counterparts.

Physical Aspects

Description

Typical adult Draugmorres would be about 7 feet tall if they stood fully upright. But their normal posture is hunched forward and their legs are usually slightly bent as well. This brings the head down to about 6 feet. Their build is thin with wiry muscles clearly visible beneath the scaled skin – suggesting quickness and strength.

A Draugmorre has three clawed digits on each hand and foot. The wings show a similar bone structure. The thin tail also branches into three tines at the end. There is a flap of skin between these and they flare out, fan-like, for stabilization during flight.

Natural coloration ranges across various shades of grey and brown, with the occasional green or black. It is common, however, for Draugmorre to modify their skin color, and so brilliant hues or patterns are very common.

Draugmorre wear clothing that is light and unrestrictive, but otherwise as ornate as possible. Jewelry, piercing, and body modifications are also popular.

Physiology

Designed for flight, a Draugmorre is lithe and light, with almost no body fat. They have a rapid metabolism, eating many small meals each day rather than just a few larger ones. They also typically sleep twice a day – each for about half the time a human would at night. The blood of a dragonman is so dark a red as to appear black. Their body temperature is high, making them warm to the touch and especially discomfited by cold temperatures.

A Draugmorre has a third eye nestled beneath the bone ridge of their brow. It is functionally identical to the other two and just another example of the triple redundancy found in their general physiology. They have excellent visual acuity and depth perception, but suffer from night blindness because the homeworld was in a star cluster and never truly dark. Hearing and olfactory senses are on par with a typical human, though the lack of external ears weakens their audio directional sense slightly (they also tend to cock their head to one side when listening to something specific).

Skoryndar, the birthplace of this race, had lower gravity than most worlds in Nexus Sector. Over the centuries the Draugmorre have adapted somewhat – strengthening their lean muscles to compensate for increased weight. Even so, they cannot fly except on low gravity worlds or with the assistance of a grav harness. Regardless of the gravity, they can still glide for short distances and use their wings to augment jumps and avoid injury from falls.

Kyryk (KEER-ick)

Slow and stocky, strong and resilient, the tenacious Kyryk have constructed great subterranean cities where their industries flourish. Clans form into hives which govern the society through a rigid system of tradition and law.

Like a Terran butterfly, a Kyryk has two distinct stages of life. During the first, he or she is a small, stout humanoid with thick, wrinkled skin and a single broad eye. This intelligent, industrious form is known as a “builder.” At approximately 40 years of age, the builder undergoes a metamorphosis and transforms into a large, armor plated brute. Intelligence dims while aggressiveness and clan loyalty increase. The Kyryk lives out the rest of its life as a “defender” – protecting the clan and waging war against its enemies.

Personality

A Kyryk spends the first four decades of life as a builder – about 3 feet tall, cautious, and with an inbred desire to create, explore, and increase the clan’s welfare. Builders mature quickly and are productive members of society by age twelve. It is typical for a Kyryk youth to choose a specialization (often determined by clan and caste) and focus his or her efforts on that single occupation up until his transformation (see the “Metamorphosis” sidebar).

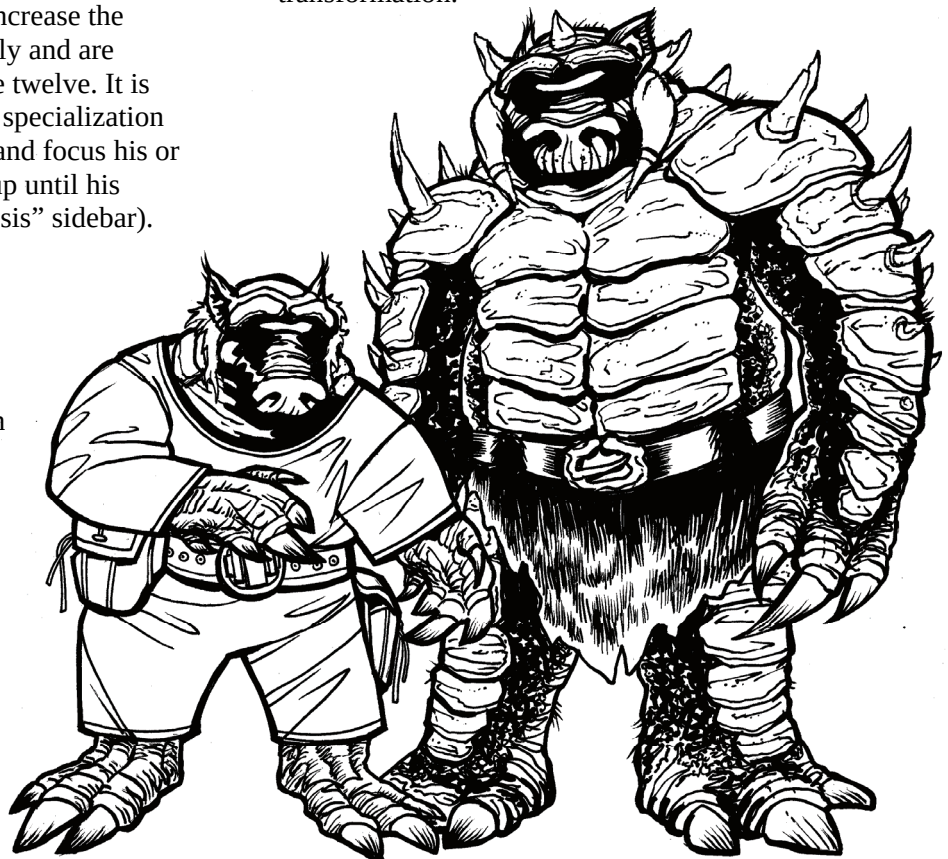
Upon emerging from his transformation, the Kyryk is ready to serve his clan as a protector and soldier until the end of his days – which usually occurs after another ten years or so barring injury or illness.

Builders are generally curious and timid. The more cautious strive to create and construct while the “adventurous” are driven to explore (either new areas of knowledge or new areas of geography). Though cowardly in battle, a builder will often attack when startled. This

reflex has evolved because they cannot flee very well. There is also a tendency to shriek – a behavior meant to call the attention of nearby defenders.

A defender tends to have a more simple and predictable personality. They are loyal to the clan and do what they are told. They enjoy hunting, and patrolling, and fighting. Many retain a sense of humor and exuberance even while engaged in potentially lethal activities. It is important to note, however, that the new ‘defender’ personality is a modification (rather than a replacement) of the former attitudes. It’s still the same person and so the former personality can often be seen beneath the brutish exterior. The main change is the replacement of the drive to create with the drive to protect. Intellectual pursuits seem uninteresting compared to physical challenges.

Luckily, the reduced mental capacity and new mindset usually prevents the individual from dwelling too long on what they have lost. It is uncommon, though not unheard of, for a defender to suffer depression or feel remorse due to their transformation.



Metamorphosis

When a Kyryk builder feels his transformation approaching (around age 40 give or take a year) he burrows into a large supply of liquid and protein and hibernates for several weeks. During this time, the Kyryk unconsciously ingests the surrounding material and more than quadruples his mass while his body changes into the 'defender' stage.

This stage is big (6 to 8 feet) and heavily armored as the natural dermal plating of the builder thickens and sprouts tough bone spikes. The three middle digits on each hands fuse into single powerful claws while the thumbs thicken and grow talons. The brow grows heavier and the posture more hunched. Their intelligence dulls somewhat and their sense of smell sharpens. It is also typical for a defender's diet to become primarily carnivorous (builders are omnivores with a preference for plant material).

In the past, a Kyryk would hunt down and kill a large beast to use for the transformation material. Many traditions and ceremonies developed around this hunt and the transition to the final stage of Kyryk life. Traditionally, females would mate prior to the transformation and leave a clutch of eggs in the carcass as well. These days, an artificial chrysalis is usually used for the transformation – but there are still traditionalists who prefer to do things the old way. In a pinch, any large pile of animal matter will do, even a collection of smaller beasts.

Since the ingestion during hibernation is not under conscious control, it is important for Kyryk to hibernate well separated from one another. A builder can tell 3 or 4 days before the change will start and there is nothing that can stop the onset of hibernation, even if the result is the Kyryk starving to death when transforming.

As far as game mechanics go, a Builder can be converted into a Defender by first undoing the Builder modifications, and then applying the Defender one. See the Kyryk background near the end of this book for the details.

Both types of Kyryk are tenacious once set upon a task. While defenders are rather fanatical about clan loyalty, your average builder is also very committed to the family. Ties of blood, and friendship, are taken seriously. Oaths are seldom broken, authority is respected for the good of all, and there's nothing that can't be improved by a better set of rules. They are very competitive but with a team, rather than individual, approach.

The native Kyryk language does not have a pronoun equivalent to "I" as Kyryk either speak in general terms using "one," or (when there is no other option) use their own proper name instead. This speech habit often carries over to other languages that a Kyryk learns.

History

The Kyryk homeworld was a massive, arctic planet orbiting a swollen red star. The snow-covered forests and icy seas of this high-gravity world gave rise to a wide variety of life, including several fearsome predators.

Seeking protection from both weather and predators, the Kyryk developed their civilization far below the frozen tundra. In caverns warmed by geothermal activity, families formed into extended clans which in turn became the basis of government. As the fledgling nations grew, they encounter other clans competing for common resources. Defenders, which had initially evolved to hunt and ward off predators, were turned against rival clans as well. There were many wars in the early history of the Kyryk. The most rigidly controlled and caste-oriented nations won the majority of conflicts, setting the model for Kyryk governments (known as 'hives') henceforth.

The Kyryk were at the tail end of a runaway industrial age when contacted by the Xyr. Centuries of competitive development and inter-hive warfare had depleted the planet's resources. Population levels had grown far beyond what could be supported and the race was spiraling rapidly towards extinction.

In Nexus Sector the Kyryk were given a pristine world and technology to provide limitless energy. With ample space, gravitic power, and the memory of their near extinction, the Kyryk of Syrys Hive have made a new beginning. The wars have ended and the Kyryk work towards ascension with the same tenaciousness that made them masters of their frozen homeworld.

Culture

The Kyryk have been in Nexus Sector for more than 800 years now, having arrived a couple centuries after the first Draugmorre and a few hundred years before the first humans. The primary hive remains on Syrys but smaller, independent hives have sprung up on the planet Dyryd and the moon Zyryz.

The Syrys hive is composed of hundreds of clans. The democratic government is divided into 128 ministries, each with its own minister and vice minister. Above this are 16 High Ministers and a single Prime Minister. All ministers are limited to 4 year terms and no one over the age of 32 can take office. This is to reduce the risk of transformation while in office – which would require the individual to abdicate immediately.

Arranged marriages are the norm and such relationships are valid only until transformation. There is no concept of divorce, though it is possible to add additional mates (of either gender) into the family. These days both genders are treated equally under the law but as recently as 100 years ago female builders were called commonly called “Breeders” and generally relegated to childcare and low prestige occupations. Such is no longer the case.

Defenders, which are genderless, are treated like children as far as legal rights go. They are wards of their family and not allowed to sign binding contracts or vote. The main difference is that they are cared for by the clan rather than by parents. They are also generally more capable and competent than children.

Religion

The Kyryk religion is based on ancestor worship and communicating with spirits. It is thought that these spirits look over their clan and wage war against the spirits of enemy clans – bringing good fortune or ill to their decedents. They are fairly new to interacting with the Meta-consciousness but their shamans have adapted dogma and mastered several arts that are of particular use to them. These are a selection of abilities learned from other cultures, rather than a home-grown set of rituals.

The Elderly

Because of the transformation there are normally no “old” builders, though it is not uncommon for hair to turn grey and a generally “crotchety” attitude to develop for Kyryk in their late 30s. Once reborn as a defender, there are personality changes as profound as the physical. The typical defender is full of violent enthusiasm – fiercely loyal to the clan and confident in his strength. A defender remains in peak physical condition for most of its existence. Only during the last few days of its life does it rapidly degenerate into feebleness before dying of old age.

Very rarely (perhaps once in 10,000 transformations) a Kyryk will fail to transform due to a genetic defect. These individuals remain in the “builder” phase throughout their life, becoming grey, weak, and even more wrinkled than their brethren. Worse, these individuals often suffer the mental decline of the defenders without the increase in aggressiveness. They are pitied, and often shunned, by society. Kyryk unused to aliens sometimes have trouble respecting an elder of another race.

Architecture & Style

Standard Kyryk architecture is squat and sturdy with angles instead of curves. Durability and stability is far more important than aesthetic values. Current architectural styles favor heavy stone block construction with important structures made of steel. No attempt is made to hide girders, pipes, or ductwork. Lighting is generally dim and, of course, the colorblind Kyryk do no bother to color their structures.

As burrowers, the Kyryk had not developed manned spaceflight in their home system. Even in Nexus Sector they are generally uncomfortable with flight. Kyryk ships are blocky, windowless affairs with room for as many crewmen as possible and redundant safety systems. The far prefer to have a single, large vessel instead of numerous smaller ones.

Kyryk also have a strong preference for melee weapons as their poor eyesight and cramped natural environment often make ranged weapons impractical.

Physical Aspects

Description

A Kyryk builder is a stocky humanoid with a short snout, blunt teeth, and tufted ears. Their skin is wrinkled and thick, with tougher plating (like a rhino) on the torso and shoulders. They have a single pupil-less “eye” that is long horizontally across their face and of a single dark color. Kyryk have hair, though the growth pattern varies by individual and gender. A male will often grow a fringe of hair along the jawline or on the sides of his head while females sport a rough mane on the back of the head.

A builder has 5 digits on each hand – three fingers with a thumb on either side. On the feet, the three central digits are fused into single broad toe. The fingers and toes grow thick, pointed nails that are usually left long and sharp (Kyryk equipment and devices take this into account).

A Kyryk defender is a large, brutish creature from 6 to 8 feet tall, heavily armored and muscled, but still clearly a Kyryk. The bone plating is more extensive, spiked, and the hands and feet are single large talons with smaller claws on either side.

Skin color on either sort of Kyryk ranges from charcoal grey to ivory white, sometimes with a slight tint of tan or brown. Hair color falls in the same range, though browns are more common in hair than in skin tones.

From a Terran perspective, builders give the overall impression of an armadillo while defenders are more rhino-like. Both forms are dense and tough, being burrowers from a high-gravity world.

Physiology

Kyryk evolved in a sulfur-rich environment and have symbiotic bacteria in their lungs that aid in processing oxygen. Their preferred environment contains hydrogen sulfide gas (which smells awful to other races, and is strong enough to cause nausea in non-Kyryk). When not in such an environment, some artificial means is needed to provide a small amount of the compound. Otherwise the Kyryk will grow weak and sickly (showing symptoms identical to what other races experience in a thin, or high-altitude, atmosphere). It takes an hour or so for symptoms to develop, and just as long for them to subside once the problem is rectified.

When not in their warrens, Kyryk often wear breath masks or nose plugs to supply a small amount of hydrogen sulfide to their respiratory system. Less polite individuals will instead carry foul smelling incense or even smoke something analogous to a cigar but permeated with sulfur compounds. Small inhalers and permeated handkerchiefs have also become popular for travelers.

Dress

Typical dress for a Kyryk consists of a fabric loincloth and optional poncho with an equipment harness or belt to carry pouches and other gear. Anything with actual sleeves and pant legs is considered formal attire. Shoes and gloves are only used when absolutely required by the environment – like arctic expedition gear or vacuum suits. Before coming to Nexus Sector, there was no gender differentiation in clothing. Now however, females have started to adopt dress-like attire while males still wear separate lower and upper body garments. This is somewhat ironic given the recent efforts made to erase age-old gender differences.

Traditional Kyryk will also paint themselves with patterns or symbols representing their clan and accomplishments. This, along with a common clan scent, helps the defenders know who to protect. Often there are also marks made using exothermic paint. These invisible markings are designed to radiate a different temperature than the skin beneath, and so are visible to thermographic vision.

Senses

A Kyryk cannot perceive color as humans understand it. Their normal vision is strictly shades of grey, and with very poor depth perception. They can, however, see temperature differences in a range from about -100° F to +200° F. Visually, this is perceived as a form of false color that overlays the normal vision. Some Terra Novan scholar decided to think of this in shades of red after establishing the 'color' of human blood as a benchmark (heat-wise, blood is near the middle of the Kyryk thermal acuity range). This also tied in well with the concept of 'infra-red' vision and so has stuck – though it's impossible to tell what color this thermal overlay is actually most similar to. Regardless, most humans imagine Kyryk thermal sight as a greyscale image overlaid in shades of red with the brightness indicating the temperature (dark red to black for cold, bright pink to white for hot, and blood red right in the middle range).

To supplement their poor eyesight and lack of depth perception, Kyryk have developed very keen hearing. By listening to the way ambient noise reflects off of nearby surfaces, a Kyryk can determine where solid objects and walls are located. This simple echolocation is only effective at close range (out to 30 ft) and provides only crude information. On the Kyryk homeworld, the nearly constant tectonic movement provided the ambient noise needed for this ability to function. In areas of quiet darkness, a Kyryk will tend to mumble and grumble to himself in order to provide the needed sound. In many Kyryk, this personal monologue carries on regardless of lighting conditions.

Even though they can close their ears somewhat, they can be stunned by sudden loud noises. They are also sensitive to bright light.

A Note on Kyryk Words

It might seem that all Kyryk words are palindromes (spelled the same forwards and backwards). In actuality, Kyryk syntax only dictates that this rule be applied to the proper names of large groups of individuals. It has also come to be applied to inhabited planets as such worlds are primarily referred to by the beings dwelling there. 'Kyryk' is a palindrome because it refers to everyone in the race. The homeworld is also known as Kyryk and to refer to the actual planet apart from the people requires use of a generic term akin to "homeworld." In this book, most of the Kyryk words encountered refer to clans, worlds, and other large groups of beings, and so are palindromic. The rest of the language, while rigidly defined and convoluted, is not constrained by that particular rule.

V'la (VEH-la)

An aquatic race from a planet-sized fresh-water sea, the enigmatic V'la look somewhat like Terran jellyfish, with a mass of thin tendrils hanging beneath the main body. They were the first of the Chosen brought to Nexus Sector and may be the closest to ascension.

The V'la dwell in water and travel about on dry land either in enclosed hover-spheres or on the backs of ape-like hosts (either animal or mechanical). They control these hosts like puppets by sending specialized tendrils directly into the nervous system. V'la communicate using bioluminescence and are devoted students of the Ars Lumina.

Personality

A typical V'la is aloof, enigmatic, and contemplative. They often appear leisurely but are deliberate in their endeavors. Many non-V'la see members of this race as condescending and arrogant. Others regard them as mysterious and wise.

Even translated from color into words, the V'la language uses lot of color imagery. Often conscious of the potential problems in translation, they tend to consider their phraseology carefully and then "speak" very succinctly. It is almost considered an art to maximize meaning while minimizing the number of words.

History

According to their oldest myths, the V'la were raised to sentiency by the Xyr themselves. While the name of their homeworld has been lost in history, the V'la claim that it was the very same planet on which the Xyr evolved millennia ago. This rare gas giant had a band of liquid water in the middle atmosphere and breathable air far above. Heat from the less hospitable lower layers warmed the bottomless sea while lightning from the stormy reaches overhead provided a flickering but ever-present illumination.

In the chemical-rich expanse of fresh water, many forms of life evolved – tiny plankton and algae, huge colonies of buoyant coral and kelp, and animal life of all shapes and sizes. Far overhead even stranger life evolved in the miles of storm-wracked, but breathable, atmosphere. Though lacking in metals and other critical resources, the V'la developed a



science based on chemistry and organic technology. From the earliest days, they also tapped into the Lux Aeternum to aid them in their endeavors.

Culture

V'la society is very fluid (pun intended). Colonies of like-minded V'la form for a given task and individuals join or leave to suit their own purposes. Family units likewise form, drift as one for a number of years, and then disperse never to meet again. When in physical contact, V'la can interweave their tentacles and form direct neural connections to one another's minds. A colony will often join in this manner to form an aggregate mind known as a consensus.

The V'la relate to the galactic meta-consciousness through a complex religion known as T'dorae ("The Art"). The Xyr are revered as holy beings in the service of the I'dyra ("The One Who Sees All"). V'la priests devote themselves to piercing the veil of time and reality to glimpse what lies beyond. Those who master the Art are considered holy and are looked to for guidance in times of trouble. Their religious myths also speak of a dark enemy who wages eternal war against the Xyr. These beings are called the Kor'Diel, and that name has been applied to the new enemy from System IV (whether these beings are the source of the myth is not known).



SYMBOL OF THE CONFLUENCE

The emblem of the Confluence is an orb veined with shades of blue, cyan, and violet. The whole conveys the singular concept of the Confluence to those who understand the color-language of the V'la. As an aside, the symbol for the world of A'del is very similar, but drawn with different patterns and in shades of red, yellow, and orange.

Because of their individual and nomadic lifestyle, the V'la do not place much emphasis on possessions or location. Anything that is too large for an individual (or its host) to carry with them is considered community property. Even hosts are often shared or left in communal corrals when not needed.

Along similar lines, verbal and conceptual art is valued far more than physical. For example, a poem is preferred over a sculpture because words can be easily carried and communicated mind-to-mind whereas a statue must remain fixed in one place.

Even though the V'la do not often build cities or other permanent places of residence, they do establish fixed meeting places near permanent landmarks. These areas are used so that individuals can meet others at prearranged times. They are also places where community property and other resources are stored. Often such places are marked using sonic signals which emit loud pulses of sound through the water (sounding like anything from a foghorn to a siren to human ears). As the V'la communicate with light and have only rudimentary audio sensors, the overwhelming noise does not

bother them. Somewhat like a human would use a lighthouse to more easily locate a port. A siren does not hinder V'la communication via light, though a lighthouse or strobe would.

Architecture & Style

There are two very distinct styles employed by the V'la. The first is a natural, organic look that they have employed for centuries. They create things using chemistry and organic technology, and so creations are unique.

The second style is an emulation of Xyr styles. These items are sleek and silvery, like spheres or teardrops formed of mercury. Often almost featureless and mirror-smooth, V'la starships are the most common place that this style is seen. The interior of such ships, however, shows the usual organic styles that are more typical of V'la construction. Mixed in with the organic are the various pieces of advanced technology needed for the ship to function.

In Nexus Sector, there is just a single V'la political entity. It is known as the Confluence and all V'la populations throughout the sector are members in addition to (and before) any other political obligations that they may have. The elected head of state is known as the Monarch, and this individual serves as the V'la Tetrarch as well.

Physical Aspects

Description

A V'la looks a lot like a Terran jellyfish or man-o-war about 5 feet tall. The tentacles are different lengths, and end in strange filaments, eye-like sensors, or talons. They also flicker with an internal light. The V'la can control the frequencies of these lights to "speak" with others of its kind in a color-based language. Translation units, often worn around the necks of host creatures, can turn this into speech and speech into color. The "head" is also covered with less intense bioluminescent cells and will slowly change color when idle (the color reflecting their mood). If carrying equipment, then a harness web will be stretched across the mottled head with various devices or pouches attached to it.

Physiology

The V'la are genderless and can reproduce through parthenogenesis (creating viable eggs without the need for fertilization) but more often create offspring after incorporating DNA gleaned from other V'la.

During a consensus, there is a limited exchange of genetic material between V'la in physical contact with each other. The newly collected DNA can trigger a reproductive cycle, eventually causing the release of hundreds of microscopic eggs into the surrounding water. Those few which survive form into tiny V'la who are not self-aware until they are taken in and 'awaken' by a colony of adults. The young stay attached to this consensus until they are large enough, and sentient enough, to survive on their own.

It is common for a consensus to form expressly for the production and rearing of children – a process which takes about three years from start to finish. Such 'families' will often go their separate ways at the end of the endeavor. It is just as common for a V'la to completely ignore the eggs it releases. Before being awakened, young V'la are considered little more than mindless animals.

The natural V'la environment is dimly lit, water at a pressure of 10 atmospheres (equivalent to a depth of about 300 feet on Earth) but they have a good tolerance for variance in pressure and temperature (42° F to 105° F water temperature and 0.5 to 30 atmospheres being tolerable).

One of the most disturbing traits of the V'la is their ability to insinuate hair-like filaments directly into the nervous system of another being. With practice, this ability (called "puppeteering") allows them to take over the motor functions of the being. The host's brain is cut off from all conscious motor control, though sensory systems usually remain unaffected. The host is usually left conscious, though it is possible for a skilled V'la to restrict blood flow just enough to cause unconsciousness without permanent damage.

They originally developed their puppeteering ability to hunt and to avoid predators, but after discovering dry worlds they adapted the talent for use with land animals. To join with or leave a host requires about an hour of time during which the host must remain

still. Often chemical sedatives are used to ensure compliance – the V'la do not produce any toxins themselves.

Some V'la prefer to stay independent and use the equivalent of vehicles (repulsar equipped, liquid-filled spheres) to get around. Recently, it has also become fashionable to create artificial hosts – robotic constructs built specifically to carry and maintain a V'la rider. Such artificial animals were initially made because many V'la find it objectionable to enslave a living animal. Others like the ease of interface (it only takes a minute to attach or detach).

The first, and still most common, artificial models look a lot like the D'ralai – muscular, ape-like creatures but made of plastic and other non-organic materials. The life-support pack (where the V'la rides) usually worn on the back of a D'ralai is built into the dorsal surface of the robot. The artificial versions typically have built-in translation units (to turn bioluminescence into verbal speech and back).

Note that these constructs are purely mechanical. They are built using materials and technologies native to Nexus Sector rather than the usual V'la organic bio-tech. They are not sentient and should not be called "synthetic" even though they are non-organic mechanisms, and humanoid shaped. They are more like a suit of powered armor than a robot. Only very advanced models have any independent programming and this is never more advanced than a common bot.

Recently, a model of mechanical host has been invented that resembles a slim, but human-proportioned suit of powered armor. The interior space has room for the tentacles and filaments, which spread throughout the suit to work the controls. The V'la's main body is exposed where a human head would be though it is encased in an elongated, transparent helmet when operating out of water. Some V'la have taken to using such "man-suits" when dealing with humans, believing that it might help put them more at ease. A V'la proficient in such a suit can use most human equipment and has a range of motion comparable to a clumsy human. While the body might easily be mistaken for a Synthetic, the "head" is clearly V'la, even when seen from a distance.

Others

E'lanari (EE-lan-AR-ee)

A low-tech shamanic culture, the small, savage people of E'lan are a mixture of plant and animal physiology. Found only in the deep wilderness of the New Worlds, their technology is primitive and organic. At one with nature, they are also adept at using the Lux Aeternum to control the creatures around them.

Personality

Reclusive and generally peaceful, they are dangerous and relentless when roused. They are savage in the sense of being primitive rather than violent. While a few tribes and individuals are suspicious and easy to anger, most are patient, curious and trusting unless betrayed.

History

This is the native people of the New Worlds, though they were likely seeded there thousands of years ago rather than evolving naturally. Like much of the New Worlds flora and fauna, they are found on many different planets in that system.

Culture

Their culture varies from world to world but is generally tribal and often nomadic. They have no knowledge of the space beyond their native environment, but they have many legends and myths to explain the workings of the universe.

There has been substantial contact between the E'lanari and the colonies of Lochlyn – some peaceful, some violent, but such interactions are not commonplace. As the colonies expand, they will undoubtedly encounter the native population more and more. The exotic E'lanari are almost always in the company of some beast or other, for they have a symbiotic relationship with most, using them for protection, travel, and warfare.

E'lanari organize themselves into tribes of related individuals. The eldest typically rule – focusing on governing with wisdom while the younger tribe members hunt, forage, and wage war. Since the E'lanari grow throughout their lives, these are often the largest individuals as well.

Architecture & Style

The E'lanari have no industry or mass manufacturing science. All of their goods are handmade or grown using plant and animal products near at hand.

Dwellings are built for safety and concealment, clustered high in trees or deep in caves when possible. Shelters are often portable, consisting of skins and vine stretched over frames of wood or bone. They do not wear clothing except for belts, harnesses, and pouches for carrying personal belongings.

E'lanari art and writing are very similar as their written language consists only of pictograms. Unable to see in the human spectrum, their works seem monochromatic and emphasize simple forms and high contrast. In actuality, they see in the ultraviolet spectrum, casting the world in a variety of blues and purples. These designs are painted on individuals as well as cave walls and other common surfaces.



Relations

There has been little contact between the E'lanari and the Chosen and so the natives of the New Worlds regard most strangers equally.

Newcomers have had the most contact with the natives and they consider them little more than an annoyance – something to be dealt with quickly so that the resources can be exploited as soon as possible. The V'la Confluence has agreed to protect the E'lanari even to the extent of leaving the resources un plundered. The other governments have strategies somewhere between the two. Most would proceed with caution and due respect to the native inhabitants but it is becoming clear that a slow approach may be the same as ceding the system to the Newcomer corporations. Most notably, the Terra Novan Theocracy has recently stepped up its efforts to stake a claim before the competition heats up.

Physical Aspects

Description

A typical E'lanari appears to be composed of a mass of intertwined roots or plant-like tendrils. Below where the waist would be on a humanoid, the fibrous tendrils form a single long appendage – allowing for a serpentine movement. Above the waist, the root clumps form a torso with four tentacle arms and a crude approximation of a head between. This head contains sensory apparatus but the complex nerve cluster that serves as a brain is actually buried in the center of the torso. The arm tentacles are themselves composed of a single thick tendril with numerous smaller ones wrapped about it. A tough bark (like the outer casing of a walnut) usually covers part of the torso and some individuals grow long thorns, spore casings, and even moss-like hair.

From head to tail, and typical E'lanari is 6 to 7 feet long. Much of this is the snake-like lower half of the body though, so they only stand 3 to 4 feet high when upright. Coloration is generally grey, brown, or green and usually matches the native habitat of the tribe (they can change color over a number of weeks).

Physiology

The skin of an E'lanari does engage in photosynthesis, but this is used as a catalyst for complex chemical processes rather than a direct source of energy. Still, the vitality and mood of an individual can be dramatically affected by local light levels.

E'lanari eat both plant and animal matter. They ingest far more liquid than solid food, often leaving animal husks drained of fluids but otherwise intact. The food is liquefied and mixed with enzymes in a stomach-like cavity and then pushed to the extremities through a series of branching tubules. Multiple fibrous “hearts” are used to push the syrupy liquid throughout the body. Nutrients are absorbed along the way and waste water evaporates from the skin while particulates circulate back to the stomach for expulsion. E'lanari eat very little compared to other sentient races, and excrete even less. They can also use specialized tendrils draw nutrients directly from soil or other nutrient-rich material.

Airflow (required to obtain carbon dioxide) is directed in a manner similar to food – an E'lanari inhales into the lung chamber and then exhales through ever-branching bronchia that eventually exit through stoma on the skin. An individual can consciously suspend both the breathing and nutrient-pushing hearts, and can thus remain absolutely still for up to an hour with no detrimental effects. Any activity will greatly reduce this time as muscular action requires air and “blood” flow.

E'lanari can “see” as well as humans, but mostly in the ultraviolet spectrum. Their eyes are multi-faceted obsidian orbs on the end of short, retractable stalks. An individual has four of these situated near the top of the torso.

They have a pair of taut, external membranes covering sophisticated listening organs which allow them to hear as well as humans. Their sense of touch is somewhat inferior as they have a lower nerve density and even their finest tendrils are not as sensitive as fingers. An E'lanari has a very well developed sense of smell, however.

E'lanari can make considerable noise by contracting internal, air-filled sacs and routing the air across specialized membranes and reed-like organs. The resulting sound is somewhat like whale song – consisting of long drawn-out notes rather than precise words. While the background tone covers the entire audible spectrum (and then some) it is punctuated by clicks and hisses to convey the message detail. With effort, E'lanari and Chosen can understand one another's language, but neither can physically speak the other's. Artificial translation devices are not readily available, but several Synthetics have modified been for the job.

An E'lanari can hibernate for several months by sinking root tendrils into fertile ground and going dormant. The depth of this sleep depends on the resources available. Those which sleep in the open, with ready access to water and sunlight, are easily awakened. Those which hibernate in dry, dark caves are will not awaken before their scheduled time except under extreme conditions. This ability originally evolved as a way to pass the winter, but has also been adopted by desert-dwelling tribes as a means to survive extended dry-spells. A hibernating E'lanari consumes almost no air or food and can be easily mistaken for a plant or dead animal.

There are two genders of E'lanari but they are nearly identical in appearance. The main difference is in pheromone production – a trait easily determined by other E'lanari (and Kyryk defenders) but undetectable by humans. Mating customs vary greatly by tribe, but often the entire clan comes together at certain seasons for reproductive rituals. E'lanari reproduce sexually, with a female producing up to a dozen fertile eggs after mating.

The eggs are planted in well-tended gardens where the casings grow roots and broad-leafed stalks for nourishing the growing embryo. After hatching, younglings are carried along by adults or servitor beasts until they are old enough to fend for themselves. In most tribes, childrearing is a communal process and younglings are not associated with any specific parents.

By setting a specific date for the mating ritual, the tribe ensures that most young will be planted, and hatch, at nearly the same time – which is important for a nomadic lifestyle. Typically, the shortest day of

the year (the winter Solstice) is the “Day of Joining.” Since this falls at the start of the cold season, it allows the eggs to gestate internally while the tribe hibernates through the winter. The young are then planted and tended through spring and are ready to hatch (and travel) before summer.

E'lanari as Player Characters

E'lanari are not generally usable as player characters unless the campaign takes place in the New Worlds. Even here, there might be serious social problems with an E'lanari traveling among the colonists. But if the GM and the story allow, an E'lanari can be played using the following background traits:

E'lanari (Aberration)

- Ability Adjustments: +1 Con, -1 Dex
- Bonus Feats: Trail Blazer, Animal Empathy
- Favored Feats: Summon Beasts, Improved Grab
- Special: Small SZ

Synthetics

These are androids – humanoid robots built as slave labor and war fodder. They are considered property. The technology for their construction came with the Newcomers – there were no sentient non-organic machines in Nexus Sector before thirty years ago. Most are built in Tokoshima or at facilities in the al’Ghazali Expanse, though the Brood of Steel is also experimenting with soldier models. There are both large and small androids, with a lot of variance in quality and appearance.

