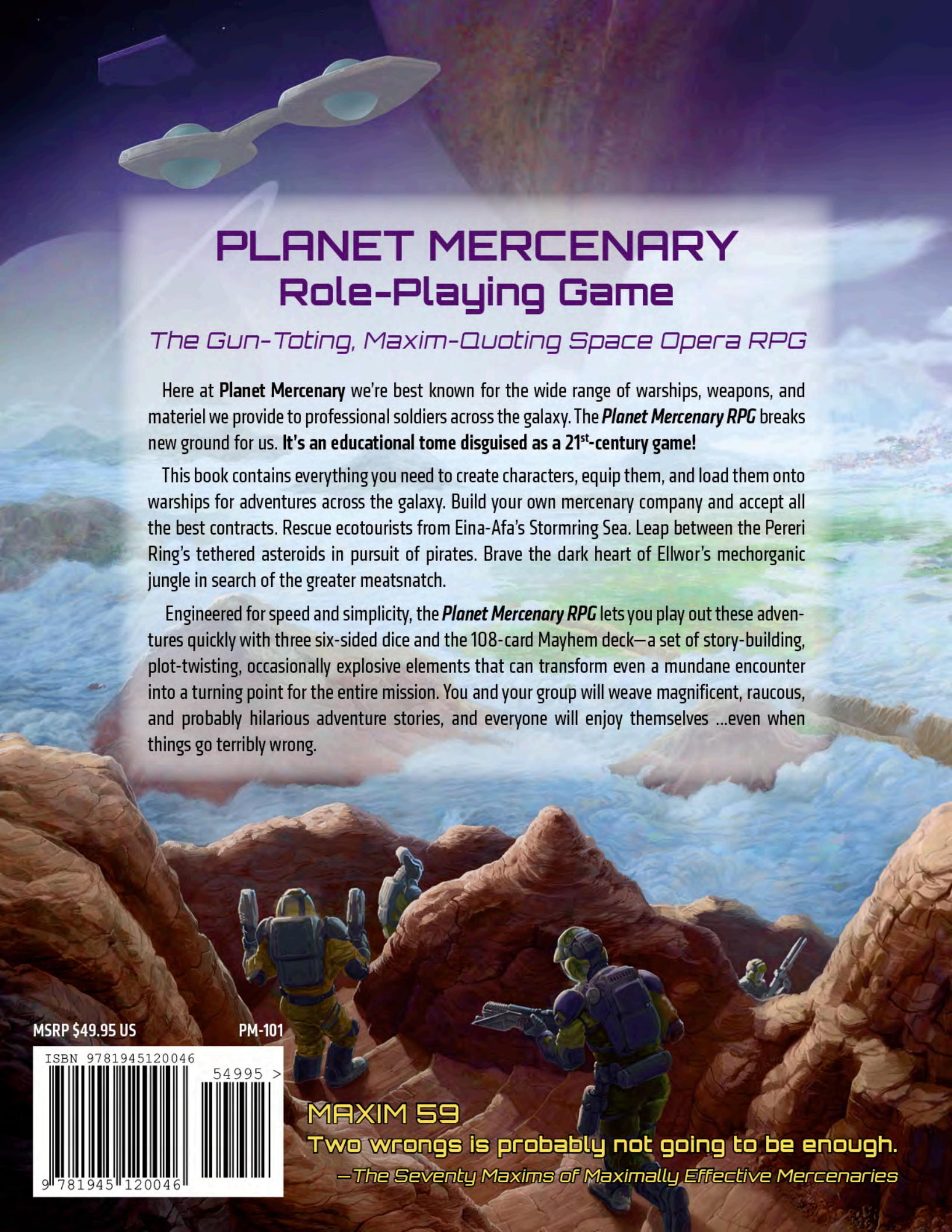
PLANET
MERCENARY
The Role-Playing Game
Alan Bahr • Howard Tayler • Sandra Tayler



PLANET MERCENARY
Role-Playing Game

The Gun-Toting, Maxim-Quoting Space Opera RPG

Here at **Planet Mercenary** we're best known for the wide range of warships, weapons, and materiel we provide to professional soldiers across the galaxy. The ***Planet Mercenary RPG*** breaks new ground for us. **It's an educational tome disguised as a 21st-century game!**

This book contains everything you need to create characters, equip them, and load them onto warships for adventures across the galaxy. Build your own mercenary company and accept all the best contracts. Rescue ecotourists from Eina-Afa's Stormring Sea. Leap between the Pereri Ring's tethered asteroids in pursuit of pirates. Brave the dark heart of Ellwor's mechorganic jungle in search of the greater meatsnatch.

Engineered for speed and simplicity, the ***Planet Mercenary RPG*** lets you play out these adventures quickly with three six-sided dice and the 108-card Mayhem deck—a set of story-building, plot-twisting, occasionally explosive elements that can transform even a mundane encounter into a turning point for the entire mission. You and your group will weave magnificent, raucous, and probably hilarious adventure stories, and everyone will enjoy themselves ...even when things go terribly wrong.

MSRP $49.95 US PM-101

ISBN 9781945120046 54995 >

9 781945 120046

MAXIM 59

Two wrongs is probably not going to be enough.

—The Seventy Maxims of Maximally Effective Mercenaries

PLANET MERCENARY
Role-Playing Game

The Gun-Toting, Maxim-Quoting Space Opera RPG

Created by
Howard Tayler, Alan Bahr, and Sandra Tayler

Published by HYPERNODE PRESS

First Edition

Universe owned by Howard Tayler

D6³ mechanic and game rules by Alan Bahr

Writing: Howard Tayler, Sandra Tayler, Alan Bahr

Editing: Sandra Tayler, Patrick Kapera, Braydon Beaulieu, Drew Wendell

Copy editing: Christopher Baxter, Sandra Tayler

Indexing: Janice Sellars

Cross-referencing: Mikaël Brodu

Art direction: Howard Tayler, Sandra Tayler

Cover art: Jeff Zugale

Interior Illustrations: Carlos Cara Álvarez, Natalie Barahona, Felipe Barros, Mirko Bojadzijevsk, Mikaël Brodu, Bogdan Bungardean, Charlotte Creber, Justin Davis, Matthew Franklin, J.C. Grande, Rodolpho Langhi, Michelle Sladek, Drew Swift, Ben McSweeney, Piero Mng, M. Jaka Prawira, Tan Ho Sim, K.B. Spangler, Keliana Tayler, Travis Walton, Jeff Ward, Brook West, Jeff Zugale

Graphic Design: Mikaël Brodu

Layout: Mikaël Brodu
(Sandra Tayler consulting)

RPG consultant: Robert J. Defendi, Patrick Kapera

Maps: Matt Franklin, Brook West

Help with Gamechiefery: Michael R. Underwood.

Howard acknowledgements:

Newton said "if I see far, it's because I stand on the shoulders of giants." I'm not standing on these particular giants, but Monte Cook, Shanna Germain, Tracy Hickman, Steve Jackson, and Monica Valentinelli have each taken the time to boost me up like that child at the zoo who wants to see pre-uplift polar bears. Thank you.

Thank you also to the backers, play testers, and readers who provided the resources and enthusiasm that made this possible.

Finally, thank you to Alan and Sandra, who morphed into titans during two grueling years, and upon whose shoulders this project was carried to you.

Alan acknowledgements:

First off, I want to thank my wife for her immeasurable patience with the partial absence of her husband during the first year of marriage. Many thanks to Howard and Sandra for taking the risk on an unknown, and trusting me to deliver what they needed. And finally, thanks to all the RPG greats who've paved this pathway before us, and been an inspiration and source of wonder to me for years.

Sandra acknowledgements:

I would like to thank Howard Tayler for dragging me into yet another terrifying publishing adventure where I come out better, stronger, and more confident than I was before. Also thanks to my four kids who learned how to cook because their parents were busy.

Thanks to all the fantastic playtesters and Kickstarter backers who are too numerous to mention, but without whom this project would not be as good as it is.

Schlock Mercenary, Planet Mercenary and all related characters are copyright 2000-2017 by The Tayler Corporation.

Planet Mercenary RPG copyright ©2017 The Tayler Corporation,

All Rights Reserved.

No part of this book may be used or reproduced in any manner whatsoever without written permission except in the case of reprints in the context of reviews. For information, email schlockmercenary@gmail.com, or check www.schlockmercenary.com for current contact information.

ISBN 9781945120046

First Printing, July 2017

Published by Hypernode Press

Printed in USA

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

A Letter From the CEO

Hello, valued Planet Mercenary Customer! 1 2

We've been providing the finest weapons, armor, and materiel to sophonts like you for over six hundred years. Our business has been built by listening carefully to you, and by tailoring our offerings to ensure delivery of the most appropriate tools for the the jobs you do.

In recent years we've heard a common complaint: your grunts are idiots and despite your best efforts to educate them, they continue to embrace ignorance in what seems to be an inherent interest in getting themselves killed.

To address that, we've created a new product, which you're holding in your hand right now. It is an encyclopedia of life-saving information, a cornucopia of soldiering knowledge, a bone-head's guide to not dying on the job, and we've taken care to camouflage it as an old-timey, pencil-and-paper role-playing game. With a little encouragement, and perhaps some subterfuge, the most unrepentantly obtuse grunts, who are throwing dice anyway, can be redirected into playing **the *Planet Mercenary RPG***.

As they stick their noses, proboscises, or other organs between the covers of this book, grunts of all stripes will absorb critical information about the equipment they will use, the enemies they will use that equipment on, and the far-flung worlds and waystations where they might draw their last breath.

Those familiar with and fond of RPGs (*"Role Playing Game," in this case. Not "Rocket Propelled Grenade," or "Rectifiable Problematic Gastronomy"*) will immediately grasp the core concepts here and can quickly begin some shared storytelling. For those unfamiliar with role-play, this sourcebook can be treated as an abridged encyclopedia; although if your grunts are the sorts of people who will voluntarily peruse encyclopedic volumes, you don't need help educating them.

We are confident that those under your command will enjoy this game. You may need to employ a bit of coercion to get them started, but if you've successfully led them into battle (or at least onto your vessel) that part should be easy.

Clutch Razormatron Feaule Azraena
CEO Planet Mercenary
January 27, 3100 CE

1

CEO: This letter is not how I talk. Too much 'coddle the customer.'

MKTG: The project lead wrote it in accordance with branding guidelines.

TERL'KRIS: That was me. Don't think of it as "coddling." Think of it as the recoil-absorbing stock of a heavy weapon—gentle at THIS end.

2

CEO: If the grunts we want to educate are reading this book, won't they read this letter first? Also, my comments are showing up in the layout. Those will be stripped out before publication, correct?

TERL'KRIS: That gets done last, so that your insights will be passed along to everyone, ensuring that nothing gets missed prior to being bound up in this tome. As to your letter, I'll memo manufacturing. They can perforate the page, allowing the customer to remove it prior to delivering the book to their grunts. 3

3

MFG: Per note from Terl'Kris, it looks like the project team wants the *customer* to be responsible for stripping out any pages and notes they don't want. Much easier on us. Bind everything together, and slap this page right in the front.

Table of Contents

Credits 2
A Letter from the CEO 3
Table of Contents 4
Introduction. 6

Game Basics 7

The Big Picture 8
Role-Play 8
Role-Play Points (RiPPs) 8
Skill Checks. 9
Adding the Right Skill 9
The Target Number. 10
Graded Skill Checks 10
Special Skill Results 10
Skill Specialties 10
The Mayhem Die. 11
Balancing Role-Play, Skill Checks, and Mayhem 11
Your First Contract. 12
Combat 12
Speak First, Go First — The Order of Combat 12
Combat Actions 13
Getting Hit. 15
Dying 15

Mayhem 16

Mayhem Basics 16
Mayhem Effect Durations 17
Contested Mayhem. 17
Reading the Cards 18
Mayhem Suits and Values 18
Applying the Cards 18

Skills 24

Skill Basics. 24
Using a Skill. 25
Opposing (or Contested) Skill Checks 26
Graded Skill Checks 26
Combat. 26
Skill Specialties. 26
Acquiring Skills & Specialties . 28
Combat Skills 28
Carbines 28
Dodge 28
Explosives. 29
Heavy Weapons. 29
Long Guns 30
Melee 30
Pistols 31
Scatterguns. 31
Stationed Weapons 31
Thrown Weapons 31
Mental Skills 32
Chemistry 32
Computers 32
Economics 34
Engineering 35
Experimental Sciences 35
History 37
Insight. 37
Mechanic 38
Medicine. 40
Research 41
Xenobiology. 41
Physical Skills 42
Air Vehicles 42
Athletics 42
Endurance 43
Ground Vehicles 44
Larceny. 44
Perception 45
Space Vehicles 46
Stealth. 46
Water Vehicles. 48
Social Skills 48
Contracts 48
Deceive. 49
Empathy 50
Inspire. 51
Intimidate. 51
Negotiate 52
Perform 53
Willpower. 53

Being a Good Player 54

Character Creation 56

Step 1: Select a Command Package 57
Captain. 57
Chaplain. 57
Doctor 58
Engineer. 58
Ops Commander 58
Legal Counsel 58
Quartermaster. 58
Step 2: Select a Background Package 59
Crime Lord 59
Driver 59
Entertainer. 59
Medical Professional. 59
Military (Infantry Grunt) 59
Military (Officer) 59
Pilot. 60
Scientist 60
Spy. 60
Street Criminal 60
Step 3: Pick a Sophont Type . . . 60
Common Sophont Types. 60
Uncommon Sophont Types. . . . 61
Advanced Sophont Types 64
Step 4: Select Skills and Specialties 64
Bonus Dodge Ranks 64
Maximum Starting Skill Ranks 65
Purchasing Skill Ranks and Specialties. 65
Skill Categories and Specialties. 65
Step 5: Derived Statistics. 67
Health. 67
Defense. 67
Role-Play Points (RiPPs) 67
Step 6: Finishing Touches 67
Step 7: Company Creation & Equipment. 67

Character Creation Example: Kreely Spy. 68

Sophont Types 69

Common Sophont Types 69
Human 69
Neophant 70
Purp 72
Rilla. 73
Ursumari 74
Uncommon Sophont Types . . . 75
Esspererin 75
Fobott'r. 76
Frellenti 78
Kreely 79
Polyflorian 80
Queltro (Tetrasoid). 81
Tausennigan Kss'thrata 83
Tausennigan Ob'enn 84
Unioc ("Oth") 85
Advanced Sophont Types 86
AI / Robot 86
Carbosilicate Amorph 89

Naming Characters 91

Naming in Sol System 91
Naming in the Wider Galaxy . . 92

Mercenary Companies. 97

Company Statistics 97
AI Rating 97
Company Resources. 98
Reputation 99
Supplies 100
Mercenary Companies & Experience (Leveling Up) . . . 100
Your First Company 101
Creating a Company from Scratch 101
Customizing Your Company . 102
Step 1: Pick a Ship. 102
Step 2: Spend Your Resources. 103
Step 3: Buy Your Gear. 103
Step 4: Build Your Fireteams 104
Step 5: Flesh Out Your Company's Story 105
Fireteams. 107
Issuing Orders to Your Fireteam 107
Fireteam Qualities 108
Grunts 109
Sacrificing Grunts (AKA the "Ablative Meat" Rule) . . . 110

Space Combat . . . 112

The Basics 112
Ship Systems 114
Repairing & Upgrading Ships. 120
Ship Taxonomy. 120

Vessels 121

Budget Vessels: 1–5 Resources 121
Affordable Vessels: 6–15 Resources 123
Expensive Ships: 16-34 Resources 126
Exorbitant Ships: 35+ Resources 130

Gearing Up 134

Armor and Weapon Qualities. 134
Ammunition 135
Applying the Right Specialty 135
Making the Story More Fun . . 135
General Materiel and Ship Locker 135
Armor 136
Stacking Armor. 136
Hull Points. 136
Weapons 138
Reading the Weapons Table . . 139
Explosives and Specialized Ammunition 139
General Materiel. 144
Vehicles 146
Pursuit and Chases with Vehicles 146

Damage Reduction, Enclosed Vehicles, Hull Points, and Weapon Slots 147
Renting Vehicles 148
Building a Custom Suit of Armor 148
Step 1: Manufacturer 148
Step 2: Suit Chassis 148
Step 3: Armor Qualities 148
Step 4: Submit Your Design for Review. 148
Building a Custom Weapon . . 150
Step 1: Manufacturer 150
Step 2: Ammunition 150
Step 3: Chassis 150
Step 4: License 150
Step 5: Qualities. 150
Step 6: Submit your Design for Review. 150