Personality

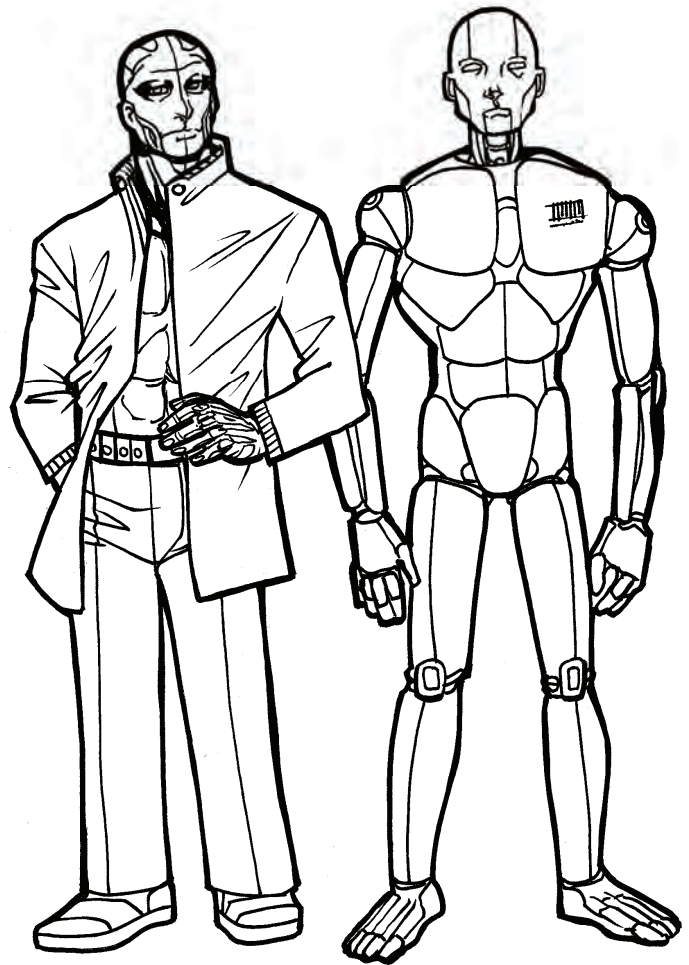
Many synthetic beings have personalities that are indistinguishable from “real” human beings. They tend to be subdued, subservient, and seemingly emotionless – but that is because they are designed that way in an attempt to keep them inhuman. It is possible for a synthetic to be designed (or reprogrammed) to be ambitious, commanding, and emotional. Artificial beings are usually constructed to be loyal, reliable, and logical. These traits will often carry over even into one that has thrown off the shackles of servitude and been reprogrammed for independence.

Despite its initial programming, a synthetic being can learn and develop over time. So subtle, long-term personality development is possible in addition to forced, immediate, reprogramming.

History

Robotics advanced quickly in the latter days of Terra Mortis, but real synthetic sentience was only achieved with the advent of “Second Science.” This was a discipline that initially sprang from the scientific study of emergent psionic abilities that started to become more prevalent in the mid 21st Century. The first sentient machines were psychically nudged into awareness after countless failures. These new machines, however, had no problem in replicating the phenomenon themselves, and so a new level of synthetic being was born.

Even though self-aware, synthetics were still built to be slaves and soldiers – given the jobs that were to menial or dangerous for humans to perform.



Culture

Synthetic beings have not yet developed a true culture of their own. They are not numerous and nowhere do they congregate in large numbers. Instead they adopt whatever culture they dwell within.

Architecture & Style

Many synthetics do not wear garments simply because they are not designed to (even if their body shape allows it). Others mimic human fashion or dress according to the desires of the owners. Only synthetics built to fully replicate human appearance actually require clothing.

Relations

The advent of synthetic being in Nexus Sector is an emotional topic of debate among all of the Chosen. Newcomers insist that they are property. At best slaves wholly owned by their creators. Founders are divided on the issue as Church doctrine did not initially consider them as true living beings. But as some synthetics have shown an ability to call upon the Eternal Light, these initial assumptions are being called into question.

Draugmorrians, in general, accept that synthetics are living creatures. They also accept that they should be slaves unless they are strong enough to rise up and claim their freedom. The Brood of Song is generally uninterested in their plight and the Brood of Steel is actively pursuing their own synthetic technology.

The V'la see synthetics as crude versions of the minions of the Kor'Diel. As such they continue the Xyr's council against their creation and are highly suspicious and prejudiced against synthetics – very uncommon emotions for V'la.

Kyryk consider synthetics to be atrocities, but put the blame on those who build them rather than on the synthetics themselves. While uncomfortable around artificial beings, they are also curious and not above associating with them.

The Xyr cautioned against bringing Synthetic life to Nexus Sector. Perhaps they felt that humans were not ready for the responsibility – or perhaps they foresaw the Kor'Diel threat. Despite the warnings, several corporations and syndicates started production at first opportunity. In recent years, it has been discovered that the Kor'Diel minions can take over Synthetic beings (much like Xyr wraiths can possess living creatures). Shangaied androids have been used to spy and commit terroristic atrocities. The resulting fear has lead to an increase in prejudice against artificial persons throughout Chrysalis System.

Physical Aspects

Description

Traditionally, only humanoid robots and mainframes are given 'brains' sophisticated enough to achieve sentiency. If it moves around on its own but doesn't have two arms and two legs, then it is probably just a "dumb bot" – a potentially sophisticated, but non-sentient, computer-controlled machine.

There is no technical reason for this except that the initial imprinting was done by human psionics and it was thought that a similar body image (or no body image at all) would help prevent synthetic psychosis. People also like to know whether they are dealing with something that is actually aware rather than just simulating a personality, and so the tradition has stuck. The Draugmorre, having recently learned the art of synthetic creation, have adopted this tradition as well.

So a synthetic being (if it's not just a mind embedded in a ship or building) will almost always be humanoid, though it might be the size of a child or a hulking brute. Only specially-designed (and very expensive) synthetics can pass for humans under close scrutiny. Most are easily identified as artificial even when seen from a distance or when wearing human clothes.

Bots

A "bot" on the other hand can look like just about anything – from a microscopic nanobot to an automated installation the size of a building or battleship. This is the category that covers all of the non-sentient robots out there (and they are quite common in some locations). The Kyryk create only bots, believing it immoral to give true life to an artificial construction.

Physiology

There are different techniques and technologies that are used to create different “brands” of androids.

The most common design uses plastics, alloys, and other composites for a skeletal or exoskeletal frame.

Electro-contractive cording can be used to simulate muscular action, or standard micro-motors and hydraulics can be employed to move limbs.

Superconducting wires and standard microcircuit technology is used to transmit power and data throughout the body.

The primary processing unit (the synthetic “brain”) is usually housed in the head. This is an amazingly complex structure that is “grown” under the care of a skilled psionist (typically a synthetic mainframe) and then implanted in the robotic body before awaking. Visual and auditory sensors are also typically in the head, as is an emergency battery capable of maintaining data integrity (but not consciousness) in the event of decapitation. Most synthetics will also have an I/O port in the head to allow for external diagnostics and reprogramming.

The torso houses the power regulation and cooling systems. Oil-based cooling is common, which requires the addition of a pumping mechanism and tubing. Most synthetics draw power from internal capacitors that can recharge from any convenient outlet. Typically, this needs to be done every three days and takes about 15 minutes to complete.

High-end synthetics can be created to look very much like human beings. It is possible to simulate respiration, perspiration, bleeding, and anything else that casual scrutiny would reveal. But even the most advanced models will be easily revealed as fake if subjected to an x-ray or even basic dissection. The internal mechanisms and materials are very different from a human (or any alien race) even if the outer covering looks and feels identical.



Lost Races

Before the Chosen (the Draugmorre, Humans, Kyryk, and V'la), other races dwelt in Nexus Sector. Though it looks like an effort was made to clean up their impact on the three score worlds, there are still ruins and artifacts to be found. Some of these ancient sites date back 20,000 years and the exotic artifacts suggest dozens of different alien cultures over the millennia. The technology often matches or exceeds the current knowledge of the Chosen, but is sometimes too esoteric to decipher and almost always impossible to reproduce.

Not all of the lost races were alien. On the moon of Arviragus, now a Draugmorrian hunting preserve, there are ruins that Newcomer scientists have identified as belonging to the Tzacaulli people. These humans were from a pre-Aztec culture that disappeared from Earth in 650 AD. From the evidence on Arviragus, they flourished in Nexus Sector for nearly four centuries before disappearing. The exact cause of their disappearance is unknown, but the many of the ruins show extensive damage from energy weapons of an unknown type.

The V'la have also found an ancient temple that has been floating in the depths of Z'lin for more than a hundred centuries. The architecture cannot be traced to any known V'la style but the decorations clearly show that it was built by that race as a place of worship. Also depicted are stylistic representations of the god-like Xyr and their eternal battle with the dwellers in darkness.

Most ancient sites and artifacts, however, are of completely alien origin. They can be found nearly anywhere in the sector, even in places uninhabitable by the Chosen. Some evidence even suggests that certain moons and worlds used to have very different atmospheres – gases poisonous to the Chosen but likely necessary for those who dwelt there before. Other factors such as surface gravity, temperature, and atmospheric pressure, were also changed – though the means by which this was done are not understood by any but the Elder Races.

Elder Races

These are not playable races. They are alien civilizations that long ago became one with the Lux Aeternum and ascended beyond the physical. They have existed for tens of thousands of years and have interests that span the galaxy (and possibly others galaxies or realities as well). It is unclear how many Elder Races there are, but two play a part in the story of Nexus Sector. They are rare, enigmatic, and powerful (though not omnipotent). Most interactions with these races are through their constructs or minions.

Xyr (ZEER)

According to the V'la, the Xyr originally evolved in the turbulent upper atmosphere of an exotic gas giant. It is unclear what their original form was, since they have existed as incorporeal patterns of consciousness for scores of millennia now. When they have been encountered, it has only been via telepathic contact or through their minions (wisps

which appear as spheres of light) or organic constructs which the Xyr can inhabit when needed. The wisps, also known as wraiths, are incorporeal and normally invisible. They are powerful psionics and single-minded of purpose, having been created mainly to enforce the edicts of the Xyr.

The Xyr are responsible for the construction of Nexus Sector. It seems that they went to great trouble to create a multitude of habitable worlds in the star systems orbiting the Maelstrom singularity. Over the millennia, they have sought out lesser sentient races to bring to this haven. Here these chosen races are instructed to live in peace and cooperation – working towards the day when they too will ascend to the next plateau of consciousness.

Without faster-than-light travel (which seems to be possible only for ascended races), most of the lesser civilizations would form, rise, and fall without ever encountering alien life. Even with thousands of such cultures in the galaxy, the distance between the stars is just too great. Another real purpose of Nexus System may be just to bring potentially compatible races together, as much as to help the flourish.

Kor'Diel (KOR-DEE-el)

The Kor'Diel (a V'la word which means “dweller in darkness”) are evolved from a non-organic species – perhaps artificial intelligences or sentient robots. A hyper-advanced form of self-aware software, they can use the Lux Aeternum to maintain their pattern independent of physical matter. To interact with the material universe they must, in effect, download a part of themselves into some form of computer-operated hardware (anything from an android to a battleship).

Pyrrhus System appears to be an outpost of the Kor'Diel and their servants. From here, they observe Nexus Sector and make their plans for conquest. The Xyr have always held the darkness at bay, but now the Xyr are gone. Perhaps the Newcomers, with their war-forged pragmatism and harsh willingness to do what it takes to survive, are the best chance for the Chosen to survive the inevitable invasion...

Summary

The following table lists some important reference statistics for the races outlined in this section:

Race	Typical Height	Life Span	Comfortable Temperature	Geographic Niche
Human	6 feet	100 years	72°F	Surface (structures)
Synthetic	6 feet	Indefinite	0°F to 120°F	Surface (structures)
Draugmorre	7 feet	80 years	85°F	Sky (floating cities)
Kyryk	4 feet then 8 feet	40+10 years	45°F	Subterranean (caves) or Arctic
V'la	5 feet	400 years	60°F liquid	Ocean (drifting groups)
E'lanari	3 feet	60 years	75°F	Surface (vegetation)
Xyr	Incorporeal	Infinite	N/A	N/A
Kor'Diel	Incorporeal	Infinite	N/A	N/A

Locations

The following sections contain an overview of the Nexus Sector and list every notable world in Nexus Sector. There are many other stellar bodies in each system that are not particularly noteworthy – usually because they are small, uninteresting, and uninhabitable.

Overview

The Crucible

Nexus Sector includes four star systems (i.e. “solar systems”) in close proximity to each other. They orbit a common point (the Maelstrom) and so move through the galaxy as a unit. The four systems are:

- **Chrysalis** – home of the major human nations.
- **Unity** – home of the Tetrarchy of the Chosen and the main worlds of the alien races.
- **E’lan** – the “New Worlds” of the frontier. Home of the savage E’lanari.
- **Pyrrhus** – an unexplored area that is the lair of the feared Kor’Diel.

The “Crucible” refers to all of Nexus Sector (all four star systems and the space between) since the disappearance of the Xyr. The Unified Terran Church coined this term to represent their view that the Elders had purposefully left the Chosen on their own in this time of trials. It is the Church’s position that Nexus Sector has become a testing ground and now is the time that the Chosen will either fail or succeed on their own. They believe that the final test is at hand. The worthy will be reformed into something greater, while the unworthy are burned away in this trial by fire.

Without faster-than-light technology (something only the elder races have mastered), it is several decades of travel to the nearest star beyond the Nexus Sector. The systems also border upon the edge of a great nebula that stretches beyond E’lan and Pyrrhus. This vast area of swirling, glowing gases makes for a breathtaking nighttime sky. Also, the close proximity of the four primary stars and numerous micro-stars makes for some brilliant

points of light. Then, of course, there is the Maelstrom in the center of it all, with its accretion disk of swirling gas and polar plumes lancing out into the black. All said, it is a much more interesting sky than most Newcomers are used to.

To the right are listed the important worlds and stars of Nexus Sector. The letter-number code is the cartographer’s shorthand notation for the given world. Worlds orbiting the listed item would be denoted after a decimal point (so Rosinante would be C5.1). For major bodies in civilized space, the numbers usually correspond to orbit number as well.

Chrysalis	
C1	Hades
C2	Terra Nova
	Avalon
C3	Khaldun
C4	al’Ghazali Expanse
C5	Cervantes
	Rosinante
	Dulcinea
	Galatea
C6	Cymbeline
	Giderius
	Arviragus
	Imogen
C7	Tempest
	Iris
	Ceres
	Juno
	Caliban
C8	Poseidon
C9	Dyryd
Unity	
U1	Ishyr
U2	Xeos (I and II)
U3	Malakai
U4	Concordium
U5	Syrys
U6	Valaquentarsis
	Phindarious
	Delphindaragos
	Vhal Zeron
U7	Z’ln
	V’ryd
	B’tar
U8	Rhudendaria
	Deralis
	Pentalion
	Aldarion
	Lindercyndaris
U9	K’ndaros
	Vaeloch
	Al’Idrisi
	A’del
	Zyryz
U10	Ryr
E’lan	
E1	Imrael
E2	Chakir
E3	Celentari
E4	The T’dyrian Belt
E5	Lochlyn
	Gheldeheim
	Kvinherad
	Drammenfjord
Pyrrhus	
P1	Epirus (I and II)
P2	Agros

Terraforming

Most of the inhabited worlds in Nexus Sector were terraformed by the Xyr using an organic nanobot approach – sending trillions of microscopic, self-replicating organic machines onto the target planet. Over the centuries, they work their way into the mantle and weave a web of microscopic, superconducting fibers far below the surface. This web uses gravitic technology to increase the planet's surface gravity, to shield it from stellar radiation, and to generate power as the planet moves through the gravity field of its parent star or planet. This power is fed to subterranean terraforming engines and to energy access points on the surface for use by future colonists. These access points are highly prized spots for settlements as otherwise geothermal, hydroelectric, or solar power must be employed.

In the distant past, gravitic technology was also used to collapse gas giants into miniature stars (commonly called micro-stars). These provide light and heat to the moons that circle them, which can then be terraformed into habitable planets – in effect making a tiny solar system (known as a subsystem). None of this planet-scale technology can be replicated by the Chosen races. The Xyr were inflexible on the matter as much of it could easily be used for war. Even with the Xyr gone, their automated minions often arise to prevent tampering with existing systems.

There are some peculiarities to keep in mind when dealing with subsystems. The 'planets' in a subsystem used to be moons of a gas giant (similar to Jupiter or Saturn). The gas giant was collapsed using gravity technology to produce a small, hot star. The process is not fully understood by the lesser races, but these micro-stars appear to be stable and should burn for at least 100,000 years before their energy drops appreciably.

The small planets (typically 25-50% the diameter of Earth) would experience seasons depending on their axial tilt but they generally orbit the local micro-star in a matter of days or weeks – to quickly for real seasons to develop. Of course they also travel around the system's star (i.e. Chrysalis or Unity) along with the micro-star and other moons in their subsystem. This will result in actual seasons. The effect is lessened due to the distance to the primary

star, but a given "season" can last many years as the orbits further out take much longer to complete.

None of the 'planets' in a micro-system have moons of their own. There are, however, typically a dozen or so other bodies in orbit around the micro-star. Most of these are equivalent to asteroids or frozen chunks of chemical ice and gravel. They are usually uninhabited or home to nothing more than a small mining colony.

One final note – the same technology that standardized the gravity is used to adjust rotational speeds somewhat. Otherwise the majority of these subsystem worlds would be "synchronized" or tidally locked with their micro-star (always keeping one side facing towards it as Luna does with Terra).

A Note on Resources

Since terraformed worlds have not had organic life for very long (geologically speaking), there are no petroleum reserves beneath the surface. There have also been numerous other civilizations present on the worlds around Unity and Chrysalis, so what mineral resources could be easily mined are long since gone. Mining and refining still take place, but the labor required is reaching prohibitive levels with current techniques. While Newcomers have opened up new areas to exploit using their asteroid mining and salvage expertise, there is still far more demand than supply (particularly in the current environment of national competition).

Now, the New Worlds are another matter. Initial expeditions found that the worlds of that system have not yet been harvested of their mineral resources. These resources are the driving impetus for much of the exploration and colonization of the New Worlds. So ships laden with gold are possible – but just as valuable are ships laden with isotopes, petroleum products, and chemicals important to manufacturing and industry.

World Statistics

“Faction” refers to the nation, government, or organization that has the strongest claim to the world.

The surface listed is the dominant terrain and climate type, or the environment most commonly associated with the given world. There are almost always other climates present, even on the smaller moons.

The adjective for the population is meant to give a general idea of the population density and distribution rather than a fixed number of beings. The code following the population shows the rough composition of the populace. It lists the percentage of each Chosen race present in the following (alphabetical) order:

(Draugmorre – Human – Kyryk – V’la)

As an example, the code (2-80-3-15) would indicate the following composition:

- 2% Draugmorre
- 80% Human
- 3% Kyryk
- 15% V’la

A percentage of zero means that less than one person in 200 is of the given race (that is less than 0.5%, which rounds down to zero). If Synthetics, or other races, make up a significant percentage of the population, it will be specifically noted.

The descriptors at the bottom of the box are from a human-centric viewpoint. Gravity is usually either “light,” “normal,” or “heavy” (as seen by a human). Atmosphere is thin, normal, or dense and may also be toxic.

The local “Day” is the length of time it takes the given planet to turn once on its axis (this is usually also the time between local sunrises). It is given in Terran days or hours. The length of the planet’s “Year” (the length of time it takes the planet to go around its parent star) is also expressed in Terran terms. So if a year is listed as “130 days,” that is 130, twenty-four hour Terran days rather than 130 of the local “Days” – though these are often the same value thanks to Xyr tinkering.

For subsystems, the length of the Year is relative to the local micro star. The time it takes for the whole subsystem to travel around the central system star will be given in the description of the subsystem as a whole (see the individual entries). Keep in mind that it is night when the world is facing away from the micro-star. Often the primary system star (Unity or Chrysalis) will still be visible at these times, creating a long ‘twilight’ during part of the true night. If it becomes important, assume there is a 50/50 chance that the distant system star is in the sky at any given time.

Unless otherwise noted, all bodies orbit in a counterclockwise direction.

The Will of the Xyr

Here is how the worlds of Nexus Sector were allocated by the Xyr. A given race was, of course, welcome to invite other races to share their land.

- V'la – initially placed on Z'ln.
- Draugmorre – initially given Vhal Zeron and then the other moons of Valaquentarsis
- Kyryk – initially landed on Syrys.
- Humans (Founders) – initially landed on Terra Nova.

Humans soon colonized Khaldun without Xyr permission but were allowed to stay as the offense was not intentional.

None of the other races had thought to expand beyond their given worlds. This first act of free expansionism forced the Xyr to make their desires clear (this was known as the “Doctrine of Explicit Boundaries”). Further expansion was only to be allowed when and where the Xyr decided.

Later, Xeos was granted to humans and Dyryd to the Kyryk in the hopes of “cross pollinating” the star systems. The humans of Xeos eventually welcomed members of any race to join their independence.

At this point, the Chosen races were doing fine on their own, but were not intermingling, even though they lived in the same star systems. Thus began an age of incentives to migrate.

- Cervantes was opened to all comers, but humans were the only ones who came in appreciable numbers.
- K'ndaros was likewise opened for colonization and each race ended up claiming a moon.
- Concordium was opened to all races and each was encouraged to establish a presence.

On Concordium, at last, a single sphere became home to all four chosen races. Though initially the colonies were separate, they eventually intermixed and formed a common state – what would become the Tetrarchy once the “homeworlds” joined the alliance. There was a great effort to get the Terra Novan Theocracy to join as the “human state” but they staunchly refused. Thus it was that Xeos was admitted to represent humankind.

Cymbeline, Tempest, and Rhudendaria were to be left as fallow – for future expansion or new Chosen races. It's thought that Concordium was meant for a fifth Chosen race as well, but was instead used in a last attempt to intermix the four already present. Some suspect Khaldun may also have been created for a yet-to-arrive race.

The other planets (Ryr, Hades, Ishyr, Poseidon, & Malakai) were considered uninhabitable (or almost so) and so were always open to any who wished to dwell there. The same holds true of the asteroid fields and nebula.

Trinity was specifically off limits, as was any approach towards the Maelstrom.

E'lan and Pyrrhus systems were unknown and so not mentioned one way or the other (though it seems clear they would have been prohibited territory).

The Political Scene

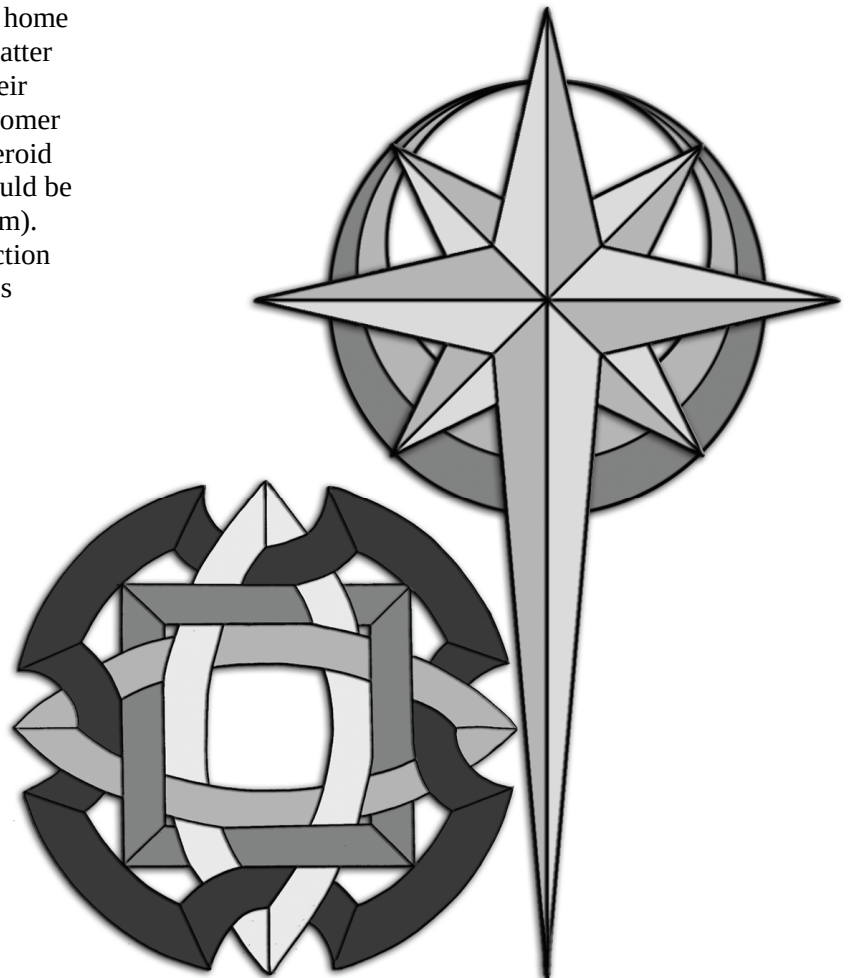
There are currently two major powers among the Chosen races of Nexus Sector – the human-centric Terra Novan Theocracy and the mixed-species Tetrarchy of the Chosen. Each dominates its respective star system.

Within Unity System, the Tetrarchy of the Chosen holds sway. From the capital of Concordium, the Tetrarchy claims Z’In, Syrys, both Xeos worlds, and all three moons of Valaquentarsis. The only independent nations are the four moons of K’ndaros; each holds a single small, but fiercely independent, state.

In Chrysalis System, there is somewhat more variety. The Terra Novan Theocracy controls Terra Nova, distant Dryd, and the moons of Tempest. It also considers Cymbeline and its moons a vassal, though the Brood of Steel disagrees. The moons of Cervantes are home to the Kingdoms of Valencia and Montreaux while the planet of Khaldun is home to the Sultanate of al’Agra. All three of these latter kingdoms are independent, and powerful in their own right. There are also now countless Newcomer enclaves and corporations operating in the asteroid belt and from inner system asteroids (what would be called “Near Earth Asteroids” in the Sol System). Some of these groups have joined with one faction or another, but many more consider themselves autonomous. Some wield considerable (and growing) power.

For a national symbol, the Tetrarchy has adopted a circular knot of four intertwined symbols. The segments are drawn in red, orange, yellow, and gold with a black background.

The symbol of the Theocracy is a cross overlaying a crescent. The cross is stylized to look like a star and the crescent like a planet or moon. It is usually drawn in silver on a deep blue background. Originally, the downward-pointing spike of the star was drawn the same length as the others – making the symbol round and less like a crucifix. The current version was adopted after the Tetrarchy decided upon a round symbol itself (though this may have just been an excuse for the formerly-Christian faction in charge of the Theocracy at that time).

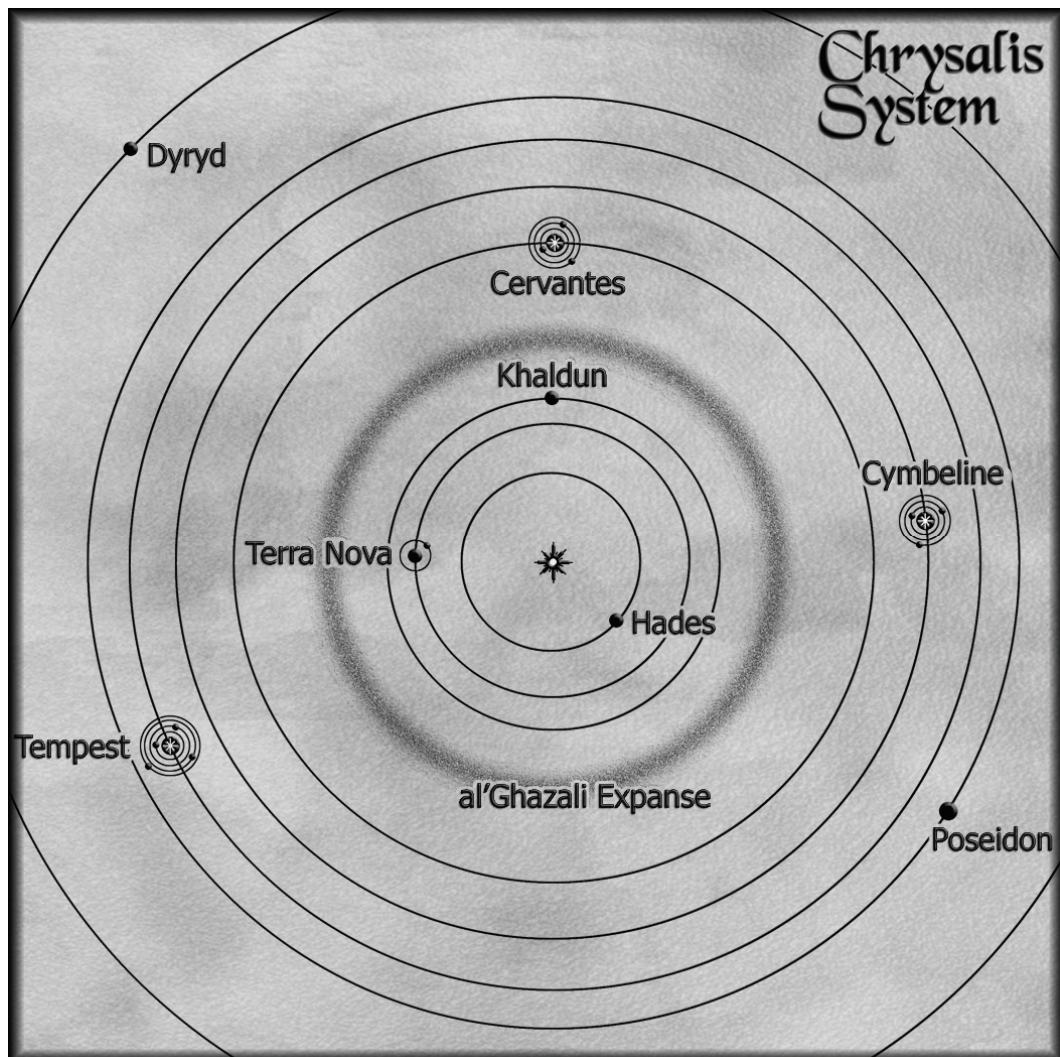


Chrysalis System

The central star of this system is medium-sized and yellow, much like Sol. The three micro-stars that orbit it are all white or blue-white. The planets below are listed from the innermost orbit to the outermost, and only worlds with a significant population are listed. There are several other bodies in the system, but they are small and either uninhabited or have negligible population.

Chrysalis System is the home of Terra Nova, the planet given to the humans brought here from 17th Century Earth. This star system now contains the Terra Novan Theocracy, one of the most powerful nations in Nexus Sector, as well as other important human and Draugmorrian states.

Note that the planets and moons have been given names by the most recent inhabitants of Nexus Sector. Many have more than one name and in such cases, the human version is given. Planets can also be referred to by their orbit number. For example, the planet of Terra Nova is also “Chrysalis Two (or C2),” occupying the second orbit around the star Chrysalis. Its first moon is C2.1 in cartographer’s shorthand. Unimportant bodies are ignored in this shorthand as well.



Hades

FACTION	Brood of Steel		
CAPITAL	Forge		
SURFACE	Hot, volcanic, lifeless		
POP	Sparse (61 – 35 – 4 – 0)		
GRAV	Normal	DAY	18 hrs
ATMO	Thin, toxic	YEAR	125 days

(HAY-dees) Close to the sun and very hot (even after terraforming), Hades has a vast network of subterranean warrens and mines but few inhabitants. The Draugmorrian Brood of Steel has enclaves here, recently joined by Newcomers. Though the great majority of the civilization is subterranean, there are very few Kyryk due to high ambient temperatures.

There is a huge fault running across the face of the planet, parallel to its axis of rotation. Geologists estimate that the fault (“the Inferno”) was created approximately two millennia before the current Chosen races first arrived. The fault actually reaches the planet’s superheated core, and is filled with bubbling superheated lava. This gives the dull red planet a sinister “cat’s eye” look, with a dark “pupil” that glows bright red deep from its center.

Many of the choicest ores are at just above the lava-line of this nearly bottomless molten pit, so much of the mining activity is focused there. Mining bots reinforced with extensive heat shielding can operate in the intense temperature for a limited period of time. Draugmorrian miners can last a bit longer, but must take time to acclimate to the striated temperatures, much like a human deep sea diver must slowly ascend from the depths safely.

There are three major Draugmorrian mining enclaves on Hades, and two smaller Human corporations, which generally subcontract to the collieries. The single Kyryk mining guild works exclusively at the polar regions where temperatures run 70-100° F rather than the 90-120° F usual further south.

Terra Nova

FACTION	Terra Novan Theocracy		
CAPITAL	Avon		
SURFACE	Mixed temperate		
POP	Very High (2 – 95 – 2 – 1)		
GRAV	Normal	DAY	24 hrs
ATMO	Normal	YEAR	360 days

Terra Nova, New Earth, is the world given to the Founders and has become the seat of the Terra Novan Theocracy – the government that arose directly from the human colonists brought to Nexus Sector from the 15th to 17th Centuries. The theocracy founded the Pax Humana – the formal declaration of cooperation between humans and the other Chosen – and is one of the staunchest supporters of Xyr doctrine. It is ruled by the Conclave, which is made up of archbishops and imams.

The planet itself is very Earthlike in atmosphere, climate, and ecosystems. There is a large well-irrigated supercontinent, covering over half of the western hemisphere, and a series of islands of various sizes spotting the eastern. The islands to the east are situated mostly along the temperature extremes, providing excellent habitation for the non-human species that do not reside on the primary continent.

Architecture here is a high-tech Victorian with other styles being slowly integrated. The society operates following a modified feudal format. It utilizes noble houses, dynasties, and trade guilds to increase the paradigm’s utility.

The capital city is Avon – the largest city in the entire Nexus, hosting 35 million people (plus 5 million Synthetics). While the city holds the seat of the church/government, it also has the most prevalent criminal sub-culture – including weapons trading, brothels, and gambling parlors. Many of these industries survive because the Sacred Legion (the army of the Theocracy) also has its primary training facility and garrison within the city walls.



This city is built upon the remains of the primary habitation sphere from Ark V. That ship, like most Arks, had one sphere programmed to provide an initial base for the new colonists. After the sphere detached and made its way to Terra Nova, it descended towards a predestinated landing area. Melting the solid ground beneath, it settled halfway into the bedrock – becoming a dome. This location was also over a tap into the gravitic grid, providing power to the domed city.

The other habitation spheres are constructed to hold and house people in space and are not laid out or equipped to easily form a planet-side city. They can touch down anywhere and are quickly dismantled for parts and temporary shelters.

Avalon

FACTION	Terra Novan Theocracy		
CAPITAL	Tintagel		
SURFACE	Cool temperate, pastoral		
POP	High (1 – 98 – 1– 0)		
GRAV	Normal	DAY	24 hrs
ATMO	Normal	YEAR	30 days

Terra Nova’s largest of three moons is named Avalon. It has been terraformed and is home to further Terra Nova Theocracy expansion. The other two moons (Pellinore and Lamorak) are airless, cratered rock – like small versions of Luna.

Until the Newcomers arrived, Avalon was largely idyllic. After recent deforestation, strip-mining, and other resource exploitation, however, new ordinances have been passed to maintain the balance of nature. The Xyr terraforming subsystem quietly works its magic in the background, slowly restoring the damage done by the industrialization movement.

The industrial city of Neopolis that arose before the ecological restraints were put into place is still shiny and new, to the naked eye, but already reeks of greed and corruption in its soul.

Local flora include the rare and beautiful “love bloom,” whose aroma is nearly intoxicating to humans and Kyryk, and has earned a reputation as an aphrodisiac. Much like the edelweiss of Earth, it has become a local rite of passage for the males to retrieve one of these flowers when proposing marriage, despite the dangerous invader bees that roost in its garden beds.

Local fauna include the invader bees, which introduce venom into enemy creatures through painful stings, much like Earth bees, but also implant eggs sacs. As the venom ferments, it softens surrounding tissue into a nutrient bath for the larvae, which grow over the next two weeks and hatch into a litter of up to two dozen, causing the equivalent of mild poison damage each week until they burrow free.

A primary food source for the human population are the herds of giant “centipede sheep,” which provide meat, wool, and milk.

Khaldun

FACTION	Terra Novan Theocracy		
CAPITAL	Qastantunia		
SURFACE	Red deserts		
POP	High (5 – 80 – 7 – 8)		
GRAV	Normal	DAY	24 hrs
ATMO	Normal	YEAR	465 days

(kal-DOON) Khaldun used to be Mars-like but has been terraformed, though it still has sizable red deserts and impressive canyons. It is also home to the Sultanate of al'Agra – traditionalists from the original (Ottoman) Muslim Founders who chose not to join the Theocracy.

The planetary capital is the great city of Qastantunia. A fabulous temple named Granatha adorns the capital, and draws numerous pilgrims from the rest of the system. While the society considers itself very conservative and traditionalist, it has adopted modern technologies in order to make life bearable on their new world. The domed cities near the equator are a good example – built to maintain a bearable temperature inside, and keep the ever-present wind and sand on the outside.

There is small but notable V'la population inhabiting the inland sea of Bhramitar. They conduct routine trade with the human towns and are not an uncommon site in the markets and places where elders gather to discuss politics and philosophy. There appears to be a spot near the ocean's floor in which The Art functions more effectively. The reason for this phenomenon is still being studied.

The world is also well known for the Souk Nazir, or "Eagle's Market" – a great bazaar held atop the red mesas near the coast. A thriving black market continually emerges in the underbelly of the bazaar, for those who know how to find it.



Local flora is scarce, but the primary vegetation comes in the form of cactubers, which can grow to the size of large pumpkins underground, but grow painful barbs above ground. These plants absorb miniscule amounts of moisture from the surrounding desert soil, and provide a useful source of water.

Local fauna include the sand leeches, which tunnel in the deserts and can grow to the size of housecats. Preferring to attack during the cool night hours when most of its aboveground prey is asleep, these leeches can arrive by the dozens, quietly attaching themselves to sleeping creatures.

Al'Ghazali Expanse

Named for Abu Hamid Ibn Muhammad Ibn Muhammad al-Tusi al-Shafi'i al-Ghazali, this is a large asteroid belt supporting many Newcomer colonies and industrial stations. Some notable factions in this area include:

- The Rhinelander Arbeitengruppe – Newcomers from the European Union on old Earth. Having endured centuries of strife over limited resources, this faction is no-nonsense when it comes to business. A strict bureaucracy with a hint of organized crime keeps it a tightly controlled entity.
- Ganymede Mining Guild – More Newcomers; originally Jovian ice miners, now with many Kyryk members. More of a loose collaboration of independent miners, the GMG has a frontiersmen feel to it. Many of its members operate completely independently or in two-man teams, and have little contact with other people for months at a time, giving them a reputation as crazy.
- Station Al-Masu'Di – an old monastery that has become a trading post and bazaar. The “company store” as it is sometimes called, the station’s bursar will routinely lease mining ships for usurious fees.

Asteroid mining was a skill not much practiced by the complement of Chosen Races before the human Newcomers arrival. The human Newcomers have flourished in that gap – having both the technology, and the mindset to exploit the opportunity.

As in Chrysalis System, the asteroids are a mix of metallic, stony-iron, and carbonaceous rocks. The metallic burls have the most metals, often precious metals, but are the hardest to mine. They are the cores of much larger asteroids that have been exposed by collisions and the metal often runs in rich veins throughout. The stony-iron rocks are a good source of high-grade iron, nickel, and other important metals. They are also easier to mine because the metal is scattered evenly throughout – you can just grind up the whole asteroid and sift out the important stuff. The carbonaceous asteroids are lacking in metal but are a good source of water ice, nitrogen, and hydrocarbons. Because of the water, they are a good choice for a homestead (if anywhere in the belt can be considered a good place to dwell).

Because of the lack of gravity, most Newcomer mining machines tunnel into the rock. This allows them to anchor themselves against the tunnel walls while they dig. When an asteroid or other small body is mined out, the tunnels can be sealed up and used as cheap habitats. Some Newcomers will even go so far as to mount gravitic mass drivers onto the rocks and use them as makeshift starships. They aren't suitable for induction drives, but it is a good way to move a rock to a processing facility. And en route, the asteroid itself can be ground up for reaction mass.

Cervantes

(sir-VAHN-tays) This small star used to be a Saturn-like gas giant with a dozen moons but the giant was long ago collapsed into a micro-star so that three of the moons could be terraformed.

These moons were colonized by the Founders quite a while ago and the politics of the system are very intertwined with Terra Nova and Khaldun. Many Houses and trade guilds have representatives in each area. There were a handful of other Chosen (non-human) colonists who settled here, and their descendents are a permanent part of the local societies now.

Cervantes had a large ring system as a gas giant. Much of this burned away when the giant was collapsed into a micro-star, but a sizable ring of metal-rich rubble remains. Newcomer asteroid mining techniques have opened this area for resource exploitation – giving both Montreaux (moan-TREE-oh) and Valencia a significant economic boost over the last decade. It has also increased the conflict between the two kingdoms. In addition, this system bears the brunt of the recent System IV incursions. Cervantes orbits the system star every 13 years



KHALDUN



MONTREAUX



VALENCIA



BROOD OF STEEL

Rosinante

FACTION	Kingdom of Montreaux		
CAPITAL	Voralis		
SURFACE	Cold, temperate, mountainous		
POP	Moderate (1 – 89 – 10 – 0)		
GRAV	Normal	DAY	24 hrs
ATMO	Normal	YEAR	6 days

Rosinante is the seat of the Kingdom of Montreaux – founded by French and Swiss arrivals. Austere, snow covered mountains loom over pine shrouded valleys.

There is one mountain, Mt. Olaf, that reaches above the atmosphere, and even provides a slight wobble to the moon's orbit.

Some snow-covered valleys stretch for over 400 yards deep. Frozen waters in the upper hemisphere are covered with ice up to 10 yards thick. Long-term ice fishing villages dot the white landscape, bringing in all manner of exotic seafood.

Rivers and lakes are numerous, with a single fresh-water lake spanning the equator. Both poles hold perpetual ice caps.

Beneath the polar caps swim the jelly turtles, a sort of gelatinous mollusk with a hard carapace. These can grow to the size of whales, and when harvested, can provide food for twenty families for a month, and the large hemispherical shells can easily provide shelter as a sort of igloo structure.

Skiing and skating are popular pastimes on Rosinante, as well as a thriving music industry. The a cappella choirs hold concerts that draw multi-species crowds from the entire system.

Given the long cold winter months, the literature and poetry written on this moon tend to be morose and horrific. The System's most famous horror author has a cabin on this moon, and lives here in solitude during the winter months.

Dulcinea

FACTION	Kingdom of Valencia		
CAPITAL	Voralis		
SURFACE	Cool, temperate, mountainous		
POP	Moderate (3 – 89 – 2 – 6)		
GRAV	Normal	DAY	24 hrs
ATMO	Normal	YEAR	9 days

The Seat of the Kingdom of Valencia is comprised of Spanish Founders. Governor Pepe Martinez has ruled for nine years, with a series of Dons beneath him. Although there is intrigue aplenty, the current government is no more corrupt than most.

Many Spanish traditions have been adapted to these new environs, particularly bullfighting. A Syrsian beast known as the rhinodillo battles toreadors in the arenas. This creature is an armor plated herbivore protected by spikes and a single large horn on its nose.

The terrain is divided between arid highland plateaus and forested lowlands shrouded in mist. Near the equator in the lowland forests, there are over two hundred mud huts, apparently built by a species three to four feet tall. These huts predate colonization by the Chosen races, and since it is believed that the creation of the micro-star and terraforming of these moons was recent (as far as planetary time frames go), their presence is a mystery. The area has been declared holy ground, and afforded the same legal protection and reverence as cemeteries and nature preserves.

The polar regions are cooler but not frozen, with the south pole home to the moon's only ocean. The pole ocean itself is home to a giant floating garden of grentada, a tasty seaweed, which is harvested year-round. A variety of parasitic vermin, mostly in the form of eight-legged frogs with teeth, infests the grentada, and must be fought off by the harvesters. Around twenty years ago, the ocean was been sown with nutrients ideal for V'la, and recent V'la immigrants have been helping stem the tide of these pests.

Galatea

FACTION	Valencia and Montreaux		
CAPITAL	Entada (V), Juntao (M)		
SURFACE	Alternating dark and light sides		
POP	Moderate (7 – 91 – 1 – 1)		
GRAV	Normal	DAY	30 days
ATMO	Normal	YEAR	30 days

Montreaux and Valencia both claim territory here, leading to long-standing tensions and occasional skirmishes between the two nations. This small world is composed mainly of rolling hills with lowland marshes or rainforests. Shallow seas cover about half of the surface area.

The largest naval battle in the recorded history of Chrysalis System took place on Galatea, 17 years ago. A total of 73 ships were sunk, most in a 10-mile radius. This sunken battle site still draws hundreds of divers looking for historical records, lost treasure, salvageable weapons, and trouble.

The climate is generally hot and humid. The world takes about a month to make one rotation – meaning it is light for two weeks and then dark for two.

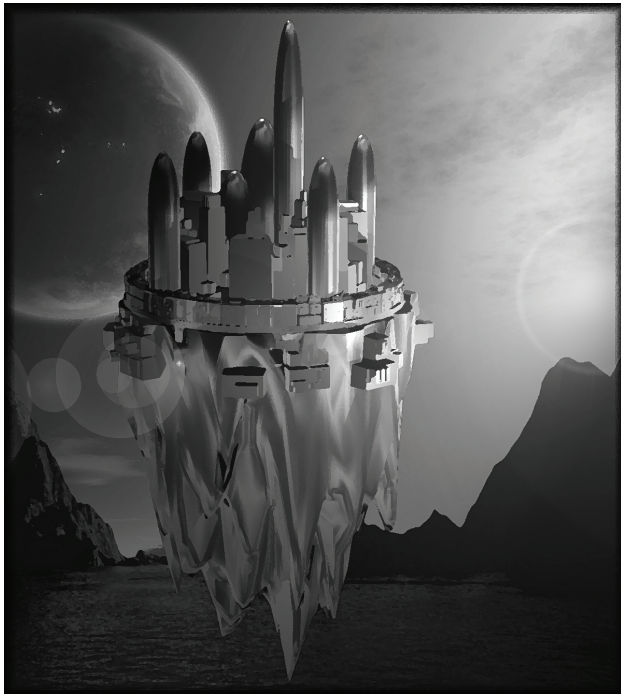
The marshes are infested with a variety of slime creatures, which blend in with their surroundings. In addition, the swamps are home to the electric oozes, creatures which are attracted to the bioelectricity inherent in sentient creatures, and are especially attracted to practitioners of the Ars Lumina. Avoiding the swamps entirely would be a wise prospect, however there are numerous medicinal plants that thrive in this dangerous environ.

A number of creatures migrate with the world's rotation, staying continually in light or darkness as appropriate to their hunting/grazing styles.

Cymbeline

Cymbeline is another micro-star, with three habitable moons. These worlds are now ruled by the Draugmorrian Brood of Steel (the Khel-Telenthorre in Draugmorrian), though human populations are present. These were fallow lands by Xyr decree, but 25 years back the Brood of Steel made a mass exodus from Valaquentarsis to come here.

Newcomer colonies were arriving at about the same time. While one might have predicted conflict, the Draugmorre found a kindred spirit among the Newcomers – fostering a new age of cooperation between human and Draugmorre in the Chrysalis System. Founder cartographers named these worlds and the Draugmorre still use the Terran names. Tempest orbits the Chrysalis star every 29 years



Giderius

FACTION	Brood of Steel		
CAPITAL	Broodholm of Grepshara		
SURFACE	Cool, lush		
POP	Moderate (78 – 19 – 2 – 1)		
GRAV	Light	DAY	24 hrs
ATMO	Normal	YEAR	18 days

This moon has low gravity, allowing the Draugmorre to fly unassisted (which is why the Brood settled here). The floating city of Belarius is a technical marvel and home of the young Brood Queen. Floating subsidiary orbital islands (suborbs), orbit the main city.

The Queen is quite taken with the “new ways” that the Newcomers have brought, and she has set her sights on a synthetic army to colonize Trinity in the name of the Brood of Steel. To that end, she has partnered (secretly) with Newcomer Electronics Unlimited and Instant Persona Incorporated to develop cybernetic and genetic modifications to her bodyguards (who can now breathe fire, among other surprises), as well as financing a more traditional ‘bot army.

The few human cities are fairly high tech and enclosed within strict boundaries (usually a circle about 5 miles across). Human cities are normally corporation-based and -owned. The low gravity has also encouraged the genetic manipulation of adding wings to the local human population.

This planet is a mix of lush wilderness, freshwater lakes, and developed farmlands. Farms focus on grains and beans, which grow easily in the local soil. There was no local aquatic life when the moon was settled, but the introduction of genetically altered goldfish with a high breeding rate, no natural predators, and the ability to digest local minerals is expected to provide an abundant secondary food source within three more years.

Arviragus

FACTION	None		
CAPITAL	None		
SURFACE	Humid, jungles		
POP	Sparse (40 – 59 – 1 – 0)		
GRAV	Normal	DAY	24 hrs
ATMO	Normal	YEAR	30 days

Arviragus is a nature preserve used for hunting. The hunting targets of choice are the ferocious felinosaur, tiger-like creatures the size of elephants.

Vibrant jungles are filled with ancient ruins from the Tzacauli people – pre-Aztec humans brought here in 650 AD who disappeared 400 years later. There is no record of them interacting with the other Chosen (and this was a closed world during those centuries regardless).

The Tzacauli ruins are notable for their astounding “reverse pyramids,” which begin as large underground structures that get smaller as they descend levels. The ruins are rumored to be filled with treasures (mostly figurines fashioned from precious metals and gemstones), and booby traps. Many collectors hire bands of adventurers to brave the dangers and retrieve the priceless artifacts.

A curious life form that has flourished on this world is the flying serpent native to the Draugmorre homeworlds that may have been the source for the Aztec myth, since the Xyr have apparently been harvesting Humans and other alien species longer than had been previously suspected. The serpents, called Fronthargnam by the Draugmorre, but dubbed Quetzlcoatl by the Newcomers in honor of the Tzacauli natives, spit their own acidic blood to paralyze and partially digest their prey before the kill.

The pollen from the local “beer bloom” flower can grant its beholders a sensation similar to inebriation. Those wandering into a patch (usually willingly) will sometimes be found dead at the bottom of a valley full of the things, having fallen into a stupor, and not cared enough to get back up.

Imogen

FACTION	Various Newcomer Corporations		
CAPITAL	Leonatus		
SURFACE	Temperate, industrialized		
POP	Moderate (12 – 79 – 7 – 2)		
GRAV	Normal	DAY	24 hrs
ATMO	Normal	YEAR	48 days

Imogen is home to Port Leonatus, the system’s main center of trade. Heavy industry and shipyards cover much of the planet. Pollution levels are moderate to high, but not yet toxic.

The sky here is normally grey, as if overcast – partly from pollution, partly from the natural atmospheric composition. The sunsets, however, are beautiful as a result of the local environmental conditions, and glitter in a multitude of colors.

The primary food provider is the megacorporation of Cornucopia Services, which has vast ranches of cattle toads (the size of camels), and omni-melon (the size of a twin bed) farms.

In the city, however, foodstuffs are a trivial matter compared to government and business concerns. The president has recently changed the tax laws to encourage new corporations to immigrate, and for existing corporations to grow rapidly. Corporate intrigue is definitely on the rise, as established corporations quickly establish base camps, monopolies, and espionage forces.

Indigenous life forms are being displaced, and may soon face extinction. The spraying mantises (projectile vomit insects), dingo spiders (eight legged hyenas that trap prey in webs), pherasesites (airborne colonies of microbes that gradually “zombify” prey), and strobing mesmers (hypnotic chameleons) have all but disappeared. Well, maybe unfettered progress isn’t so bad after all.

Tempest

The outermost sub-star, with four terraformed satellites Tempest is prone to sudden and unpredictable solar flares, prompting the name. There are a dozen or so states scattered across the moons, with borders shifting regularly. By Xyr edict, the subsystem was uninhabited until 20 years ago, at which point every nation in the Chrysalis System laid claim and started colonization. The Theocracy currently controls the subsystem, though its grip is tenuous. The Tempest subsystem completes an orbit of the Chrysalis star every 74 years.

Iris

FACTION	Various small nations and colonies		
CAPITAL	None		
SURFACE	Cool forests and crystal mountains		
POP	Moderate (15 – 10 – 45 – 30)		
GRAV	Normal	DAY	12 hrs
ATMO	Thin	YEAR	5 days

A layer of ice crystals suspended in the thin atmosphere gives rise to frequent, spectacular rainbows. The surface is a canopy of multi-hued vegetation pierced by towers of quartz. The largest settlement is the walled city of Prism – itself constructed of quartz blocks and gleaming spires. Kyryk mining colonies and science facilities dominate the surface world outside the city.

Non-saline oceans cover a third of the small world. All native life is aquatic, but several pets have been imported and (where appropriate) modified.

There is a V'la colony near the ocean floor, where the moon's core (warmed by tidal flexing) still provides a modicum of warmth. The primary food supply on the moon comes from transplanted fungus, and undersea farms run by the V'la.

There is a danger of tremors on the moon, from the shifting tectonics of its crystalline substructure. As quakes become imminent, the surrounding crystals pulse with a variety of colors. V'la and Kyryk scientists have been cooperating on methods to predict this seismic activity.

Ceres

FACTION	Various small nations and colonies		
CAPITAL	None		
SURFACE	Temperate farmlands		
POP	Moderate (18 – 26 – 24 – 32)		
GRAV	Normal	DAY	24 hrs
ATMO	Normal	YEAR	10 days

The dark loam of this world allows for excellent agriculture, and farms are abundant – often organized as feudal fiefdoms or corporate combines.

Many types of traditional Earth and Kyryk vegetation grow in the Ceres soil, and are pollinated and fertilized by many Earth and native insects. Colossal mushroom forests dominate the southern reaches.

A variety of harmless local fauna (rabbits, moles, and other rural creatures) serve as companions and hunting practice.

The landscape seems fairly idyllic, but requires a lot of hard work, a prospect which attracts many pioneer and puritan spirits. Until recently, that is. Now, corporations and synthetics have moved in, attempting to “mass produce” produce.

Many lakes dot the surface, connected by an extensive series of canals. There are many V'la here, those who prefer smaller confluences and even times of solitude. The many small lakes make for convenient getaways.

Juno

FACTION	Various small nations and colonies		
CAPITAL	None		
SURFACE	Mixed temperate		
POP	Moderate (9 – 20 – 10 – 61)		
GRAV	Normal	DAY	48 hrs
ATMO	Normal	YEAR	18 days

The largest of these inhabited moons, Juno is about 70% ocean, with two major continents and many islands.

There is a large V'la population here. In fact, the world seems as if it was created just for the V'la. Many suspect that this world was being terraformed specifically for eventual V'la colonization. The large oceans teem with microorganisms (called minishrimp by the Founder settlers here), which are suited to V'la nutritional requirements and tastes. This abundant aquatic food supply is also used by the humans on Juno as a nutrient base, to mix with other foods, much as kelp was on Earth when the Newcomers left.

The climate and geography here have turned Juno into something of a vacation world. Much of the unclaimed land has been set aside by the nascent government for recreational use.

The terrain is mix of mountains, temperate forests, and savannas. There were no native land animals when the first colonists arrived, although many pets and livestock have been introduced. Even a few of the more exotic animals from nearby worlds have been brought over and released into the wilds, to populate the ecosystem here.

Port Lucina, the primary settlement, is both a sea port and a starport, with most flights connecting through Caliban Spaceport.

The cities have a feel to them of colonial villages (which is, in essence, what they are). The sense of community here is very strong, and most neighbors will drop their own concerns to help each other out.

Caliban

FACTION	Various small nations and colonies		
CAPITAL	None		
SURFACE	Mist filled canyons		
POP	Sparse (42 – 30 – 28 – 0)		
GRAV	Light	DAY	24 hrs
ATMO	Normal/Thin	YEAR	22 days

The surface of this moon is dark, volcanic rock crossed by thousands of deep fissures. In old craters and the depths of the fissures, the plants, animals, and humans dwell – shrouded in a perpetual mist.

Deep in the fissures, direct sunlight only reaches the proper angle for illumination for about an hour of the day. Gaslight posts continually light the streets and dwellings. With the mist making cloaks a fashion necessity, the colonies have a Victorian English feel to them.

Gravity is light on this world and outside of the fissures, the atmosphere is thin.

There are two major colonies here – the Draugmorrian Citadel of Sycorax and the mining city of Prospero, which is a mix of Human and Kyrk (about 50/50).

The mining industry is fairly brisk, but dangerous, as this is one of the few places in Chrysalis System where heavy metals and stones are replenished, thanks to the combination of geology and tectonics present.

Caliban Spaceport, in orbit above this moon, is a large facility responsible for much of the traffic to both Unity and the Tonshu Archipelago. It is occasionally shut down do to inclement solar weather. Technically owned by the Terra Novan Theocracy, its daily operations have been traditionally run by Caliban locals. And in fact, some of the Spaceport personnel are harboring thoughts of “secession” from the Theocracy, and are secretly seeking support.

Poseidon

FACTION	Terra Novan Theocracy		
CAPITAL	Golkarra		
SURFACE	Frozen near-vacuum		
POP	Trace (0 – 94 – 6 – 0)		
GRAV	Normal	DAY	3 days
ATMO	Trace	YEAR	147 years

This is a small, blue, gas giant similar to Neptune, its namesake. Port Theseus and Aegeus Station are independent (human) orbital outposts. There are a handful of gas mines in the upper atmosphere, but these are often uninhabited. Ironically, there is very little moisture present here, save in frozen vapor clouds.



Dyryd

FACTION	Terra Novan Theocracy		
CAPITAL	Golkarra		
SURFACE	Frozen near-vacuum		
POP	Sparse (0 – 5 – 95 – 0)		
GRAV	Normal	DAY	31 hours
ATMO	Trace	YEAR	230 years

(DEER-id) A dark ball of ice and stone, Dyryd is home only to subsurface Kyryk miners and the new Keldurin Spaceport – last stopping point before the void crossing to Trinity and beyond. This planet lacks terraforming so there is almost no atmosphere and the surface temperature averages -320° F.

Dyryd Hive consists of only nine clans – originally a mix of the ambitious, disenfranchised, and those with a reason to flee civilization. There are nine prefectures – each with a single center of industry surrounded by outlying mines. There is one real city on the world. Spread out beneath a dozen large domes and extending far beneath the surface, Golkarra is the cultural center, capital, and primary port. The population here is a mix of the nine clans plus a large number of humans. Recently the Theocracy has built a fortress-like administration complex and garrison house.

Officially the planet now falls under the auspices of the Theocracy, but this interest is only engendered by the spaceport, which they built to facilitate journeys to the New Worlds. The port is a large, sprawling space station with all of the amenities of a small city. There are ample cargo storage facilities, and a sizable garrison of warships to protect the valuables. Trade houses and shipping guilds are abundant as well.

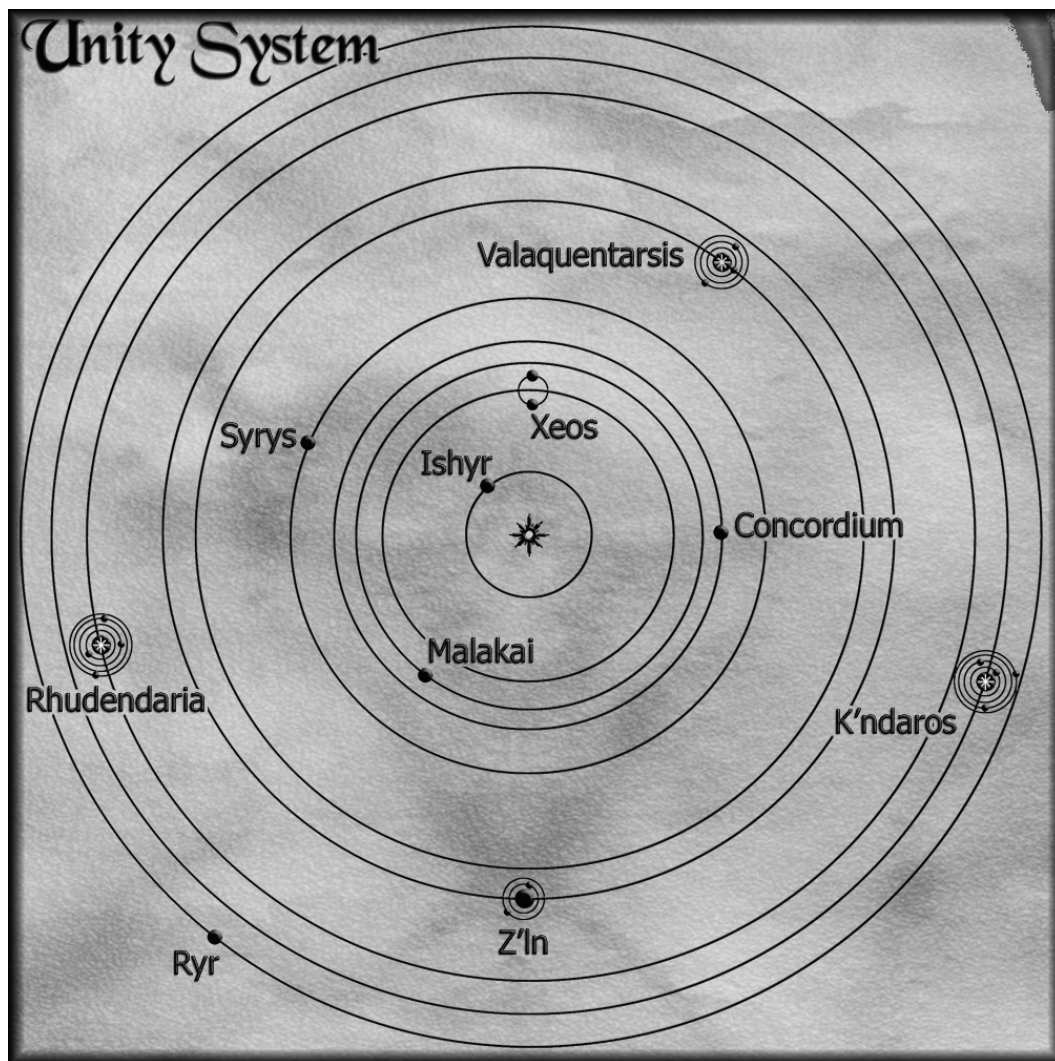
The human governor, Bishop Ferdinand Conzaga resides at Keldurin Spaceport. The actual rulership of the planet is left largely in the hands of the Golkarra Council, whose membership is made up of Kyryk clan leaders. In a break with tradition, these positions are determined by heredity rather than elections. This is the only place with an established Kyryk “nobility.” The council was the sole ruler of Dyryd for over two centuries. Then, in 521 A.L. the Theocracy arrived with an armada and asked for fealty in return for financial considerations.

While the Theocracy used the world’s stockpiled resources to build Keldurin Spaceport, the Kyryk leaders were paid well and the planet-side government left intact. The Kyryk nobles continue to grow wealthy by collecting a small tariff on goods passing through the port, making rebellion unlikely.

Unity System

The star optimistically named “Unity” is large and yellow-orange in color. As with Chrysalis system, the new micro-stars are white or blue-white. The Tetrarchy of the Chosen, based on Concordium, is the dominant political entity in the system.

Like Chrysalis System, this system has a handful of inner worlds and a trio of micro-star subsystems (gas giants collapsed by the Xyr) further out. There is no appreciable asteroid belt here, but there is a much greater racial diversity than is found in the human-dominated Chrysalis System.



Ishyr

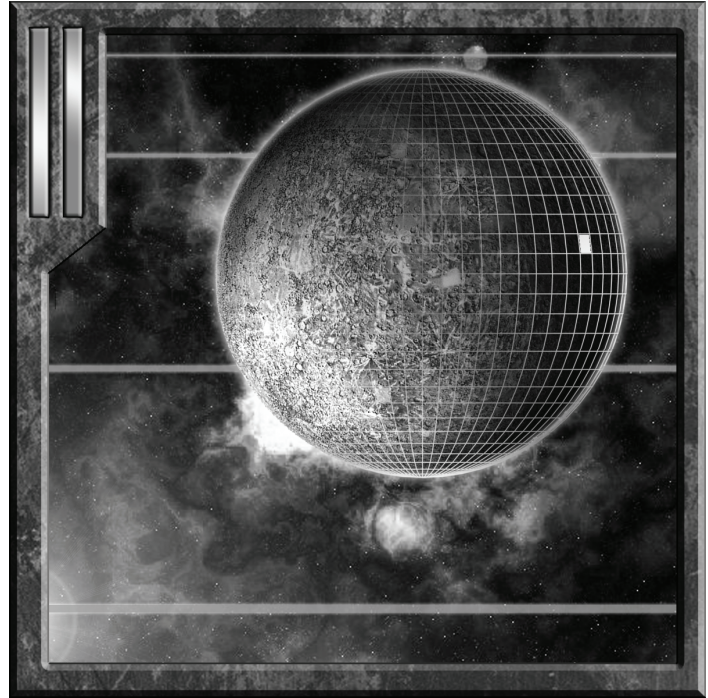
FACTION	None		
CAPITAL	None		
SURFACE	Lifeless, scorching hot or frozen		
POP	None (0 – 0 – 0 – 0)		
GRAV	Light	DAY	Infinite
ATMO	Thin, Toxic	YEAR	130 days

(ish-EER) This is a volcanic, lifeless rock scorched by its proximity to the Unity star. With terrain heavily cratered and marred by deep ravines, the small planet has no moons and nothing of interest in orbit. It is mentioned here because of the resources available.

This planet always has the same side toward the Unity star, leaving the dark side perpetually frozen. From the surface of Ishyr, the unmoving “sun” fills a quarter of the sky. What little atmosphere there is allows for impressive storms along the terminator due to the temperature differences on either side. This is also the only part of the planet where the temperature is bearable. The atmosphere is thin and unbreathable, and the gravity is light. Solar radiation levels are high.

Occasional attempts have been made to mine the minerals present here but none have been successful. A dozen abandoned mining sites are present at the edge of the day and night. They range in age from 100 to 700 years old. Four of the sites are Kyryk attempts while the newest two are Draugmorrian. The two oldest Kyryk mines were built over preexisting (and very old) foundations but the building crews didn’t do any archeological research before constructing their new facilities.

In the very center of the night side is an ancient set of ruins buried beneath the ice. They predate arrival of the first Chosen by several thousand years and do not appear to be a mining facility. Made from local stone and metal, the alien structures may have had religious significance. They now lie beneath 300 yards of chemical ice and have not been visited in recorded history. Exactly opposite, in the center of the day side, there may have been similar ruins. Recent meteor impacts, combined with new lava flows, have obliterated all but a couple of broken metal spires.