Armor 154
Light Armor 154
Medium Armor 156
Heavy Armor 157
Team Protection 160

Weapons 161
Pistols. 161
Beam Pistols. 161
Non-Lethal Pistols 161
Projectile Pistols 162
Scatterguns 164
Projectile Scatterguns 164
Carbines. 165
Beam Carbines 165
Projectile Carbines 165
Long Guns. 168
Beam Long Guns. 168
Projectile Long Guns 169
Heavy Weapons 170
Beam Heavy Weapons 170
Non-Lethal Heavy Weapons . .171
Projectile Heavy Weapons 172
Melee Weapons. 175
Common Melee Weapons 175
Exotic Melee Weapons 176
Explosives and Specialized Ammo 177
Descriptive Effects of Ammunitions 180
Projectile 180
Beam. 181
Non-Lethal. 182

General Materiel. 183
Assorted Automation 183
Bots. 183
Automated Food Machines . . .184
Computation & Communication 185
Handbrains 186
Cuffs & Stuff 188
Med-Tech. 190
Miscellaneous Materiel 192

Vehicles. 195
Consumer Vehicles 195
Military Vehicles 198

Locations. 201

Sol System 202
Earth 202
Megalopolises of Earth. 202
Orbital Cities of Earth 207
Juab Jurassica. 207
Dusta Phohora 208
Luna 209
Nectaris 209
Tube Ruins: Boblet, Blaireton, and Melosha 209
Emmy Ellwun and Mall One. 211
Mars 211
Marineris Dam City 212
High Olympus. 212
Venus 213
Europa 213
The Belt 214
Ceres. 215
Kuiper Belt 216
Bacchus and the Bacchanal. . . 216

Celeschul System 217
Celeschul (planet) 217
Arnarsaftur 218
Lelesh 219
Barschuum. 219
Habitats, Stations, and Asteroids 220
Immigration and Cohabitation: 2260-3010 220
Schism, War, and Reconstruction: 2981-3100 . . .221
The Terraforming War 221
Elltooine. 222
New Xandarosa and The Powell Museum of Terran Heritage. 223
Haven Hive 224

The Plenipotent Dominion 225
History. 226
Planet Down 227
Pretty Dead 227
Parnassus Dom. 227

The Pereri Ring 229
Culture, Economy, and Politics 230
Esspererin Cluster-States 231
Eshte Xerik. 231
Abentro Cor. 232
Oshka Kree 232
Lonesome Lost Gilligan 233

Eina-Afa. 234
Government 235
Jumpstar Prime 236
The Spindle 237
The Spindle Vault 238
Spindle Command Center . . . 238
The Eina-Afa Interior 239
Day and Night 240
Terrain and Ecology 240
Rainforests 241
The Vertical Jungles 241
The Cable Swamps 242
The Stormring 242
Isthmus Galactica. 243
Soulcrypts 244

Othlin. 245
The Eye of Oth 245
Gobbroth-Tambrol Megalopolis. 246
Jun Ebbir 246
The Parthedrome 247

Gripp 248
Ondrophol. 249
Allaphame 249
Mnengitt'r 250
Fistfall Quarry Memorial 250
Jungle Gardens 251
Tetlumbrathi. 251

Damaxuri 252
History. 252
The Damaxurian Spongiform Matrix 253
Highport 254
Surface Cities 255
Mellsen-Anlied 255
Tanstaff. 256
Morgan's Brake 256
Obsidiana. 257
Merchant Caravans 257

Ghanj-rho. 258
Ghanj-rho Orbital Habitat . . . 259
Lonesome Plateau 259
The Ranch 260
Science Stations 261
Canyon City Site Gamma 262
Hotsea and the Radio Swamps. 262

Ellwor 263
(Un)Natural History 263
Orbital Stuff 265
Juris My Diction I, II, and III 265
Scofflaw Redoubt 265
The Ellworan Wilds 265
Bogmaw 265
Friggen Jungle 266
Andrhianni's Labyrinth 267
Wroughtmarsh 267
Northern Plains. 268
Southern Reach. 268
Brinsea Breaches. 268
Battery Park. 268
City-States 268
Kieschegaard 269
Boldfavor 270
Pilot's Prayer 272
Downton Dirtgrow. 272

The Game Chief Section 273
Key Concepts 273
The Social Contract 273
Speak First, Go First. 274
Role-Play 274
Role-Playing Points (RiPP) . . .275
Making Jokes 275
Setting Up a Welcoming Space 276
Rule Arbitration 276
Pacing. 276
Rolling Skill Checks 276
Prepping a Game 276
Planning a Session 277
Random Job Generation 278
Random Company Generation. 279
Building a Good Encounter. . .280
Building a Good Campaign. . .281
Managing Character and Company Creation 281
Running a Game. 281
Managing Mayhem. 281
Managing Players 282
Player Accessibility. 282
Other Potential Player Challenges 284
New Skills & Specialties 284
Special Cases for Skill Checks 285
Movement 285
Adapting Mid-stream. 285
Special Rules for Amorphs . . .286
Character Death 286
Job Completion & Leveling Up 287

Game Chief Reference 288
Terms 288
Sol System 289
Celeschul (System). 298
Plenipotent Dominion 304
Pereri Ring 307
Eina-Afa. 310
Othlin. 315
Gripp 317
Damaxuri 319
Ghanj-rho 322
Ellwor. 325
Other Locations 332

The Damaxuri Deception 333
Overview 333
Scene 1: MercCon. 333
Scene 2: Point A to Point B . . . 336
Scene 3: The Hunt. 337
Scene 4: Target Acquired. 337
Scene 5: Bounty 339

Units of Measure 341
Glossary 342
Index 345
Notable Persons and Companies. 349
Creatures 350
Mooks. 350
Tables 350
Character Sheet. 351

Introduction

The *Planet Mercenary Role Playing Game* is a military-themed science fiction RPG set in 3100 CE, in the universe of *Schlock Mercenary*. Aliens, humans, and artificial intelligences are all part of a galaxy-spanning culture in which warfare is common enough that there is a sizeable market for people who can wage it professionally.

You and the other players are the senior officers in a mercenary company of your own creation, a relatively small organization that promises to put you in harm's way on a regular basis. One of you might be the doctor, equally proficient with a scalpel and with a sidearm. Another might be the chief engineer, responsible for maintaining and upgrading your equipment. One of you (preferably *only* one) will be the captain, responsible for making the tough call when it's decision time.

Game play is fast and energetic. During a three-hour play session the group should be able to accept a mission, travel to their destination, uncover a secret agenda or two, and play through three or four combat encounters. It's useful to know the rules of the game, but ultimately it will be more useful to get to know the other players. Your personal expertise with probability curves and dice is less important than your ability to quickly work together.

You've probably heard that "failure is not an option." In *Planet Mercenary Role Playing Game* failure is not *optional*. Some degree of failure is guaranteed. You and the other players will fail a lot. Bad decisions and botched die rolls will make eventual success much sweeter, and will provide lots of laughter along the way.

But even a completely botched mission may be the game session everybody remembers as their favorite. Your simple snatch-and-grab bounty hunting contract could turn into an epic adventure in which you flee from new enemies.

Game Basics

This will be fun.

With this book, you and your friends will create adventures that you will laugh about for years to come. Yes, it's full of rules and procedures and trivia, but these are all part of a framework for playing a game in which the objective is to tell a shared story.

The people telling the story are typically divided into two groups: the players and the **Game Chief (or "GC")**. The GC functions a little like a referee, but they also keep an outline for the story. The players play roles within this outline, and the story unfolds according to their decisions, some dice rolls, and some card draws. The players and the Game Chief have different responsibilities, but ultimately the story belongs to everyone at the table.

Playing *Planet Mercenary RPG* is simple, really. Instead of running around in a real-life theater of operations trying not to die, you play this game, which loosely simulates that activity. *Planet Mercenary RPG* encourages snap decisions and rough approximations in the service of a well-told narrative. The rules are designed for rapid resolution rather than realistic physics. Some among you may know *actual* rocket science, but a story that cannot unfold until someone arrives at a solution for a three-body problem seems unlikely to entertain players enough to justify the time spent.

Death is an integral part of playing *Planet Mercenary RPG* . Players may sometimes need to let their characters perish in service of the story, but a good death can be a wonderful thing. A player who loses their character can keep playing by promoting a **grunt** to officer status and adopting that new character as their own. This may not happen every session, but if it never happens something has probably gone wrong. At the very least, your game isn't accurately depicting the stakes you'll face out in the real universe. 1

1

MKTG: Is this on message, Terl'Kris? Aren't we supposed to be encouraging survival?

TERL'KRIS: I'll let Development take this one.

DEV: We tested this a lot. Occasional character death is required in order to encourage survival. Also character death is poignant, and wonderful, and hilarious.

CEO: Indeed. I laugh all the time about "churn" in the intern pool.

The Big Picture

There are two core components of *Planet Mercenary RPG*: role-play and skill checks. Providing entertaining transitions between these two components is the Mayhem deck. We'll cover role-play, skill checks, and combat in this section. *For everything you need to know about Mayhem, see page 16.*

Role-Play

Role-play is the act of performing in a role as a specific character, making decisions as that character, and describing and acting out the character's actions and reactions. When you speak "in character," you're engaged in role-play. When you narrate the action your character is performing you're also role-playing, just from a bit more of a distance. Once you start rolling the dice and looking up numbers, you're making skill checks, which you'll learn about shortly.

The Game Chief encourages role-play by awarding **Role-Play Points (RiPPs)** 1 to players who act in character (that is, plausibly for the character they've created, in the situation the character is facing). It's even more impressive — and therefore even more worthy of a RiPP — when a player acts in character even if it might cause problems for the mission, or get their character killed.

1

CEO: I like acronyms you can pronounce, but where did the 'I' come from?

DEV: The "I" in RiPP is the I that isn't in the word "Team."

Role-Play Points (RiPPs)

As stars of their own stories, player characters often benefit from extraordinary turns of good fortune, explosive displays of willpower, and other positive twists of fate. This is represented by Role-Play Points (RiPPs).

Each player with a new character begins their first session with at least one RiPP, though we recommend three. The Game Chief decides exactly how many RiPPs each player begins with, and all players always start with the same number (There may be specific reasons for the GC to decide that everyone should start with more or fewer, in which case everyone starts with that new number. Recommendations for this are covered in the Game Chief section.

Players earn RiPPs in a wide variety of ways. Mayhem cards often grant opportunities to earn bonus RiPPs — usually for strong role-play of a particular situation — and the Game Chief can award them for good role-play even when no cards have been drawn. RiPPs can also be earned for funny or witty banter, inventive puzzle solving, bringing snacks, and more. Instructions and suggestions for the Game Chief's management of RiPPs can be found in the Game Chief section on page 275.

RiPPs generally carry over from game session to game session, so if you end an evening of *Planet Mercenary RPG* with three RiPPs you can expect to start the next one with the same. There is a limit, however: **no player may have more than five RiPPs at any time**. So don't hoard them, it benefits no one.

There's a handy space on your character sheet for tracking RiPPs, just like all the other parts of your character.

Expect to use your RiPPs frequently. They're a fluid resource you should rely on to save your bacon and make the game more fun for everyone.

You can spend RiPPs at any time. Here are some of the things you can do with them:

Reroll Your Dice

Once per roll, you can spend a single RiPP to reroll one or more of your dice. You can even do this with damage rolls. You can reroll any or all of your dice — and yes, you can even reroll the Mayhem die *(see page 11)* — but you must accept the second roll, even if it's worse than the first. You can spend a RiPP in this fashion only once per roll.

Negate Mayhem

Once per Mayhem card drawn and revealed from the deck (i.e. once per "Mayhem flip"), you can spend a RiPP to negate that card and all its effects. You can decide whether to spend a RiPP in this way **after** you see what the card says.

Player Accessibility

Everyone should feel welcome to enjoy *Planet Mercenary RPG*. To that end, GCs may alter any rules specified in this book to accommodate disabilities or impairments. For accessibility options, see page 282.

Sacrifice a Grunt (aka "Ablative Meat Shield")

After you're hit, you can spend a RiPP to have a friendly grunt take the hit instead. This option requires you to know more about how your company and grunts work, so it's covered fully in the Mercenary Companies section *(see page 110)*.

Skill Checks

When your character tries to do something interesting, challenging, or important to the story, it's time for a skill check. You make a skill check by rolling dice. There are two types of skill check in *Planet Mercenary RPG*: **standard** and **graded**. Standard skill checks are measured against a marker of difficulty determined by the Game Chief, called a **Target Number (TN)**. Graded skill checks, by comparison, normally don't involve a TN. Instead, the result of your dice roll determines how successful you are. Combat is resolved with a *series* of skill checks and is discussed fully on page 12.

Tying your shoes, for example, doesn't ordinarily require a skill check but if a mission objective hinges upon successfully lacing your shoes in a hurry, while under fire, or while distracted, the Game Chief may require you to roll dice to see if the knot holds, or if the action results in a mayhem flip.

To make a skill check, you roll three six-sided dice (abbreviated "3d6"). The sum of these dice is added to the appropriate skill rank on your character sheet. This total is your **result**.

Any style of six-sided dice can be used for skill checks, but one of those dice must be easily distinguished from the other two. This might mean that you roll 1d6 separately from the other two, to distinguish it. Alternatively, you might use two dice of one color and a third die in a different color. Or you can use dice of different sizes. This third die is the **Mayhem die**, and its result can trigger extra effects. We'll explain more about this after we outline skills.

Skill Check Modifiers

Skill check results are occasionally modified by various rules. For example, your mercenary company's Reputation modifies your team's skill checks for Contracts, which are made to establish the amount you earn from a job. *For more about Reputation, see page 99.*

Adding the Right Skill

The skill you apply depends on your action, and sometimes the situation in which you find yourself. For instance, if you want to shoot something with a handgun, add your Pistols skill rank. When you're patching up a wounded soldier, add your Medicine skill rank. Chasing someone down on foot is an Athletics check. Every skill has multiple uses and most of those uses are described fully in the Skills section *(see page 24-53)*. Your GC will likely determine what skill applies to a check, but if you want to apply a different skill (or if you think a skill should be applied where your GC has neglected to specify one), ask your GC about it, and explain why you think that skill is applicable.

When you try something, and have no ranks in the appropriate skill, or when there's no skill involved at all, the GC may still let you roll anyway. In this case, you add nothing to your roll and hope for the best!

Maxim 68 2

The brass knows how to do it by knowing who can do it.

2

CEO: Are we allowed to quote from *Seventy Maxims of Maximally Effective Mercenaries*?

LEGAL: We acquired citation rights, yes.

CEO: I love that book, but let's not overdo it.

TERL'KRIS: There are only 70 maxims

CEO: Do not let your writers use all 70.

Table 1.1: Target Numbers

TN	Difficulty	Notes
10	Easy	A competent person will succeed most of the time.
15	Moderate	A competent person will succeed some of the time.
20	Hard	With a *lot* of training you just might succeed. With no training? Don't hold your breath.
25	Very Hard	Even with a lot of training your chances are slim.
30*	Exceptionally Difficult	Only a true master of this discipline stands any chance of success.
35*	Impossible	A master of this discipline will frown and step away. A fool will rush in and try anyway.

* A newly-created character cannot succeed against these TNs. Game Chiefs should take great care assigning these difficulties in early games of Planet Mercenary.

The Target Number

Each skill check is made against a Target Number (or "TN" for short). Meeting or exceeding that number means success. Rolling below the number means failure.

Target Numbers are always chosen by the Game Chief, who may or may not choose to share the TNs with your team. The harder the task, the higher the Target Number. Target Numbers range from 10 to 35, as shown on *Table 1.1 (see page 9)*.

Graded Skill Checks

Not all skill checks resolve with simple success or failure. Some skill checks can have incremental effects based on the result. These types of checks might have TNs as determined by the Game Chief, but most will not—as long as you don't roll triple-ones for an automatic failure (covered below in Special Skill Results), you'll get something out of the check. On **graded skill checks**, how *high* you roll will determine the level of your success. Here are a few examples:

- **Contracts:** When negotiating with a potential employer, rolling a total of 4 might mean that your employer pays you with a box of random spare parts, while rolling a total of 17 might mean that he or she pays you more than the amount you wanted.
- **Mechanic:** When jury-rigging an item, rolling a total of 4 might mean that the item fails to work at all, while rolling a total of 17 might mean that it lasts you the rest of your adventure.
- **Research:** When studying a topic, rolling a total of 3 (an automatic failure) might mean that not only do you fail to learn anything about the topic (thus not getting a temporary bonus in that skill), but you might erroneously find bad or false information. Rolling an 18 (an Upgraded Success), on the other hand, might mean that a portion of your temporary skill increase becomes permanent.