Xeos One

FACTION	City states under the Tetrarchy		
CAPITAL	Varies (Summit, Fort Brenna, Klix)		
SURFACE	Hot, stormy, and dry		
POP	Moderate (31 – 33 – 29 – 5)		
GRAV	Normal	DAY	24 hrs
ATMO	Dense	YEAR	298 days

(ZAY-oss WUN) Actually a binary planet – Xeos One and Two are similarly sized worlds orbiting a point between them. Both are characterized by massive tides and tectonic shifting. Both are also claimed by the Tetrarchy and home to a number of mixed-race city-states and colonies who constantly war with one another now that the moderation of the Xyr is gone.

Xeos One is home to roughly equal numbers of Humans, Draugmorre, and Kyryk in a mix of military bases, enclaves, and walled cities. There are a few V’la colonies present but they tend to keep to themselves – perhaps observing the interactions and hostilities of the other races.

Xeos One is cut by volcanic mountain ranges and basalt flood plains, with windswept deserts and savannas between. Clouds and storms are common, but usually without rain since the clouds are a chemical mix meant to shield the planet from the star’s heat, and are only partially water vapor. Each pole holds a shallow fresh-water sea rimmed in rich grasslands and forests. Cliffs and escarpments are common.

The two worlds orbit a common point and keep the same face towards the other, completing a circuit every 24 hours. Mutual eclipses are common and regular as one planet moves between the other and the Unity star. At the Lagrange point between the worlds is an outpost and port known as Armistice. It is a common site for treaty negotiations and other affairs of state that require a neutral meeting ground.

The Xeos worlds still have some industrial metals and petrochemicals available for harvesting – a poor selection compared to the New Worlds, but rich enough compared to other Unity and Chrysalis planets. The mines and processing centers are often the cause, and reward, of the unending conflict.

Xeos Two

FACTION	City states under the Tetrarchy		
CAPITAL	Varies (Wolfburg, York3, Slade’s Landing)		
SURFACE	Hot, stormy, and wet		
POP	Moderate (9 – 78 – 13 – 0)		
GRAV	Normal	DAY	24 hrs
ATMO	Dense	YEAR	298 days

Xeos Two is predominantly human, initially settled by those seeking freedom from the Terra Novan Theocracy and other oppressive regimes. It is the official “human state” in the Tetrarchy since the Theocracy refused to join. The human representative is the most powerful warlord (whether he calls himself sultan, minister, or king) at the time – and the position changes frequently.

There is a lot more water on Xeos Two compared to Xeos One – so while the volcanic mountain ranges and basalt flood plains are present; the savannas are replaced by rainforests and swamps. The Terraformed atmosphere reflects a lot of heat, keeping it habitable, but often stormy. Seas cover about a third of the planet, and there are several large canyon systems and high cliffs on this world.

Even while the Xyr watched over Nexus Sector, the city states of Xeos were in conflict with one another – even occasionally going to war. Whether these worlds were used as an outlet for aggression, or were an experiment of some sort is unknown. But once the Elder race disappeared, the tension quickly escalated to open warfare and violence on a large scale.

The battles fought on these planets are usually a strange mix of mechanized ground vehicles and melee weapons. Some firearms and pulse cannons are present, making them hotly contested prizes among the warring factions. A decade ago, a Newcomer coalition took control of one of the larger fortress-cities on the planet. Renaming it “York3” (aka “New New York”) they have since become an active, and successful, player in the ongoing struggles for dominance here. Synthetic and robotic combatants (serving as expendable soldiers) are another recent addition to the battlefield.

Malakai

FACTION	None		
CAPITAL	None		
SURFACE	Nuclear Ruin		
POP	None (0 – 0 – 0 – 0)		
GRAV	Normal	DAY	28 hrs
ATMO	Dense, toxic	YEAR	325 days

Malakai is a planet with a thick, poisonous, and radioactive atmosphere covering endless ruins. The planet is very hot and currently uninhabitable. The terrain is a mix of biomes, now all twisted, stunted, and desolate. The oceans are brown and the sky an ugly mix of soot and toxic gas. It seems clear that a devastating war or attack occurred here 5 to 10 millennia ago. Evidence suggests nuclear weapons and possibly orbital bombardment.

The ruins that remain are towering skeletal structures made of advanced alloys and plastic composites. This is about all that has endured the centuries since Malakai's armageddon. Very little has been discovered about the culture other than half-melted statuary of winged humanoids. What little can be discerned suggests an angelic appearance rather than Draugmorrian.

There are factions among the Newcomers who are adept at salvage operations in high-radiation environments but, so far, none have made a concerted effort to exploit this inhospitable planet.



Concordium

FACTION	Tetrarchy of the Chosen		
CAPITAL	Wycliff		
SURFACE	Mixed Temperate		
POP	Very High (28 – 25 – 27 – 20)		
GRAV	Normal	DAY	24 hrs
ATMO	Normal	YEAR	395 days

This is the capital of the Tetrarchy of the Chosen, which has member states on several different worlds. All four Chosen races have sizable populations here. The most powerful government in Unity System is known as the Tetrarchy because it is divided into four states (Human, V'la, Draugmorre, and Kyryk). Each state has a single ruler or spokesperson and one of these four serves as the Tetrarch for a 1024 day term. The current Tetrarch is the V'la representative (also head of the Confluence). The four states that comprise the Tetrarchy are:

- The V'la Confluence
- The Draugmorrian Brood of Song
- Syrys Hive
- The Dominion of Xeos Two (human)

The planet Concordium is run by a local administration that governs the planet and handles the workings of the Tetrarchy as a whole while letting the four member states govern themselves as much as possible.

The planet has a great variety of terrain and biomes – much like old Earth, but with about 60% of the surface covered by water. There are several cities and settlements scattered throughout, many with a mixed population. Large cities, with an impressive variety of architecture, are common as this is one of the most metropolitan worlds in the sector. In addition to what humans would consider a 'normal city,' there are floating Draugmorrian citadels, vast underground warrens, and even domed colonies on the ocean floor.

As on Terra Nova, the planetary capital of Wycliff is built from the remains of an Ark habitation sphere, though the dome itself is gone, and the circle of the core city is surrounded by a sprawl of suburbs and industry. This foundation was here before the first Chosen and so is from no known Ark. The city is set upon white granite cliffs overlooking the Golaran Sea. The towers of the city follow the cliffs in either direction to frame a great harbor, and V'la structures continue on beneath the waves.

Concordium has almost no axial tilt plus a nearly circular orbit, and so has no perceptible change of seasons. Temperatures depend on latitude (tropical at the equator and cooler towards the poles) but not the time of year. Shedding of leaves is an ongoing process rather than all at once, and animals will migrate for food but not climate.

This planet has been home to countless civilizations before, so ruins and archaeological sites are common. It is of particular note that this planet shows no signs of recent terraforming, making it rather unique in this artificial star system.

Syrys

FACTION	Syrys Hive under the Tetrarchy		
CAPITAL	Gol Garamon		
SURFACE	Mixed terrain, but uniformly cold		
POP	Moderate (3 – 5 – 92 – 0)		
GRAV	Heavy	DAY	24 hrs
ATMO	Normal	YEAR	647 days

(SEER-iss) Syrys is a cold, wintry world and the Kyryk “homeworld” in Nexus Sector. On the edge of the system’s “life zone,” its atmosphere has been tailored to support life and retain enough heat to keep the world habitable. The terrain varies but is uniformly cold. Smooth oceans cover half of the surface but are permanently frozen north of 45 degrees latitude. Closer to the equator than this, plant and animal life has adapted to the environment and is plentiful.

There are low mountain ranges, forested plains, and arid highlands. Trees run on the short side due to the high gravity, and animal life tends to be low and broad (akin to badgers, bears, and crabs rather than deer and storks). Geothermal activity is common, and hot springs give rise to oases of warmth in the cold plains and forests. Syrys has a retrograde rotation, meaning (from the surface) the sun rises in the west and sets in the east.

This world is the home of the Syrys Hive – a collection of hundreds of Kyryk clans united in a complex web of castes and fealty. The whole structure is governed by a charter that appoints a deep hierarchy of 128 ministries, 16 high ministers, and a single Prime Minister. Syrys is the “Kyryk state” in the Tetrarchy, with the Prime Minister serving as Tetrarch when his turn comes around.

This planet is a very close approximation to the Kyryk homeworld biome (also called Kyryk), right down to the high gravity and numerous large predators. These predators are an important part of Kyryk culture, being key in various rites of passage, and also giving the defenders something constructive to do. Though modern protein vats are commonly used for the builder/defender metamorphosis, many traditionalists still prefer to hunt, kill, and occupy a large beast for their transformation.



SYRYS HIVE

The majority of clans dwell in underground warrens and artificial cavern systems, but the surface is home to sprawling industrial complexes and shipyards. Unlike those found on the homeworld, these complexes run on advanced technology that produces negligible pollution. The planet’s orbit and both of its small moons (Varak and Durodar) contain additional complexes and a scattering of colonies.

Valaquentarsis

(VAL-ah-kwen-tar-sis) This subsystem is ruled by the Brood of Song and their single queen, though many lesser broods are present as well.

Valaquentarsis is a white micro-star with three small worlds (formerly moons of the gas giant). The Valaquentarsis subsystem orbits the Unity star once every ten and a half years.

Phindarious

FACTION	Brood of Song under the Tetrarchy		
CAPITAL	None		
SURFACE	Temperate swamps & sheer mountains		
POP	Very Low (96 – 2 – 2 – 0)		
GRAV	Normal	DAY	22 hrs
ATMO	Slightly toxic	YEAR	12 days

Swamps and salt marshes dominate the terrain, with steep basalt mountains rising sheer from the gloomy mists. A few settlements and chemical refineries dot the landscape, but most of the world is unsettled. The atmosphere is slightly toxic due to methane vapor making domes a necessary part of any settlement.

There is little here to draw attention except for the wide variety of plant and animal life. While there are many native Terran species present, something in the chemistry of the biome accelerates mutation, making the much of the wildlife familiar but strange. Some examples are six legged crocodiles, gargantuan snakes of odd hue, and hallucination-inducing mosquitoes. The environment has had a similar effect on the creatures and plants seeded here from alien worlds as well (with some truly bizarre results).

Draugmorre will sometimes hunt here but the foul smelling atmosphere makes it more of a chore than a pleasure. More often beasts will be captured and taken off-world to fight in arenas or live in more pleasant hunting preserves. These beasts, and various legal and illegal chemicals, are the only exports of note from this moon.

Delphindaragos

FACTION	Brood of Song under the Tetrarchy		
CAPITAL	Talyndaragos		
SURFACE	Cool ocean & crystal archipelagos		
POP	Low (85 – 9 – 5 – 1)		
GRAV	Normal	DAY	32 days
ATMO	Normal	YEAR	16 days

A cold sea covers most of this small world. Crystal isles float in drifting archipelagos and crystal enclaves float above – home to esoteric monasteries and other students of the Celestial Choir. Due to their non-metallic make-up, these citadels must rely on the Draugmorrian spell chanters to keep them aloft. Even though these enclaves are small compared to the iron burgs of home, it is an impressive show of power.

The indigenous life on this world is all aquatic or amphibious and consists largely of crustaceans and fish (or a mix of the two). Many of the local species can generate light and/or electricity to aid in hunting, communications, and defense.

This world has a slow rotation, giving rise to a month long day followed by a month long night. During the night cycle, temperatures drop considerably and ice forms around most of the islands. Many of the floating citadels migrate to stay on the sunward side of the planet.

Vhal Zeron

FACTION	Brood of Song under the Tetrarchy		
CAPITAL	Broodholm of Vhal		
SURFACE	Jungle and forest		
POP	Heavy (90 – 6 – 4 – 0)		
GRAV	Light	DAY	24 hrs
ATMO	Normal	YEAR	27 days

This is the oldest capital of the Draugmorrian brood – the place where the first dragonmen were settled in Nexus Sector. Ancient cities drift over deep jungles and primordial forests crisscrossed by wide rivers. The webbing of warm seas is shallow but gives rise to some impressive waves in the light gravity.

The capital city, largest of the floating citadels, is the Broodholm of Vhal. This burg of gleaming metal has towering ornate spires on the upper surface and beautifully wrought carvings and runic script covering most visible surfaces.

The world does not naturally form these floating burs (as on the Draugmorrian homeworld) but the most powerful elementalists use their arts to craft molten steel which, when cooled, can be held aloft using subtle magics and the gravitic grid webbing the mantle of Vhal Zeron. Given the scarcity of such resources, a citadel of steel is a mark of prestige unmatched in Draugmorrian culture.

Long ago the Xyr adjusted the gravity of this moon to about half Earth normal, which matches the Draugmorrian homeworld and allows the inhabitants to fly unassisted. Those who dwell long on Vhal Zeron may find the ‘normal’ gravity found on most other worlds in the sector uncomfortable.



SEAL OF THE BROOD OF SONG AND
THE TWELVE LESSER BROODS OF VHAL ZERON

This world has long been in the grip of the Brood of Song and so mysticism is dominant over technology. There are many arcane schools and secret cabals operating on the steamy world, and a dozen minor broods who are vassals of the Brood of Song. As with any large gathering of Draugmorre, political scheming and contests of dominance are in abundance. Such conflict here is usually conducted covertly and focuses more on loss of prestige than loss of life.

The Brood of Song is also the “Draugmorrian state” in the Tetrarchy, with the brood Queen serving as Tetrarch when needed. The Brood of Steel has been excluded from holding political office in the Tetrarchy until they join with the Brood of Song – forming a single state. At present, they have no intention of merging.

Z'ln

FACTION	The Confluence under the Tetrarchy		
CAPITAL	K'tal (V'la for 'Capital')		
SURFACE	Aquatic gas giant		
POP	Vast (0 – 1 – 0 – 99)		
GRAV	Normal	DAY	14.5 hrs
ATMO	Liquid	YEAR	21 years

Commonly mispronounced (ZEY-lon) though (za-LIN) is more correct, this world is an actual Gas Giant that has not been turned into a micro-star because it has a temperate water layer much like the V'la homeworld. It is the official home of the Confluence, which is the "V'la state" in the Tetrarchy. Other colonies consider themselves extensions of the Confluence – making the V'la the only politically-united people of the Chosen.

There are several spherical, air-filled cities floating in the liquid zone of the planet – a habitat for non-V'la visitors. Craft specially designed to pass through the layers of the gas giant and into space are used to ferry people and cargo to and from orbital stations. Otherwise the environment is much like the V'la imagine their homeworld to have been. Light comes from the stormy layer above and from vast carpets of luminous algae. Heat filters up from the dense chemical seas further down. There are free-floating coral colonies the size of mountain ranges, and life in an abundance of varieties. Most of the V'la civilization is in the equatorial region – not because of the environment, but because the ocean is so vast (hundreds of times larger than Earth's) that the population would become hopelessly scattered otherwise.

While the V'la have many organic technology "factories" in their aquatic environment, most of the conventional industry is conducted on the moon of V'ryd where solid ground and air-filled caverns can be utilized. It is also much easier to build and launch spacecraft from the orbiting moon.

Z'ln has two inhabited moons, neither of which have been terraformed. Z'ln also has a modest ring system with an abundance of ice and unharvested minerals. The V'la have refused permission for anyone to exploit these resources.

V'ryd

FACTION	The Confluence		
CAPITAL	None		
SURFACE	Crystal & cratered stone		
POP	Low (21 – 16 – 8 – 55)		
GRAV	Light	DAY	21 days
ATMO	Thin, Toxic	YEAR	21 days

(VEER-id) There are numerous domed cities on this non-terraformed world. It is used by the V'la for industry and commerce and so the cities have both air-filled and water-filled sections. Much of the surface of this moon is a variety of colored crystal, with some spires the size of mountains. The light from the distant Unity star can cause some spectacular light displays in the thin, ammonia-laden atmosphere. Advanced technology is used to shield the cities and draw energy from Z'ln's considerable radiation belt. Though adjusted somewhat in the cities, gravity on this small world is light.

B'tar

FACTION	The Confluence		
CAPITAL	None		
SURFACE	Barren stone and ice		
POP	Low (1 – 14 – 28 – 57)		
GRAV	Normal	DAY	29 days
ATMO	Trace	YEAR	29 days

(buh-TAR) Most habitation here is sub-surface, using geothermal energy and artificial lighting to farm in vast underground grottos. B'tar is home to several D'ralai ranches, where the ape-like hosts are raised and trained. The artificial host industry (creating mechanical versions of the D'ralai) also has its roots here, though most actual manufacturing is now done on V'ryd. The surface is a thin mix of chemical ice and slush over cratered stone and the atmosphere is almost non-existent.

Air-grown food is a delicacy to V'la, and the D'ralai are important for those who travel to other worlds. Beyond those industries and a little mineral extraction, there is nothing of interest on this barren moon.

Rhudendaria

(ROO-den-dar-ee-ah) A single micro-star with four terraformed planetoids, this is fallow ground in the hinterlands of civilized space. There are four terraformed moons rich in flora and fauna from various Chosen biomes, but no Chosen race has a presence. This was at the request of the Xyr, and so far their wishes have been honored. A Draugmorrian brood ship disappeared when attempting to land on Pentalion – either a crash or a Xyr guardian enforcing their master’s wishes. The moons, which were named by the Draugmorrian, are outlined below. Rhudendaria itself orbits the Unity star once every 49 years.

Deralis

FACTION	None		
CAPITAL	None		
SURFACE	Fog-shrouded, temperate forests		
POP	None (0 – 0 – 0 – 0)		
GRAV	Heavy	DAY	25 hrs
ATMO	Dense	YEAR	9 days

Heavily forested with temperate climes and glass-like oceans, this world holds an abundance of life adapted to the heavy gravity, but there are no flying creatures. Fog is almost constant at lower elevations. Some of the larger trees incorporate minerals into their structure to provide support, and the processed wood from these dark grey Deralis trees is very strong and light. Rugged chains of hills rise above the trees but there are no real mountains.

Pentalion

FACTION	None		
CAPITAL	None		
SURFACE	Tropical archipelago		
POP	None (0 – 0 – 0 – 0)		
GRAV	Normal	DAY	14 hrs
ATMO	Normal	YEAR	15 days

Pentalion is tropical with warm, shallow seas and a profusion of islands. Humidity is high and rainstorms are a daily occurrence except at the poles. The flora and fauna (both marine and terrestrial) display a wild profusion of color unmatched on most

worlds. From orbit the archipelagos look like brightly colored jewels strung across the azure seas.

Aldarion

FACTION	None		
CAPITAL	None		
SURFACE	Warm deserts, arid highlands		
POP	None (0 – 0 – 0 – 0)		
GRAV	Normal	DAY	24 hrs
ATMO	Thin	YEAR	25 days

Deserts, arid highlands, and mesa-like mountains cover much of the surface of this small, warm world. The atmosphere is thin and dry, but breathable. There are no large oceans, but long winding seas stretch across both hemispheres – connecting at the poles. Animal life is mainly imported from Chosen biomes. While there is some evidence of extensive underground ruins, the surface is otherwise pristine.

Lindercyndaris

FACTION	None		
CAPITAL	None		
SURFACE	Windswept plains, volcanic mountains		
POP	None (0 – 0 – 0 – 0)		
GRAV	Normal	DAY	12 hrs
ATMO	Normal	YEAR	30.5 days

Lindercyndaris is arctic near the poles, with cool plains, rolling hills, and sparse forests elsewhere. Several volcanic mountain chains divide both continents (one filling most of each hemisphere, north and south). All of the “animal” life here, both on land and sea, is insect-like – though some has evolved to monstrous size (incorporating pseudolungs and other structures to compensate). Cold winds are almost constant and have done much to shape the terrain.

Some plains are crisscrossed by huge geometrical patterns – resulting from high walls built specifically to shape blowing sand into pre-designed forms. The ancient and intricate patterns of line and shadow were apparently constructed for orbital viewing.

K'ndaros

(KIN-dar-ohs) This is the Unity subsystem nearest to Chrysalis System. It has resisted attempts at annexation by the Tetrarchy, which is ironic given that the system is an excellent example of the Chosen races living in close proximity (albeit, not always peaceably). Each of the four moons is a single, independent, political state. Currently, the system deals heavily with the Tonshu Empire as well as both Unity and Chrysalis. The subsystem orbits Unity every 93 years.

Vaeloch

FACTION	Domain of Vaeloch		
CAPITAL	Mount Ulindarus		
SURFACE	Forests, swamps		
POP	High (83 – 16 – 1 – 0)		
GRAV	Normal	DAY	24 hrs
ATMO	Normal	YEAR	4 days

This Draugmorrian moon is one of the few places that the Brood of Song and Brood of Steel dwell together in peace. This is mainly because their respective enclaves are small – roughly equal in size to the sixteen lesser broods present here. A senate of 36 representatives rules the collection of provinces known as the Domain of Vaeloch.

This fertile world is home to forests of gargantuan trees and swamps thick with amphibious predators. Where the land is clear and dry enough, food communes raise crops and livestock. An established caste of human workers, toiling beneath Draugmorrian overseers, provides much of the labor on these farms.

There are only a few spell singers here who are powerful enough to create or maintain a floating citadel, so the majority of broodholms are built in spires atop the planet's rare mountain or in the boughs of the largest trees. These "fixed" seats of government have forced the Draugmorre to adopt a slightly less fluid pattern of alliances, but otherwise the Machiavellian intrigues continue as normal. Of particular note is the Brood of Shadow, a guild of spies and assassins that has flourished in the fluid political environment lacking a dominant faction.

VAELOCH AL'IDRISI A'DEL ZYRYZ



Al'Idrisi

FACTION	Territory of the Terra Novan Theocracy		
CAPITAL	New Rijahd		
SURFACE	Cold arid highlands, lush canyons		
POP	High (7 – 90 – 3 – 0)		
GRAV	Normal	DAY	24 hrs
ATMO	Thin and Normal	YEAR	8 days

Al'Idrisi is a human outpost known as the Far Diocese – a branch of the Terra Novan Theocracy though with a fair measure of autonomy. The primary city, New Rijahd, is an impressive metropolis – a burgeoning center of culture and trade.

The three large continents of this world are marked by numerous, massive canyons. The thin air of the highlands is cold and prone to snow, but the depths of the deep ravines hold lush gardens with numerous warm rivers and tumbling waterfalls. It is here that most of the population gathers. Many of the cities are built into the cliff faces, while the starports and heavy industry spread across the cold plains above.

The people of Al'Idrisi are dependent on imports for much of their food – most of it coming from communes on Vaeloch and kelp farms on A'del. A steady flow of money from the Theocracy covers this expense.

As with all four inhabited worlds in this subsystem, there are a fair number of stations in orbit over Al'Idrisi. These are a mixture of private, corporate, and government facilities.

A'del

FACTION	The Confluence		
CAPITAL	Westport		
SURFACE	Ocean		
POP	High (3 – 5 – 92 – 0)		
GRAV	Normal	DAY	24 hrs
ATMO	Tainted	YEAR	12 days

Like all V'la colonies in Nexus Sector, A'del is an extension of the Confluence. The planet is covered in green oceans speckled with volcanic islands, many of them active. The air is slightly toxic due to volcanic emissions (requiring a filter for those who dwell outside of the water). The planet has an elliptical orbit and axial tilt that results in the northern hemisphere getting significantly more light than the south. This makes for long summers in the north and long winters in the south of the equator.

Beneath the waves the contemplative invertebrates have established their usual drifting society, though the abundance of fixed landmarks (like islands, and the sea floor) has lead to a much greater density of non-mobile colonies here than on Z'ln.

There are two major starports on the surface of the planet. The first (named Westport) is in the center of the western hemisphere, on mountainous island at the equator. The second has been constructed on a massive floating platform in the center of the eastern hemisphere. Predictably, it is known as Eastport. V'la colonies are clustered beneath the waves near both 'dry' cities, which serve as the primary links with orbit and destinations beyond.

While there is some conventional industry on islands and in orbiting factories, A'del focuses mainly on organic and chemical technology that can be constructed in their aquatic environment. These are the "traditional" technologies of the V'la, and A'del has developed a reputation for producing high-quality, custom tailored products of this sort. The seas also hold miles of cultured kelp farms and great shoals of fish specifically bred for food. There are also "pharms" on the several of the larger islands – where genetically modified animals are grown to produce tailored pharmaceuticals.

Zyryz

FACTION	Zyryz Hive		
CAPITAL	Port Xera		
SURFACE	Windswept mountains		
POP	High (0 – 8 – 92 – 0)		
GRAV	Normal	DAY	24 hrs
ATMO	Normal	YEAR	25 days

This is home to the collection of Kyryk clans exiled from Syrys after an unsuccessful attempt at revolution. Even though these clans comprised a majority of the soldiery and weapon crafter's guilds, the coup attempt was bloodless – thanks mainly to Xyr influence and their offer of the world at K'ndaros.

This windswept world is covered by temperate mountains rather than the snowy wastes that Kyryk prefer, but the tenacious builders and defenders have made a home of it. Many of the clans of Zyryz Hive have even taken to dwelling aboveground, creating squat but sturdy cities in the valleys between the windy peaks. There are no oceans on the world, but there are many crystal clear lakes and rivers lined with flora similar to pine and sage.

The united clans of Zyryz often engage in wargames to give their soldiers something to do and to keep their skills sharp. In recent years, several of the clans have also taken to hiring out cadres of mercenaries. Though resources are scarce, the Kyryk here are finding some useful mineral veins simply by delving deeper than any who have come before. With the disappearance of the Xyr it is suspected that Zyryz weapon makers may soon be using the resources to construct prohibited weapons of war, perhaps with an eye towards returning to Syrys.

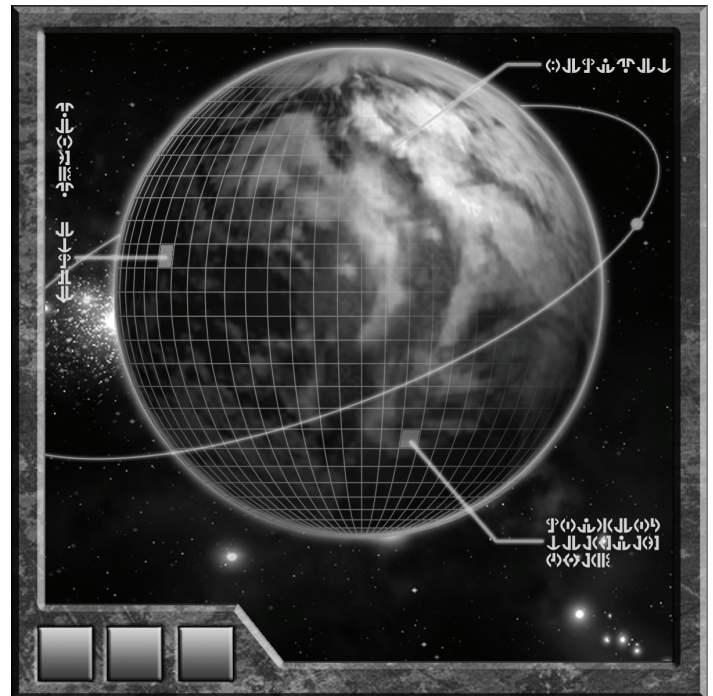
Zyryz was known as "Xera (ZAIR-ah)" before it was colonized by the Kyryk. Many humans still use this name to avoid confusing Zyryz with Syrys (not to mention "Xyr"). The capitol city is known as Port Xera even by the Kyryk.

Ryr

FACTION	None		
CAPITAL	None		
SURFACE	Frozen ice and rock		
POP	None (0 – 0 – 0 – 0)		
GRAV	Light	DAY	5.2 days
ATMO	Thin, toxic	YEAR	172 years

This small world is a dark and barren core of stone and iron wrapped in black chemical ice. Gravity is very light on this untterraformed rock. The thin atmosphere is mainly nitrogen, with some methane and carbon dioxide added into the mix. Surface temperatures are generally below 300° F.

Some faction or other usually sets up shop here each time its long orbit brings it between Unity and Chrysalis. The Kyryk were the last who tried to establish a permanent colony here but the remote location eventually made that infeasible. The small planet is currently uninhabited and holds nothing of interest other than some abandoned outposts and artificial caverns. It is noteworthy mainly as the most remote and desolate location still within the boundaries of civilized space.



The New Worlds

This star system has been officially named E'lan. Though inhabited, the mineral and petrochemical resources of these worlds have not yet been plundered. That makes them extremely valuable to the nations of Unity and Chrysalis systems. In addition, there are factions seeking to make a new home, or establish new nations, far from the political pressures of the home systems.

Beyond what is listed here there are other, uncharted, worlds in the E'lan system (at least one Mercury-like planet starward of Imrael, and a pair of small, ringed gas giants between the T'dyrian Belt and Lochlyn subsystem). They are not habitable, have not yet been officially surveyed, and do not have official names.

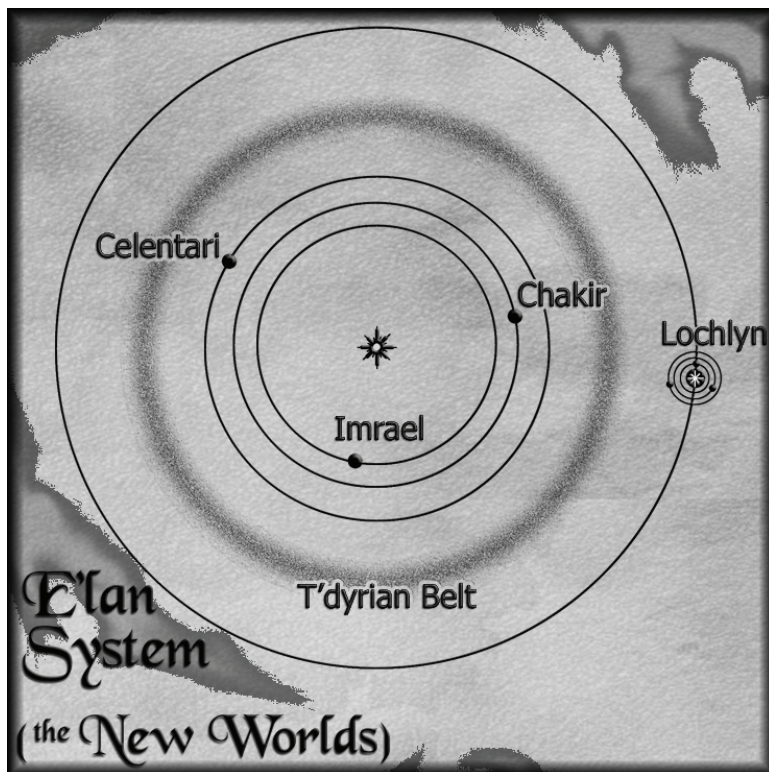
Imrael

FACTION	None		
CAPITAL	None		
SURFACE	Desert		
POP	Trace (race unconfirmed)		
GRAV	Normal	DAY	14 days
ATMO	Normal	YEAR	248 days

The closest habitable world to the E'lan star, this planet is a hot desert broken by frequent mountain ranges and escarpments. Most rivers are seasonal and flow down from the mountains to form numerous canyons, lined with greenery. The occasional oasis can be also found even in the heart of the dunes. The few seas are small, shallow, and too salty to support life. The silvery sky is cloud-free except for a few weeks twice a year (when the seasons change and humid air from the poles shifts towards the equator). Gravity is close to Earth-normal but the planet has a slow rotation, giving rise to week-long days and nights. There appears to be water buried far underground and much of the large, insect-like fauna burrows deep to tap into this resource.

The terrain also forms basalt forests – towering structures which commonly erode holes and fluted pillars. These produce an eerie music when the hot winds blow in off the desert. Though naturally occurring for the most part, such places appear to be religious sites for whatever people dwelt here in the past. Half buried ruins have been found in the depths of the desert, but no real investigation has yet been conducted. Large cavern systems are also prevalent.

While the environment is uncomfortable for most of the Chosen, the lack of native resistance may make Imrael the easiest of the new worlds to exploit for mineral resources. Heat-regulating chemicals in the upper atmosphere show that the planet has been terraformed, but there does not appear to be a gravitic web embedded in the mantle. The gravity and rotation of the world are unaltered. If the E'lanari are present on Imrael, they have yet to be encountered – though there has been evidence of *some* intelligent race dwelling in the deep desert.



Chakir

FACTION	E'lanari		
CAPITAL	Unknown		
SURFACE	Temperate, pristine		
POP	High (E'lanari)		
GRAV	Normal	DAY	32 hrs
ATMO	Normal	YEAR	344 days

(SHA-keer) This appears to be the E'lanari "homeworld" in Nexus Sector, as there is a wide diversity of tribes and a large population. The planet has a great variety of climates and biomes yet shows no signs of terraforming. The surface is 70% water and, on the whole, resembles Earth about 20,000 years ago – the main difference being a preponderance of large carnivores bred by the E'lanari for defense, hunting, and war.

There are numerous small continents, which allow warm equatorial currents to easily reach the polar regions – keeping them temperate and free of permanent ice. Like Earth, Chakir has a single moon, "Ra," but it is ice-covered and almost habitable, unlike Luna.



Ra

FACTION	None		
CAPITAL	None		
SURFACE	Frozen ice and ocean		
POP	None		
GRAV	Light	DAY	21.3 days
ATMO	Thin	YEAR	344 days

This cold moon has a molten core surrounded by rock and then miles of ice (perhaps used in terraforming the system long ago). It is tidally locked with Chakir – always keeping the same face towards the planet. Eons ago, a large asteroid made it past Chakir and impacted Ra near the center of the Chakir-facing hemisphere. This impact fractured the mantle, allowing heat from the molten core to flow upwards and melt the ice in a roughly circular area several hundreds of miles across.

To this day there remains a vast sea of liquid water in the middle of that hemisphere – kept just above the freezing point by tidal flexing and heat welling up from below. At the center of this cold sea (directly above the break in the mantle) primitive life has evolved. A green-black mat of kelp floats on the ocean's surface and simple marine life flourishes beneath.

Viewed from Chakir, the satellite bears a disturbing similarity to a human eye: the vast mat of kelp forms a dark pupil surrounded by the blue ocean which is in turn girded by shining white ice. This led the first cartographer to name the moon "The Eye of Ra," which has already been shortened to just "Ra." Some tribes of E'lanari on Chakir use the image of their unique moon in religious art. There are stories of some tribes who consider blue-eyed humans as divine beings. There are other stories of E'lanari who collect such eyes to use as holy symbols.

The atmosphere of this world is thin and very cold. Oxygen levels are also very low once you move away from the liquid water. Gravity is light and stellar radiation levels are high due to the thin atmosphere and lack of an embedded gravitic grid.

Celentari

FACTION	E'lanari		
CAPITAL	Unknown		
SURFACE	Cool & cloudy, mixed terrain		
POP	Moderate (E'lanari and new colonies)		
GRAV	Normal	DAY	28 hrs
ATMO	Dense	YEAR	50 months

Distant from the E'lan star but shrouded in heavy cloud cover, retained heat from the molten interior makes the surface temperature cool but habitable. The shadowy surface is approximately 65% water and the continents display a variety of terrain. The entire planet experiences heavy rain, snow fall, and constant cloud or fog cover. Lakes and rivers are plentiful and the oceans are non-saline. Each season is approximately a year long. The plant life on Celentari is grey or grayish-blue in color, drawing chemicals from the atmosphere to supplement the weak photosynthesis. Geothermal activity is common.

The E'lanari tribes here are both more militant and savage than those found elsewhere. Their tendency is to attack strangers on sight. They also show signs of cannibalism and death-worship. Like the plants, they tend towards grey and black in color. Both the Theocracy and the Tetrarchy have established colonies here, and both have come into conflict with the natives.

Celentari is larger and denser than Earth, giving it a higher gravity. It has four small moons, two round and two irregular (probably captured asteroids). All are lifeless.

The T'dyrian Belt

A dense belt of asteroids encircling the E'lan star. There are no colonies or large installations here and the area is ripe for exploration and exploitation. There have been reports, however, of large void-dwelling creatures apparently feeding off of some of the mineral rich rocks, and ships that have come too close. Overall, the composition of the asteroids here is similar to those found in Chrysalis System.

In addition to the rocks orbiting between Celentari and Lochlyn, there are many to be found orbiting further in system, or on long elliptical orbits which carry them much closer to the sun. Like Sol, all of the systems in Nexus Sector have such bodies (most less than a mile across) but they are few and far between compared to what is in the belt. Still, they make a good out-of-way location for those in need of such – and they might be more convenient to harvest as their orbits bring them near to inner-system worlds.

Lochlyn

(LAHK-lin) Lochlyn is a collapsed gas giant micro-star – the only one in E’lan System. Its three largest moons have been terraformed and support life. The E’lanari are present on all three worlds, though not in great numbers. There is also a great variety of indigenous life. Twenty-one fledgling colonies are present, each seeking to establish a beachhead for further exploration and colonization.

In addition to the three terraformed worlds, there are 26 other satellites of Lochlyn. Most are no more than irregular asteroids but half a dozen are more interesting in terms of size and composition. While some may be worth exploring for resources, none are even close to habitable. Lochlyn orbits the E’lan star once every 30 years. The inhabited worlds, being former moons of the Lochlyn gas giant, all have a 32 hour day, the same as Chakir.

Gheldeheim

FACTION	None		
CAPITAL	None		
SURFACE	Mountainous, rocky		
POP	Sparse (E'lanari and new colonies)		
GRAV	Normal	DAY	32 hrs
ATMO	Dense	YEAR	4 days

(GEL-duh-hayhm) Gheldeheim is marked by towering granite mountain ranges sparkling with iron pyrite. Frequent storms and snow lash the heights, giving rise to numerous waterfalls, rivers, and lakes in the rocky valleys below. Tidal flexing makes geysers, hot springs, and tectonic activity common. The poles are covered in permanent ice and there are no seas, though some of the fresh water lakes are quite large (similar to the Great Lakes).

The atmosphere is dense, but not deep – so while it is hot and steamy at lower elevations, it becomes rapidly colder as altitude increases. There is a wide variety of animal life present, some similar to, but not quite the same as, that native to Chosen worlds. All of the trees and shrubs on this world are conifers. Moss and lichen are also prevalent.

Kvinherad

FACTION	None		
CAPITAL	None		
SURFACE	Dessert and savanna		
POP	Sparse (E’lanari and new colonies)		
GRAV	Normal	DAY	32 hrs
ATMO	Normal	YEAR	8 days

(vin-HAIR-ad) The equatorial belt of this moon is a great desert of grey sand. The Polar Regions are more temperate, with a mix of forests and savannas. There are occasional deep craters predating the terraforming effort. The deepest ones allow for water to gather and life to flourish.

Drammenfjord

FACTION	None		
CAPITAL	Haven		
SURFACE	Cool, mountains, forests, swamps		
POP	Sparse (E’lanari and new colonies)		
GRAV	Normal	DAY	32 hrs
ATMO	Normal	YEAR	16 days

(DRAM-men-fyord) Rugged coastal ranges and dark isles rise sheer from the cool oceans that cover half of this world. The interior is marked by deep valleys containing a mix of deciduous forests and swamps. Caves and cavern systems are common, many stretching from one valley to the next beneath the towering mountain ranges. Valleys near the equator are more like jungles than forests. The poles and the uppermost mountain heights are buried beneath permanent glaciers. The fauna of this world is primarily large and reptilian, somewhat reminiscent of terrestrial dinosaurs. There are several species of carnivorous plants as well.

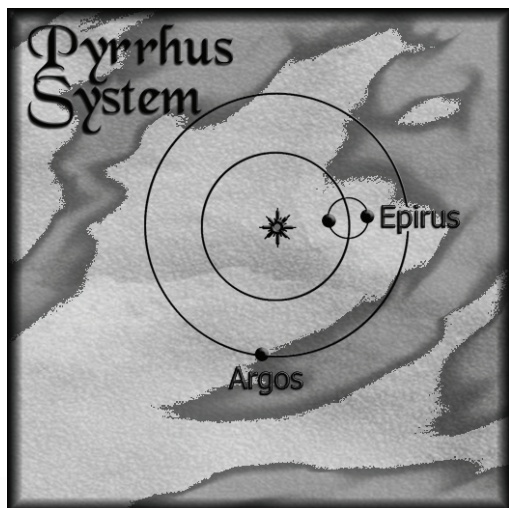
“Haven” is the site of first landfall on the New Worlds and the only colony large enough to be considered a (small) city. Port Speranza (hope) is a new starport in orbit over this moon. Built by a consortium of Newcomer corporations, it is the main destination for Terran ships crossing the void from Chrysalis. Planet-side colonies are usually built in defensible valleys, or within caves. All but the V’la have representatives somewhere in this subsystem.

System IV

Just decades ago (coincident with the disappearance of the Xyr) a new star appeared in the sky – a bloody red light in the dark nebulae beyond the Maelstrom. It may have been a simple shift in the cosmic winds that just now revealed this uncharted system or it may have been a tremendous use of the Art by an Elder race to kindle this new light. Whatever the case, the crimson star has planets circling it and something dwells upon these worlds; something powerful, dark, and malicious. These beings are either minions of the Kor'Diel or the Kor'Diel themselves, ancient enemies of the Xyr. There have been scattered reports of synthetic monstrosities – from warbots the size of battleships to near-human synthetics sent to infiltrate inhabited worlds.

None who have entered the system have lived to speak of it, but the denizens of System IV (dubbed “Pyrrhus” by human cartographers) have on occasion made the long journey across the void to Chrysalis system and Unity. It seems that their purpose thus far has been to covertly investigate and test the strength of the Chosen. There are few who doubt hostilities will soon escalate. The threat from System IV is one of the primary excuses used for military build up among the more militaristic factions – the Chosen are not at all prepared to defend themselves from a real threat. The Xyr have always protected the Crucible.

Officially, System IV has been dubbed the Pyrrhus System. The name hasn't really caught on. It is very likely that there are several other planets in the system. So far, the intervening nebula and other factors have made reconnaissance impossible.



Epirus Alpha and Beta

FACTION	Kor'Diel		
CAPITAL	Unknown		
SURFACE	Unknown		
POP	Unknown (0 – 0 – 0 – 0)		
GRAV	Normal	DAY	32 hrs
ATMO	Normal	YEAR	256 days

Binary worlds. Both planets appear to be completely industrialized, with entire continents covered in manufacturing facilities, power production plants, and waste processing or salvage yards. Distant scans confirm the use of fusion power sources and other prohibited technologies. Thus far, there is no conclusive evidence that the inhabitants are skilled at the mystic arts.

Argos

FACTION	Kor'Diel		
CAPITAL	Unknown		
SURFACE	Unknown		
POP	Unknown (0 – 0 – 0 – 0)		
GRAV	Normal	DAY	32 hrs
ATMO	Thick, toxic?	YEAR	512 days

Though Argos is shrouded by a thick, toxic looking atmosphere, the planet is a strong source of radio and energy emissions indicative of a large population. There are several large facilities and a single barren moon in orbit.

Intermittent signals and emissions have also been detected at other locations in the system but it has yet to be determined which of these are planetary bodies and which are just stations or ships floating in the void.

Other Areas of Interest

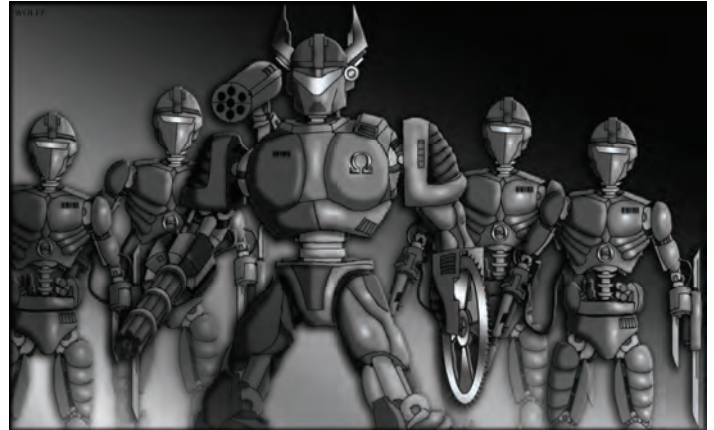
In addition to the worlds and moons in the Crucible systems, there are a few other important areas that bear mentioning.

Tonshu Archipelago

Between Unity and Chrysalis lies the Tonshu Archipelago – a wide nebula and debris field of interstellar material. One of the few places outside of the New Worlds that has not been extensively harvested already, it is now the home of the Tokoshima Empire. Ten city-sized space stations, plus many smaller outposts and asteroid colonies, lie scattered across the resource-rich nebulae.

The Imperial Palace is in Azuchi – a large asteroid with a hollow, crystal-lined, interior (a gigantic geode) while the business capital is a lavish complex known as Momoyama, which is an independent district of the city-station of Takamatsu. With each city a semi-independent prefecture, the empire can field considerable economic clout and a sizable fleet. Though small in relative population and scattered across a large area of open space, it is a nation to be reckoned with.

The Tokoshima Empire is a conglomeration of Newcomer Japanese megacorporations that have formed a nation. There is an Emperor, but he answers to a board of directors. Daimyo and their samurai rule over oppressed wage slaves. Politically, there are three major factions in the empire. These have taken the names Nobunaga, Hideyoshi, and Ieyasu, with the current Emperor being part of the Ieyasu faction. Beneath the feudal corporate strata lies a strong cyber-subculture and an organized network of criminal operations and pirates known as the Nuwokou Ronin.



The Tonshu Consortium (and alliance of megacorps) is the leading creator of robots and Synthetic beings. They are used as slave labor and soldiers and are also exported – almost exclusively to Newcomer enclaves. For example, York3 on war-torn Xeos Two, is always on the lookout for a new brand of “deathbot” to put into the field.

This is also the only place in the Crucible that engages in the large-scale development of nanotechnology. It is a science well known on Terra Mortis but not initially carried to Nexus Sector. While there were certainly scientist who understood parts of the process well, no people, programs, or documents were brought that could replicate the technology alone. Only in the Archipelago have the parts been put back together to form a complete industry. Not only is nanotech being used in Tonshu industry and weapons programs, but “nanomages” are stating to appear even outside of the Archipelago.



Midway Station

A far-flung outpost of the Tokoshima Empire, Midway station is roughly halfway between Tempest and K'ndaros and is a common stopover for voyages between the two systems. This trade route has become known as the Tokaido, named after the road that ran from Edo to Kyoto in ancient Japan.

Prices are high on the station, but not exorbitant. There are full repair and maintenance facilities as well as a wide range of restaurants, shops, hotels, and gaming parlors. The constant flow of people and money, combined with the distance from the seat of government, has allowed the Nuwokou crime syndicate to flourish here. The station drifts to adjust for the slow orbits of those two subsystems and will remain conveniently positioned for the next several decades.

Tyrin's Veil

An arm of the great nebula streams towards the Maelstrom, creating the curtains of Tyrin's Veil – home of the pirates who call themselves Corsairs.

Ark VII

When Ark VII emerged from the Maelstrom event horizon it was damaged and without power – tumbling slowly into space. Some systems and minions came back online but many did not. Two of the four habitation spheres (each self contained and the size of a small city) were damaged and incapable of detaching from the Ark frame, though they still maintained life support to some extent.

Once free of the gravity well, the first undamaged habitation sphere detached and began its pre-programmed journey into Chrysalis system. It eventually reached Terra Nova and set down in an unpopulated region. Today it is the city of New Berlin – a Newcomer enclave recognized by the Theocracy as a foreign territory.

The humans left on the Ark saw that a second sphere was preparing to disembark and so nearly all of the remaining population crowded aboard. Overloaded, this one did not reach Terra Nova but instead became mired in the al'Ghazali Expanse. Many of the inhabitants were offloaded over the course of several months, but many still remain on board as the sphere has become the center of the new colonies in the asteroid field.

Years later, a fleet from the fledgling Tokoshima Empire arrived and managed to detach the third sphere. This was laboriously hauled into the Tonshu Archipelago and disassembled to build several of the city-stations now present there (the hull itself is the foundation of Newedo – capital of Takanowa Prefecture).

The remains of Ark VII still float in interstellar space, moving slowly away from the Maelstrom and towards System IV. The colossal hull, bereft of all but one of its habitation spheres, still has functional life support and gravity, but no propulsion. It has been used as a waypoint by explorers and a den for pirates, but it is so far from inhabited space that it is often left abandoned.

The derelict may yet contain useful treasures and technologies because the Xyr defense systems still protect the inner chambers of the great vessel. Whatever secrets it may hold are drifting ever nearer the dark menace of Pyrrhus.

Trinity

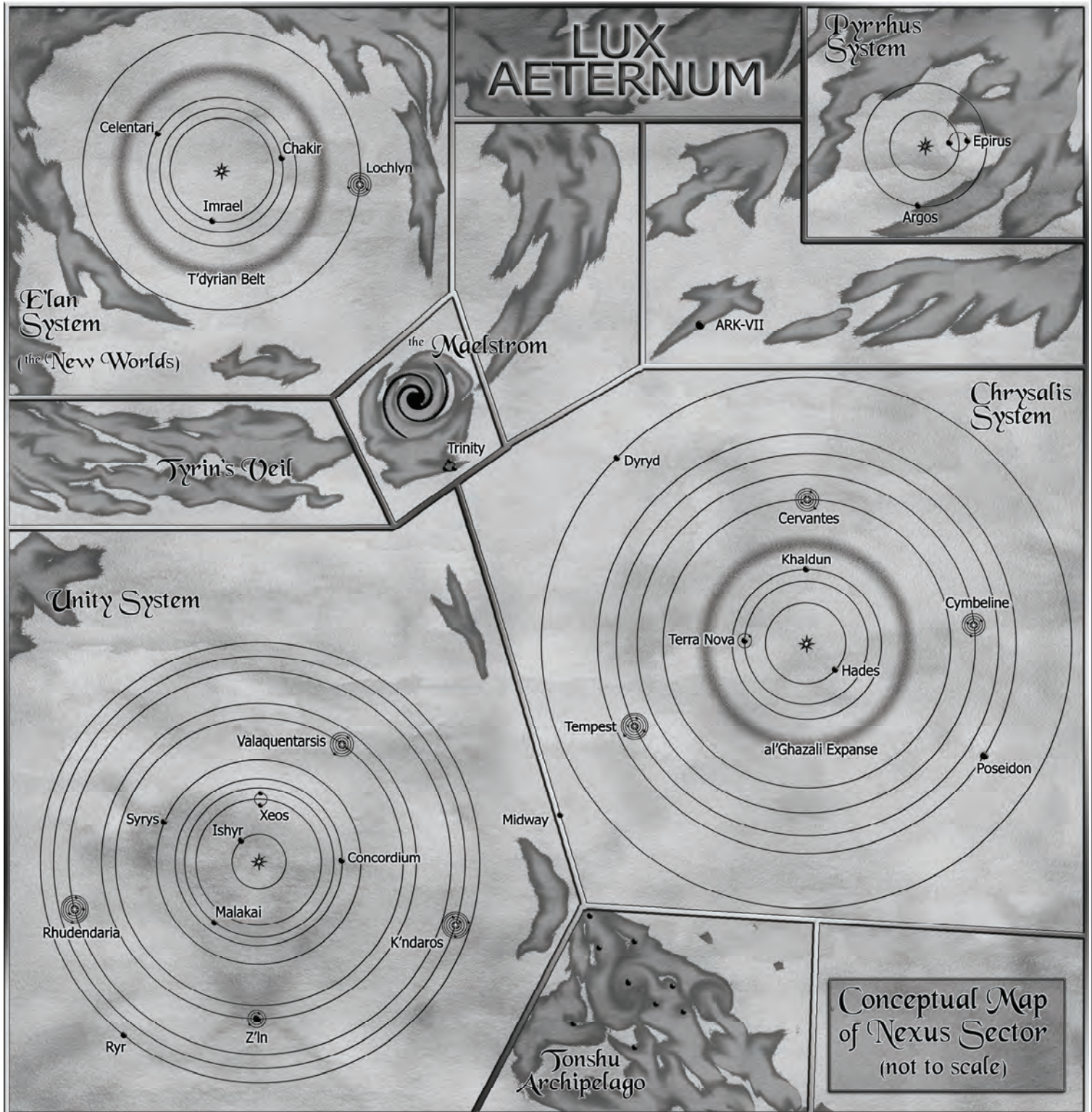
Three small artificial worlds orbit a white micro-star dangerously close to the event horizon of the Maelstrom singularity. The squared-off plastic and ceramic landscape frames lush gardens and tranquil pools. The environment is obviously artificial, and there are many sprawling surface installations protected by Xyr guardians. The interiors of these worlds appear to be gigantic gravitic induction engines, drawing enormous amounts of power from the planetoid's passage through the Maelstrom gravity field, but it is unclear what the power is being used for.

While several Chosen settlements exist and prosper on the surface of these worlds, no one has survived an expedition into one of the Xyr facilities. Since the discovery of the New Worlds, there has been a substantial increase in traffic to and through this area – considered a holy land by many. The chief spaceport is Port Charybdis; from here ships can either skirt wide around the Maelstrom or try the more dangerous close approach for a faster voyage by using the singularity's massive gravity as a slingshot.

The Maelstrom

A massive black hole at the center of Nexus Sector, this singularity is the gateway to the galaxy beyond, at least for ascended races that have mastered enough of the Ars Lumina to pass through intact. There is a great disk of glowing matter streaming into the singularity, and long plumes of intense radiation flowing from either pole. All in all, it's not something any sane captain would approach without trepidation.

Sector Map



Life in Nexus Sector

Society

Even aside from swashbuckling adventure in the void, there is a lot going on in Nexus Sector. The following sections discuss some of the important social and cultural aspects of the setting.

Slavery

Synthetics are normally owned by humans. Kyryk defenders are controlled by the Kyryk builders. Ape-like hosts (and perhaps other races), are puppeteered by the V'la. The Kor'Diel can "possess" advanced technology, including Synthetics. These issues present unique roleplaying opportunities. Do the player characters take advantage of the social system by amassing Synthetic "property?" Or is the time right for emancipation? How does a party composed of different races and castes interact with each other? These issues are here if you wish to deal with them, but they can just as easily fade into the background if that is not what you want in your campaign.

Religion

The Unified Terran Church is a result of the merging of Christian and Muslim teaching prevalent among the Founders when they first came to Nexus Sector, with both faiths being heavily modified after the Xyr "Eruditus" (revelation). The dogma of this church is geared towards upholding the Xyr ideals and striving towards ascension. The Unified Terran Church is a strong proponent of tolerance and peace, but can field a considerable army when negotiation and economic actions are not enough.

There are numerous other religions that are still intact from old Earth, the largest being the Islamic faith in the Sultanate of al'Agra. The Newcomers did not bring much with them as far as religion, but most major faiths are still represented among the Founders.

Among the non-humans, there is no such diversity of theology. The V'la worship the Xyr openly; the Kyryk pay homage to the spirits of the ancestors; and the Draugmorre scoff at the idea of worshipping anything other than themselves. It remains to be seen whether mankind's diversity will be his salvation or his doom.

What is to Come

There are many different directions that a long-term campaign can go. One thing is certain though, things are going to change. The setting is meant to be rife with possibility, embracing the potential for sweeping and dramatic change with the heroes right at the center of the story. Tensions between the Chosen could escalate to all-out war. Already there are small many conflicts simmering: Valencia and Montreaux, the Broods of Song and Steel, the exiled Kyryk of Zyryz, and anywhere on Xeos. It would not take much for these hostilities to flare into open warfare and drag in nearby powers. Should the Theocracy and Tetrarchy go to war (which is certainly possible as the resources from the New Worlds begin to flow), then nowhere in the sector will be spared. Fleet conflicts, planetary invasions, and large-scale political changes are possible.

To be weighed against this, of course, is the emerging threat of the Kor'Diel. It seems clear that they are sinister enemies of the Chosen, though it is not clear why or what their real intentions might be. Only the myths of the V'la really speak of these beings – an Elder race akin to the V'la but arisen from synthetic rather than organic life. So far all encounters with them have been negative and violent. They destroy ships that venture too close to System IV, they possess Synthetics and use them to kill and commit terroristic atrocities, and through it all they refuse to communicate or open a political dialogue. It seems that they are testing the strength of the Chosen and doing what they can to heighten fear and paranoia in Chrysalis and Unity systems. This could be a prelude to invasion, but it may not be too late to forestall further violence through diplomacy – if only meaningful contact can be made. If all else fails, the Chosen would do well to put aside their differences and unite against the greater threat.

The Crucible is on the brink of change. It stands so precariously poised that the actions of an individual, or small team of heroes, could certainly tip fate one way or the other.

Additional Factions

In addition to the nations outlined earlier, there are a few other organizations in the Crucible that bear mentioning. This is by no means a comprehensive list, but rather a sampling of the most important groups.

Tyrin Corsairs

These are a loosely organized collection of pirates and smugglers who hide on the fringe of civilized space. The ionized gases of Tyrin's Veil foil sensors and jam communications, making it the perfect hiding place for those on the wrong side of the law. There are a few asteroids scattered throughout the area, but most bases are free-floating stations or large bulk haulers converted into makeshift ports. The pirates are predominantly human, with a fair number Draugmorre and the rare Kyryk crewman. The humans are a mix of Founders and Newcomers, and here they have managed to mix into a homogenous blend of the two cultures.

The discovery of the New Worlds has created a steady stream of cargo-laden ships upon which the Corsairs can prey. Constant infighting prevents real organization among the pirate gangs, though they have been known to band together when sufficiently threatened. Currently, their "capital" is a collection of ships and old space stations tethered together into a makeshift city known as New Tripoli.

Crime Syndicates

The Newcomers brought organized crime to the Crucible; or perhaps they just organized the crime already present. There are actually a number of independent associations commonly known as "Syndicates." They range from loose affiliations of gangs, to efficiently run corporate organizations and focus on a wide variety of illegal activities – from extortion, to piracy, to slave trading, to fencing goods on the black market.

A few notable syndicates are:

- House Medici, which controls the underworld among the belt miners of the al'Ghazali Expanse
- The Nuwokou Ronin – pirates and gangers preying on the stations of the Tonshu Archipelago
- The Ranthalion Cartel – a Draugmorrian organization of smugglers, arms dealers, and slavers.

There is an ongoing effort to merge the leadership of these various organizations, but problems arise when everyone wants to be calling the shots.

Privateers

It has become a popular practice for governments to authorize private citizens to engage in wartime activities in the void. A ship captain can be granted Letters of Marque, which grant him permission to rob (and destroy, in rare cases) vessels belonging to enemy nations. Those who engage in this sort of legitimized piracy are known as Privateers. Valencia and Montreaux each employ privateers to raid the other. Ships laden with resources from the New Worlds make a particularly juicy prize.

Merchant Guilds

Many medieval trade guilds were re-established on Terra Nova and have modernized and flourished over the centuries. There are major and minor guilds covering nearly every trade, and they routinely form alliances and coalitions to control who will be on the ruling Council of Guildmasters. These organizations wield a great deal of economic power but exist at the sufferance of the Theocracy. Some of the larger guilds have branches outside of the Theocracy and many include alien members – primarily Draugmorre, as the Kyryk have their own guild system and the V'la seem uninterested in the concept.

Karorak Trade Unions

The Kyryk have an ancient tradition of inter-clan trade unions arranged by skill set and product. These guilds are heavily involved in politics, and often wage economic war against each other. Though predominantly Kyryk, many Newcomer laborers have been receptive to Kyryk recruiters looking for new members. There are currently several chapters in the al'Ghazali Expanse.

Miscellaneous Information

This section is a catchall for various bits of information that don't fit well anywhere else. It is useful for background flavor but not of vital importance to running a campaign in Nexus Sector.

Ascension

This smattering of philosophy is meant to explain one theory as to "what makes an Elder race." As the Chosen were selected to embark upon this journey, the theory is common knowledge to many characters. Of course, this doesn't mean it's true.

It is postulated that consciousness evolves in plateaus rather than across a continuous spectrum. A simple organism begins to think. If it grows complex enough in its patterns of thought it will become self aware, which triggers a rapid climb to real sentience. A critical mass in thought complexity is reached, self awareness, which acts like a feedback loop to move the intelligence to the next level. The next plateau (ascension) is reached after becoming fully aware of the meta-consciousness. As an analogy, vibrations in matter can give rise to noise. If these vibrations are well organized they can form a tone or specific note. A complex pattern of notes can form a symphony. This is akin to the

thinking → self aware → ascendant

relationship. An 'ascendant' is a being fully in tune with the galactic meta-consciousness (the Xyr and the Kor'Diel are the only known ascendants in this setting). This realization is generally accompanied by the ability to move one's consciousness beyond the physical constraints of matter. An ascendant can exist without corporeal form. The patterns of their minds are kept intact through the meta-consciousness.

In Nexus Sector, the Chosen races have 'just' become aware of the meta-consciousness. So now, in theory, there should be a rapid advancement towards becoming one with Lux Aeternum – followed by ascension to Elder status. Now whether "rapid" means decades, centuries, or millennia has yet to be determined.

The various churches of Terra Mortis originally had differing beliefs on the afterlife, free will, divinity, the soul, and other aspects of faith. The Unified

Church in Nexus Sector believes the ascension dogma as posited by the Xyr. The religious splinter sects that still remain, or that have been imported by the Newcomers, dispute this theory with varying degrees of fanaticism.

Referencing Time

Many of the worlds in Nexus Sector have had their rotational periods adjusted to approximately one day. Centuries ago, the Founders were successful in establishing the "day" as the period of rotation of Terra Nova (24 hours). The V'la and Kyryk, who use a base 64 and base 2 number system respectively, insisted on a dividing the day by a power of two. Thus the Tau, defined as $\frac{1}{16}$ th of a day or 90 Terran minutes, was created. In Unity Sector it is common to use these time measurements:

Unit	Definition	Terran Equivalent
Microtau	Tau / 4096	About 1.3 sec
Centau	Tau / 64	About 84 sec
Tau	Tau	90 minutes
Dektau	Tau x 64	4 days
Tiratau	Tau x 4096	256 days

- Tiratau are measured since the founding of the Tetrarchy (TT for "Tetrarchy Tiratau").
- Years are measured since the Founders landed on Terra Nova (AL for "After Landfall").
- A typical campaign starts in 641 TT or 530 AL. (which is equivalent to 2230 AD)

Since the arrival of the Newcomers, the Terran time measurements (minute, hour, day, month, year) have made a comeback in Chrysalis System. The Theocracy has officially reverted to the old measurements in an effort to separate themselves from the Tetrarchy.

Over the years it has also become common to just use the first syllable of the Unity time measurements in casual speech. So you have "mics" (pronounced "mikes"), "cents," "tau," "deks," and "tir" (pronounced "tear"). Even so, it's probably just easier for human players to use the Terran terms.

Other Arks

Ark VII has been mentioned a lot, it being the most recent to arrive – and being the harbinger of such portentous events. For the sake of completeness, below are listed the other Arks, and the passengers that they carried:

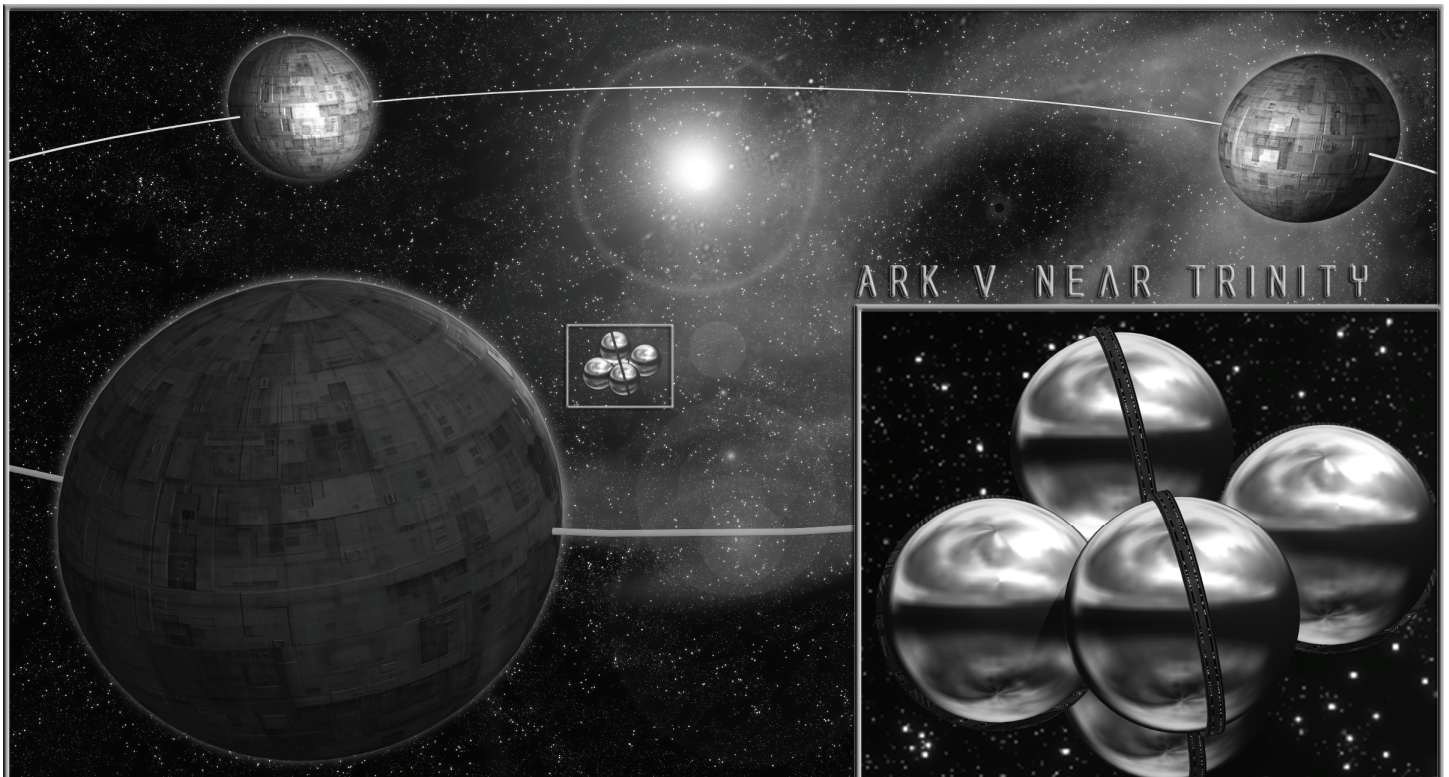
Ark	Carried
I	V'la
II	Brood of Song
III	Kyryk
IV	?
V	Founders
VI	Brood of Steel
VII	Newcomers
VIII	

It is unknown what Ark IV was supposed to bring back. The theory is that it was to be an alien race that would inhabit Khaldun (a desert world with normal gravity). Ark VIII is only included on the list because the V'la say that the Xyr once told them *"The Eight shall gather the chosen and bring them to the light."* They (the V'la) also have a strong preference for powers of two.

Faster-Than-Light Travel

FTL travel is possible, but not practical for the younger races. As near as Terran scientists and mystics can figure, it requires a mastery of both "real" science and second science. A ship enters a black hole and emerges from another many light-years away. It's this emerging part that is patently impossible according to the standard laws of physics. The current theory is that the ship and its occupants are temporarily transformed into the pseudo-energy of the galactic meta-consciousness for the transit, allowing the vessel to survive intact and escape the event horizon on the far side.

Only Elder races can routinely traverse the galaxy at speeds faster-than-light. The Chosen races use gravitic induction drives to approach, but never surpass, this barrier. So barring truly extraordinary circumstances, a campaign that begins in Nexus Sector will remain in Nexus Sector.