Specifics on which skills require graded skill checks and tables for those graded checks can be found in the Skills section *(page 24-53)*.

The D6³ Engine

The $D6^3$ engine gets its name from the formula x^n, used to calculate all possible permutations of x values in n positions. On three six sided dice that formula tells us there are 216 possible permutations ($x=6$, $n=3$, $6^3=216$), though there are only 16 possible sums (3 through 18). We're not using all 216 permutations, but we are using some of them.

Special Skill Results

For story purposes, it's fun to taunt the untrained fool with a tiny glimmer of hope. It's equally fun to watch the masters fail miserably at spectacularly simple tasks. To support this, two special outcomes apply to every skill check, regardless of the circumstances.

- Any roll of three ones (a result of 3) is an **automatic failure** — even if the result equals or exceeds the TN.
- Any roll of three sixes (a result of 18), *provided the result (18 + the applied skill points) meets or exceeds the TN*, is more successful than the player was attempting. This is called an **Upgraded Success**.

Upgraded Success may also be triggered by a Mayhem card *(see page 16)*.

Applying an Upgraded Success

Generally an Upgraded Success means that your character accomplished the task at hand in some spectacular or astounding fashion, and in all cases when there's no specific rule to follow the Game Chief determines what this means. In combat there's one constant...

- An Upgraded Success with an attack doubles your rolled damage. You roll damage twice and add the results together. If the target can reduce your damage in any way, that reduction comes off this combined amount.

Many other examples of Upgraded Successes are found in the Skills section *(see page 24-53)*.

The Odds of an Upgraded Success

For the statistically inclined, there's exactly one chance in two hundred and sixteen for a player to roll the triple-sixes required for an Upgraded Success. The odds go up a little if the player spends a RiPP to re-roll one or more of the dice, but the odds are still pretty slim.

Skill Specialties

For full details on skill specialties, see pages 26 and 24-53 (Skills)

For details on how to acquire skill specialties, see pages 28 and/to 64-65 (Character Creation)

Sometimes a character will have a **specialty** in a skill. For example, a character with a good Melee skill might be even better with Exotic arms, like an Urtheep Moly-Poly. A character who can competently drive Ground Vehicles could shine when performing an Evasive Action in a car chase.

When you roll dice to perform a check on a skill in which your character has a specialty, you may reroll a single die to improve the outcome of that roll.

Whenever you reroll a die you must accept the second roll even if it's worse than the first, so be sure you want to apply a specialty before you pick up the die. The rules for spending a RiPP to re-roll dice can still be applied after a die has been re-rolled because of a specialty.

Nearly all skills have a list of specialties that may be gained, as detailed in the Skills section. Specialties are gained when creating your character. Sometimes you gain them as part of your Background, Command Package, or sophont type, but you can always purchase them with skill points as well. All of these options are covered in Character Creation.

The Mayhem Die

For full details on Mayhem cards, see pages 16-23 (Mayhem)

All skill checks are subject to Mayhem, which can cause the player rolling the dice to draw a Mayhem card. This happens when **both** of the following conditions are met:

- The Mayhem die shows a higher number than *each of* the other dice (e.g. you roll a 1 and a 2 with your regular dice, and a 3 with your Mayhem die).
- The skill check is successful OR it was a graded skill check.

When you meet both of these conditions, you *must* draw one Mayhem card and resolve it immediately, before play moves on to the next player. This is called a Mayhem flip.

The Mayhem mechanic is a critical part of playing *Planet Mercenary RPG*. This is the point where the two core components of the experience — role-play and skill checks — meet, like gears engaging. It's the entropic force that throws a brilliantly-planned operation sideways in service of a story.

Players love to fear Mayhem, and fear loving it. Game Chiefs sing its praises for making their jobs easier. Game designers gush with pride over its elegance. 1

Balancing Role-Play, Skill Checks, and Mayhem

Balancing role-play, skill checks, and Mayhem is everyone's responsibility. Role-play leads to skill checks, and skill checks prompt further role-play. Too much of one without the other leads to unbalanced gameplay, which can mean slow adventures and boring conflicts. Mayhem helps keep both core components of *Planet Mercenary RPG* in check by providing players with unexpected situations to which they must react with both role-play and skill checks. Mayhem shakes up situations and encounters so that the players and GC can tell a funnier and more exciting story.

Remember that role-play guides situations in *Planet Mercenary RPG,* so playing in character propels the story forward. You can always create a character who resembles you in personality, behavior, and appearance, so don't fear role-play if you feel nervous—just do what's feels right for your character. Every player will approach role-playing in different ways, so don't feel intimidated by a player who shows up to game night in costume and acts out all their lines. Just go along at your own pace. Conversely, don't shame a new player who might not understand how to play in character. Do your own thing, and eventually that player will settle into their role. As you play, everyone will make decisions about what to do in situations that can be stressful—stay calm and in-character, and trust that the group will resolve these situations in service of the story.

The decisions that you make will ultimately lead to actions that have a meaningful chance of succeeding or failing. The Game Chief ultimately decides when to require a skill check, what skill to apply, and the TN against which players must roll. The players can and should *suggest* skill checks when they think they're appropriate, and especially when they're performing an activity that's in character and covered by one of their skill specialties. *Planet Mercenary RPG* is collaborative and everyone plays a role in creating the story.

1

CEO: *All* game designers, or just the ones responsible? Regardless, this seems a little over-the-top.

WRITER: "Over-the-top" is part of the brand, isn't it? Terl'Kris told us we could lift copy from marketing, and this is from our 3088 catalog copy for Blattco.

CEO: Is that plagiarism?

WRITER: Not after I've filed off all the serial numbers.

Your First Contract

An essential skill check (and one that will happen early in your first adventure) is using the **Contracts** skill to barter with a potential employer for higher pay on a potential job.

A Contracts check determines the extent of your rewards for completing a job. One of you — usually the Captain or Quartermaster — does the negotiating, rolls 3d6, adds their Contracts skill value, and then applies the modifier from your Company's Reputation score. Contracts is a graded skill check, so look up the result on the skill's table (in this case, *Table 2.9: Contracts page 49*) and the Game Chief interprets the table to determine your group's pay for undertaking the contract (or in the event of rolling an automatic failure, how much your pay will be docked). Mayhem flips can be triggered by this roll as by any skill check. Some of the best games and stories start with Mayhem on contract negotiation.

With your contract negotiated you'll be off on your first adventure, and that's where things will likely go awry. That brings us to...

1

CEO: What about people who think faster than they can talk? Is there a "pound on the table" rule?

DEV: We've documented some techniques to help the Game Chief manage this. They're covered on page 282-284.

Combat

From time to time your characters will get themselves into trouble — the kind of trouble that attempts to kill them. They will need to attempt to kill trouble right back. When two or more parties engage each other in violence, Combat rules activate. Combat is a staple of most role-playing games, and engaging in combat is a great way to move the story forward.

Planet Mercenary RPG simulates combat with a turn-based series of skill checks, most of which will be made with weapon skills, which are listed under Combat on your character sheet.

In combat, each player has two actions per turn, and one turn per round. The order in which you take turns is determined with a simple mechanic: speak first, go first.

Speak First, Go First — The Order of Combat

The first player to announce an action — yelling, "I dive for cover!" or even, "My turn!" — takes their actions first. This simulates the quick pace of real combat, and it ensures fast-paced play. 1

If no player speaks up quickly, the Game Chief should keep things moving by declaring that the enemy takes their actions first. This may seem cruel and unfair, but battlefields are cruel, and if they're fair then the universe isn't trying hard enough.

The first player takes their two actions, rolling skill checks as appropriate, and resolving the results with the GC. The remaining players then speak up to determine who takes their two actions second. This continues until all players have had a turn. Enemy actions are inserted by the GC when there is most potential for good storytelling. The GC will also adjudicate the order further as necessary. ("You can't move yet. You're buried under Kreely kibble.")

Like actual combat, this ordering is frantic and may sometimes be confusing. Early game sessions will likely be chaotic, but players will swiftly learn that they must cooperate with each other to succeed. Speak First, Go First may reward loud, hasty fools, but acting first when the rest of your group has not prepared is a good way to die, which can cost your group a player-character during the encounter.

The Game Chief should do their best to foster the learning process here, encouraging players to talk things through well ahead of combat (when possible), and debriefing afterward to identify any problems so everyone can improve next time. The Game Chief can even "stop the clock" in combat, handing the action to players who are having difficulty articulating their actions. *Planet Mercenary RPG* is most enjoyable when the players and GC have out of

Ship Combat

Information and instructions for ship-based combat are found in the Ship Rules section on page 112.

game discussions about how to make sure the game and story are fun for everyone. However, don't be constantly stopping the game to have discussions about the game. That isn't fun either. More details on managing this can be found in the Game Chief section. (2)

Combat Actions

Each player gets two actions per combat turn. Here are some of the most common options...

- Dodge
- Attack
- Move
- Use a skill
- Issue orders
- Reload your weapon

Actions may be repeated. You can dodge twice, or attack twice, or use two skills, but note that the defense bonus you get from dodging does not stack within a turn. So dodging twice doesn't make you twice as hard to hit, a second dodge roll will replace the first one, not stack with it. Attacking twice, however, *does* let you make two different attacks, which can prolong your life when you're fighting two enemies, or a single big one.

Dodging

You can spend an action to attempt to make yourself harder to hit. If you spend an action to dodge, and the result is higher than your normal Defense score, then all incoming attacks are made against your Dodge result rather than your standard Defense score.

To dodge, roll a skill check for your Dodge skill. There is no TN. If the result is greater than your natural Defense value, then the result becomes the TN your opponent must beat in order to hit you. This effect lasts until your next turn, or until you fall unconscious (whichever comes first). If your Dodge result is equal to or lower than your Defense value, then, well, you wasted an action.

Dodging represents your character parrying, taking cover, or just getting out of the way. It's best to describe how you're dodging when you take the action. After all, you couldn't simply stand up and scream "DODGE!" on a real battlefield and expect not to be shot. The game is more fun if you describe the way you defend yourself. "I duck behind the pile of crates" or "I knock away his knife."

Here's an example...

Player 1: *"I dive behind the shipping containers!" *rolls a 14**

Game Chief: *"The Fobott'r pirate fires at you," *rolls a 10, then adds the pirate's pistol skill of 3* "and misses!"*

Player 2: *"I'm jumping behind shipping containers, too!" *rolls a 7**

Game Chief: *looks at the 2, 2, and 3 on the dice and says, "As you take cover you notice the shipping label, which says that your container is full of light, fluffy packing material. It provides no additional protection beyond your normal defense."*

Attacking

An attack is simply a skill check using a combat skill, like Pistols or Carbines. Your weapon may add or subtract from your result, as shown in the Weapons section *(see page 138)*.

The TN for a successful attack is the target's Dodge result (if they made a Dodge check to avoid being hit in their most recent turn), or their Defense value (otherwise).

If your result equals or exceeds the target's score, you hit. Roll the damage listed for your weapon (found in the Weapons chapter and hopefully listed on your character sheet.) and consult the rules for getting hit *(see page 15)*.

Mayhem applies when attacking, but not when rolling for damage.

Example 1: *You fire a pistol at an armored Fobott'r pirate. Your Pistols skill value is 6 and the pirate's defense is 13. Your three dice come up 2, 2, and 1, for a total of 5. Your result is 11, which is less than 13 and so you miss. Also, wow, you rolled poorly. No Mayhem applies because the check failed.*

Example 2: *In an alternate universe with the same attack, you instead roll 5, 4, and 2. Your total is 11 so your result is 17. That's more than the pirate's Defense score of 13, so you hit him. Also, if the 5 came up on your Mayhem die, then you have to draw a Mayhem card and resolve it immediately.*

(2)

CEO: Are you kidding me? Have you actually gotten players to cooperate quickly and smoothly using this system?

DEV: We have. It was kind of amazing. One group of interns got so good at this after just one session that they—

CEO: You let interns PLAY?

DEV: Those who survive R&D trials are rewarded with play time, yes.

CEO: And they're clever enough to work as an ad-hoc team?

DEV: R&D trial survivors are quite clever, ma'am.

Example 3: *In yet another alternate universe with the same attack, the pirate knew the attack was coming and rolled Dodge on his last turn, generating a result of 22. In this case you'd need to roll 16 or higher on your three dice to hit him.*

Moving

Planet Mercenary RPG uses narrative movement [1] rather than a tactical grid. The Game Chief describes the battlefield, and may even provide a diagram or a map of the area. This description should include useful information like the cover that's available, the enemies you can see, and whether or not anything is on fire or covered in caustic syrup.

When you want to move, declare that movement is one of your actions and then tell the GC where you want to be and how you're getting there.

The GC will arbitrate. You might be required to make a skill check to stay on a rail-less catwalk, or to leap puddles of molten packing material. If you're very far from your destination, the Game Chief may tell you it's going to take more than one action to get to where you want to go, or that you need to make an Athletics skill check to see if you can move quickly enough to make the trip in a single action.

Ultimately, movement is a matter upon which you and the Game Chief must quickly agree.

Movement in the game, like on an actual battlefield, should always be handled expeditiously. Unlike on an actual battlefield, it should also be handled in service of the story. Some Game Chiefs may find that using more detailed visual resources contributes to the storytelling style of the group, and that's okay—if the focus of the way in which you build and represent your world is in service of having fun, then we encourage you to experiment!

[1]

CEO: Narrative movement? Is this a thing?

DEV: It is now. We had a tactical map in an early version of the game but it was so complicated that players began consulting their handbrains for tac-sim, and that quickly devolved into them checking SpaceLook, or ordering out for food.

CEO: Just make the map simpler.

DEV: We did. Twice. We ended up with narrative movement and lo, the players began playing instead of staring at the table.

CEO: Say "lo" again. But let me get my knife first.

Using a Skill

Many activities that aren't specifically combat-related may be performed in combat. These include using battlefield medicine, blocking a door, and swinging cinematically — and awesomely, we might add — from an old-timey chandelier to traverse a room. If the activity in question has a chance of meaningful success or failure, it requires a skill check.

Announce your intentions. As usual, the Game Chief will let you know which skill(s) to use, and may or may not announce the TN for your roll. This works just like any out-of-combat check, and success or failure becomes part of the fight and the broader adventure.

Here's a short example of role-play and skill checks during a combat:

Player 1 *(who is on his second combat action): "SURRENDER NOW! I'm shouting at the enemy."*

Game Chief: *"Roll for it. Intimidate."*

Player 1: *rolls 3d6 then says, "Eleven plus, um, nothing. I don't have Intimidate."*

Game Chief: *pantomimes screams from behind cover and says, "NO, YOU SURRENDER. YOUR GUNS ARE TINY."*

Player 1: *"What was the TN for intimidating them?"*

Game Chief: *smiles and says, "More than 11. Moving on. Next turn?"*

Player 2: *"I'm firing my plasgun at the shipping container they're hiding behind. And shouting TINY THIS, YOU, umm… What's a good insult for these guys?"*

Game Chief: *"Smooth-skins will do."*

Player 2: *"YOU SMOOTH-SKINNED WIMPOIDS!"*

Game Chief: *"Nice. That's both your actions. Two rolls. Attack with Pistols, and Intimidate."*

Player 2: *rolls 3d6 then says, "Ten plus five on the attack, and," rolls again, says, "fifteen plus three for Intimidate."*

Game Chief: *"You hit the crate. Gimme a damage roll."*

Player 2: *rolls 2d6+2 for Pistol damage, then says, "Oooh! Fourteen!"*

Game Chief: *"Okay, the crate is melting, and on fire. From behind the crate you hear 'SORRY! NOT TINY!' And they throw their guns out from behind the crate."*

In this example the players and the Game Chief have incorporated role-play into the combat. Mayhem cards aren't featured to keep the example simple but they could add even greater detail, action, and surprise to the encounter.

Issuing Orders

For full details on fireteams and orders, see pages 107 and 97-111 (Mercenary Companies)

Each player character has a fireteam of grunts under their command. This fireteam is an

integral part of your company and the game, and deploying them properly can be critical to the success or failure of every mission.

Each grunt has their own set of skills separate from your character's skills, and each grunt contributes to the fireteam's overall ability. An entire fireteam makes skill checks just like a single character, and so it has nearly as many options in combat as you do. However, for simplicity's sake, and because player characters are the stars of the show, your fireteam only acts when you issue orders telling it to do something.

You can issue an order to your fireteam as a combat action. Common orders you might issue include:

- Concentrate fire on a specific target
- Duck and cover to avoid enemy fire
- Provide cover fire for you, or for another character, object, or location

After you issue an order to your fireteam, they will perform that action to the best of their ability for a number of rounds equal to your Inspire rank *(see page 51)*, or until you issue a new order to the team (whichever comes first). If your orders run out with no new orders forthcoming, your fireteam will hunker down and wait for new orders.

Reloading Your Weapon

Weapons must periodically be reloaded, as described in the Weapons section *(see page 139)*. Also, some Mayhem cards require you to reload your weapon even when it doesn't normally need to be reloaded.

In most cases, reloading your weapon takes one combat action.

Getting Hit

Inevitably, you'll get hit with an attack, despite your best efforts. When this happens, you suffer the attacking weapon's damage minus any reduction provided by your armor *(see page 136)*.

You *were* wearing armor, weren't you? If not, then you may want to call on one of your grunts to take the hit as "Ablative Meat." This is a special reaction order you can issue, and it's covered with all the other fire team rules in Mercenary Companies *(see page 110)*. 2

Dying

If your character suffers enough damage, they can die. It doesn't even take an action!

All damage that you suffer lowers your Health, and when your Health drops to zero or below, you immediately fall unconscious. The next attack that hits you *will* kill you. 31st-century medicine is amazing, but there's a point at which it runs up against "meat salad" and moves on.

You also die if you ever sustain damage equal to or greater than double your maximum Health *(see "meat salad," above)*. This may mean you die instantly without falling unconscious first. Yes, that's harsh, but if you suffered *that* much damage you probably did something pretty reckless, right? *Right?*

Unlike *actual* combat, dying in the game doesn't mean you stop playing. Battlefield promotion of NPC grunts as full player characters is quick and easy. You'll be building these characters during every mission and perhaps even eyeing them with interest. The death of your current character is a chance to seize control of your favorite fire team member and start a whole new adventure!

When you die, you have two options:

- Promote a named grunt and take control of him, her, them, or it. Promoting a grunt who has survived Ablative Meat (taking a hit for a player character) grants you extra points to put toward that grunt's skills.
- Create a new character from scratch. You and the Game Chief can work this character into the story however you see fit.

Rules for both options are covered in the Character Creation chapter *(see page 56)*. Your new character can even take weapons and armor from your old character after the combat is over, so you get to keep your favorite gun. If your company takes time to scrape your old character into a cryokit or nanny bag, it's even possible you can choose between *two* awesome characters for the next job. Whichever path you choose, make sure that it fits best with the story!

Each game session should involve characters taking life-or-death risks in service of a good story. Brave and/or reckless actions may lead to characters dying or they may lead to brilliant success; played well, these can result in a game session that becomes the stuff of legend, with a story that you and your friends will talk about for years to come.

Equipping Promoted Grunts

There are several options for equipping a grunt that has just been promoted player character. Mid combat, the new PC can use an action to pick up a weapon or item from the prior PC. After combat, they can gain all the prior PC's gear. Alternately, the Company Quartermaster can allow them to use Supplies from the company pool to equip themselves. (Assume a free amount of 10 supplies to represent gear the grunt already has).

2

CEO: This understates the value of actual armor, which we sell quite a lot of.

MKTG: Already taken care of. We shoehorned some sales copy into the the Weapons, Armor, and General Materiel sections.

WRITER: Give us some credit. It's much cleaner than whatever a shoehorn is.

Mayhem

Planet Mercenary RPG is played with three six-sided dice (3d6), one of which must be easily differentiated from the other two. We call this die the **Mayhem die**, and while players typically use a Mayhem die of a different color than their two standard dice, you can also play using a die of a different size, or with a different style of numbering. Even simply rolling your Mayhem die separately from your two standard dice may work, but take care not to confuse them!

Your dice in *Planet Mercenary RPG* do more than provide sums for skill checks. They also determine when you'll draw cards from the Mayhem deck. Mayhem cards inform storytelling and they may dramatically change the course of your adventure.

Note

If you get Mayhem outside of combat, but the card seems combat oriented, either adapt it to your situation or let it do nothing and move onward.

Mayhem Basics

Mayhem cards come into play in three ways:

- If a player rolls a successful skill check and the Mayhem die shows the greatest number of the 3d6 (i.e. not a tied number, but the greatest number on any die rolled), then the player who made the check draws one Mayhem card.
- Sometimes a Mayhem card will tell you to draw additional Mayhem cards. In this case, draw and resolve additional cards as instructed.
- Some Mayhem cards may be held and played later. In these cases, the card is resolved when played, rather than when it was drawn.

Unsuccessful skill checks do not result in Mayhem. This means that Mayhem usually occurs as an interesting complication or upgrade to success.

Drawing a Mayhem card is called a **Mayhem Flip**. When a player draws (or "flips") a Mayhem card, they must read the card aloud to the entire group (unless otherwise instructed by either the card or the Game Chief). **The player who drew the card may then spend one RiPP to negate the card if they choose.** No other player may spend a RiPP to negate the card — only the player who drew the card has this option. The GC also has the power to negate Mayhem cards as outlined later in this chapter in the Contested Mayhem section. Place negated Mayhem cards in the deck's discard pile.

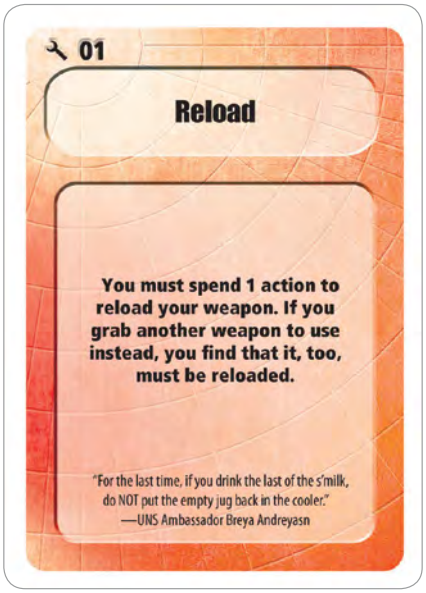
If a Mayhem card is not negated, one of two things occurs:

- A card with an immediate effect is applied before the next action (or before the next card, if flipping more than one card). Any stat changes, numerical adjustments, and story ramifications are applied at once.
- A card that may be held for later is placed face up on the table. The player who drew the card decides when to apply the card and may play it at any time, provided that they follow all of the card's rules. A held card is not considered "in effect" until it's used, and it may not be negated (not even by spending a RiPP). Players lose all held cards at the end of each session.

The GC decides how every Mayhem card affects the current action, combat, story, or overall mission, though we encourage the players to make awesome story suggestions (if an idea comes to them quickly without slowing down the action) — especially the player who drew the card. The GC should weigh any suggestions based on what they know about the mission background, upcoming events, characters present, and how much fun any given

House Rules for Mayhem

Gaming groups can create their own house rules for Mayhem cards, so long as everyone is agreed to the rule and it adds fun to the game. An example of such a rule: players may use their RiPP to negate cards for other players if they wish. House rules can also apply to interpretation of cards or the removal of cards from the deck if everyone in the group dislikes a particular card.



idea would be, if implemented. When in doubt, err on the side of fun. Failing that, default to the best story.

For instance, if a player flips the Reload card while fighting with a knife, the knife might get stuck in their opponent, forcing them to spend an action extracting it. Or perhaps the attack bloodies the grip of the knife and they must spend an action cleaning it. Or maybe they simply drop the weapon and must pick it up. The story you tell from any card may be dramatic, significant to the character or the story, or just humorous. 1

Interpreting Mayhem cards can be challenging for GCs, especially during fast-paced game sessions, but it's one of the most rewarding parts of playing *Planet Mercenary RPG*.

Mayhem Effect Durations

Some Mayhem cards have effects that linger. For example, the Karmageddon card applies a –5 penalty to "the next player to roll." But what if no one rolls again soon? Likewise, the Reload card mentioned above forces you to spend an action to reload your weapon, but what do you do if you draw that card at the end of combat?

When a card doesn't make it absolutely clear how long an effect lasts, fall back on these general rules:

- Unless a card says otherwise, the longest its effect can last is until the end of the current combat or scene. Often an effect will logically end before that. The GC will tell you when this is the case.
- Unless a card says otherwise, all changes to skills, weapons, and other gear are permanent (though future flips and gear modifications may alter them further, or revert them to their former state). These changes may also break the normal limits for character options (e.g. a Mayhem card may add an upgrade to a weapon that already has the maximum number allowed).

Contested Mayhem

Sometimes the GC may decide that a Mayhem card simply doesn't fit the current story or situation. In this situation the GC may negate the card by granting each player at the table a single RiPP.

The GC may also decide that a player-negated Mayhem card really *does* fit the story or situation, in which case the GC may reinstate it, applying its results in a fashion they deem best. This also results in a single RiPP for each player at the table. (The player who negated the card also gets their RiPP back, but doesn't also get the bonus RiPP awarded to everyone else.)

Sometimes the GC will decide that a Mayhem card isn't appropriate *yet*. In this case the GC can capture the card, setting it in face down and then smiling in a completely non-menacing, innocent way that says, "It's okay, I'm sure everything will be fine, there's nothing at all to worry about…" When the GC claims and holds a card in this manner, no RiPPs are gained.

1

CEO: Ah, because dropping your weapon during combat is *funny*.

DEV: Consider where they buy weapons, sir. *We* laugh all the way to the bank.

The Perils of Contesting Mayhem

GCs should take care when negating, reinstating, or capturing Mayhem cards. It can potentially rob players of some of the excitement and payoff for their actions and rolls, and if it happens too often, may foment player rebellion. Try to intervene in Mayhem only when doing so visibly improves the story — preferably in a way the players can see and appreciate during the current session. Who knows? Perhaps they'll even applaud your commitment to their fun. Or not. Players are fickle like that.

Reading the Cards

Mayhem cards include a number of common phrases and terms, defined below. When in doubt about how to apply a card, always defer to the GC. Be consistent in these rulings to avoid breaking the internal logic of your game world.

Fireteam and/or **Weapon:** Some cards mention fireteam qualities and/or weapon upgrades. You can find complete details for these on pages 108 and 152-153, respectively.

Hold this Card: When you see this, keep the card face up in front of you until you want to use it. You must use a held card before the end of the current play session or you lose that card. Held cards are not "in effect" until you apply them, at which time you must follow all of the rules on the card. Sometimes another card or game effect may take a held card from you. You may *not* trigger a card just before it is taken, no matter how much you might want to do so. (1)

May: The card's effect is optional. The player who drew the card may apply it or not, as they desire. It also means you're budgeting poorly if you spend a RiPP to negate it.

Must: This is the opposite of "may." When you see this, you don't get a choice — the effect happens whether you want it to or not, unless you spend a RiPP to negate it.

"Do X for a RiPP": Many cards offer you a chance to earn a RiPP — usually by role-playing your character's reaction to a new development. This reward isn't always guaranteed, and as always the GC decides whether you've earned your kibble. Support for players with special accessibility concerns can be found on page 282.

Upgraded Success: When you see this on a card, it means the check that prompted the Mayhem flip is now an upgraded success. This can have many effects based on the type of check or roll you were making. *For more information about upgraded successes, see page 25.*

Mayhem Suits and Values

The Mayhem deck consists of 102 unique cards across nine suits, each of which is thematically named, giving players a clue about the kinds of effects the cards might have.

Kill

Die

Bleed

Block

Res

Rep

Fix

Talk

Command

There are thirteen cards in each of the first four suits (Kill, Die, Bleed, Block) and ten cards in each of the other five suits (Res, Rep, Fix, Talk, Command). This means you could shuffle up the cards from the first four suits and play poker, blackjack, or any other game that calls for a standard deck of playing cards.

We've also included some blanks in the deck. Use these to create your own Mayhem effects! Planet Mercenary R&D would love to see them. (2) Post them to @PlanetMercenary on Twitter or via the contact page at **PlanetMercenary.com**!

Applying the Cards

Most Mayhem cards should be self-explanatory. A few could use a little extra discussion or clarification, and for those we've created this handy reference list. If you feel unsure about a card's meaning, or how to apply it, check here first.

Cards are listed alphabetically by name for easy reference, followed by their suits and values.

A Big Bag of Premonitions (Command 01)

For added fun, the GC can require that no one identify the card they drew. For even *more* fun, the players can be banned from referring directly to the cards at all. (None of this will stop the players from acting based on their knowledge, of course, which is the whole point: to increase focus on role-playing.)

A Bit Premature (Bleed 13)

This card requires significant discretion on the part of the GC. It might affect something the players have automated (an alarm trigger, a

(1)
CEO: Why do we say "hold" when we mean "put it down in front of you?"
WRITER: Our audience is familiar enough with card games to know that "hold" does not necessarily mean "clutch this card in your oily pseudopod until the perfect moment."
R&D: Some pseudopod oils are digestive. The cards are polymer coated, but those polymers are edible for at least three of the scientists here in the lab.
TERL'KRIS: I was wondering what happened to my extra cards. I don't have the budget to provide snacks for your team.

(2)
CEO: Is this what we're paying you for? If you're so dry on ideas that you're crowdsourcing them, I should come down to your lab and demonstrate some mayhem for you.
TERL'KRIS: That won't be necessary. We have no shortage of ideas, but sometimes an outsider's insight is on point. Also, it's good to maintain the illusion that we're listening.
MKTG: Phrases like that last one need to not appear in the final product.

Terminology: NPC and PC

The terms NPC and PC are common in role-playing games. They stand for Non-Player Character and Player Character. An NPC is any character in the story who is run by the GC rather than by an individual player. It also includes grunts and fireteam members who take orders from the player's character, but whom the player does not actually role-play. The PC is the character who is run and role-played directly by an individual player. There should only be one PC per player per game.

camera hack, or perhaps the timed detonation of a bomb). It could alternately affect instructions given to a fireteam, or to Non Player Characters (NPCs.)

For a player to resolve this card, they may require cooperation from another player. If the party has a plan, this card may force one of the players — not necessarily the one who drew the card — to rush ahead. This presents a wonderful opportunity to role-play a haste-related flaw, consequences notwithstanding. GCs may reward this cooperation with a RiPP.

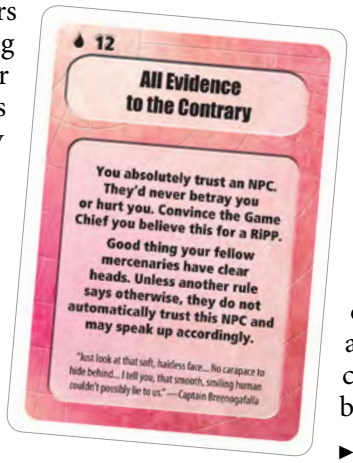
A Bit Too Inspiring (Block 04)

The fireteam action(s) prompted by this card occur *in addition to* their regular actions.

All Evidence to the Contrary (Bleed 12)

Some players may have difficulty resolving this card, especially players who have a hard time differentiating player knowledge from character knowledge. If a player struggles with this distinction, the GC may want to negate the card to keep things moving along smoothly.

When this card is in effect, remember that grunts are also free to speak their minds. No one has to listen to them, but they can point and scream about the blind spot of a player character (PC) all they want.



Backfire (Bleed 01)

The GC has a lot of latitude in the interpretation of this card. One of the most common skill checks to trigger a Mayhem flip is a successful hit with a ranged weapon, and the "complementary negative result" alluded to on this card could be collateral damage, friendly fire, or simple physical comedy, like the weapon's recoil knocking the player prone. If a Mechanic check flips the card, it could result in a negative quality being added, like Reload Intensive. The key is to come up with a negative effect that doesn't simply say, "Your action failed."

Born Unlucky (Block 09)

You may only pick the named grunt from *your* fireteam. If there are no named grunts in your fireteam, this card has no effect.

Call Your Shot (Res 06)

Per standard Mayhem rules, a player on whom this card is played may *not* spend a RiPP to negate it. The player who *draws* the card can spend a RiPP to negate it — if they're nice.

Closet Full of Skeletons (Rep 02)

See Dirty Laundry, next. We'll cover these two cards together. They're a lot alike.

Dirty Laundry (Rep 01)

Closet Full of Skeletons and Dirty Laundry both have negative effects on the company's reputation. The principal difference lies in magnitude of result. Dirty Laundry is bad. Closet Full of Skeletons is worse. In both cases, embarrassing information about the player character, the company, or their activities, now becomes widely known. Perhaps:

- An NPC discovers something that the character or company did in secret. (e.g. "Hey, those are the idiots who started the food riot yesterday!")
- The local media misrepresents recent actions. (e.g. "In breaking news, we found the idiots who started the food riot. Were they also responsible for the string of murders at curry kitchen? Pay-per-view now to find out!")
- A character reveals a secret from their backstory, or the company's mission. (e.g.