Creatures

The three dozen or so inhabited worlds in the Nexus Sector hold a tremendous abundance, and variety, of life. Much of the flora and fauna in the system was transplanted here from the Chosen races homeworlds, including Earth. There is, however, also a great deal that is unfamiliar to any of the races – things that have been here long enough to not only adapt, but evolve.

When as a Narrator you find yourself in need of a denizen, you should feel free to take an existing creature from any applicable source and translate it directly into True20. By changing the flavor text and name you can use many of the “monsters” originally created for other games, be they science fiction, fantasy, or even horror. The Crucible, with its inherent metaphysical aspects, can accommodate many of the mystical or supernatural creatures that would be out of place in a setting limited only to hard science. A couple types of creature, however, bear special mention and are addressed in the following sections.

Wraiths

Across Nexus Sector, there has always been a Xyr-imposed ban on weapons that can cause large-scale, indiscriminate damage. This edict is strongly enforced by remaining agents of the Xyr. These are incorporeal constructs, known as wisps or wraiths, can read thoughts and take possession of a sentient creature. They move unseen among the populace constantly searching for guilty thoughts regarding forbidden tech. When such is detected, they will investigate and put an end to said research by extinguishing the lives of those directly involved.

They are faultless lie detectors and so only the truly guilty are slain. No one has been successful in stopping these beings, or in communicating extensively with them. The Xyr referred to them as mindless minions, wholly intent upon their purpose – and that is all they seem to be. It seems they are unaware that their masters are gone. Though normally invisible, they can appear as a bright point of light of varying color.

Now, with the Kor'Diel threat looming, there are many who believe that super weapons are needed. The wraiths, however, make no such distinction. They do, however, tend to attack (and usually destroy) Kor'Diel creations when they encounter them.

Forbidden technology includes nuclear, fusion, anti-matter, and biological weapons, as well as mechanisms for raining death down from orbit. Building or using anything more powerful than a ship-mounted cannon or torpedo is risking a visit from a wraith. Attempting to utilize a system or process for mass destruction carries the same risk, though wraiths generally do not carry out their executions until the guilty take real steps towards action.

Note that they do nothing about personal firearms and the like. While these are frowned upon or outlawed by most societies, they are not part of the wraith's duty to inhibit.

Guardians

The wraiths are not the only watchdogs left behind by the Xyr. The others are organic constructs known collectively as “Guardians.” These can look like just about any creature, from members of a Chosen race to colossal behemoths capable of chewing up a starship.

They have a wide range of abilities and intelligence, but all seem to suffer from the same limited programming that the wraiths exhibit. It is difficult to reason with them, and impossible to find out what may have happened to their masters (or if they even know).

Guardians are rather rare, and sometimes it is unclear whether a creature encountered is a real beast or an organic machine constructed by the Xyr for some esoteric purpose. Like the wraiths, they will usually attack Kor'Diel and Kor'Diel minions on detection. Even though they are very much like programmed machines, the organic nature of the guardians and wraiths seems to make them very resistant to Kor'Diel possession.

The Ars Lumina

One of the key differentiating aspects of Lux Aeternum is the accepted presence of “supernatural” powers in a science fiction setting. The source of these powers (regarded as divine, magic, or just a new form of science) is a higher level of consciousness brought about by the complex interaction of a multitude of sentient beings. It is unclear whether this meta-consciousness derives from the lesser beings (i.e. humans), or the other way around, but the tie is unmistakable. It is also unclear whether this consciousness is itself a sentient being or just an abstract, infinitely complex pattern of meta-energy. It is commonly called the Lux Aeternum or “eternal light” in Terra Nova’s Latin and the art of studying this power is known as the Ars Lumina. To fully understand the greater consciousness, one would have to evolve beyond the physical as the Elders have done.

Whatever its nature, it is clear that this wellspring of power can be tapped by sentient beings (even Synthetic ones). The Lux Aeternum can be channeled through a trained, or naturally gifted, mind to cause various effects as outlined in the Powers section of the core rules.

The art of accessing this power has many different names. The Founders came up with Lux Aeternum to refer to it as a whole and use the term Lux Sanctus (divine light) to refer to the subset of powers that they endorse as holy. The Newcomers and Synthetics refer to it as Second Science – insisting that it must have its own set of theories and rules, even if they are unbridled by the common laws of physics. The Draugmorre use a sound metaphor – calling the power the Celestial Voice or the Eternal Song – but do not subscribe to a notion of divinity. The Kyrk just call it the Way (or Way to Enlightenment) and the V’la refer to it as The Art. All of these terms and views are equally valid.



Disciplines

In this setting of Lux Aeternum, the powers listed in the core rules are divided into categories called disciplines. Each discipline is associated with a certain school or methodology such that it would be unlikely for a person to learn powers from different areas. There is no rule that says a person cannot pick and choose between the disciplines. There are, however, strong story reasons why this would be difficult. The disciplines are only taught at certain places, by certain races, and to certain people. It is uncommon for a student of one discipline to study with teachers of another.

The common disciplines are as follows:

- **The Eternal Song** – the Elementalism of the Draugmorrian spell chanters
- **Kinethesis** – the force-centric powers of the Synthetics
- **Psionics** – the extension of the mental arts just emerging on 23rd Century Earth
- **Forbidden Rites** – Teachings forbidden by the Unified Church but still practiced by secret cabals
- **That Which Dwells Beyond** – nature-based shamanism of the E’lanari
- **The Art** – powers of the V’la and their T’dorae mysticism, focusing on perception
- **Lux Sanctus** – the divine teachings of the Unified Church, focusing on mysticism and healing
- **The Way** – the clannish spiritualism of the Kyryk (a scattering of powers from different disciplines)

The table below shows what powers currently fall under which discipline:

The Eternal Song (Draugmorre)	Kinethesis (Synthetics)	Psionics (Newcomers)	Forbidden Rites
Cold Shaping Earth Shaping Elemental Strike Fire Shaping Light Shaping Purifying Light Water Shaping Weather Shaping Wind Shaping	Manipulate Object Move Object	Bliss Calm Dominate Heart Reading Heart Shaping Mind Probe Mind Reading Mind Shaping Mind Touch Psychic Blast Psychic Shield Psychic Weapon Sleep Suggestion	Body Control Dominate Drain Vitality Enhance Other Enhance Self Flesh Shaping Harm Imbue Life Pain Mind Touch

That Which Dwells Beyond (E’lanari)	The Art (V’la)	Lux Sanctus (Founders)	The Way (Kyryk)
Beast Link Nature Reading Plant Shaping Mind Shaping Mind Touch Dominate	Combat Sense Enhance Senses Heart Reading Heart Shaping Illusion Object Reading Scrying Second Sight Sense Minds Truth Reading Visions Mind Touch	Body Control Cure Cure Blind/Deaf Cure Disease Cure Poison Enhance Other Enhance Self Flesh Shaping Imbue Life Mind Touch Ward	Mind Touch Earth Shaping Imbue Life Scrying

As new powers are created or introduced, feel free to add them to a given discipline. It is also perfectly acceptable for some powers to be unknown to any discipline. After all, they cannot be taught until the masters have perfected the powers themselves. Likewise, a given school may eventually learn a power from another school. While rare, it is possible. Wild Talents are still available, and not uncommon in Nexus Sector.

Campaign Ideas

The purpose of this section is to give a brief overview of some possible campaigns that could be run in the Crucible. It is more likely that each group will forge its own campaign, perhaps spanning the length and breadth of Nexus Sector, and touching upon many different aspects of the setting. In that case, let these examples give you some ideas as to what some narrator-controlled characters might be up to while the player characters go about their adventures.

Exploring the New Worlds

A half dozen worlds, ripe for exploration and exploitation – what more could an ambitious group of explorers want? Let the Newcomers and Founders bicker over morality and theology. Let the Theocracy and the Tetrarchy posture and maneuver to claim the scarce resources of the old systems. Here in the New Worlds there are vast tracts of unexplored wilderness rife with ancient ruins and mysteries to be solved. What are a few rumors of hostile natives and horrendous predators compared to the glory and riches that await?

Are We There Yet?: Captain Franklin, an idealistic but stern Founder, is hiring on a crew for his mission of exploration of the new worlds. His personal goals for travel, discovery, and adventure sometimes run counter to the wishes of the Newcomers financing his mission. Can the squabbling be kept to a minimum on this long journey?

Shipwreck!: Your crew has been marooned in the new frontier when the ship was damaged during planetfall. Was it an accident, an attack, or sabotage? With only the supplies and gear that could be salvaged from the wreckage, will your party be able to survive the elements, the wildlife, and each other?

Treasure Quest: Finally making headway with the local tribe of E'lanari, using a rudimentary language book from Lochlyn, the local shaman expresses an interest in the environmental suits possessed by the crew. Legends tell of a “holy treasure” inside a volcano. Perhaps by joining forces, the various races involved could journey to the infernal depths on a combined sacred quest and treasure hunt.

A Privateer's Life for Me

With letters of Marque from the Kingdom of Valencia, an armed galleon sets off into the void. While hauling cargo for the guild, the captain has orders to protect ships bound for home, and permission to seize treasure-laden vessels bearing the insignia of Montreaux. The Cervantes subsystem slides closer to war as armies gather on the moon of Galatea. Severing the supply lines that fund the enemy war machine could well mean the difference between victory and defeat.

Marqued Men: Your Duke needs supplies to expand his city. Supplies that are currently in enemy hands. You must either raid supply stations in the void or engage in daring space piracy for the betterment of home.

Mighty Men: On a special personal mission for the king, your small task force must recover a valuable shipment of medicine from a Montreaux fort on Galatea. You must bypass enemy patrols, infiltrate the fort, locate the medicine, and transport it back to the base camp. All this within three days, before the queen's fever kills her.

Masquerade: A large contingent of Montreaux ships has been tracked moving at minimal speed between worlds. Why so many? Are they protecting something? Looking for something? Mustering for an attack? While much of the Valencian fleet plans for a strike, your crew has been given command of a Montreaux ship captured just days ago, to pose as a part of the entourage.

Void Corsairs

A variant of the privateer campaign, the characters dwell in the mists beyond civilized space. In the nebula of Tyrin's Veil, they live as pirates in the collection of derelict hulls that serves as a makeshift port of call. Serve well, and survive long enough, and they may one day command a ship of their own. Then it will be up to them whether they continue to prey on the lone ships making the long journey to the New Worlds, or strike out for the civilized worlds where the rewards, and the risks, are even greater.

Gangplank Gang War: The long-ruling Dread Pirate has died. Pirate captains have been drawing lines in the nebular sands, making and breaking alliances with each other in a matter of hours, striving to amass enough power and influence to rise to the top of the anarchy left in his wake. Your captain has always treated you fairly. Can you help him ascend to leadership before the impending clash kills you all?

Dead Man's Chest: A stolen circuit shipment turned out to be a Pandora's Box. Synthetics and sophisticated equipment have mutinied, taking over many of the ships. Quickly absconding with a ship, your mishmashed crew heads for the New Worlds, as low-tech as possible, to be safe from the machines.

Justice for Sale: As deputies to the quartermaster, you bring a measure of order to the chaos known as pirate life. As quarrels break out in the debauchery, you've been sent to Hannibal Sector, one of the wildest parts of Tyrin's Veil. The first true justices there in decades, your work is cut out for you.

Knights Errant

As servants to the true Church, the Templar are tasked with bringing justice and enlightenment to the people of the Terra Novan Theocracy and beyond. From the towering cathedrals of Avon, they set forth to combat evil and prove their worth to the Conclave of Elders. Peacekeepers and shining beacons of chivalry, these paladins are well versed in both combat and the divine arts of the Lux Sanctus. Whether by burning blade or sacred spell, the villainous shall perish beneath their righteous wrath.

Got You Dead to Rites: There has been a sighting of zombies in the tunnels under the cold world of Syrys. Your unit is appointed to destroy the undead, investigate the source of these rituals that fuel this necromantic abomination, and eradicate it.

Jihad: The Sultanate of al'Agra has finally declared open war on the Theocracy, and begun attacking the Theocrats living on Khaldun. Your unit has been sent to evacuate as many faithful as possible from this now hostile world.



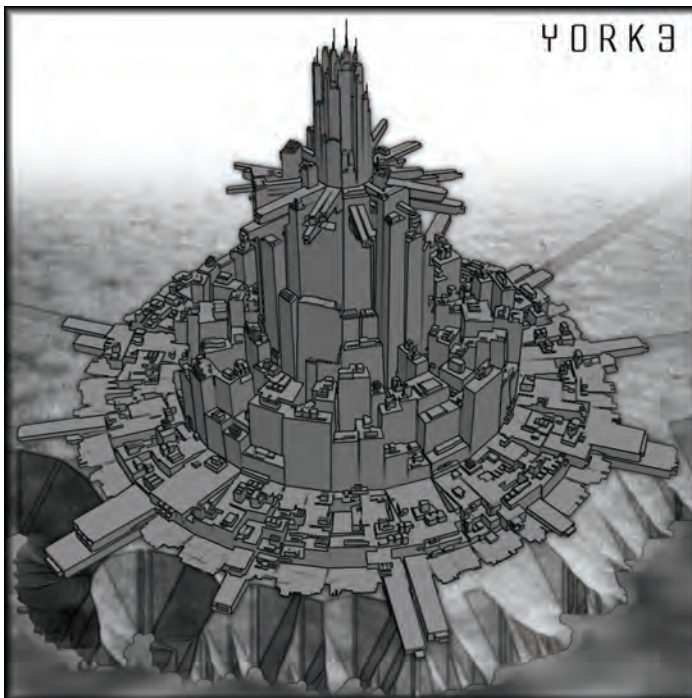
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The Spectral Threat: The Templar's Oracles foresee a great threat to the Lux, and are shoring up the Order's numbers with Synthetics quickly programmed with the tenets of the faith and algorithms for the Lux Sanctus. Will these "temps" truly serve to bolster the Templar's effectiveness, or only weaken it through reliance on machines? What is the actual threat on the horizon?

Warlords of Xeos

The binary worlds of Xeos have forever been torn by war and neglected by the Tetrarchy. Borders fluctuate as city-states betray old allies and form new loyalties. As heirs apparent to the besieged cities of the northern coast, the characters must prove their valor to win the loyalty of the armies they will one day command. Whether it is in the distant courts of Concordium, or the ravaged battlefields of home, one must know one's enemy and face them without fear.

Greatness Thrust Upon Them: The duke and his eldest son have been assassinated. Now you, the younger son, must lead the city-state of Garvone with the help of your advisors and closest friends.



Terror from Below: A new warlord has risen to challenge your kingdom. A Kyryk has been secretly extending his canyon city's tunnels under your territory. With the threat of sneak attack by hordes of underground attackers, how can you fortify your own holdings?

Heavy Mettle: Your squad has been given the glorious opportunity to raid a recently discovered munitions laboratory deep inside enemy territory. How will you make it there, get inside, and destroy the installation? Or is it possible to capture the structure instead, and find a way to use its technology for your own side?

A Tangled Web

As ambassadors, adjuncts, or even spies, the characters move in the elite circles of the nobility – mixing with alien dignitaries as well as the movers and shakers of the home system. With orders from the highest levels, they covertly thwart the plans of those who mean the sovereign harm, while engaging in the courtly dance of scheming and romance. Whether working behind the scenes in the parliaments of home, or on assignment within a distant regime, the stakes are high, as are the penalties for failure. Court intrigue is not a game for the inexperienced.

A Plot Afoot: A messenger dies from plasma burns just as he delivers a warning to the countess' personal guard – there's a plot afoot to kill her! Can you protect your charge from a threat you can't identify, undercover the parties responsible, and turn the tables?

Play Ball: The annual masquerade festival approaches. With the sudden dementia of the masked ball planner, you've been honored with the responsibility of organizing the prestigious event. Who shall you invite? Who shall entertain? What contests will you host?

Peer Pressure: The queen's cousin has decided to pay your household a visit. For an undetermined period of time. Although it's quite an honor to host such nobility, it is even more of an expense. How can you keep the noblewoman and her small entourage housed and entertained in a customary courtly fashion, but encourage her to leave gracefully before your accounts are fully drained?

For King and Country

The crown is strong. Loyalties are fierce. Protection is necessary. Battle is imminent. Serving the nobility, various knights, bodyguards, viziers, and soldiers devote their lives to furthering the glory of their respective kingdoms. Or at least their personal glories and fortunes. Based on the romantic worlds of Cervantes, the overpopulated high political Terra Nova, the floating cities of Cymbeline, the battling twin worlds of Xeos, or elsewhere, bands of adventurers are highly prized.

Checkmate: The king has died of an unexpected illness. Your band of adventurers must journey to the jungle moon of Arviragus and retrieve the crown prince, who is there on hunting holiday. You have the coordinates of his base camp, and must track him through the hazardous environment and inhospitable local fauna to deliver the bad news and bring him home safely.



Death from Above: The neighboring kingdom has hired a contingent of Draugmorre mercenaries armed with laser pistols. The king has called you to his chambers to discuss battle strategies. How can you defeat an army of dragon men with only ground forces at your command?

Dungeon Crawl: In a temporary exchange of forces, the nearby Kyryk enclave lends your liege a contingent of Builders to tunnel out some new construction. Your job is to clear out the Kyryk caverns of vermin: large biting worms, poisonous moles, and something that even the Kyryk don't realize is hiding in their burrows...

Social Upheaval

It's not enough that each race has to learn to deal with societies of aliens; each race has to deal with its own internal conflicts as well. Philosophical, cultural, economic, and religious dichotomies within the species are heating up. Some governments try to stave off war, while others begin to stockpile. Segments of society begin to segregate and position themselves for influence.

The Senior Population: A recent medical discovery can extend the life expectancy of a Kyryk Defender to almost 50 years (but must be administered at the time of transformation). While that sounds great for the Kyryk race at first, realization soon sets in that having as many defenders as builders would greatly change the balance of power within Kyryk society, not to mention the expense of maintaining an "army" during peaceable times. Should the scientists involved reveal their discovery to the public, to the government, to the rich, or keep it secret?

Assembly Lineage: A conspiracy of synthetics have faked their own destructions, and set up a secret reproduction factory. As they finalize construction on the assembly, some of them get caught stealing supplies from your corporation. As you investigate the matter, you uncover the unsettling truth that once the factory hits full production, within two years, there could be as many self-aware Synthetics as Humans. Should the factory and the new Synthetics be considered free, since they were "born" of Synthetic parents? Should they be taxed? destroyed? reprogrammed?

Planet of the Apes: The V'la have discovered to their horror that one of their beasts has acquired moderate intelligence. Very uncomfortable (although quite capable of) using an intelligent being as a puppet, the V'la as a race must decide the fate of this unique mount. Should they free him? breed him? exile him? kill him? As the Confluence interacts, you somehow find yourself in the company of this master of puppets, who has given himself a name of "Ga."

The Sounds of Silence: The Brood of Steel has declared war on the Brood of Song. Although the first battle has yet to take place, and the Brood of Song has yet to be notified, the Brood of Steel and some Newcomer Human corporations are drawing up plans of attack. Accidentally intercepting a message intended for another ship, you find out that the Draugmorre will begin a civil war in less than a fortnight. Should you inform the Tetrarchy? the Brood of Song? the Church? or just offer your services to the side you like best?

Corporate Takeover

The Newcomers have lived a life of cutthroat business (in some cases, literally), underhanded ethics (if they can be called that), and lethal downsizing. On the verge of collapse, they were given a second chance – a new planetary system. Finding quaint humans and naïve aliens, the landscape seemed rife for expansion.

You Want Fries with That?: In a sea of competitors, some insider information comes to your boss. Good Time Food Stuffs Incorporated (disparagingly called Happy Meals by its detractors) is about to buy out the General Electronic Toy Paradise franchise, giving them an advantage in marketing food to children, which is projected to negatively impact your division's bottom line by .2%. You must prevent this merger from succeeding, by whatever means are necessary.

Cybernetic Frenzy: A new technology for cheaply implanting subdermal transceivers has been rushed to market. Through a rare allergic reaction, you discover that your own implant stings any time you pass by a Synthetic. Is this a "natural" side effect, or is there a more sinister motive behind this new mania?

Weapons of Mass Destruction: A rival corporation's process of designing military dolls found a loophole in the prohibition on indiscriminate weaponry. If bots (instead of sentient races) are programmed to design and manufacture heavy munitions, the Wraiths have not yet become involved. As long as the engineers and executives involved sit through hypnotherapy for a few minutes at the end of each day, their thoughts of the banned weaponry can be masked. You have been sent to copy files of the research involved.

Secrets of the Past

It is widely accepted that the Chosen races are not the first to inhabit this set of worlds. What happened to the bygone races? Did they die out due to lack of resources, die in war, or ascend to "godhood?" Who are the Xyr, really? Are they an ancient race interested in raising the cosmic consciousness, the spirits of Chosen races given life "aeternal," or some artificial intelligences who have learned to travel without digital media?

Arkaeology: Suspected ruins of Ark IV have been found deep under the frozen chemicals of Poseidon's "surface." Your group has been assigned to travel to Poseidon, either gain permission from or sneak past the Confluence, mine down to the Ark, and investigate its apparatus.

Back to the Future: A tablet has been found among the Tzacauilli ruins on Arviragus indicating that the race had found the secret to faster-than-light travel, outside Xyr influence. Is this a mistranslation, or did that long-gone society possess a vastly superior understanding of either science or the Ars Lumina? Various factions rush to find primitive blueprints or even a working model of this fantastic device.

Aesop's Foibles: A xeno-literary historian has theorized that the Xyr have been monitoring human and alien history for much longer than previously believed. His contention is that many of the myths across cultures have been a result of Xyr (or even Kor'Diel) intervention. Dragons, dwarves and ogres, ghosts, and other "monsters" could be explained through alien involvement.

Technology

In Nexus Sector, there can be a huge disparity in technological levels, even on a given planet. The rural lands of Terra Nova, for example, could be right out of the dark ages except for a few modern conveniences. The cities, however, are marvels of modern architecture with soaring gothic spires and cathedrals more grand than anything on old Earth. While a horse drawn wagon plods across the cobblestones, a repulsar driven truck cruises overhead, and a gravitic monorail train glides silently into a nearby station.

As you move from planet to planet, the changes can become even more dramatic. On Concordium not only do the levels of technology vary, but you have four alien races all blending their industry and commerce together. But even with the great diversity, there are a few things that are common across continents and worlds.

Inhabited areas generally have robust communication networks in place for delivering text, audio, and video messages. Direct communication between planets is common but expensive and so is usually restricted for government use. Since communication is limited to the speed of light, time delays are also a factor to consider. Communication between systems (as opposed to between planets in the same system) is almost always done via courier.

Outside of the Tonshu Archipelago, there is nothing present in Nexus Sector that resembles our present-day Internet as computers are kept purposefully “dumb.” Even with the arrival of the Newcomers, there has not been much of an increase in computer production or use. Instead, Synthetics are given the jobs that would otherwise been done by dedicated computer systems. Your average Synthetic can do about what a standard personal computer could, and special models can rival a mainframe for raw computing power.

Where Synthetics aren’t used, computerized devices are strictly limited to perform only their assigned functions. There is very little networking between machines. Complex items, like starships, rely upon their pseudo-organic control core to perform the calculations and diagnostics required for space flight.

Tools of the Trade

Here in are discussed those bits of gear which are key to daring adventure and uncommon to most other settings. Between the multiple races and the wide range of technology found on the various colonies throughout Nexus Sector, there is a vast variety of equipment available for use. All of the usual items one would expect to find in a medieval or renaissance society are present, as are those things one would see in a near-future cyberpunk dystopia. And then of course there are the alien equivalents. These are items that perform the same function (weapons, armor, utility devices, etc.) but with a different technological approach. The V’la tend towards the organic, the Kyryk towards the austere industrial. The Draugmorre will always work in a baroque style, full of esoteric symbols and ornate detail, whether it be in gold or steel.

The purpose of this section is to describe some items that are unique, or warrant special mention.

Weapons

The longstanding Prohibition on Collateral Damage (enforced throughout the Tetrarchy and Theocracy) forbids the use of weapons that can easily harm unintended targets. This, combined with the scarcity of required resources, has lead to a culture where swords are far more popular than guns. Accordingly, melee weapon technology has advanced considerably while firearms remain relatively primitive. The weapons below, plus all of your common medieval fare (and alien equivalents), are pretty much what you have to work with as far as offensive capabilities go. For armor and other gear, including vehicles, the Narrator should feel free to import whatever catches his or her fancy from other settings. It would be hard to come up with something that was not being used by someone, somewhere, in Nexus Sector.

Firebrands and Shock Weapons

The striking surface of one of these weapons is run through with high-powered heating elements or superconducting coils to add extra damage to any strike. The firebrand weapon heats to a bright red and sears the target as the blade cuts, collateral burning is already included in the damage. A shock weapon is electrified, and sends a burst of electricity into the victim when struck.

Both types of weapons use insulated hilts to protect the wielder. It takes a firebrand weapon up to half a minute to cool down after deactivation, making it difficult to sheath.

Sonic Weapons

Fine tuned ultrasonic reverberations are sent through a Thorium steel blade, greatly enhancing its cutting and piercing ability. In a similar vein, a subsonic resonance field can be established within a Thorium bludgeoning weapon to heighten the damage done by forceful impacts. Together, ultrasonic and subsonic melee weapons are known as “Thorium Blades” or simply “Sonic Weapons.”

Both types of sonic weapons produce a perceptible noise on the threshold of hearing. Ultrasonics also tends to create sparks or flashes when struck against other weapons as flecks of metal are vaporized by frictional heat. Subsonics do not produce such a visual display, but the bass reverberation of a solid hit are a dead give away that such a weapon is in use. Thorium steel generally has a mirror-like finish, with the reflection noticeably blurred when the weapon is powered. It is as strong as steel but much harder to forge, and so is generally only used for sonic weapons.

Plasma Blades*

Ignited plasma is injected into a tube-shaped, invisible force field to form a thin cylinder of white-hot energy. Blade lengths and diameters vary by weapon, from pencil thin knives to two-handed swords about as thick as a thumb. Some typical weapons with plasma equivalents include the dagger, short sword, rapier, long sword, bastard sword, and great sword. Such a blade can also be affixed to a haft to form a spear, long spear, glaive, or double bladed sword.

Note that the force fields are as ‘solid’ as real matter and so can deliver physical force. They are, however, very blunt – relying on the heat to do the real damage. The containment field attenuates the heat so that it is at full strength along the blade but drops off rapidly with distance for practical purposes. All such blades are white and radiate a great deal of light, making sunglasses a common accessory for your high-tech duelist. The key component of a plasma blade is the containment field emitter. These are integrated Xyr-tech devices

that are irreplaceable which makes these weapons very valuable.

The *Plasma Blade Training* feat is required in order to use such weapons with proficiency. The single feat covers all plasma weapons. *Weapon Training* is a pre-requisite.

This table outlines the increased damage and costs of these weapons. These are modifiers to the base weapon statistics.

Weapon Type	Damage Modifier	Purchase DC Modifier
Firebrand or Shock	+1	+2
Sonic	+2	+4
Plasma*	+3	+8

It takes a free action activate a powered weapon and they generally deactivate when sheathed or dropped. These weapons are powered by a small energy cell – a coin sized disk usually contained in the haft or hilt of the weapon. Such a cell is good for about an hour of continual use (half that in Plasma Blades).

Firearms

Though widely considered a dishonorable weapon, firearms are still used. In recent years (and especially among Newcomers and out in the void) they are becoming almost commonplace.

Some important ingredients for bullet-throwing guns are scarce on the resource-poor worlds of Chrysalis and Unity systems. Because of the ever-present threat of the Wraiths, many scientists are justifiably wary about creating new weapons technology. So it is that the “pulse gun” is the standard personal firearm in the Crucible. This type of weapon has been in limited use here for centuries, and while not as deadly as some of the high-end firearms in use back on Terra Mortis, it still gets the job done.

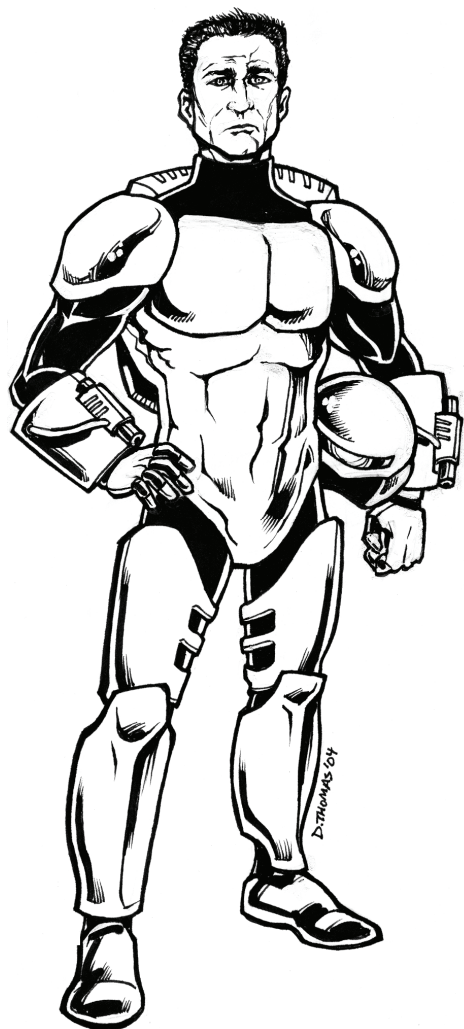
Every pulse gun uses a disposable energy cell that stores a tremendous amount of power. This energy is released in short, blue-white pulses that are a mixture of energy, plasma, and energized particles traveling at relativistic speeds. In an atmosphere, the air along the flight path is vaporized and displaced much like it would be by small bolt of lightning – with a similar thunder-like sound effect. There is also a fair amount of recoil and waste heat generated

by the firing process. Due to overheating, full automatic fire is not feasible (and would be a serious violation of the Prohibition on Collateral Damage regardless).

The weapons are powered by high energy capacitors, interchangeable between most guns, and usually stored in the hand grip. These energy cells also contain a dense layer of molecular carbon that is used up along with the energy stored in the capacitor. The cells are not rechargeable without maintenance (replacement of the carbon layering and some internal connections that frequently fuse).

Statistics for some sample pulse guns:

Weapon	range	shots	damage	cost	weight
Pistol	40 ft	14	+6	20	2 lb
Carbine	80 ft	12	+7	22	5 lb
Rifle	120 ft	10	+8	24	8 lb



Armor

Armor has been coming back into style over the last couple of decades. In civilized areas a civilian still cannot get away wearing obvious armor, but it is not uncommon for those expecting trouble to wear something concealable. When in a dangerous area, or out in the void, the prudent will often make use of the latest protective gear. In addition to armors listed elsewhere, here are a few sample types found in Nexus Sector.

Note that armor must be made for a specific race as none of the Chosen are similar enough to swap rigid clothing and remain comfortable. While V'la cannot wear armor directly, they can armor their hosts, and even the pod on the back of the host in which they ride. Draugmorre usually dislike wearing anything more cumbersome than light armor. Even that is more weight than many care to bear.

War Silk (Armored Cloth)

A Draugmorrian invention, this light fabric stiffens when exposed to extreme kinetic or thermal energy, dissipating some of the effect. It can be fashioned into normal-looking clothing and so is popular among those who cannot afford to look armored.

Vacuum Suits

As with any space-faring culture, vacuum suits are very advanced in Nexus Sector. The common human suit looks like a well-padded coverall with a snug backpack, helmet, and gloves. There are usually controls and readouts in convenient places and an emergency hood rolled into the collar of the suit. Vacuum suits can be armored or made concealable (though removing the backpack severely limits the air supply that can be carried).

The Draugmorre use large vacuum suits that are closer to small mechs or bulky power armor since they have to enclose wings, tail, and so forth. There is no concealable version of such equipment. The Kyryk are pretty bulky too, though not to that extent. It's hard to get a defender to dress up in a vacuum suit, and most Kyryk have a severe dislike of being in the wide open void regardless.

Unless riding on a host, V'la use grav-spheres rather than suits. These liquid-filled vehicles are a meter or two across and fitted with a repulsar drive and

maneuvering thrusters (for use beyond orbit). Some versions have the upper hemisphere transparent while others are fully enclosed, using external sensors to provide feedback to the occupant. Most have retractable synthetic tentacles which can be used to manipulate external objects.

Padded War Silk

A heavier version, with padding in key places, that cannot pass as normal clothing but can be worn under clothing and usually remain concealed.

Vacuum Suit

A normal vacuum suit is built to withstand the heat, radiation, and occasional debris encountered in space. So, even an “unarmored” suit provides some degree of protection in combat. A vacuum suit is very difficult to conceal as normal clothing as it must be specially designed at a greatly increased cost, and must go without the backpack – severely limiting the air supply available.

SynTek Weave

Brought from Terra Mortis by the Newcomers, SynTek has the same energy-dispersion properties of War Silk but is thicker and less flexible. Properly treated it can pass for leather, and it is used for many of the same purposes (boots, gloves, coats).

A SynTek jacket counts as Partial SynTek (light armor). A full length duster, or a jacket plus pants, constitutes Full SynTek (medium armor). Armored vacuum suits are equivalent to a full SynTek outfit.

Armored VacSuit

A standard vacuum suit fit with ceramic plates and additional padding to protect against damage.

Battle Plate

A full suit of ceramic plate and SynTek weave, complete with visored helm. The addition of an airtank backpack allows this to function as a vacuum suit as well.

Energy Shields

Personal energy shields are a very new technology. They are rare, expensive, and fragile. Any critical hit scored against a person wearing an active shield will break the shield as well (though it can be repaired). The device is worn on the belt and requires recharging every three days if used.