"Actually, the ship isn't mine. I stole it. From those guys over there.")

► The skill check that triggered Mayhem hurts your reputation. (e.g. "Whoa, you can pick locks? You must be a criminal. I bet you're all criminals!")

PCs are an inexhaustible source of awkward moments. If you cast your mind back to the last time everyone at the table couldn't stop laughing, then the reputation-damaging information needed to resolve these cards should become obvious.

Friendly Fire (Bleed 03)

Apply this card for best effect when you link the sources of the damage or chaos. Nearby explosives or volatile materials are great for this (it's entirely plausible that a gas canister punctured by errant gunfire might injure two characters in proximity), but you can also get plenty of mileage out of a runaway vehicle or a minor natural disaster like a landslide.

Give One to the Team (Bleed 09)

Apply the skill point granted by this card to the player's choice of Combat, Mental, Physical, or Social. You may not apply it to Damage.

Hail to the Chief (Command 04)

In the hands of the right GC this card can work wonderfully. When you resolve this card (assuming it isn't negated), the GC draws four Mayhem cards. They select one and apply its effects immediately. The GC holds the remaining three cards, and any time Mayhem is triggered the GC may decide to play one of the held cards instead of letting the player draw a new card.

These held cards played by the GC cannot be negated — the opportunity to negate them passed when the player who drew Hail to the Chief decided not to negate it — so, you know, every misfortune that results from the held cards is entirely their fault.

History Repeats Itself (Command 08)

The GC is entirely within their rights to adjust their counting speed to the players' ability to think on their feet. Some groups will want to decide on the card together; this may obviate the need for a count at all.

I'm Not Dead Yet (Die 01)

Note that this card allows for a final action *anytime up to the end of the current scene*. This timing can potentially strain plausibility as it allows a character to effectively survive to the end of the scene in which they die. The GC should bend the narrative a bit to allow for this, however, in order to give the player character a chance to shine in their final moment(s). There's a bit of give and take here as well, as a player is likewise encouraged not to hold back the final action to "stay alive" a little while longer. Ultimately, the card should enable a satisfying send-off for the character.

What Is a Scene?

In *Planet Mercenary RPG*, some actions have effect to the end of a scene. It is most useful to think of a scene in terms of a stage play or a movie. The end of the scene is when the location changes or some significant time passes.

It's All About the Shouting (Talk 08)

Make no roll for checks related to your next fireteam order. Since you make no roll, Mayhem cannot not apply. That's probably a relief. Unless you like Mayhem. Then not so much.

Let Me Show You How That's Done (Kill 06)

If this card grants a skill point to a fireteam, it should increase the skill category containing the skill that triggered the card's use (e.g. if the triggering skill was Larceny, then increase your Physical skill category). You may not apply it to Damage.

Let's Settle this Like Adults (Res 09)

The series doesn't have to consist of any particular number of contested skill checks (other than two or more), but as a rule of thumb the number shouldn't go above five. Unless the GC is having a bad day. Or the snack-bringer brought off-brand munchies. Again. In that case the GC might want to make the number of contested skill checks high enough to serve as an example for future generations.

No, This is My Trap (Bleed 05)

This card's effect also serves as a great general rule for ambushes. Creative or tactical players will ask to ambush enemies, and assuming the PCs aren't wearing armor decorated with wind chimes, the GC should probably let them try.

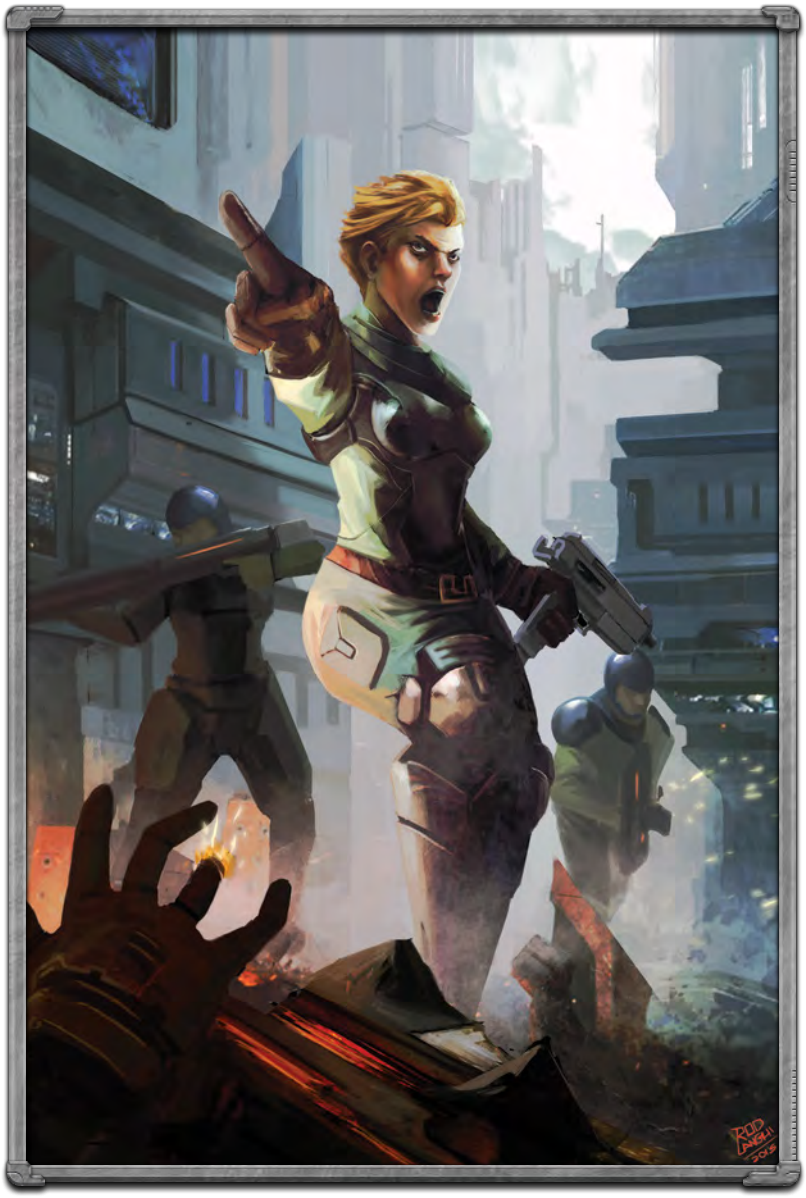
No More Probie (Die 03)

This card upgrades the probie grunt to a full member of the fireteam, eliminating the restrictions in place for having a newbie in the ranks *(see page 109)*.

Oh. That's What Overkill Is. (Kill 13)

If fewer than three enemies are available, you hit any enemies that you can plausibly hit with your attack (the GC may rule that certain enemies don't qualify, such as those behind cover).

Also, the reload action required after playing this card works just like the Mayhem card named Reload (Fix 1): if you grab another weapon to use instead, you find that it, too, must be reloaded.



Maxim 18

If the officers are leading from in front, watch for an attack from the rear.

Oiling the Well-Oiled Machine (Kill 03)

Apply the skill point granted by this card to the player's choice of Combat, Mental, Physical, or Social, whichever the Player decides is most closely related. You may not apply it to Damage.

Open to Interpretation (Command 05)

There are at least ten thousand possible two-card combinations in the resolution of this Mayhem card, so they can't all be spelled out for you. Here are three:

► **The First Thing to Go (Die 07) + This Reminds Me of That One Time (Talk 01):** The player whose character most recently

took damage picks a skill and loses a point in that skill. Then that player tells a story, in character, about the use of that skill. Obviously there are RiPPs at stake.

► **That Wasn't on My Resumé (Resource 04) + Reload (Fix 01):** The player picks a skill they don't have and gains a point in it. Their next combat action must be spent using that skill in an attempt to make their suddenly non-functional weapon functional again.

► **Armor of Enthusiasm (Kill 11) + Let Me Show You How That's Done (Kill 06):** The next player who takes damage only takes one point of damage, and gains a point in a skill of the GC's choosing.

Need some narrative examples? Here you go!

Example: *Angela draws Open to Interpretation. She draws two more cards: Someone Just earned a Nickname and One of You Dodged the Bullet. The GC — a clever fellow named Steve — assigns a poor amorph named Bart the nickname 'Bad Luck Bart' and uses One of You Dodged the Bullet to have Bart draw another Mayhem card.*

Bart's player, a witty sort named Ebeneezer (1), later draws Open to Interpretation. His two draws are They're Both Broken? and I'm Not Dead Yet. The GC — still Steve — sagely nods and captures both cards. Steve secretly has Bart's armor fail at an improbably bad time, causing Bart to live up to his nickname. However, as Bart plummets to his death after the malfunction, I'm not Dead Yet lets him eat an active bomb, thereby saving his allies.

(1)

TERL'KRIS: Ebeneezer... there's an AI in my intern pool named 3benee2er.

WRITER: Same person. Outstanding gamer. Dies valiantly all the time.

TERL'KRIS: Dies *in game*, right?

WRITER: Mostly... She's restored from backup twice that I know of.

Overly Ambitious (Block 07)

As the card implies, for the rest of the current session the identified grunt is the *only* one that any player may choose when invoking Ablative Meat *(see page 110)*. All the other grunts can rest easy... for now. At least until the overly ambitious grunt dies. Then the rest of those poor suckers are fair game again.

Say What? (Bleed 02)

If the last order given to the player's fireteam was a while ago, or even last round, you have two options when you flip this card: either you can come up with a reason that the team misinterpreted a part of their orders they haven't carried out yet (perhaps some convenient static over the comms), or you can ignore the card (in which case it has no effect).

That's Coming Out of Our Pay (Res 08)

This card can require some creativity when it's drawn after success with a non-violent, non-explody skill (like, say, Dodge or Economics). Nearly anything can lead to entropy though, right? You may have dodged out of the way of an attack, but that attack could set off a chain-reaction leading to a planetary record for highest property damage in one minute or less. That ledger you squared like a pro and submitted six weeks ahead of schedule? That's great until it's sent to the wrong office and mistaken as a casualty report, prompting three firings.

There is No Carrot (Kill 10)

The bonus granted to your fireteam's combat rolls applies to *all* of that team's combat rolls, including skill checks *and* damage.

They're BOTH Broken? (Fix 03)

When you flip this card, the GC writes the target item and the name of the PC who owns it on a slip of paper. The GC reveals this item's condition the next time it's used (in the event that the GC forgets, the slip of paper can be tossed when the GC finds it again). Remember that equipment modifications applied by Mayhem are permanent unless noted otherwise.

They're Not Dead Until the Doctor Says They're Dead (Die 12)

Remember that rule where the GC can snatch a Mayhem card to use later? This is an *excellent* candidate for that — particularly if the next enemy isn't the one that could best harass the team in future missions.

Think Fast, Act Faster (Block 10)

This card offers the GC carte blanche to make the player characters' lives miserable — in an indeterminate amount of time of the GC's choosing. Players are advised not to worry about what they're going to do so much as how

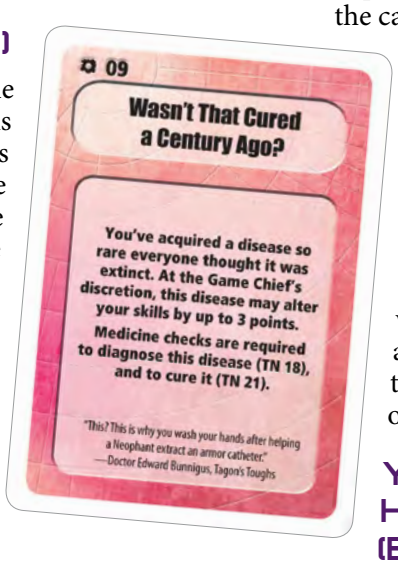
quickly they do it — and they shouldn't feel surprised if they still don't hit the deadline, because sanctioned chaos is fun!

Toxic Workplace (Bleed 04)

"Environmental factors" can include all sorts of things, from excessive heat to vertigo to a high-pitched frequency emitted by nearby machinery that disrupts biological brain waves (or the same result generated by the droning conversation of the most boring grunt alive).

Wasn't that Cured a Century Ago? (Die 09)

When this card comes up, the GC may alter the player's skills by a *total* of three points. This means he or she may increase or decrease one skill by three points, increase or decrease one skill by two points and a second skill by one point, or increase or decrease three skills by one point each. Reverse these alterations if the player succeeds on both Medicine checks, so the player should note both their original and altered skills on their character sheet. 2



What Were We Doing Again? (Die 10)

"The plan" identified by this card is most often the latest concerted effort by the player character's team (e.g. the formation of a planned attack or the specific order to cut a set of wires to disarm a bomb, as opposed to setting it off). Larger scale portions of the team's plans — up to and including the current mission objective(s) — may be appropriate as well, depending on the story and the current situation.

Some players may have difficulty resolving this card, especially players who have a hard time differentiating player knowledge from character knowledge. If a player struggles with this distinction, the GC may want to negate the card to keep things moving along smoothly.

Who's the New Guy? (Block 05)

This card adds a permanent fourth grunt to your fireteam. The player in control of the fireteam chooses this fourth grunt's role, and the grunt's stats add to the team's stats accordingly *(see page 107)*. However, the next time a member of the fireteam dies, the fourth grunt is not automatically replaced (i.e. the fireteam drops to its normal size of three grunts).

You Can Be MY Wingman (Rep 08)

Some players may have difficulty accepting the outcomes of this card, especially if their character doesn't get along with the PC who rolled the success. If a player struggles with this in role-play, the GC may want to negate the card to keep things moving along smoothly.

You Can't Unsee That (Block 01)

When a character is forced to face an aversion, or when they intentionally face it, the GC may apply a –2 penalty with associated rolls. Since this aversion remains permanently, the player should note it on his or her character sheet.

You Have Exactly Half a Chance (Bleed 08)

Players who receive this card may intentionally "waste" their next action on something unimportant to mitigate a high chance of failure. Others may realize this card *improves* their odds of success at something difficult, and relish the chance to shine using a skill they don't have. Both are valid ways to use this card, so both should be met with golf claps or silent nods of approval.

2

MKTG: Is there a complete list of diseases in this book?

TERL'KRIS: Not enough pages.

MKTG: Can you just list the species-jumpers?

TERL'KRIS: Still not enough pages. We abstracted all of that.

SOPH_RES: Being sick is not "abstract."

Note

As of this writing, most living humans who have fought in a full-scale war did so during the Terraforming War in Celeschul System.

Skills

Skills are the heart of the *Planet Mercenary RPG*. If an action might result in meaningful success or failure, then that action requires a skill check: a roll of three six-sided dice (3d6) to determine if you succeed at performing the action, or if you fail to do so. Every meaningful action that you perform, from using a weapon to flying a starship, requires a check in the appropriate skill. This section walks you through skills and their checks in much greater detail than the quick start rules outlined in Game Basics.

The first half of this section covers the rules related to skills, including some that come up infrequently. This chapter includes a copy of Table 2.2: Skills, this table can also be found in the Character Creation section so you don't have to flip back and forth quite so much.

The rest of this section details every skill and specialty, in the order in which the table presents them — first by skill category, and then alphabetically within each category. The skill descriptions help players determine which skill supports any given action. They also illustrate the many ways that your character can support the company. The Game Chief will use this material to dream up and power all those fancy encounters you'll face.

Maxim 2

A sergeant in motion outranks a lieutenant who doesn't know what's going on.

Skill Basics

Skill checks should only take place when a player character attempts something interesting, risky, or pivotal to the story. Unless an activity can result in at least two meaningful (and different) outcomes, then there's no reason to roll dice.

Example: *Lt. Tandersil decides to open an unlocked door. She could conceivably fumble with the latch a bit but that wouldn't be interesting, so there's no skill check.*

Example: *Lt. Tandersil decides to open an unlocked door. The GC knows that there's a surprise waiting on the other side. The GC asks for a Perception check. The player rolls 3d6 and adds her Perception score. Opening the door was easy, but quickly determining what was on the other side? Less easy, and more interesting!*

Example: *Lt. Tandersil decides to unlock and open a locked door. Eventually she'll succeed, but an enemy security patrol approaches from about two minutes away. The player keeps making skill checks until the door opens or the GC declares that the patrol has spotted the team. If that happens, it's time to start rolling skill checks for combat.*

Skill checks typically feel intuitive, but situations will occur where they're unclear. The GC always decides when and how skills apply to the game. If you feel that a different skill better benefits your situation, then ask your GC to allow you to roll that skill instead; however, the final decision for checks rests with the GC.

Using a Skill

To make a skill check, roll 3d6. Add the sum of these dice to the appropriate skill value on your character sheet. This total is your **result**.

You make each skill check against a **Target Number (TN)**. Meeting or exceeding that number means success. Rolling below the number means failure.

Target Numbers are always chosen by the GC, who may or may not choose to share the Target Numbers with your company. The harder the task at hand, the higher the TN. Target Numbers range from 10 to 35, as shown on Table 2.1 (*see below*).

Hidden Target Numbers?

When the GC chooses not to reveal a TN, it's because your results aren't immediately evident, or may never be. This is often the case when sneaking, and when making checks against other characters' opposing checks (e.g. when you roll Willpower to resist an enemy's Intimidate roll).

Automatic Failure

Any roll of three ones (a result of 3) is an automatic failure, even if the result equals or exceeds the TN. This means your character fails at the action. The GC may also choose to describe the failure in an appropriately amusing or unfortunate fashion, if it fits the moment.

Upgraded Success

A roll of three sixes (18), provided that the total result (18 + any applied skill) meets or exceeds the TN, is an Upgraded Success. If the total result is less than the TN, the check fails. An Upgraded Success means your character exceeds your expectations in some spectacular way. Each skill's description in this chapter includes one or more common Upgraded Successes, but the GC can always introduce a different effect instead. Upgraded Success can also be triggered by Mayhem cards.

Mayhem

One of your three dice in any skill check should be a different color or style. This is the Mayhem die. When your check succeeds and the Mayhem die's result is greater than either of the other dice, you draw a Mayhem card. (*For more information, see page 16*)

Table 2.1: Target Numbers

TN	Difficulty	Notes
10	Easy	A competent person will succeed most of the time.
15	Moderate	A competent person will succeed some of the time.
20	Hard	With a *lot* of training you just might succeed. With no training? Don't hold your breath.
25	Very Hard	Even with a lot of training your chances are slim.
30*	Exceptionally Difficult	Only a true master of this discipline stands any chance of success.
35*	Impossible	A master of this discipline will frown and step away. A fool will rush in and try anyway.

* A newly-created character cannot succeed against these TNs. Game Chiefs should take great care assigning these difficulties in early games of Planet Mercenary.

Opposing (or Contested) Skill Checks

An opposing skill check is when the skill of one PC or NPC is directly pitted against the skill of an opponent. In this case the skill result of one character becomes the TN that the other character needs to beat. If the roll results for the contested checks are equal, the tie goes to the player. If two players are opposing each other, have them re-roll in the case of a tie. You see opposing skill checks in cases of pursuit, larceny, grappling, etc.

Graded Skill Checks

A few skill checks aren't made against a TN. Instead, these checks have a progressively better effect the higher you roll. These are called graded skill checks.

When making a graded skill check, you have no TN. Instead, you compare your result to the table for your activity (found in the skill description). As usual, a natural roll of 3 is an automatic failure, and most of the time a roll of 4 or 5 won't yield any benefit either.

Example: *Building a bomb with the Explosives skill requires a graded check. A result up to 5 fails to create a useful explosive, but a result of 6 to 10 makes one that inflicts 2d6 damage, and the bomb's damage increases with results of 11 or more.*

The skills most commonly used with graded checks are identified on Table 2.2: Skills with a ⌖ symbol (*see page 27*). The descriptions for these skills include tables for their most common graded uses, though as usual the GC may decide to grade any skill differently, raising or lowering the numbers on a table, or even changing the standard outcomes of a result. But only when such alterations make the story better and the game more fun.

In fact, the GC can adapt nearly any skill check to be graded, if the graded outcome might meaningfully differ from a standard check's success/failure states.

Example: *A PC uses Inspire to sway a sizeable audience with a moving speech. Under normal circumstances the GC would set a TN and success would mean the character sways the whole crowd, while failure would mean the character sways none of the crowd. Instead, the GC could set an initial TN of 10 and decide success at that difficulty means the character only sways a few individuals in the crowd. With a result of 15 to 19, the character sways about a quarter of the crowd; from 20 to 24 the character sways about half the crowd; from 25 to 29 the character sways roughly three-quarters of the crowd; and at 30 and above the whole crowd is swayed.*

As always, Game Chiefs should make such on-the-fly decisions before anyone rolls any dice.

Combat

While skills drive combat in *Planet Mercenary RPG*, combat does not resolve with a single roll. Every attack is a skill check, as is every attempt to dodge. *Find the full rules for combat on page 12.*

Skill Specialties

Skill specialties allow characters to focus their training in one narrow application of a skill. For example, many of the Combat skills have the Beam, Non-Lethal, and Projectile specialties, letting a character focus with one, two, or all three types of the weapon in question.

Having a specialty can be extremely helpful when making a skill check. When you roll dice to perform a check on a skill in which your character has a specialty, having a specialty allows you to reroll a single die to attempt to improve the outcome of that roll. Whenever you reroll a die you must accept the second roll even if it's worse than the first, so be sure you want to apply a specialty before you pick up the die.

You can even reroll the Mayhem die, in case you want to trigger a card draw (or avoid one if you're worried that the next card might be bad). The rules for spending a RiPP to re-roll dice can still be applied after a die has been re-rolled because of a specialty.

Whenever you reroll a die you must accept the second roll even if it's worse than the first, so be sure you want to apply a specialty before you pick up the die.

You can find all of the common specialties in *Planet Mercenary RPG* on Table 2.2: Skills. Specialties always appear in parentheses following their skill. For example, "Long Guns (Projectile)" refers to the Projectile specialty for the Long Guns skill.

Note: Even when multiple specialties could apply to a single skill check, the player may only reroll a single die.

Table 2.2: Skills

Combat Skills	Specialties
Carbines	Beam, Non-Lethal, Projectile
Dodge	None
Explosives ⊙	Building, Detection, Disarming, Placement
Heavy Weapons	Beam, Non-Lethal, Projectile
Long Guns	Beam, Non-Lethal, Projectile
Melee	Common Weapons, Exotic Weapons, Unarmed, Wrestling
Pistols	Beam, Non-Lethal, Projectile
Scatterguns	Beam, Non-Lethal, Projectile
Stationed Weapons	Ballistic, Beam, Missile
Thrown Weapons	Aerodynamic, Grenades, Improvised
Mental Skills	**Specialties**
Chemistry	Biochemistry, Inorganic
Computers	Hacking, Programming, Repair, Security
Economics	Local, Planetary, Sector
Engineering	Architecture, Habitats, Planetary Vehicles, Vessels
Experimental Sciences ⊙	None
History	Military, Political, Religious, per sophont type
Insight ⊙	None
Mechanic ⊙	Build, Jury-rig, Repair
Medicine	Battlefield, First Aid, Surgery
Research ⊙	None
Xenobiology	Per world of origin
Physical Skills	**Specialties**
Air Vehicles	Evasive Action, Navigation, Pursuit, Stunts
Athletics	Climbing, Flight, Jumping, Pursuit, Running, Strength, Swimming
Endurance	Hard Vacuum, Hold Breath, Immunological
Ground Vehicles	Evasive Action, Navigation, Pursuit, Stunts
Larceny	Breaking & Entering, Picking Locks, Picking Pockets, Sleight of Hand
Perception	Hearing, Magnetic, Sight, Smell, Taste, Thermal, Touch
Space Vehicles	Evasive Action, Navigation, Pursuit, Stunts
Stealth	Hiding, Tailing
Water Vehicles	Evasive Action, Navigation, Pursuit, Stunts
Social Skills	**Specialties**
Contracts ⊙	None
Deceive	Bluffing, Disguise, Distraction
Empathy	Gambling, Gather Info, Influence, Read Sophont
Inspire	Oratory, Leadership, Seduction
Intimidate	Coercion, Interrogation, Torture
Negotiate ⊙	Black Market, Haggling, Persuasion
Perform	Acting, Comedy, Dance, Song
Willpower	Fortitude, Tenacity

⊙ One or more uses of this skill are graded checks.

On Skills Not Specifically Named in the Skills List 1

The *Planet Mercenary RPG* does not have a completely exhaustive list of all possible skills. To do so would have been prohibitive in book space and unwieldy in game play. We rely on the creativity of GCs and players to determine which skills fit best for the story you want to tell. When all else fails you can fall back on the Experimental Sciences and Research skills to cover any gaps.

1

CEO: How exactly did you draw the line here?

TERL'KRIS: With great difficulty. The skill system is an abstraction of the myriad skills and abilities operating in the real world.

CEO: There you go with the "abstract" word again.

TERL'KRIS: I got it from Czecki.

WRITER: In this context "abstraction" is what you'd get if a summary and an analogy loved each other very much, and—

CEO: Stop.

WRITER: —invited a metaphor over for a creche-weaving—

TERL'KRIS: The boss said stop. But that *was* pretty good.

Acquiring Skills & Specialties

Your starting skills come from your Command Package, Background, and possibly your sophont type as well (*see Character Creations, steps 1–3, pages 57–64*).

From there you can spend skill points to buy ranks in any skills you want. Starting characters have a maximum of nine ranks per skill. When players are awarded skill points for completing jobs, they may use those points to buy ranks past nine if they wish. You can also spend skill points to buy skill specialties. Specialties don't have ranks; you either have the specialty or you don't.

The number of points that players may spend when starting a new character are shown on Table 2.3: Skill Points (*see below*).

Each rank costs one point and each specialty costs two points. You may only buy a specialty for a skill in which you already have one or more ranks, and you may have no more than one specialty per rank you have in each skill.

Example: *If you have two ranks in Ground Vehicles, you may buy two of that skill's specialties — Evasive Action, Navigation, Pursuit, and Stunts — but you may not buy all four. If you buy the two specialties Evasive Action and Stunts, you pay four points.*

Combat Skills

Every weapon in the game uses one skill — and only one skill — to fire, and you may never use alternate skills in place of a gun's designated skill. This means that even if you find a heavy weapon that also functions, arguably, as a long gun, you still only ever use the Heavy Weapons skill to fire it. The specific skill used for each weapon is found in the Weapons section (*see page 138*).

Carbines

Use your Carbines skill when firing carbine-class weapons. As the weapons most commonly issued to infantry, carbines offer versatility and lethality. They are designed for quick carry, ease of use, and close-quarters action.

This skill has three specialties:

- **Beam:** Apply this specialty when attacking with carbines that use beam ammunition.
- **Non-Lethal:** Apply this specialty when attacking with carbines that use non-lethal ammunition.
- **Projectile:** Apply this specialty when attacking with carbines that use projectile ammunition.

Upgraded Success

On your attack, you inflict double-rolled damage (roll the dice two times and add the results together). Otherwise the GC decides the effect.

Dodge

Dodge represents your self-preservation instinct, and your training that reinforces this instinct. This is your ability to predict incoming violence and get out of the way. The source of danger is irrelevant; whether you're threatened

Table 2.3: Skill Points

Character Type	Points to Spend
New character (not an AI)	40
New character (AI)	10 × the Company AI rating (*see page 97*), plus any granted by chassis (*see page 86*)
Promoted grunt	40 + 10 additional points for each time the grunt survived Ablative Meat (*see page 110*)

by a directed attack, a passive trap, the environment, or something else, you always use Dodge to avoid injury.

Dodge factors into your ability to avoid harm in two ways:

- Your Defense score is always equal to your Dodge skill rank + 5.
- As your action in any round, you may make a Dodge skill check. If the result is higher than your Defense score, then your result becomes your temporary Defense score until your next action or until you fall unconscious (whichever comes first).

This skill has no specialties.

Upgraded Success

By default, an Upgraded Success with Dodge means that you may choose to ignore any single injury until your next action or until you fall unconscious (whichever comes first). This need not be the next injury — you can save this "free escape" for a really successful attack if you want, but you lose it at the start of your next turn or when you fall unconscious, even if it's unused. In addition, you can't use this escape against any attack or injury inflicted with another Upgraded Success. For example, if you roll 18 on a Dodge check but your attacker also rolls 18 on an attack, its Upgraded Success ignores yours.

Alternatively, the GC can replace this default effect with one of their choosing. Perhaps you dodge just in front of a second enemy, causing them to be hit instead, or perhaps you wind up in an advantageous position at the start of your next action.

Explosives

Use your explosives skill to build, set, find, or disarm an explosive device. If you try to hurl an explosive, like a grenade or an incendiary bottle, handle that check with Thrown Weapons (*see page 31*).

Creating an explosive is a graded check. Compare your result to Table 2.4: Creating an Explosive to find the damage your device inflicts once you've built it (*see below*). Use your result also as the TN when someone tries to disarm the device.

When you set (or "place") an explosive, your Explosives skill check result becomes the TN for someone else to find it with a competing Explosives result. Use Explosives skill checks also to analyze the aftermath of an explosion to glean information about the device, its placement, or its creator.

This skill has four specialties:

- **Building:** Apply this specialty when creating an explosive.
- **Detecting:** Apply this specialty when trying to find and identify explosives.
- **Disarming:** Apply this specialty when disarming an explosive.
- **Placing:** Apply this specialty when setting an explosive in a location, to be detonated later.

Upgraded Success

When building, disarming, or placing an explosive, an Upgraded Success generally means you accomplish the task much faster than expected.

When searching for an explosive or analyzing a blast site, an Upgraded Success usually means you learn something particularly useful about the device, its placement, or its creator. The GC determines the nature of this discovery.

Table 2.4: Creating an Explosive

Result	Damage
3–5	Failure (no explosive is created)
6–10	2d6
11–15	3d6
16–20	4d6
21+	5d6

Heavy Weapons

Use your Heavy Weapons skill when firing heavy-class weapons. If your weapon hangs underslung, feels massive, rotates, and makes terrifying noises when it's fired, then you're packing a heavy weapon. Tanks, large vehicles, power-armored sophonts — these all become valid targets when you fire a heavy weapon.

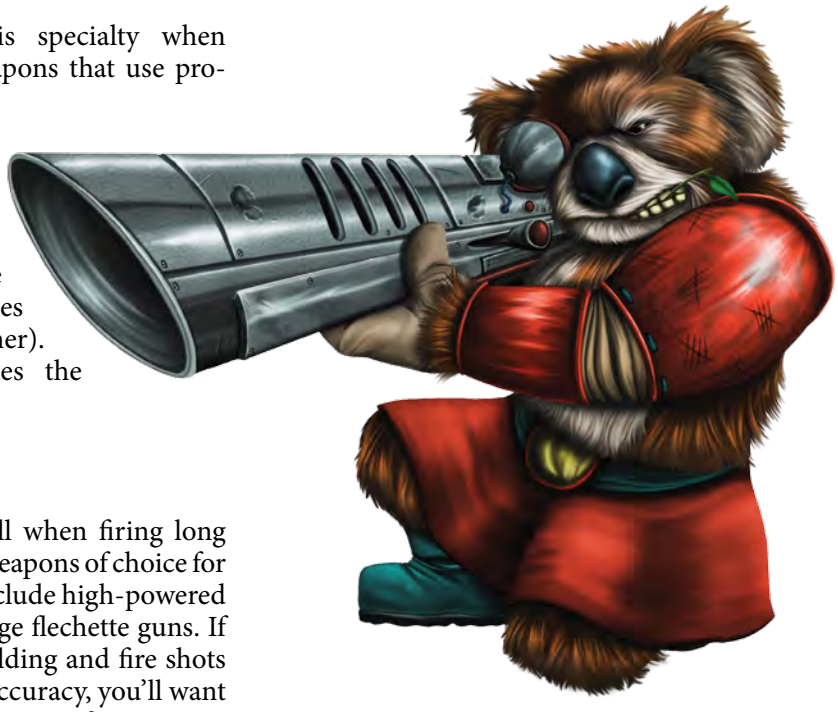
This skill has three specialties:

- **Beam:** Apply this specialty when attacking with heavy weapons that use beam ammunition.
- **Non-Lethal:** Apply this specialty when attacking with heavy weapons that use non-lethal ammunition.

► **Projectile:** Apply this specialty when attacking with heavy weapons that use projectile ammunition.

Upgraded Success

On your attack, you inflict double-rolled damage (roll the dice two times and add the results together). Otherwise the GC decides the effect.