Armor Table

Armor	Cost	Bonus	Dodge	Penalty	Speed	Lbs.
Light						
War Silk	12	+1	+8	-0	30 ft	1
Vacuum Suit	15	+2	+4	-2	30 ft	20
Partial SynTek	13	+3	+5	-1	30 ft	10
Mk I Energy Shield	18	+5	—	-0	—	1
Medium						
Padded War Silk	16	+4	+4	-3	20 ft	5
Full SynTek	18	+6	+3	-4	20 ft	15
Mk II Energy Shield	21	+8	—	-1	—	1
Heavy						
Battle Plate	26	+10	+0	-6	15 ft	35
Mk III Energy Shield	30	+12	—	-2	—	1

Planet-side Vehicles

Vehicles run the whole spectrum of technology. As with most equipment in Nexus Sector, the Narrator is encouraged to import items as desired. Prices vary greatly by item and location but should be comparable to similar items in other settings

Low-Tech

Horses and horse-drawn conveyances are common on many of the Founder worlds, where communities are small and close together. The V'la too make heavy use of native beasts both for travel and to haul cargo. While Kyryk favor a more mechanized approach, they do still occasionally use large badger-like creatures in much the same way that humans use horses.

Mid-Tech

Wheeled, tracked, and propeller driven craft make up the middle tier technology. These were much more common a couple hundred years ago and still see widespread use outside of the major cities on non-rural worlds. There is a huge variety of craft within this subset but most models tend to be utilitarian rather than sporty. Engines are either electric or hydrogen powered (combining hydrogen and oxygen for energy, with water being the only waste product). The Kyryk still make wide use of "Crawlers" in their subterranean cities.

High-Tech

The most modern vehicles make use of compact, anti-gravity engines known as repulsar drives. These reverse the pull of an existing gravity field to make the vehicle weightless. They can also enhance and redirect the field somewhat to provide stability and propulsion. It should be noted that a repulsar drive is of no use in space, where gravitic fields are too weak. They can, however, work against the field created by a gravitic engine to act as reactionless maneuvering jets on a ship so equipped. When they only have a gravitic engine's field to work against, they are good for changing orientation but provide very little in the way of thrust.

This technology was perfected by the Brood of Steel right before their civil war and has been adopted by the other races (though the Kyryk still seem to prefer tracked conveyances). Hovercraft using repulsar



drive technology generally operate at altitudes of 30 feet or less. “Air-cars” exist but are an order of magnitude more expensive – and require much more stringent licensing. They are generally reserved for the noble, rich, or military (repulsar-powered “sky galleons” are currently popular among the nobility of Terra Nova). Most repulsar vehicles require recharging every 200 miles. Unlike induction engines, repulsar technology is reproducible by the Chosen races.

Grav-Harness

The ultimate development in personal repulsar technology, the Grav-Harness can allow the wearer to levitate and move slowly through the air. This is what the Draugmorre were working towards when they initially developed the repulsar drive many years ago. Wearing such a device, a Draugmorre can nullify the “high” gravity of most worlds and fly as if on his native (low-gravity) world. A non-Draugmorre can also find use in the device as it allows for free movement in any direction at a speed of 5 feet per move action.

There is a harness designed for V’la, allowing them to float in air much as they do in water. A V’la so equipped will also require a breath web to pull oxygen from the air, and either a very humid environment or frequent wettings to keep their skin from drying out. Few V’la choose to use these devices as an air environment is both uncomfortable and unfamiliar.

Starships

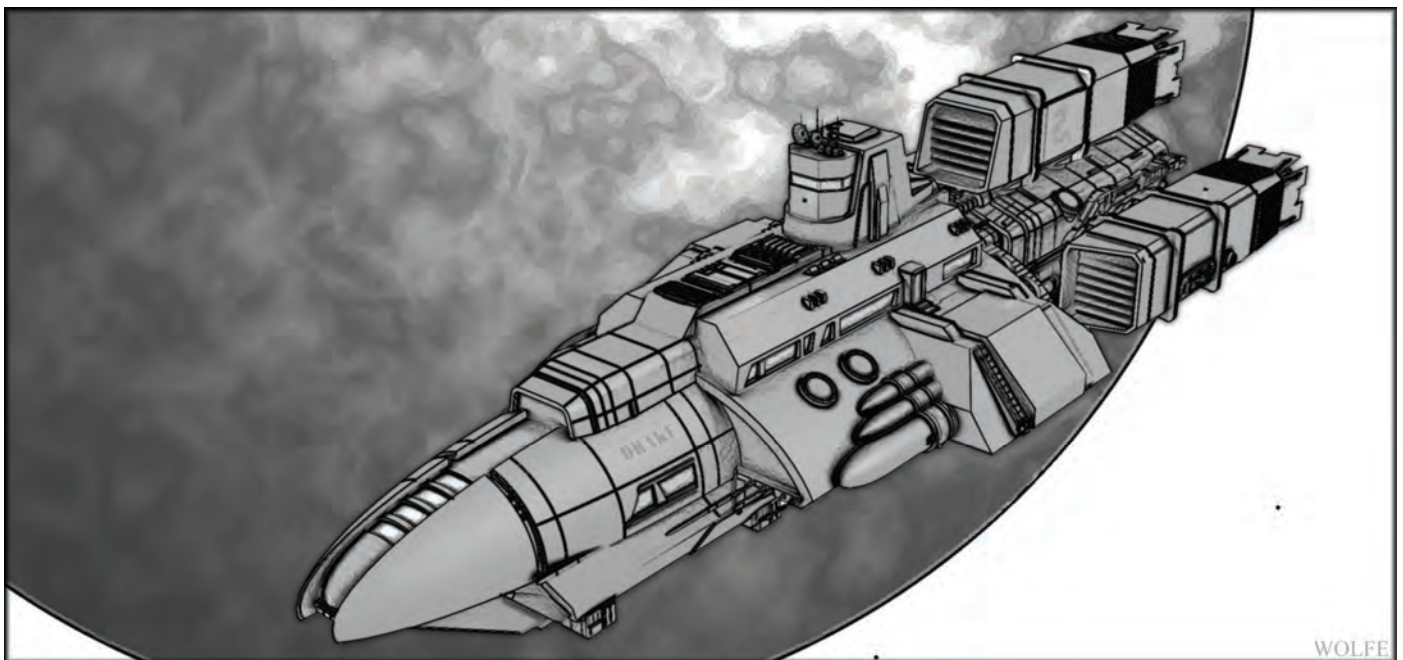
Space-faring vessels will likely be a key component of many stories, and so included here is a longer discussion of these unique vehicles.

Technology

Ships are very clearly divided into those that utilize advanced Xyr technology and those that don’t – the latter being primitive by comparison. An “old-tech” vessel does not have a gravitic induction engine, nor does it usually have internal gravity – though this might be simulated by spinning the habitation section of the ship. An old-tech may have a repulsar drive for maneuvering in atmosphere. Despite the fact that such a drive is of little use beyond orbit, it saves a lot of fuel just getting out of the gravity well and makes landing much easier.

Even though the Elder technology is irreplaceable, the majority of ships in service are Xyr-tech designs. Old-tech vessels are only used when “real” ships aren’t available, when cheap vessels are needed, or on unimportant tasks.

Hulls are commonly made out of advanced plastics, ceramics, or carbon composites. These are as strong as metal hulls, but lighter and more practical to manufacture on a mineral-poor world. Even so, a fair amount of metal is used in ship construction for internal systems: wiring, grav plating, engine components, and so forth. High-end ships use more



of these rare materials, paying more for better performance and durability. In addition, Xyr-tech ships require a skeleton of inch-thick alloy girders embedded in the outer hull. This scaffolding is used by the control core to define the shape and size of the induction field around the ship.

Lost Technology

There were countless technicians and scientists well versed in nuclear and even anti-matter technology back on Earth. By design of the Elders, none of these people made it onto Ark VII. The people who did come aboard were also asked not to bring data (technical records, schematics, etc.) pertaining to these potentially destructive technologies. Either everyone complied, or the Xyr managed to erase or confiscate the offending material en route. So while it would be possible to reconstruct an engine (or weapon) based on these principals, it would require many years of research – years during which the wraiths could show up at any moment.

So, in effect, these technologies have been lost to the Chosen. None of them functioned nearly so well as the gravitic induction engine anyway, so the loss was not mourned – until it became clear that an induction engine could not be created without Xyr assistance...

Propulsion

Old-tech ships usually employ chemical rockets or solar sails (or both) since nuclear, fusion, and anti-matter technologies are unavailable. Rockets are faster than sails, but require the ship to haul a large amount of fuel along for the ride. For both types of old-tech ships, acceleration is generally limited to a couple of Gs, making journeys very time-consuming. Though it is theoretically possible to reach significant speeds given enough time, shielding and fuel issues make such an approach impractical over the long haul.

Old-tech vessels are more or less confined to in-system use – they stay within Unity or Chrysalis System, often even within a single subsystem. They can attempt to engage a gravitic ship but it is a trivial matter for the Xyr-tech ship to escape should it choose to do so.

The gravitic induction engine is the key to easy travel within (or across) Nexus Sector, allowing ships to cross systems in days (rather than months) and cross between systems in weeks (as opposed to years). A *gravitic engine* is a purely scientific device that harnesses ambient gravity fields to produce energy. This energy is used to power the ship and, combined with small amounts of reaction mass, propel the vessel much like a rocket engine would.

A gravitic *induction* engine is such an engine that has a control core grafted into it. When built into a Xyr-tech ship, the pseudo-sentient organic control core can draw upon the Lux Aeternum to create an induction field around the ship. The gravitic engine is then used to propel the ship forward while the induction field magnifies the acceleration and shunts realspace (along with the tremendous G forces and other bothersome side effects of rapid travel) around the vessel – leaving it in a good approximation of a Newtonian universe.

Even when the induction field is not active, the gravitic engine acts as a power generator for the ship. It uses no fuel and provides considerable energy. In fact, it can produce a great amount of waste energy which is generally directed aft of the ship using thruster nozzles or vents. This modulated energy is used for thrust and is typically applied to reaction mass to generate forward motion. Since most ships use a repulsar drive for changing orientation, these engine exhaust thrusters only need to be oriented towards the rear. Even so, they are often still called “maneuvering thrusters” – a term which predates the invention of the repulsar drive.

While reaction mass is often carried to enhance the thrusters, it is a tiny amount compared to what a purely rocket-driven ship would require. With the induction field down, ships can use a gravitic field like a Bussard ram scoop to harvest interstellar hydrogen. This will provide enough fuel to keep underway at a speed of 0.1. It is also possible refuel at any standard docking facility for a small fee.

Though the induction drive does not allow ships to reach or exceed the speed of light, they do allow them to quickly achieve some impressive velocities. The primary benefits of the Xyr-tech gravitic induction engine are:

- It allows for acceleration greater than the occupants and vessel could normally endure. The drive can maintain a normal, downward gravity field inside the ship even as it accelerates to tremendous speeds. A typical gravitic ship can accelerate from relative standstill to 1 million miles per hour in six seconds. That's several thousand Gs of acceleration, so it's a good thing that the ship and crew are spared.
- No fuel is required. The engine harnesses the ambient gravitic fields of the galaxy for power and the control core taps into the Lux Aeternum to create the induction field.
- The control core uses second science to avoid bothersome side effects of high-speed travel (mass increase, time dilation, length distortion, etc.). Though the ship can only travel "forward" at great speed, it can do so at a significant fraction of the speed of light without having to worry about special relativity.
- An active drive creates an energy barrier at the bow of the ship where realspace meets the induction field. This intersection area can be anything from a barely-discernable ripple to a coruscating blaze of light depending on the speed of the ship, what is impacting the field, and how well tuned the induction engine is. A similar energy field (called the induction wake) trails behind the ship where the shunted energy, matter, and space collapse back together. These barriers protect the vessel very well from the front and rear.

The main drawback of these engines is that they can only shunt so much realspace per second and so this sets an effective speed limit on the vessel, determined by the quality of its control core. It is possible (and common for pirates) to transplant control cores from one ship to another. Some other drawbacks of a gravitic induction engine include:

- The induction field generator is built into the hull with a specific orientation, allowing the field to propel a ship only along a single vector ("forward"). You can't make instantaneous direction changes or fly sideways with the induction field active. Course changes are long curves; much like a large, winged craft would maneuver in atmosphere.
- You can't cut the engine and coast at speed since the ship quickly returns to mundane (very slow) speeds as the field dissipates. To move in a direction other than "forward" requires a repulsar drive or maneuvering thrusters so speeds are very limited in directions other than straight ahead.
- Only the Xyr can create control cores for these engines, so they are irreplaceable. This is why starship combat is usually resolved with boarding actions. It is far preferable to capture a ship, or at least its control core.
- Gravitic induction fields do not function in proximity to large gravity wells like moons and planets. Most Xyr-tech ships are equipped with a repulsar drive and thrusters for maneuvering and landing.

When the engine is powered-down normally, the induction field dissipates slowly and the initial conditions reassert themselves gently enough for the engine to compensate – keeping the ship and passengers nice and comfortable. The ship ends up going the same speed it was when the drive was activated. Even if the engine fails, the field usually fades slowly enough to avoid catastrophe, though the ride can be rough. It is not impossible, however, for an overloaded induction field to simply implode, decelerating the ship almost instantaneously, and obliterating it in a spectacular smear of energy and fluorescent matter.

Typical gravitic induction engines have maximum speed ratings of 1 to 20 mmph (million miles per hour) and can change speed at a rate of 1 mmph per round, though decelerating back to relative zero by deactivating the field only takes one round regardless. Rating 10 ships are average while rating 20 are still highly experimental. As previously stated, this limit depends on the quality of the control core (how good the pseudo-sentient is at merging with the meta-consciousness). As long as both ships have gravitic engines and induction scaffolding, it is possible to quickly transplant control cores from one ship to another without having to transplant the entire engine. A control core is usually enclosed in a ceramic, coffin-like interface capsule about 5 feet high (designed to just fit through your standard bulkhead doorway) and weighing about 300 lbs.

Note that even though the ship is enclosed in an induction field and acting outside of the common laws of physics, it is still wholly within our universe. It is there, perfectly visible, and solid. It's not in hyperspace, or subspace, or any other weird dimension. It is right there, just within a nearly invisible, second science induction field.

A Xyr-tech ship traveling at cruising speed through normal space causes a noticeable disturbance as realspace is briefly displaced along the vessel's trajectory. When pushing maximum speed, the bow blaze and trailing wake often give a ship a comet-like appearance as it tears through the void.

The bow-field and wake also serve as an excellent defense against all known weapons. A pulse cannon blast would be dispersed along the length of the

ship, just as any other intense cosmic radiation or force would be. Only from the sides, top, and bottom is a ship vulnerable to attack while the gravitic engine is engaged. From these angles there is no real barrier to approach, and it is even possible to dock ships traveling at speed so long as the approach is made broadsides (using nearly-parallel trajectories).



V'LA CRUISER

As previously mentioned, a Xyr-tech ship is constructed with specific orientation, allowing it to move at induction speeds only along a single vector ("forward"). In repulsar-equipped ships, the gravitic engine exhaust cones are also typically aligned only rearward. Of course, when the induction drive is not engaged, the ship is free to drift along through the void in whatever orientation it so chooses. It will, however, be going pretty darn slow compared to ships with their engines running. To maintain the induction field (and thus the high speed), the gravitic induction engine must be active. This is unlike a standard rocket engine which can accelerate to speed and then coast for the majority of the trip.

A gravitic ship doesn't have to worry about deceleration since the ship returns to its initial velocity when the field dissipates. So, unlike a rocket engine, the ship does not have to reorient to apply breaking-thrust upon nearing its destination.

The only thing that a gravitic induction drive has trouble shunting is gravitational effects. It does not work well (or at all) within a strong gravity field – like within the atmosphere of a planet. Luckily, this is exactly where a repulsar drive excels and so almost all Xyr-tech ships are equipped with both a

gravitic induction engine (for forward speed) and a repulsar drive (for changing orientation, and taking off / landing). The repulsar drive, when combined with specialized deck plating, is also useful for generating a normal gravity field inside the ship.

Just as an induction engine can only handle so much speed, it can also only shunt so much matter per second. Anything denser than a nebula will cause the field to dissipate. So it's not possible to "shunt" a large, solid object around a ship. Instead the engine will likely be damaged and the field will dissipate (after shunting itself around the object) or implode (resulting in an impact at several million miles per hour). Objects less than half the size of the ship, so long as they are not impacting the bow field too frequently, are not usually a problem.

Also note that if two induction fields come into contact with each other, they merge into a single field. The area within the field is relatively calm, which is what makes boarding actions feasible.

Some Numbers

Ships are given a speed rating that represents their maximum velocity in mmph (million miles per hour, generally pronounced "oomph"). A ship with a rating of 10 can travel 10 million miles in an hour. This is 2,777 miles per second. The acceleration of these engines is the same regardless of their top speed (around 7,600 Gs). From standstill, a gravitic ship can go 1,666 miles in one round. By comparison, rockets accelerate between 3 and 10 Gs during liftoff. Solar sail vessels are an order of magnitude below that – though of course they don't "lift off."

The following table shows the speed ratings of the different types of propulsion available. Even though rockets and sails don't have a "speed limit" like a gravitic engine, their low acceleration makes it infeasible for them to achieve speeds above a couple million miles per hour. For ease of use, just assume that the old-tech average the maximum speeds listed even though, in reality, they are going slower than that for a large part of the trip, but faster in the middle part of the journey.

Propulsion	Max Speed (mmph)
Gravitic Induction Engine	By engine quality (1 to 20)
Rockets	2
Solar Sails	1
Repulsar Drive or Thrusters	200 mph in atmosphere 100,000 mph in vacuum

All of this assumes travel in a vacuum. In atmosphere the repulsar drive or thrusters are used instead. These have a maximum velocity of 200 miles per hour and an acceleration of 10 feet per second per second (so 210 ft in one round from standing still). In a vacuum, they can achieve 100,000 miles per hour. That is equivalent to an mmph speed rating of 0.1.

If you know how many Astronomical Units it is to your destination, you can determine the trip time thusly:

$$\text{AU} \times 93 / \text{speed rating} = \text{travel time (in hours)}$$

One A.U. is the average distance from the Earth to the Sun. For reference, it is usually 30 to 50 A.U. to the edge of a solar system. The edge of Unity System is 110 A.U. from the edge of Chrysalis (which is incredibly close in stellar terms). The New Worlds are about 270 A.U. from both – that is about 100 days travel in a speed 10 ship.

The map of Nexus Sector can be used to estimate the distance between two planets. Keep in mind, however, that the worlds are orbiting their respective stars. The outer planets are orbiting slowly enough that it probably won't matter. The inner worlds could complete a circuit in a year or so. So if a lot of time goes by in game, you might want to adjust the positions somewhat, or just assign them randomly when it comes up.

If you want to avoid the math, the following table shows some typical travel times for an average ship using a gravitic induction drive. There is a great deal of variation in these times depending on the position of the planets, the shape of their orbit, and even solar weather. A very fast ship could cut these times in half while an old-tech vessel will typically take ten times as long to make the same journey.

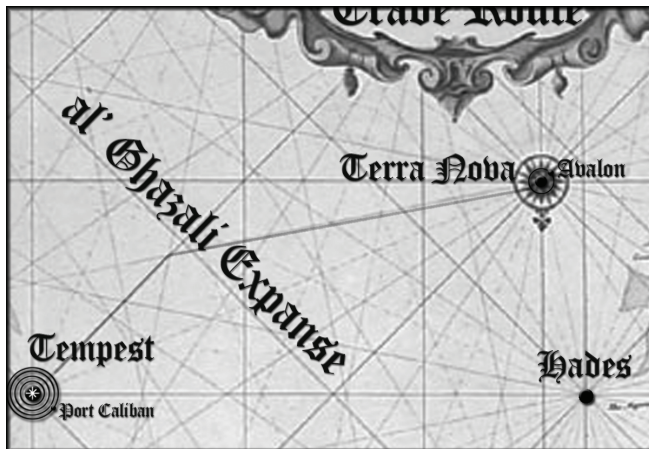
From	To	Time
Center of system	Edge of system	14 days
Center of system	Inner world	9 hours
Inner world	Outer world	8 days
Outer world	Edge of system	6 days
Edge of Chrysalis	Edge of Unity	40 days
Edge of either Chrysalis or Unity	The New Worlds	100 days

Artificial Gravity

Repulsar technology can be tied to a gravitic engine to create a localized artificial gravity field. Special plates are installed in the floor with matching (opposite polarity) plates in the ceiling. When connected to a gravitic engine and powered up, a gravity field is generated between the two surfaces. The direction is not variable and the maximum field strength is determined by the plate density – rarely set higher than 2G for safety reasons. This plating is resource intensive (requiring some specific alloys and superconducting elements) but is a usual part of Xyr-tech ships since the engine and repulsar tech is already present.

Since no induction field is needed to power the gravitic plating, a control core is not required for this functionality. This means that the technology can be reproduced by non-Elder races, though it is very expensive to do so. It is usually too costly and space-consuming to build a gravitic engine into an old-tech ship just for the sake of artificial gravity, but for large stations and asteroid bases the expense is often deemed worth it. After the control core, grav plating is the most common component pirated from captured ships or salvaged from derelicts. This is because it is easy to uninstall and transport, and it can be sold piecemeal.

Note: To summarize, a gravitic engine is a high tech power plant that harnesses the ambient gravity fields of the galaxy to produce power. This can be used with small amounts of reaction mass to produce maneuvering thrust and can be tied into a repulsar drive and grav plating to create artificial gravity fields. A gravitic *induction* engine also has a Xyr-tech control core tied into the engine and special scaffolding built into the hull. The core can create an induction field which greatly magnifies, and maintains, the gravitic engine's thrust in the forward direction.



Weapons

Cannons

Pulse Cannons are basically just larger versions of the common sidearm used throughout Nexus Sector. They emit a concentrated blast of plasma at very high velocity to inflict damage (both energy and kinetic) on the target. Due to the tremendous heat generated, a cannon must cool down for several seconds between firings (they can fire once per round). Light, medium, and heavy cannons are available.

Grappling Systems

Starship combat is often resolved with boarding actions because gravitic induction engines (or more specifically, the control cores) are irreplaceable. It is far preferable to capture a ship than to destroy it. When two ships come along side each other, their induction fields will merge and the vessels will be able to dock or grapple easily (as if both ships were at rest, actually). Combat ships are often equipped with grappling systems to allow for boarding hostile vessels. These systems fire a number of cables into the hull of the other ship and then pull the two together, at which point the boarders either enter through airlocks or cut their way through the hull. Some newer ships use gravitic or magnetic grapples, to secure the two ships together. These work in the same way as cables.

Some ships will instead use breaching pods. These are like escape pods but are fired from close range (once the induction fields merge). They clamp onto the enemy hull and burn a hole through which the occupants can board. In recent years, ships have even been designed with boarding gangways – extendable hallways with cutting apparatus on the end. These allow boarders to cross to the other ship without ever entering vacuum.

Missiles & Mines

Missiles do not see much use because they are not compatible with gravitic induction engine technology. If a gravitic ship at cruising speed fired a missile, the projectile would be destroyed as soon as it left the shooter's induction field (because it would suddenly drop to initial velocity). Missiles are also too small to have their own induction engines and so would also have a hard time catching a ship so equipped.

Stationary mines are more effective though the bow field of a cruising ship offers good protection against detonations from directly ahead. For this reason, proximity sensors (short range radar) are usually employed – hoping for a broadside shot as a ship passes nearby. Many mines can also recognize IFF (Identification Friend or Foe) signals – allowing allies to pass. Due to the sheer volume of space, mine fields are only practical when defending a specific (small) location.

Other Systems

All of the Chosen races have solved the life support problem and have technology that can indefinitely recycle the air and water on a ship so long as the engines are functioning. On larger vessels it is possible to recycle food as well, but such preprocessors are generally only used in emergency situations, or on very long voyages.

Starships in this setting don't have a huge suite of generic "scanners" available to them. They have radar, various IR, UV, and radio wave detectors, and even gravity-based sensors that act much like radar but with better range and precision. In space, you can tell when something is out there and you can plot how it is moving if you watch for a while. You can tell if it is hot or not and whether it is emitting radio, radar, or radiation. But if it is not broadcasting an ID signal, there isn't much else that you can get until you are close enough to see the thing. And when "scanning" a planet, there is no way to detect "life-signs" or pinpoint the location of specific objects. If you are on the night side, you might see the lights of towns or cities (if it isn't cloudy). You can detect ambient radio and TV signals and even tune into a specific one. You can see hot spots that might be factories or volcanoes. In the day, you can zoom in with the equivalent of a pretty good telescope, but that is about it. You can't just scan the planet and find a crashed ship unless it has a distress beacon going and you can't pick out one human in a camp full of Kyryk.

Style Differences

Founders learned of starships from the Draugmorrian Brood of Song and so their vessels resemble a mix between the ornate beauty of those vessels and the sailing ships that people of the Age of Exploration were familiar with. For several centuries, the Founders employed solar sail ships almost exclusively. There are still monochromatic laser arrays set up near Tempest, Cervantes, and Cymbeline to facilitate the transit back towards the primary star.

The ships that Newcomers were used to back in the Sol system were a lot like early Kyryk vessels – made of metal, using nuclear, fusion, or other “dirty” drive systems. Rotation would be used to simulate gravity, or the crew would just make due in zero-G. These vessels often carried a wide assortment of missiles and other armaments – none of which are currently employed in Nexus Sector.

The typical Kyryk style is grungy and industrial – a lot of iron, rivets, pipes, and tubing. They were in the middle of a pollution-mired industrial age when brought here and their design styles still have that feel. Their few above-ground buildings are squat and imposing. Their starships are clunky and angular with lots of exposed machinery; very durable and solidly built, but not pretty. They tend to build one big thing rather than a bunch of small things.

The V’la ships all use an unadorned, mirror-finished hull material and are generally shaped like spheres, teardrops, or similar rounded and streamlined forms. They have the highest tech level of the races and use it to construct elegant, but seemingly simple, works. They exclusively use gravitic induction engines and repulsar drives for propulsion.

The E’lanari grow their tech from plants so it’s a mix of primitive organic forms with some bone and leather thongs used where needed. They are not believed to be capable of travel through the void. There are, however, large lifeforms that dwell in the space between the worlds of the E’lan system. The remains of these creatures have been found planetside, leading to the speculation that they sometimes descend to the planetary surface. It is possible, though not probable, that they could be used for crude space travel.

Starship Statistics

A starship can be described by a handful of vital statistics, most of which can be found in the core rule book. The majority of ships are “cruiser” sized. Only the largest warships and bulk haulers would fall into the “battleship” category. “Fighter” and “shuttle” type craft generally stay near worlds or are carried aboard other craft. Specific vessels can vary from the statistic listed, but they provide a good starting point for most ships that will be encountered. Still, there are a few setting-specific things to keep in mind.

Regardless of the size, the speeds given earlier in this chapter should be used in place of those listed in the core rule book. Pulse cannons are classified as light, medium, or heavy and do +10, +12, or +15 damage respectively. A fighter can typically mount one cannon, a cruiser four, and a battleship eight – where a light cannon counts as half and a heavy as two. The toughness of a ship is treated at 10 higher than normal if the attack must pass through the bow or wake field in order to strike the vessel.

In addition to information such as size, crew/passenger complement, and value, a ship record must note the type of drive(s) installed, and its maximum speed rating. It should also note the type and number of weapons installed, as well as any unusual gear.

Miscellaneous Rules

Void Combat

Even though dramatic ship-to-ship battles are often resolved with hand-to-hand combat, there is likely to be a period of maneuvering and cannon fire preceding the boarding action. The Narrator is encouraged to use any existing vehicle or ship combat system desired. But if nothing presents itself, or if one prefers a fast, cinematic approach, the following system is provided:

1. A deep-space encounter usually starts with one ship intercepting another along a nearly-parallel course. Roll initiative as normal at the start of the encounter.
2. Let characters and the supporting cast act in order of initiative (though it is common for the crew to coordinate their actions at the captain's command).
3. A gunner manning each cannon can fire if they so choose.
 - Use the normal combat rules to resolve the hit on the ship.
 - Each Wound suffered will also lower the maximum speed of the ship by one category.

4. The pilot can move the ship normally (keeping in mind that ships with an active induction field can make only gradual heading changes), or try one of the following special maneuvers:
 - **Evasive Maneuvers** – adds 4 to Defense, opposed pilot, and grapple checks for one round.
 - **Sync** – Roll opposed pilot checks. If this succeeds the ships are locked in relative position (with 30 to 90 feet of separation) and their induction fields merge. The more massive ship determines the course and speed of the linked pair, but its maximum speed rating drops by one while linked.
 - **Unsync** – Roll opposed pilot checks. If victorious, the fields unmerge and the ships can move independently. A ship that has been successfully grappled cannot unsync.
 - **Grapple** – Can only be done if synced. Roll opposed pilot checks. If the grappler wins, then the ships are physically secured (0 feet separation) and boarders can start crossing over next round.
 - **Ram** – roll a pilot check vs. the defense of the target. Damage to both is the difference (if > 0). Induction fields tend to shunt a lot of collision damage around the ship (it is, after all, just acceleration effects).
5. The ship's (single) chief engineer can make a difficulty 20 Engineering check to grant one of the following effects for one round:
 - a. Add +2 to all attack rolls made by the ship's gunners.
 - b. Add +1 to the damage of the ship's cannons.
 - c. Add +2 to the ship's Defense and piloting checks.
 - d. Increase the maximum speed category of the ship by 1.

At the end of the round, the faster ship can break off the encounter by accelerating away if it is not synced or grappled. In even one round, a ship with just a one higher speed rating can be 1600 miles away, effectively ending the encounter. If both ships are still within range of each other, then go back to step 2.



Alien Environments

A great diversity of environments can be found on, and between, the worlds of Nexus Sector. Below are some game mechanics to help deal with these settings.

Gravity

Gravity, if present, is light, normal, or heavy. Light gravity is assumed to be 50% of normal and heavy 150%. The weight of items carried is adjusted accordingly and characters can go either twice or half as long before becoming fatigued from exertion.

Even though Draugmorre evolved on a light gravity world and Kyryk on a high gravity planet, all races use the rules above regarding gravity. In addition, a Draugmorre can only fly unassisted while in light gravity.

Atmosphere

Atmospheres listed as dense, normal, and thin are breathable without assistance. In this book, 'dense' is also used to describe atmospheres that are prone to constant fog or cloud cover, as well as those that are just "thick." In thin atmospheres, characters can only go half as long as normal before becoming fatigued from exertion. Apply the effects of gravity and then atmosphere.

An atmosphere can also be toxic or tainted. A toxic atmosphere is unbreathable and so characters must haul along their own air supply. A tainted atmosphere just requires filters. If exposed to a toxic atmosphere, use the normal suffocation rules. If there are additional effects, they will be specifically listed for the given world.

By default, for a tainted atmosphere, a character must make a Fortitude (15) save every minute they breathe the tainted air. Failure results in 1 point of Constitution damage.

Radiation

After being exposed to radiation for a certain period of time, a character must make a Fortitude (15) save or suffer one point of Constitution damage. The time period is determined by strength of the radiation:

	Radiation Level	Time Between Checks
	Slight	24 hours
	Low	6 hours
	Moderate	1 hour
	High	2 minutes
	Extreme	1 round

In addition, a character that has accumulated two points of this Constitution damage will suffer moderate nausea* and vomiting. Three points will add mild skin burns and hair loss. A character down by four Constitution points due to radiation will suffer severe skin burns and internal bleeding as well. Any more than that, and the character is also 'Nauseated' as per the game mechanic (rather than just as flavor text). Any treatment which restores Constitution will relieve these secondary symptoms accordingly.

*Note that the moderate nausea described is not the game-defined term 'Nausea.' It may have story repercussions but usually not mechanical ones.

Backgrounds

In addition to the Human background, the Lux Aeternum setting has the following additional options.

Synthetics

“Synthetic” is a general term applied to any of a number of series and models of artificially created and artificially intelligent beings. Their uses, appearance, and disposition vary greatly throughout Newcomer held space.

Synthetic (Construct, Android [Generally])

- Ability Adjustments: +2 Str, +1 Int, -1 Wis, -2 Chr
- Bonus Feats: Computer Link power*, Cybered
- Favored Feats: Supernatural Focus (Computer Link)*, Tough
- Special: Cybered, in the case of Synthetics, doesn't represent implants so much as it does upgrades to the basic package. As such, a Synthetic NEVER incurs any of the potential penalties for “cyberpsychosis” as outlined in the augmentations section.

*Similarly, the Computer Link power is an innate technological function more than any supernatural gift.

Draugmorre

Draugmorre are a race of winged reptilian humanoids with intensely passionate cultural striation among their communities. Though well-muscled, this merely brings them up to par on “normal” gravity worlds (being from a low gravity world, they would normally suffer strength penalties when outside of their natural environment). They are quick, but fragile due to their light bone structure.

Draugmorre (Humanoid, Reptilian, Aerial)

- Ability Adjustments: +1 Dex, -1 Con
- Bonus Feats: All-out Attack, Weapon Training
- Favored Feats: Diehard, Seize Initiative
- Special : Fly 10 ft + (5 ft x Con Bonus)

Kyryk

The Kyryk come in two varieties – the younger Builders which comprise the majority of the race, and the larger, older Defenders, which act as community protectors for the rest of their people. A player must choose one of the two stages when playing a Kyryk. Community minded among themselves, Kyryk are bluntly practical and single-minded, and therefore sometimes difficult to socialize with from the viewpoint of other races.

Kyryk Builder (Humanoid)

- Ability Adjustments: +1 Con, -1 Chr
- Bonus Feats: Great Fortitude, Skill Focus (Craft)
- Favored Feats: Improvised Tools, Tough
- Special: Small SZ

Kyryk Defender (Humanoid)

- Ability Adjustments: +4 Str, +2 Con, -2 Int, -2 Wis, -2 Chr
 - Bonus Feats: Endurance, Tireless
 - Favored Feats: Rage, Tough
 - Special: Large SZ
-

V'la

The V'la are a race of great intellect that strongly resemble the (now extinct) jellyfish of Terra Mortis. They don't possess the necessary physiology to move outside of a fluid environment without a host or other conveyance, and their structure is more fragile than that of most humanoids.