Long Guns

Use your Long Guns skill when firing long gun-class weapons. As the weapons of choice for sharpshooters, long guns include high-powered rifles, snipers, and long-range flechette guns. If you want to perch on a building and fire shots across town with pinpoint accuracy, you'll want some deadly serious Long Gun proficiency.

This skill has three specialties:

► **Beam:** Apply this specialty when attacking with long guns that use beam ammunition.

► **Non-Lethal:** Apply this specialty when attacking with long guns that use non-lethal ammunition.

► **Projectile:** Apply this specialty when attacking with long guns that use projectile ammunition.

Upgraded Success

On your attack, you inflict double-rolled damage (roll the dice two times and add the results together). Otherwise the GC decides the effect.

Melee

Use your Melee skill for all melee attacks, with or without a weapon. Whether you punch with fists, swipe with claws, slap with nano-engineered chunks of advanced metal embedded in your tentacles, stab with a combat knife, or swing a vibro-halberd over your head, you use the Melee skill when you attack right up in whatever passes for your enemy's face.

This skill has four specialties:

► **Common Weapons:** Apply this specialty when attacking with any variation on the club, or the sharpened stick (e.g. a sword, axe, hammer, spear, or another blunt, edged, or pointed weapon in common use).

► **Exotic Weapons:** Apply this specialty when attacking with an improvised melee weapon (e.g. a table leg, which isn't weighted to be a club, but you're giving it a go), or a weapon that can just as easily injure the attacker as the target (e.g. a whip, chain, or rope-dagger), or a stealth weapon (e.g. a Dorothy-wire boot, hat-brim blade, or poisoned ring-pin). This specialty also applies to weapons designed for a sophont with more limbs than you have.

► **Unarmed:** Apply this specialty when attacking with your bare hands (or your bare feet, or your fancy officer's boots, or any other melee configuration that does not include a weapon). This specialty is also used for biting, attacking with claws, pseudopods, and other weapons that are part of your body.

► **Wrestling:** Apply this specialty when grappling, or trying to pin your target without hurting them (i.e. when you just want to hold a target in place).

Special Application: Grappling

A successful grapple holds a target in place. The attacker may also inflict their unarmed damage if they like, but they don't have to. Breaking free requires a Melee check from the held character, with a TN equal to the Melee check that bound them.

Upgraded Success

On your attack, you inflict double-rolled damage (roll the dice two times and add the results together). Otherwise the GC decides the effect.

When you attempt to grapple, an Upgraded Success means you pin your target and they cannot escape until either you let them go or they manage an Upgraded Success of their own (whichever comes first).

Pistols

Use your Pistols skill when firing pistol-class weapons. Hold-outs, fast-draw handguns, and other ranged weapons designed to be held in a single hand (or hand-equivalent appendage) are used with this skill. Pistols are more easily concealable than many other weapons, making them an excellent choice for clandestine operations in places too civilized for slinging a carbine over a shoulder (or shoulder-equivalent joint).

This skill has three specialties:

- **Beam:** Apply this specialty when attacking with pistols that use beam ammunition.
- **Non-Lethal:** Apply this specialty when attacking with pistols that use non-lethal ammunition.
- **Projectile:** Apply this specialty when attacking with pistols that use projectile ammunition.

Upgraded Success

On your attack, you inflict double-rolled damage (roll the dice two times and add the results together). Otherwise the GC decides the effect.

Scatterguns

Use your Scatterguns skill when firing scattergun-class weapons. If your weapon fires a spread of projectiles (or a spray of high-energy particles), use the Scattergun skill. The form factor of scatterguns is like that of many carbines, but these weapons require a different kind of focus and control. Some scatterguns approach heavy weapon-levels of coverage, but they're still optimal for close quarters combat.

This skill has three specialties:

- **Beam:** Apply this specialty when attacking with scatterguns that use beam ammunition.
- **Non-Lethal:** Apply this specialty when attacking with scatterguns that use non-lethal ammunition.
- **Projectile:** Apply this specialty when attacking with scatterguns that use projectile ammunition.

Upgraded Success

On your attack, you inflict double-rolled damage (roll the dice two times and add the results together). Otherwise the GC decides the effect.

Stationed Weapons

Use your Stationed Weapons skill when firing stationed weapons. Any weapon that is fixed into a brace, built into a structure, mounted on a swivel, or attached to a vehicle counts as a stationed weapon. You may make any Carbine, Long Gun, Scattergun, or Heavy Weapon into a Stationed Weapon by attaching it to a pre-installed weapons slot that already exists in a vehicle, turret, tripod, or wall. If a pre-installed weapons slot is not available, you may still make your weapon stationed by rolling an Engineering check or Mechanic (Jury-rig) check TN 20. The ability to make weapons stationed is particularly valuable to small sophonts, such as esspererin.

Maxim 60

Any weapon's rate of fire is inversely proportional to the number of available targets.

This skill has three specialties:

- **Beam:** Apply this specialty when firing a stationed weapon which requires line of sight between weapon and target.
- **Ballistic:** Apply this specialty when attacking with stationed weapons that fire unpowered projectile ammunition, like field artillery and ship-mounted point-defense cannons.
- **Missile:** Apply this specialty when attacking with stationed weapons using powered projectiles, whether guided or unguided, like rockets or breacher missiles.

Upgraded Success

On your attack, you inflict double-rolled damage (roll the dice two times and add the results together). Otherwise the GC decides the effect.

Thrown Weapons

Use your Thrown Weapons skill to hurl an item at a target. This skill applies no matter what you throw. If you lob a grenade, hurl a spear, or

toss a caber, this skill determines your capacity to rain brutality down on your foes. Use this skill also when attacking with a weapon that you throw with the help of an additional tool, like the atl-atl, or a sling and stone.

The GC decides where a thrown weapon ends up after your attack. With an automatic miss, the GC may land your projectile somewhere unrecoverable (into an acid bath) or unfortunate (like inside an ally).

This skill has three specialties:

► **Aerodynamic:** Apply this specialty when throwing any weapon designed to be thrown (e.g. a throwing knife, spear, or dart).

► **Grenades:** Apply this specialty when throwing an explosive that is designed to be thrown. Also, please consider acquiring this specialty before throwing an explosive, because the failure state for throwing an explosive tends to be much more severe than the failure state for throwing a rock.

► **Improvised:** Apply this specialty when throwing any weapon not designed to be thrown (e.g. a chair, vial of acid, chunk of masonry, sword, or Shurikannon). Also apply this specialty when throwing an explosive that normally requires placement (e.g. a directional demolitions charge or a mine).

Upgraded Success

On your attack, you inflict double-rolled damage (roll the dice two times and add the results together). Otherwise the GC decides the effect.

Mental Skills

Most of these skills involve acquiring and using information to your advantage, though some rely on mental acuity and quick thinking as well. A few are intuitive, helping characters solve problems beyond their normal ability.

Players may want to use a Mental skill repeatedly until they succeed, operating under the assumption that they can solve any problem with enough time. When a task isn't time critical, or if there's no consequence for repeated failure, the GC shouldn't ask for a check. Instead, the GC should declare that the player has succeeded after a certain amount of time. 1

1

CEO: It looks like Mental Skills can be used to build characters who are smarter than the players.

TERL-K'RIS: Working as designed, sir. Players can also build characters who are stupider than they are, and many players do that *on purpose*.

CEO: This game is very strange.

Failure on a Mental skill check should mean one of two things:

► The problem is beyond the character's current ability, and they may not make further attempts.

► This attempt fails and something interesting happens.

Chemistry

Use your Chemistry skill to develop and reverse-engineer chemical compounds, find antitoxins for poisons, manufacture vaccines, and determine the suitability of an atmosphere for a particular form of life. If a task requires a deep understanding of chemical reactions and properties, then you need to perform a Chemistry skill check to complete it.

This skill has two specialties:

► **Biochemistry:** Apply this specialty when working with living and/or organic matter.

► **Inorganic:** Apply this specialty when working with minerals and other non-living, non-animal, non-plant matter.

Upgraded Success

With many Chemistry checks, an Upgraded Success means that you learn something more, or more specific, about the target of your check. Sometimes it means you make a certain discovery more quickly.

Biochemistry vs. Medicine

The Biochemistry specialty may sometimes overlap with the Medicine skill. Here's a simple rule of thumb: make a Medicine check to determine which chemicals (medicines) to use on a patient. Make a Chemistry check if you're out of a particular medicine, and need to make more from the material in the cleaning closet.

Computers

Use your Computers skill to hack, program, repair, and protect non-sentient computer systems. It's also used to perform many tasks that are managed through the use of a computer, like complex data searches and toggling linked security devices. You can even use Computers to interface with an AI, though only through a normal node and with only very basic control (*see the sidebar next page for more information*).

Can I Hack an AI?

In short, no. Growpramming, the process by which AIs are developed, results in systems that do not adhere to the architectural models of "traditional," non-sentient computers. Characters trained to use Computers can build or program interfaces that connect a non-sentient computer device to an AI but that's about it, and that's still wildly complex (TN 20+).

Hacking, growpramming, and repairing AIs is well beyond the scope of your garden-variety *Planet Mercenary RPG* job, and is therefore beyond the scope of this book. When an AI enters a scene, treat it like another character. Use Social skills to interact with it and Mental skills to match wits with it. Should an AI ever truly escape the constraints growprammed upon it, don't spend time arguing with it. Run. Or open fire. Whichever you think grants you a better chance of survival.

Everyday activities do not require Computers skill checks, such as accessing non-secured files or using a well-known interface. However, actions such as adding new functions to a computer, changing its programming, or repairing a damaged or broken device all demand rolls of the dice. Generally, the more extensive the change and the more elaborate the computer, the higher the TN. The GC provides this number, which increases if bombs are dropping overhead or you're hanging upside down inside a malfunctioning reactor core.

The Computers skill is *not* used to operate linked weapons systems, such as a remote missile turret; that's almost always the province of the corresponding weapons skill. The only time you use your Computers skill for an attack is when the weapon is controlled by programming a machine. This is extremely rare and it will always be indicated by the GC.

Hacks against simple systems have a TN, as normal. For a system operated by a sentient being — an artificial or natural intelligence — the result of your computer skill check is matched against your opponent's computers skill check. The hacker may apply the Hacking specialty (if they have it) and the defending AI may apply the Security specialty (if they

have it). The greater number succeeds. If the hacker wins, they gain control of the system for a limited time and/or may use it for a limited purpose. The scope of a hack is usually defined ahead of the check, and the GC usually describes the result.

Computer encryption works the same way but is often asynchronous. A Computers (Security) check to encrypt something is commonly made long before another Computers (Hacking) check is made to break the code. If the Hacking result exceeds the Security result, then the encryption fails.

Always treat repairing a computer system as a narrative endeavor. The GC decides the TN based on the extent of the damage and the available tools and resources. Some systems have simply incurred too much damage (be it physical or digital) to repair, in which case the GC will deny the check.

This skill offers four specialties:

► **Hacking:** Apply this specialty when breaking computer encryption, and when trying to make a computer do something that someone else doesn't want it to do.

► **Programming:** Apply this specialty when making permanent modifications to a computer's hardware or software, and when another system is not actively contesting your changes.

► **Repair:** Apply this specialty when repairing a computer's hardware or software. When a bullet clips the edge of the q-block, a virus disentangles your telepairs, or a grunt accidentally installs some pernicious malware, use this specialty.

► **Security:** Apply this specialty when operating a computer system in an effort to counter a hacking attempt, and when encrypting or encoding data.

Upgraded Success

The effect of an Upgraded Success is highly conditional, and you can often interpret one in multiple ways. Commonly your task takes significantly less time than usual. With a complex data search, you might learn more about your target, or gain specific, highly useful information.

With encryption, you might yield an "unbreakable" one-time code that can only be deciphered with another Upgraded Success. When hacking, or protecting a system against another user, you might learn that character's identity.

If you require Resources, Supplies, or other limited assets for the check, as is common with a repair, perhaps you use far less of these assets than you expect.

Economics

Use your Economics skill to interpret the economic landscape, successfully navigate the various galactic stock markets, exploit new financial trends, and find new business contacts throughout the known worlds (including contacts that are unsavory, extralegal, or outright black market ones).

The Economics skill tells you where to shop, when to buy, and when to sell, but it isn't used to broker transactions or settle on a price. For haggling, use Negotiate (*see page 52*).

This skill has three specialties:

► **Local:** Apply this specialty when your search, task, or question focuses on the economic systems of a city, habitat, or smaller community.

► **Planetary:** Apply this specialty when your search, task, or question focuses on the economic systems of a planet or planetary system.

► **Sector:** Apply this specialty when your search, task, or question focuses on trade networks and transactional markets that span multiple star systems.

Upgraded Success

An Upgraded Success often means you learn something more, or more specific, about the target of your check. Sometimes it means you make a certain discovery more quickly.

If you're investing for a long-term return, you earn roughly double what you expected or hoped. The GC translates this into Resources, Supplies, or other assets.

When you're hunting for business or black market contacts, you locate the very best sources in the area. These contacts may not be the most well-known, but they have the greatest access to what you seek.

Engineering

Use your Engineering skill to design and build ground-based physical structures like skyscrapers, space elevators, and arcologies, as well as space-based structures like starships, habitats, and orbital foundries. You can use it to identify important details about buildings and vessels, like good points of forced entry, locations of power conduits, and choice spots for inflicting catastrophic damage.

This skill has four specialties:

- **Architecture:** Apply this specialty when working with conventional ground-based structures.
- **Habitats:** Apply this specialty when working with any structure with a robust, self-contained life support system, whether it's in orbit, on inhospitable ground, or in an ocean.
- **Planetary Vehicles:** Apply this specialty when working with very large vehicles designed to operate primarily within an atmosphere, on the ground, or in/on an ocean.
- **Vessels:** Apply this specialty when working with vehicles designed to operate primarily outside an atmosphere, especially if they have artificial gravity and travel with heavy acceleration.

Upgraded Success

An Upgraded Success with Engineering may reveal a significant cost savings or a way to dramatically improve the structure's stability, efficiency, or other attributes. The GC may allow you to mount an extra weapon on a vehicle or starship improved in this manner, or to boost its speed or another stat.

When studying a building or starship, an Upgraded Success may reveal extra information or ways to leverage your findings in particularly helpful ways. Or you could find your answers much faster than expected.

Experimental Sciences

They say "necessity is the mother of invention," and many who said this actually survived the havoc wrought by their inventions. Some even went on to live normal lives. Experimental Sciences goes beyond the deductive epiphanies of Insight, carrying armloads of tools and foolhardy enthusiasm into the realms of the unproven. It goes beyond the kit-bashing of Mechanic (Jury-rig) and steps right into what mundane folk might call "mad science."

To use Experimental Sciences, describe the problem you want to solve. You might suggest one of your Mental skills that could apply but you don't have to do that until after you roll. The GC sets a TN like usual, and you use the Experimental Sciences skill to make the check. The check is *only* made with the Experimental Sciences skill; any other skill you identify is mentioned only for flavor, and it has no bearing on the actual skill check resolution.

Consult Table 2.5 to determine your effect (*see page 36*). Most of the time you'll work with the GC to describe what happens, and occasionally you'll wind up with a minor souvenir of a wild success. Beware: solutions presented by this skill frequently come with drawbacks — sometimes significant ones. Such is the price of trailblazing.

This skill has no specialties.

Example: *After examining the pilot's console from a downed enemy transport, Rike Mandahl hypothesizes that he can overload the comms to temporarily disable the vehicle's controls. Mandahl's player, Bob, describes this to the GC, who decides that it's technically possible, but also points out that this is*

Can I Build a Starship?

Sure, but it would probably become a constant lingering process in the background of your entire campaign, or several campaigns. Months, or sometimes years are needed to take a capital vessel from blueprints to fly-ready, and the same is true of most large structures — including that secret mercenary base you're considering.

It's true that you could use Engineering to plan and build a smaller vehicle, or a single-unit dwelling, in much less time, but even that endeavor probably requires more focus than any mercenary company can feasibly afford.

In practical game terms, the Engineering skill is intended to support less grand actions, like deciding just where to plant that satchel charge that you're carrying around, and the fastest way out of the maximum-security prison in which your teammate finds themselves detained.

military hardware. The attempt requires an Experimental Sciences check (TN 16).

Bob's been investing in Experimental Sciences for several sessions now and grins with glee, because he's got 12 ranks in the skill. Let's look at four possible outcomes:

1) Bob rolls a 4, for a total of 16. He meets the TN. The GC decides this is a "compromised success." The transport-disabling pulse works — once — but the effect lasts for just six seconds. Hopefully that's enough.