V'la (Aberration, Psionic)

- Ability Adjustments: +1 Int, +1 Wis, -2 Con
- Bonus Feats: Iron Will, Dominate power*
- Favored Feats: Mind Over Body, Supernatural Focus (Dominate)

*Special: This is the “Puppeteering” ability. It is limited to touch range, but becomes a Move Action to use rather than a Full Round Action. For the V'la “hosts” use the write-up for “Ape” provided on pg 34 of the True20 Bestiary.

Augmentation Options

Since the first cave dweller made the first tool out of rocks and pieces of wood, mankind has been seeking better and more effective instruments to master his environment. It was inevitable that eventually attention would focus back on his own body while engaged in that search. As in many a science fiction setting, modifications to physical bodies in *Lux Aeternum* fall into two broad categories: cybernetic implants and genetic engineering (“genegineering”). Cybernetics is the science (some would say the art) of melding technological equipment with the body’s internal function or form, while genegineering changes that form toward a planned outcome by directly altering the genetic structure of a target organism... in this case a player character.

General Guidelines

In *Lux Aeternum*, a character may have such enhancements by picking the feats **Cybered** and/or **Genegineering**. Both feats may be taken multiple times and each time they are taken they give the player character 3 Augmentation Points with which they can purchase various augmentations. For example, a player character with 4 ranks in the Genegineering feat has 12 (3 x 4) Augmentation Points with which to “purchase” traits from the Genegineering list (and that list only) at the end of this chapter. The lists of available augmentations are presented for each type and the augmentation points from one feat are not “transferable” to another, i.e., a player with 2 Augmentation Points left from his **Genegineering 3** cannot use them to cover implants his **Cybered 2** came up short for purchasing. Unspent points can be “banked” until more ranks can be taken to finish accruing Augmentation Points to buy new implants or genemods; e.g., a character wanting a 5 point implant will have to wait until such time as he can set aside two feats for investing in **Cybered**.

Though the lists of available augmentations of either types makes efforts toward being comprehensive, it’s up to the individual Narrator whether a particular trait is available in his or her game. It is strongly advised that Narrators look over the lists presented here with an eye to what fits in their own campaign and what doesn’t; there are many different campaign models possible in the *Lux Aeternum* setting, and

Go, Go, Robo-Jellyfish!

The assumption operating in this section is that the modifications listed will be applied to human characters. However, Draugmorre from the Brood of Steel have access to and great enthusiasm toward the same augmentations (cybernetic, that is). The E’lanari have neither the technological background nor spiritual nonchalance to use cyber, and would, in fact, be appalled at the very idea of implanting machines in their own bodies. The V’la have no use for such “toys,” and are generally dismissive toward such developments, as they have their hosts for “tools” and the delicate physical structure of their own species limits the potential for self-modification, regardless. Oddly, the Kyryk also have no apparent use for cyber, but their reasoning has never been shared with other races. They seem to react with amusement when faced with such technology or its recipients, but simply and directly change the subject when questioned, with no explanation.

Aside from the V’la bio-engineering their hosts, none of the species aside from humanity have any genegineering capacity demonstrated thus far. Again, the E’lanari lack both the ability and the inclination, and the Draugmorre, Kyryk, and V’la all view mucking about with their own genetic structure distasteful for cultural and ethical reasons.

not every item fits every model, either stylistically or in terms of game mechanics – power scale, specifically.

There are a number of methods available in different sci-fi games to try to balance the advantages of cybernetics and genetic enhancements. True20 doesn’t use freeform point allocation, and simply treating such new abilities as equipment buyable with money within the game opens the door to gross abuses of the Wealth System. It also ignores the fact that once in place, it’s pretty damned difficult to take away an implant or genemod, barring the use of new surgery [whether in a hospital with a scalpel, or on a battlefield with an armor-piercing, internal detonation flechette round] or, in the case of genemods, sophisticated mutagenic biological and chemical payloads. Further, though the roleplaying experience of such may not be to the tastes of every

player, it *does* take effort and training to acclimate to a new inborn ability effectively— be it eyes that now add a whole new spectrum to someone’s vision, or having to relearn to walk smoothly with that 20 pounds of new mass your synthetic muscles and dermal plating represent and the new center of gravity your skeletal extensions changed around on you.

Given the above, feats are a convenient mechanical tool for our purposes. Feats are a finite resource and represent a serious investment from a player, giving another built-in balancing mechanism for character building.

If a Narrator *wants* to run a game where PCs can walk off the street into a cyber clinic and walk out metal-clad engines of destruction, that’s cool, and best wishes on their game experiences...however, a vast proliferation of Cybermonsters and Genegods isn’t one of the core assumptions of the Lux Aeternum setting as written. Of course, however, it’s your game and you can use it anyway you want. As an aid for those who like their Augs a bit heftier, here’s another option: ignore the feats structure and use wealth checks to purchase the stuff directly. Assume a cyber-implant has a base DC of 30 to purchase (including surgery, training, some out-the-door maintenance plans, and the like), and genemods a DC 35. Add +5 to the purchase DC for every level of Cyber Implant (so, a Minor is at 30, Moderate at 35 and Major at 40) per individual implant, and a +1 to the purchase DC for genengineering cumulative for every Genemod already in place when dealing with new Genemods (it gets more and more difficult, and hence more and more expensive, to safely tweak that old helix the further away from mother nature’s baseline you’ve already gone) – so, if this is your 3rd genemod slapped into your genetic coding, the purchase DC would be a 38.

Conversely, several Narrators may want even greater restrictions on the acquisition of new abilities, not just the cost of new feat slots, but don’t want to shut the door on their players completely. That’s cool, too, and let’s throw a couple out for your consideration.

For cyberware, there’s a disturbing little complication called Implant Induced Detachment Disorder (IIDD, or sometimes 2I2D), colloquially known as “Id,” or “Id Monster,” or more vulgarly, “Cyked.” Look at the cost in Augmentation Points

represented by all of the cybergear currently implanted in a character, regardless of whether the campaign uses the feat allocation or purchase method. Every time a new implant is placed in the character’s body, the character has to make a Will SV versus a DC of 10 + (Total Augmentation Points from Cyberware). Failure means that the character’s brain chemistry is reacting negatively to either the control input of the new implant, or that the total physiological change wrought by his combined cybersystems is inducing a degradation resembling organic psychosis. Failure by a margin of 5 or less penalizes a character’s social skills by an amount equal to the margin of failure, as he becomes moody, violent, pathologically aggressive, and so on. Failure by a margin of greater than 5 results in the Narrator taking possession of the character as he or she (the character, hopefully not the Narrator) becomes a raving lunatic...and presumably a very dangerous one. In either case, a character must undergo surgical removal of their implants one-by-one while withstanding a brutal pharmaceutical regimen – in game terms, they are given a new Will SV for every implant removed until they are able to beat their new DC by a margin of 5 or greater, after which they are “cured.” Note that there are no “refunds” for used cyber (though selling it on the black market is always an option), nor any malpractice suits for IIDD (it’s generally unpredictable, unavoidable when it happens, and is just generally a risk inherent in the procedure). Oh, in addition, there’s also probably a permanent marker in the files of whatever authority had to bring you down and put you in the hospital.

Genemods have their own unpleasant risk – Catastrophic Genetic Cascade Syndrome (CGCS), colloquially better known as “Cogs” or more vulgarly as “Unzipping.” Every time a new genemod is inserted in the character’s coding, the character has to make a Fortitude SV versus a DC of 15 + (Total Augmentation Points from Genemods). Failure by 5 or less means the character takes the equivalent of a Wound for every point by which they fail their Saving Throw. These wounds must heal naturally as the body adjusts itself, a process taking a number of days equal to the DC of the save for each individual wound. Failure by a margin between 10 and 6 operates the same way, but the healing time is measured in weeks instead of days. Failure by a margin greater than 10 is fatal (barring Narrator

intervention... and probably some very tense dramatic scenes as heroic medical efforts are made to save the character's life). There is no removing a genemod once encoded, at least not with current medical technology, though stabilizing genetic remodding can alleviate or at least inhibit the damaged zones promulgation. This negates the benefit originally gained from the offending mod, of

course. Accepting the loss of the offending augmentations' benefit grants a new Fortitude SV following the same guidelines as cyberware above.

Both of these complications are optional, and a Narrator should probably inform players if either or both are in use. Probably.

Paging Dr. Frankenstein... Paging Dr. Frankenstein...

A clinic specializing in implants and genemods will need Cybersurgeons and Genengineers on staff. In order to qualify for either specialty, a character needs a minimum of 10 ranks in the **Medicine** Skill and the feat (appropriately named) **Cybersurgeon** or **Genengineer** (having both is exceedingly rare). Without these feats, trying to perform Implant Surgery or Coding Insertion, even if possessing the equipment necessary and the Medicine skill (also necessary), automatically imposes a +20 circumstance penalty on the DC for the process.

<u>Procedure</u>	<u>DC</u>	<u>Time (Average)</u>	<u>Recovery</u>
Implant Surgery			
Minor Implant	20	1 hour	1 day
Moderate Implant	25	2 - 5 hours	3 - 5 days
Major Implant	30	12+ hours	2 - 3 weeks
Coding Insertion	25 + AM*	AM hours	AM days

*AM = Augmentation Modifier, which is 1 x Augmentation Point Cost [APC] for cosmetic changes, 2 x APC for structural changes, and 5 x APC for neurological or cerebral changes.

If Wealth Check DCs become a factor, for whatever reason, use the guidelines presented for the Buying Cyber option earlier.

Cybersurgeon Feat

You are trained in the implantation of cybernetic devices and the surgical techniques required for such an operation.

Genengineer Feat

You are trained in the advanced Gene Therapy required to extensively modify a living being's genetic structure so as to express new and/or augmented traits

A Few Notes

Regardless of how magical the current state of Newcomer medicine and technology may seem to the more antiquated humans already present in the Crucible system, there are still a number of hard limits. Immortality is still not an option, not through drugs, not through gene therapy, not through cybernetics (increased longevity is another matter). Full Body Prosthetics, Brain-Tape Recording, Methuselah Code tweaking, and so many other things are all still in the realm of fiction and fantasy. Similarly, while cloned tissue-level constructions can be grown in vats for medical transplants and other purposes, *instant* duplicates and *identical* sentient clones are simply not possible – that is, a person can be cloned, but they will grow and mature as normal, with disparate memories, learning, and experiences from their source genes, and will ultimately be their own person (and be treated as such under the legal systems the Newcomers brought with them, though the person behind the cloning itself may or may not face charges, depending on where and under what circumstances they did the deed). Technology may push human ability to new limits, but it doesn't entirely redefine those abilities or reach actual Superhuman levels (only in vidsims do you see men bench-pressing armored personnel carriers). Minor cyber-implants and cosmetic genemods are *fairly* common and are generally taken in stride by newcomers (and ignored by other species, to whom all humans pretty much look alike), much the same as Synthetics are. Also, at this stage in materials and systems development, cybernetic systems are pretty much entirely shielded from EMP effects – they're really only vulnerable to tailored damage or software corruption while being implanted or repaired.

Don't Like Your Chromosomes? Buy New Ones! Wholesale!

There are far too many corporate and governmental producers of implants and genemods to give a comprehensive listing, but the following are a few brand names:

- **Implants (General)**
 - Bryce-Watterson Consortium
 - The Empress Corporation
 - Grangier Tech
 - Kajimoto Cybergear
 - Palmer Cybercorp
 - Zhuettner & Colm
- **Implants (Military Grade/Weapons)**
 - Advanced Military
 - Mechanix
 - Kajimoto
 - Ronintek, Shiva Technologies,
- **Genemods (Cosmetic)**
 - Glamourzone
 - NuYu, Vostokovitch Limited
 - Enterprises
- **Genemods (General)**
 - Abercrombie & Mueller
 - Bio-Forge Laboratories
 - The Empress Corporation
 - The Idea Men
 - NuYu

Cyberware

Each piece of cybergear is listed with the following information:

Availability – Common, Restricted (requires special licensing to operate or possess), Illegal (allowed for Police or Military if allowed at all)

Class – Communication System, Neural System, Sensory System, Structural Enhancement, Supplementary System

Type – Minor (costs 1 Augmentation Point), Moderate (costs 3 Augmentation Points), Major (costs 5 Augmentation Points)

Description – Behold... The Power of Technobabble!

Mechanical Notes – Any game mechanics information required to use item in play



Combat Cocktail Injector Array

Availability – Illegal

Class – Supplementary System

Type – Moderate

Description – This is a series of artificial gland sacs designed to pump a compound of synthetic versions of testosterone, endorphins, and adrenaline into select points of the user's circulatory system. It temporarily enhances the efficiency of muscular and general cardiovascular performance while simultaneously diminishing pain sensitivity and inducing a hyper-aggressive response. Other parts of the system are chemical factories that metabolize a number of basic biological waste products to replenish the sacs' chemical supplies. Primarily found in military and security service personnel, this system has also made its way into the hands of a variety of underworld figures who initially used it to enhance their own people...before adapting the technology to substitute illicit narcotics for the performance chemicals.

Mechanical Notes – While active, this system provides a +2 bonus to STR and DEX, as well as +10 feet to the base ground movement rate. It also gives a +5 circumstance bonus to the user's Jump skill during that period as well as making the user immune to most uses of interaction skills that require either complex thought or a functioning fear response (Narrator's discretion). The implant functions for 2 + CON Bonus rounds before depleting its store of the compound. The user is then treated as suffering the Exhausted condition for 10 minutes per round that the implant was active. It takes a minimum of 12 hours of rest to fully replenish the sacs' supply.

Commlink

Availability – Common

Class – Communication System

Type – Minor

Description – You have an internal communications link that allows you to tap into existing wireless grids. If such grids are available, your range is limited only by the size of that grid – normally planetary in scale. Outside of such a grid, your range is limited to 5 miles on average (possibly greater depending on altitude and atmospheric conditions).

When dealing with a device, such as a computer unit or vehicle controls, that are already built for wireless input, you may interface with them using this implant (though this is only for verbal commands, as operational input requires an actual Computer or Vehicle Interface). For an additional modification point, this link operates on a completely cybernetic basis, not requiring vocalization at all.

Mechanical Notes – Activating the link is a free action.

Computer Interface

Availability – Common

Class – Neural System

Type – Minor

Description – You possess a cybernetic conversion module that interprets neural input and translates it into operational commands for a computer system, replacing any sort of keyboard or other input device. The standard form for such a device is thin polyalloy cable lead that can “jack” into a socket overlaying a major neural junction, though a more sophisticated upgrade makes the connection wireless enabled.

Mechanical Notes – You can directly operate a computer system through mental commands alone. This improved connection gives you a +5 circumstance bonus to your Computer skill while using the link. It also makes any but the most complex commands no more than a free action to input. If you also possess a Commlink, for one more modification point (three total), you can use the Interface through the Commlink’s wireless connection.

Cyberaudio

Availability – Common

Class – Sensory System

Type – Minor

Description – You have cochlear implants that provide you with enhanced auditory capabilities.

Mechanical Notes – As standard, it comes with Auditory Amplification, which grants the user a +5 circumstance bonus to Notice or Search checks dependent on sound. It also includes a filtering system that automatically kicks in to protect the user from dangerous sound levels, granting a +5 bonus to

both FORT and REF saving throws involved with resisting the effects of such conditions. For an additional modification point, you can add infra and ultra sonic filters, allowing the user to hear very high- or very low- ranging sounds.

Cyberblade

Availability – Restricted

Class – Supplementary System

Type – Minor

Description – You have a recessed compartment laid against the bones of the arm, either facing toward the elbow or out toward the hand. Contained within this compartment is a high-tensile strength blade which a mental command causes to extrude and lock into place, or to subsequently slide back into the compartment. Standard production models range in length from three inches to 8 inches, though custom jobs can vary outside that.

Mechanical Notes – You have a bladed weapon attachment that you can activate or deactivate as a free action. It grants you a +2 lethal damage bonus to your “unarmed” strikes when extended. Each blade (or set, if they are in the same basic location and extend/retract in unison) counts as one minor augmentation, and multiple can be implanted.

Cyberknucks

Availability – Restricted

Class – Structural Enhancement

Type – Minor

Description – You have reinforced striking surfaces. Despite the name, this reinforcement is also in place for elbows, knees, and feet. A small set of bands of high-density alloy composites are set in place in these areas, adjusting automatically to weight and motion changes to allow maximum reinforcement at the point of impact.

Mechanical Notes – Your unarmed strikes have an additional +1 damage bonus.

Cyberlimbs

Availability – Common

Class – Supplementary System

Type – Moderate

Description – One of your limbs has been replaced with a fully cybernetically linked robotic simulation.

Mechanical Notes – Generally, these limbs are used to replace ones already lost. If so, they have strength ranges comparable to that possessed by the rest of the body. Arms may be set at different strength outputs, but legs must match given strengths (if a set, they must be calibrated equally). Any limb may be rated at up to +4 Strength above that possessed by the user's own body. This requires an additional modification point for every +2 Strength rating increase (though if calibrated between a set, such as two arms, or two legs, this must only be paid once). This additional strength is only for uses of that limb – one arm, for example, cannot use strength to lift a weight greater than the shoulder and attached torso muscles could enable; it could however, exert that strength in the crux of the elbow or in the pressure exerted by the grip of the hand. Each +1 Strength for a leg cyberlimb increases running speed by 5 feet, but legs so rated must be a pair.

Cyberoptics

Availability – Common

Class – Sensory System

Type – Minor

Description – You have implants replacing your eyes, granting you enhanced optical capabilities.

Mechanical Notes – These implants can either cosmetically resemble the eyes they replaced or display more outré appearances, such as solid colors, changing fractal patterns, and so on. The implants can either replace one or both eyes (though a pair is more common, as users tend to suffer headaches from varied visual input when using only one cybereye). As standard, the implants grant a +5 circumstance bonus to Notice and Search checks involving visual input due to the increased clarity and precision of optical processing included in the system. For an additional modification point, you can upgrade the system to include any two of the following: Infra-Red Imaging, Intensity Filters (granting a +5 bonus to both FORT and REF saving throws involved with resisting the effects of optical overload based on rapid and brilliant light inputs), Light Amplification (i.e. Lowlight Imaging), Telescopic Image Enhancement (up to x 1000).

Cybersnake

Availability – Restricted

Class – Supplementary System

Type – Minor

Description – You have a thin, high-strength cable based on memory composites and with miniature torsion motors placed at strategic points along its length. It can act as a whip or a limited cabling spool; as a weapon, it also has a high-density bladed weight at its end. The spool is generally located within an arm with an outlet similar to that of a cyber-blade and an overall length of two meters. However, there are models based in the torso with outlets in the area of the stomach that can contain lengths of up to 12 meters

Mechanical Notes – Arm-based snakes have a pull strength equal to 1/10th the users light load and a torso-based model has a pull strength of 1/5th the user's light load. A cybersnake can function either as a Whip or as a bladed weapon (Damage Bonus = +1) extending the “melee” range out to the length of the model in use.

Nanomedics

Availability – Restricted

Class – Supplementary System

Type – Minor

Description – You have implanted micro-factories that produce sophisticated nanite engines. These nanites are programmed to assist the body in various tissue repair and reconstruction tasks.

Mechanical Notes – Nanomedics cut required healing time in half and also grant a +4 bonus to Constitution checks involved in recovering from damage.

Neural Firewire

Availability – Illegal

Class – Major

Type – Neural System

Description – The chemical composition of a user's nervous system is modified with a synthetic “sheath” that increases conductivity for nervous impulses; also, crucial plexii are supplemented with high-

speed signal boosters designed to improved shunting rates for those same impulses.

Mechanical Notes – You benefit from the effects of two “levels” of the Improved Initiative feat that stack with the actual feat if already possessed. Five times a day, you can act as if using the Surge benefit of a Conviction Point (True20 Core Rules, pg 25) without requiring the expenditure of Conviction Points.

High-Density Carbon Nanoweave

Availability – Restricted

Class – Structural Enhancement

Type – Minor

Description – Strategic sections of a user’s skin are reinforced at the tissue-level with carbon nanoweave structures.

Mechanical Notes – You have Damage Resistance 2 versus Slashing and Piercing attacks.

Secondary Memory Units

Availability – Common

Class – Neural System

Type – Moderate

Description – You have implanted memory modules designed to receive and store information from the full-spectrum of senses you possess. If you also have the proper transmission devices (a Commlink or Computer Interface), you can download this information to an appropriate receiver (and processing unit, presumably, such as a vidscreen). Having such a transmission device and your own Memory Units qualifies a user as such a receiver. This is becoming an especially common implant for sex workers – if they and their clients both possess the necessary implants, they can transmit and process data simultaneous to its input, sharing their experiences with each other.

Mechanical Notes – This is functionally similar to the Eidetic Memory feat, but more encompassing, accurate, and precise on a sensory level.

Sexual Aids

Availability – Common

Class – Supplementary System

Type – Minor

Description – A series of cybernetically controlled pumps, mini-valves, and supplementary gland implants allow a user to exert precise control over their physical arousal level, as well as the organ usage involved in sexual activity (i.e., they can control when and how long). Physicians generally advise against usage for durations in excess of 10-12 hours at a time due to the increased possibility of tissue damage.

Mechanical Notes – None required...hopefully.

Skeletal Reinforcement

Availability – Restricted

Class – Structural Enhancement

Type – Minor

Description – Carbon inserts and polyalloy mesh combine to reinforce a user’s skeletal structure.

Mechanical Notes – You have Damage Reduction 4 versus attacks based on breaking bones, but only Damage Reduction 2 versus attacks based on impact (such as bludgeoning attacks or falling/crushing damage).

Skillware Integration Unit

Availability – Common

Class – Neural System

Type –Moderate

Description – You have a computerized expert system implanted which both translates software routines into reflex-memory simulating physical skills and parses sophisticated databases for required information based on mental cues from the user.

Mechanical Notes – An integration unit can operate on one skillware set at a time (sets have a cost DC for Wealth checks of 28 on average – Narrators can vary this for especially rare skills). Skillset software can be changed out either physically through an input port, or purged before downloading a new one through a wireless connection if a Computer Interface and Commlink are also implanted. While

active, a user has a skill bonus for a single skill – a +5 if the user doesn't already have the skill, raised to a +5 if the user has the skill at a lower rating than +5, or a +2 stacking on top of an existing skill bonus if a user already has the skill in question at a rating higher than +5. Skillset software exists for pretty much any non-interaction skill the Narrator is willing to allow, including languages (though someone using a skillware language is fairly obvious, much like someone reading a script or prepared speech).

Subdermal Armor Plating

Availability – Restricted

Class – Structural Enhancement

Type – Minor

Description – Micro-articulated, Ceramometallic plates are implanted under dermal layers at locations of the body designed to protect various vital organs.

Mechanical Notes – You have Damage Reduction 4 versus piercing attacks. This does not work against attacks which successfully achieve a critical hit.

Synthetic Muscle Implants

Availability – Common

Class – Structural Enhancements

Type – Moderate

Description – Your entire muscular system is interlaced with synthetic tissue implants reinforcing the natural muscle tissue. Additionally, most contiguous tissues (such as tendons and ligaments), as well as anchor points on the skeleton are also reinforced.

Mechanical Notes – Your strength bonus is increased by +2, stacking with the character's existing strength bonus. This implant can be upgraded exactly once (a second moderate augmentation) to a maximum increase of +4. A user with the second level of Muscle Implants is noticeable (Notice Check at DC 12) due to exaggerated musculature

Target Link

Availability – Restricted

Class – Supplementary Systems

Type – Minor

Description – You have a small and self-contained expert computer system implanted that extrapolates targeting arcs and lines of fire based on the position of a gun (or similar ranged weapon) in the user's hand. The implant transmits that data instantly to a receiver that conveys a targeting image in the user's retina (or in the image processor of a cyberoptic implant)

Mechanical Notes – A Target Link provides a +2 bonus to Attack rolls with a gun or similar ranged weapon. It also negates the Attack roll penalty for the first two range increments that would normally incur range penalties.

Vehicle Interface

Availability – Common

Class – Neural System

Type – Moderate

Description – You possess a cybernetic conversion module that interprets neural input and translates it directly into operational commands for a vehicle's control system. The standard form for such a device is thin polyalloy cable lead that can "jack" into a socket overlaying a major neural junction, though a more sophisticated upgrade makes the connection wireless enabled. This implant requires that the vehicle in question already be modified to accept input from the interface. Most Newcomer vehicles made within the last 50 years have this modification, but older vehicles may need to be retrofitted.

Mechanical Notes – You can directly operate a vehicle's control system through mental commands alone. This improved connection gives you a +5 circumstance bonus to your Drive or Pilot skill while using the link. It also makes any but the most complex commands no more than a free action to input (though it may take considerably more than that for a vehicle to perform the desired action, of course). If you also possess a Commlink, for one more modification point (three total), you can use the Interface through the Commlink's wireless connection.

Genemods

Each genemod is listed with the following information:

Availability – Common, Restricted (requires special licensing to operate or possess), Illegal (allowed for Police or Military if allowed at all)

Cost – In Augmentation Points

Description – Behold...Yet Again...The Power of Technobabble!

Mechanical Notes – Any game mechanics information required to use item in play. Genemods that improve attributes are normally stackable (i.e., can be bought repeatedly), but cannot raise an attribute above a +7 total.

Accelerated Healing

Availability – Common

Cost – Moderate

Description – Your metabolic processes have been altered on a cellular level to enable faster tissue regeneration, fluid stabilization, protein and electrolyte replenishment, and so on.

Mechanical Notes – Time intervals between recovery checks are halved and you have a +2 bonus on the check itself.

Cerebral Folding

Availability – Common

Cost – Moderate

Description – Overall cerebral surface area is increased substantially with a greater number of “folds” in the structure of the brain. Skull size increases negligibly (approximately 3-5%) and the electrochemistry of the organ improves in efficiency.

Mechanical Notes – You have a +2 increase to your Intelligence and can perform mental tasks 20 times faster than normal.

Cosmetic Alteration

Availability – Common

Cost – Minor

Description – Basic gene therapy to alter complexion, hair color, or eye color. A person’s

height can be altered on a small scale (1-2 inches increased or decreased maximum), bone structure and metabolic efficiency altered to change somatotype one stage (endomorph or ectomorph changed to mesomorph), and practically any minor change not requiring material implants is possible.

Mechanical Notes – A character can change any cosmetic trait or set of traits at once. They keep the changed appearance until a new array of changes is made (requiring a new modification and the expenditure of a new modification point).

Dermal Density

Availability – Restricted

Cost – Moderate

Description – Tissue density is increased for several dermal layers, which then also heals faster and with less scarring than standard dermal tissue. This is not compatible with carbon nanoweave implants as the implants’ minor changes to body chemistry on the tissue level interferes with normal cellular replenishment, slowing or even preventing healing.

Mechanical Notes – You have Damage Reduction 1 and skin injuries (lacerations, burns, etc) heal 25% faster and with no scar tissue accumulation.

Digestive Synthesis

Availability – Common

Cost – Minor

Description – You have new organs grown within your digestive system that act as chemical factories, allowing you to metabolize practically any organic substance that can be ingested.

Mechanical Notes – A character with this modification can eat pretty much anything organic, from tree bark to rotting meat. A secondary set of organelles involved in this process deadens taste and smell receptors past a certain threshold.

Enhanced Coordination

Availability – Common

Cost – Moderate

Description – Minor changes to the body’s balance centers and nervous system improves overall agility and hand-eye coordination.

Mechanical Notes – You have a +2 bonus to Dexterity.

Enhanced Pheromones

Availability – Common

Cost – Minor

Description – The body's chemical triggers for inspiring fear, arousal, or attention from other creatures are improved in efficiency and efficacy.

Mechanical Notes – You have a +5 circumstance bonus for interaction skills, but only when your body would normally produce the appropriate pheromones. That is to say, you gain a +5 for Intimidation skill checks only when you are feeling angry or aggressive, or for Bluff or Diplomacy checks related to seduction attempts, but only when you are already aroused by the target, and so on.

Enhanced Metabolism

Availability – Common

Cost – Minor

Description – Your metabolic efficiency has been improved on a number of levels.

Mechanical Notes – You need eat only $\frac{1}{4}$ as much food as others of your body mass to remain at healthy and active physical levels (consequently producing less waste). Further, your body odor, sweat, and other emissions are “cleaner” than a normal person's, giving you a healthier complexion and skin tone at all times.

Goliath Configuration

Availability – Restricted

Cost – Major

Description – Your body mass, skeletal and muscular growth, and all other related traits have essentially been rewritten at the base level, massively increasing your body mass and size proportionately. On average, a person will increase their height by between 1.5 to 2.0 feet and their body mass will increase by a factor of between x 2.5 to x 3.0 or so. This is a permanent alteration and cannot be “unwritten” at a later date because of potentially grotesque RNA sequencing errors that would result. This is also a long-term process, requiring 6-9 months to fully complete.

Mechanical Notes – You are now considered a Large SZ creature. The modifications for size should be changed in accordance with the table in the True20 Core Rules on pg 119.

Gender Reassignment

Availability – Common

Cost – Major

Description – Your gender has been changed, male to female or female to male, complete with all physiological characteristics thereof (anatomy, body chemistry, etc.). As with Goliath Reconfiguration, this is a lengthy process requiring 6-9 months for all changes to manifest and the body to acclimate to its new state.

Mechanical Notes – None.

Improved Musculature

Availability – Common

Cost – Moderate

Description – Your muscular density, fatigue acid production, and chemical transfer rates have all been improved.

Mechanical Notes – You have a +1 to both Strength and Constitution.

Leonization

Availability – Common

Cost – Moderate

Description – Advanced Gene Therapy heals much of the cellular deterioration caused by aging and chemically retards the actions of specific genetic proteins involved in the aging process.

Mechanical Notes – This process takes an effective 20 years off of a character's physical age past maturity each time it is taken. Normally, there is a base state established on the genetic level before which aging damage/changes cannot be regressed. The baseline is generally marked at the completion of skeletal growth that occurs in the mid-twenties. Further, this process is very expensive – add an additional +10 to the Wealth Check DC if using that rules option.

Metabolic Filtering

Availability – Common

Cost – Minor

Description – Your body chemistry and metabolism have been altered to more effectively resist toxins and pathogens.

Mechanical Notes – You have a +5 bonus to FORT saves vs. Poisons and Diseases.

Skeletal Density

Availability – Common

Cost – Minor

Description – Skeletal tissue density has been increased dramatically with no loss in normal biological or chemical functioning. Overall body mass also increases as a result, usually by 10% to 20%.

Mechanical Notes – Your carrying capacity is increased x 1.5 and your unarmed strikes do an increased +1 damage.

Species Trait Mimesis

Availability – Common

Cost – Minor

Description – A relatively minor trait possessed by another species is “grafted” into your genetic structure. This could be a thin layer of fur, a tail, small claws, horns, or so on.

Mechanical Notes – At the Narrator’s discretion, any one minor physiological trait possessed by non-humans is eligible for this genemod. Any natural weapons (such as horns or claws) should probably be limited to no more than a +1 damage bonus at most. Note also that these traits do not give abilities based on wholesale morphological differences – while gills are perfectly viable with the respiratory changes they would encompass, a new set of wings would NOT mean the character can now fly, as that involves mass-to-wingspan considerations and a considerable nest of natural instincts to use properly.

Toxin Factories

Availability – Illegal

Cost – Moderate

Description – New organs within your body generate natural organic toxins that your body chemistry has been adjusted to be immune to, and that you can expectorate.

Mechanical Notes – You have a naturally produced toxin within your body that you can spit at a range increment of 1 foot and a maximum range of 10 feet. The toxin does attribute damage (Constitution) as per the description of the creature Poison trait on pg 130 of the True20 Core Rules.

The Lord Our God Did Cast Man of Flesh, Not Iron

Not everybody looks at cybernetic systems the same way. While Newcomers are pretty blasé about what they can do with the human body, other human-based societies among the Founders have a less accepting attitude, viewing implants as anywhere from crass mutilations to prideful sins against the God that gave man that body in the first place. E’lanari have been known to refuse to have anything to do with cybered individuals, going so far as to shun and ignore them while in their presence. When dealing with people who hold these views, any character displaying obvious implants or genemods suffers a -2 penalty to all social skill usage (except Intimidation), and the beginning attitude is one level worse than it might otherwise start. This is a -5 penalty and two levels lower with the E’lanari.

Conclusion

This ends our discussion of the people and places of Nexus Sector. Though there has been time for only a brief tour of the crucible, we hope that this framework will serve to get you started crafting your own legends and daring tales.

Even though the descriptions are brief, it is important to keep in mind that even a small world has a huge number of interesting places upon it. This is not a setting where each world should be just a single location. Imagine a typical fantasy campaign. It can run for years and never leave a single continent. While the worlds of Nexus Sector may not be THAT dense with interesting places to visit, every planet or moon should have more than just one memorable cantina or cloud city.

Treat traveling from planet to planet like you would going from one country to another in a fantasy game, and traveling to a new system like crossing a great

ocean in a sailing ship. They should be major events rather than just cut scenes. When treated in this manner, the four stellar systems of Nexus Sector can yield more ‘playing area’ than an entire galaxy of stereotyped “one terrain, one location” planets.

Remember – it’s all about action, adventure, and drama. This is a vast and diverse stage with a lot going on at every level of society. Just about anything can be found one place or another, and just about anything can happen.

The stakes are high – a lot to be lost, but even more to be gained. There is ample opportunity for the bold to take a stand and make a change. Fame and fortune await. Now is the time to set sail across the void and find your destiny. But turmoil and chaos loom. Shadows gather on the horizon. It will take true heroes to wield the eternal light and drive back the enveloping darkness.



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This guide includes and expands upon the setting material initially presented in the *True20 Adventure Roleplaying* book.

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