2) Bob rolls a 10, for a total of 22. He succeeds! The GC has Bob describe how Rike Mandahl builds a high-energy comm array that disables this particular type of transport from a distance. The transport-disabling pulse works, and the effect lasts for two minutes.

3) Bob rolls a 15, for a total of 27. He succeeds and invents something new! Bob describes how Rike Mandahl builds a high-energy comm array that disables this transport from a distance. After the first engagement, the GC decides that the device will work again. Once.

4) Alternatively, the GC decides this is a pretty low-end transport and the TN is only 14. Bob rolls an 18 (Upgraded Success), for a total of 30, which beats the TN by 16 points. Success, invention, and permanence! Rike Mandahl is now the proud owner of a device that disables this model of transport and he can use it as often as he wants. Later, perhaps in a different game session, the manufacturer of the transport contacts him and offers a large sum of money for the prototype.

1

R&D: It's not loaded dice. In an infinite universe, there had to be at least one Kevyn Andreyasn.

TERL'KRIS: And our universe ended up with two of them.

R&D: It's a self-selecting anomaly, like life. Once it happens, it will continue to happen.

CEO: This conversation would be more interesting to me if either Andreyasn could be convinced to work for us.

Upgraded Success

Time to celebrate! You've just discovered or invented something entirely new, never-before-learned in the whole of history (at least not by anyone who lived to describe it). Your discovery or invention will certainly earn you accolades across the known worlds. It might even earn you some money if you play your cards right.

The GC determines what, specifically, you discover or invent. After all, an advancement like this can unbalance the game by disrupting the setting or plot. You should make suggestions, though! And whatever you discover or invent, you should put your name on it — because that's what inventors do.

The GC does not need to detail the discovery or invention right away. Flashes of brilliance often come long after the events that spark them. If no one has any ideas right now, leave it and come back to the discovery when you think of something interesting, funny, or thematically appropriate.

Teraports: A Case Study

The Teraport, which completely revolutionized the way that sophonts ply the distances between the stars, might, in game terms, be considered an Upgraded Success for an Experimental Sciences check. And in game terms, we suspect the player who rolled that check may have used loaded dice — because the Teraport's inventor has several game-changing inventions to his credit. 1

Table 2.5: Experimental Sciences

Result	Effect
Below TN	***Failure.*** You come up empty. If the GC finds it amusing, you might also suffer a slightly embarrassing mishap.
TN + 0 to 5	***Compromised Success.*** Choose a Mental skill with which you have at least one rank. The GC describes your success using this skill and may apply one significant flaw with your performance.
TN + 6 to 10	***Success!*** Choose a Mental skill with which you have at least one rank. You describe your success using this skill, though the GC may still apply one minor flaw with your performance.
TN + 11 to 15	***Invention!*** In addition to the effects of ***Success!***, you gain a single, one-use weapon or gadget related to or derived from your action and/or the skill used to complete it. The GC determines the nature of this device, though you may make suggestions.
TN + 16 or higher	***Lasting Invention!*** In addition to the effects of ***Success!*** you gain a single permanent weapon or gadget related to or derived from your action and/or the skill used to complete it. Work with the GC to determine the nature of this device.

History

Use your History skill to draw on your knowledge of the past to solve current problems. This skill represents your understanding of past events throughout the galaxy. A History check can give you helpful context for the environment in which you find yourself, and can provide the information you need to solve a problem facing the company. You could determine a good course of action through recall of an important precedent, and might even put yourself in the shoes of historical figures for a bit of inspiration.

This skill has four specialties:

- **Military:** Apply this specialty when drawing on knowledge of armed forces, warfare, and related events.
- **Political:** Apply this specialty when drawing on knowledge of governments, diplomacy, and related events.
- **Religious:** Apply this specialty when drawing on knowledge of conviction, known faiths, and related events.
- **Per Sophont Type:** Apply this specialty when drawing on knowledge of events in a single sophont type's timeline e.g. History (Kreely) or History (Neophant). You may have any number of sophont type or non-intelligent species specialties.

A successful History skill check provides you with information relevant to your current situation, or with an answer to an important question you're asking. The answer might not be *true*, however. The victors write the history books, after all, and certain victors have buried certain inconvenient truths.

Upgraded Success

You come to an unexpected but helpful conclusion that you find particularly relevant just now, or you come to this conclusion very quickly. At the discretion of the GC, you may also "connect the dots" in the existing historical record and uncover a bit of true history that was previously lost.

An Upgraded Success when putting yourself in the shoes of a historical figure is an excellent opportunity for grand role-play — by you, the GC, or both of you.

Insight

Use your Insight skill to make deductive leaps beyond the scope of player knowledge. This skill represents your character's ability to contemplate their sophont-appropriate center of being in order to reach an epiphany. This skill differs from Experimental Sciences in that it focuses on ideas rather than devices, though both skills help to solve problems facing your company.

To use Insight, describe a question or problem to the GC. You may suggest, for story flavor, the Mental skill that informs your train of thought, but your Insight skill is what you use for the skill check against the TN that the GC has set.

Table 2.6: Insight

Result	Effect
Below TN	***Failure.*** You come up empty. Or, if it suits the story, the GC might have you arrive at an erroneous, conclusion, with interesting results.
TN + 0 to 5	***Compromised Success.*** Choose a Mental skill with which you have at least one rank. The GC describes your success using this skill and introduces two clues that you discover as a result. Sadly, only one of the clues is true.
TN + 6 to 10	***Success!*** Choose a Mental skill with which you have at least one rank. You describe your success using this skill, and the GC introduces one clue that you discover as a result. This clue must be true, but it needn't be all that revealing.
TN + 11 to 15	***A Clue!*** In addition to the effects of ***Success!*** you gain a minor clue about the situation or events beyond the focus of your inspection. Perhaps when reviewing the scene of an attack, you learn where the assailants went immediately after the battle.
TN + 16 or higher	***A Bigger Clue!*** In addition to the effects of ***Success!*** you gain a major clue about the situation or events beyond the focus of your inspection. Maybe when reviewing the scene of an attack, you learn the identities of the assailants.

Consult Table 2.6 to determine your effect (*see page 37*). Most of the time you'll work with the GC to describe what happens, and occasionally you'll learn something new about your situation or the overall job in the process. Beware: solutions presented by this skill frequently come with drawbacks, sometimes significant ones. Such is the price of ingenuity.

This skill has no specialties.

Example: *The company arrives at a meeting to find that their contact has been murdered, possibly by the very people they're being hired to track down. The killer or killers have departed the scene but law enforcement officers have not yet arrived.*

Captain Tentoo might have a pretty good idea what to do next but Steve, the player, feels unsure, so he decides to roll Insight. The GC sets the TN at 10. Steve rolls a 9 and his 6 ranks with Insight give him a total of 15. It's a compromised success but enough to keep things going. The GC says, "Captain Tentoo, you realize this room contains tons of evidence." Then all the Player Characters use Perception checks to discover the clues which Tentoo's Insight said were there.

Example: *The players have a stack of clues but can't make sense of them. The GC knows there are several avenues of further investigation open to the players, some of which lead to trouble, and one of which takes them exactly where they want to go. The GC asks for an Insight check but doesn't reveal the TN, which is 10.*

Steve rolls an 11, for a total of 17, which beats the TN by 6. The GC looks at Steve's sheet and sees that he has ranks in Melee, plus the Exotic Weapons specialty. The GC tells Steve that the blade that caused these wounds is a ceremonial punch-dagger, and that the local combat cutlery shopkeeper might know a thing or two about people who carry "those ancient, clumsy things." Captain Tentoo now has the intel he needs to get the company moving.

The story would have unfolded differently if Steve had scored a higher Insight result. Captain Tentoo might have realized these rope-wrapped ceremonial daggers do not clean easily, and the killer might even now be visiting the bladesmith in the back room of the combat cutlery shop for help laundering the murder weapon. With an Upgraded Success, Tentoo might also realize why a killer carries a priceless, unwieldy artifact, and how that relates to the price of node-jacks in Haven Hive. 1

1

CEO: Am I missing something here? It looks like the Insight skill is just a way for the Game Chief to get these stupid grunts to keep telling the story.

WRITER: You're definitely missing something, ma'am. Give me an insight roll.

TERL'KRIS: Careful... I can only do so much if my word pool starts rolling *those* dice.

Upgraded Success

This is more than just an epiphany. You've just learned a secret — something known only to a select few and perhaps something that's unique to your tailored *Schlock Mercenary* setting. The GC is the final arbiter of what qualifies, of course, especially since they're the one giving you the information. It might be appropriate for you to offer some suggestions about the nature of the information, especially if you have burning questions about your galaxy or the current narrative.

An Upgraded Success with Insight could catch the GC off guard. In this case they may give you only the information directly related to the problem at hand, following it up with a line like, "You think you're on to something here, but you might need to sleep on it."

Mechanic

Use your Mechanic skill to repair, maintain, and modify your gear, or build completely new gear. This skill covers weapon modifications, hull patches, and robot repairs. Mechanic checks can also be used to learn how something works, why it's not working, and when needed, how to make it stop working.

A Mechanic skill check often requires materials, either at the company scale (Resource) or the quartermaster scale (Supplies). Describe what you want to build, and the GC will let you know what the Resource or Supplies expense will cost, how long the work will likely take, and the TN required to get the work done. You must spend the time and materials cost regardless of whether the check succeeds. You only get the

Special Application: Healing Robots

This works exactly like making a Medicine skill check to heal an organic character. The Target Number to heal a robot is always 15. With success, the robot regains 1 Health, plus the amount by which you beat the TN.

You can also use Mechanic to save a dying robot. The TN for this check is 20. If you can reach the robot within one round of them dying — that is, within one round of them taking a hit after they fall unconscious — you can make a Mechanic check to save their life. With success, you revive the robot with a single point of their Health remaining.

finished or fixed item if you meet or beat the TN.

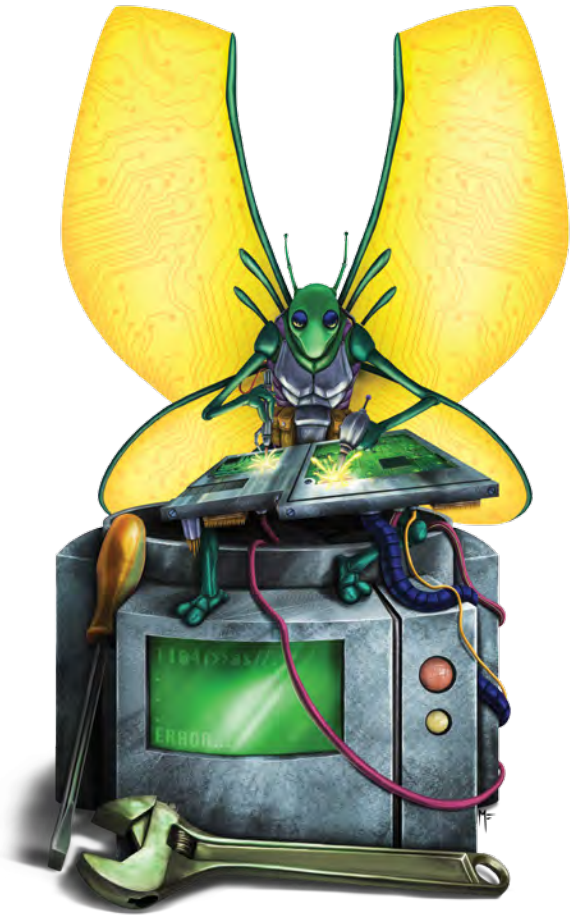
Jury-rigging is the art of building or repairing something using parts meant for other things. Jury-rigging results in something that performs a known function in an improvised fashion. It's not a new invention, or an improvement on an existing design. Also, if you're planning to jury-rig something large and complex, you must begin with most of that large and complex thing already on hand. You can jury-rig a troop transport for your squad if you start with a light-duty delivery van and the power plant from a tank, but not if you start with two scooters and a sheet of faux formica.

Describe your intended jury-rig to the GC. Be specific about the final function of the item you wish to jury-rig. The GC will decide the state of available parts at your disposal (unavailable, poor, adequate, or optimal), based on your request. With all this info in hand, roll a Mechanic check and compare your result to Table 2.7 (*see below*).

Table 2.7 depicts how many times you can use the jury-rigged item before it breaks or becomes inoperable, and the maximum skill check result you can achieve when using the item. You must automatically lower any result that exceeds this maximum utility to the number specified on Table 2.7.

This skill has three specialties:

- **Build:** This specialty applies when making a new item from intended parts.
- **Jury-rig:** This specialty applies when making a new item from improvised parts.
- **Repair:** This specialty applies when fixing a broken item or recovering a robot's Health.



Maxim 48

If it ain't broke, it hasn't been issued to the infantry.

Table 2.7: Jury-rigging

Available Parts	Result	Number of Uses	Max. Utility
Unavailable *	N/A	N/A	N/A
Poor	3–5	Failure / No Item	Failure / No Item
	6–12	1	15
	13+	2	20
Adequate	3–5	Failure / No Item	Failure / No Item
	6–12	1	20
	13–17	2	20
	18+	2	25
Optimal	3–5	Failure / No Item	Failure / No Item
	6–12	2	20
	13–17	2	25
	18–22	3	25
	23+	4	30

* No skill check is possible.

Maxim 43

If it's stupid and it works, it's still stupid and you're lucky.

Upgraded Success

When building or repairing an item, an Upgraded Success may mean significant cost savings, or an improvement in the item's durability or other attributes. Alternatively, the GC may let you add a new quality to the item (*see pages 152-153*).

When restoring health to a robot, double the recovered Health.

When jury-rigging, an Upgraded Success produces a fully-functional reproduction of the item you seek, regardless of the parts you used. It may *look* like something else, but it functions perfectly and permanently.

Medicine

Use your Medicine skill to heal organic sophonts. You may also use this skill to diagnose illnesses, determine cause of a death, and answer all manner of questions about the physiology of a body, be it living or dead. Most of the time, though, you'll make Medicine checks to plug bullet holes in your comrades, keeping them operational enough to point their weapons.

The Target Number to heal a character is always 15. With success, the character regains 1 Health, plus the amount by which you beat the TN.

Example: *If your result (ranks + dice roll) equals 19, then the patient regains 5 Health (19 - 15 = 4; 1 Health + 4 = 5 Health)*

You can also use Medicine to save a dying character. The TN for this check is 20. If you can reach a character within one round of them dying — that is, within one round of them taking a hit after they fall unconscious — you can make a Medicine check to save their life. With success, you revive the character with a single point of their Health remaining, and possibly an opinion or two about this whole "afterlife" people keep talking about.

You cannot use the Medicine skill on a robot. Instead you use the Mechanic skill. The TNs remain the same — 15 for healing and 20 for saving a life.

Certain items help when healing a character, and some make the skill check unnecessary *(see Med-Tech, page 190)*.

When you use the Medicine skill to make a diagnosis or gather information about a condition, the GC sets the TN based on the complexity of the problem. Some corpses are harder to study than others, and some diseases are tricky to identify. The GC may choose not to reveal the TN in some cases, leaving players uncertain about their diagnoses.

This skill has three specialties:

► **Battlefield:** Apply this specialty when healing or saving the life of a character on the battlefield, or in any crisis that occurs in rounds.

► **First Aid:** Apply this specialty when healing in the field, away from a hospital, but also away from combat conditions.

► **Surgery:** Apply this specialty when healing with full access to a hospital or medbay.

Upgraded Success

When healing a character, your patient recovers twice the normal amount of Health (e.g. if you roll 19, they recover 10 Health). When reviving a "dead" character, you bring your patient back from the brink with half of their full Health, rounded down.

An Upgraded Success for diagnosis or medical investigation yields a precise conclusion. Be proud of yourself. You nailed it. If your culture gives awards for medical achievements, you're *totally* getting one (unless the academy plays favorites again, like the crusty nepotists that they are).

Research

Use your Research skill to quickly (but temporarily) increase your knowledge in a specific area, using your hypernet connection. This can translate to a boost with an upcoming skill check.

Choose any one Mental skill *except* Experimental Sciences, Insight, or Research. The GC will let you know how much time you need to conduct your study. Make a Research check and then consult Table 2.8: Research to find the bonus that you earn (*see below*). Apply this bonus to the next check you make with the chosen Mental skill. You lose this bonus if you do not use it by the end of the current game session — or perhaps sooner, at the discretion of the GC. You may not transfer this bonus to another character.

You can also make Research checks to find specific resources quickly, like user's manuals, contact information, or the name of the singer who covered that tune your quartermaster keeps humming. The base TN for this type of Research check is 15. With success, you find the information quickly (perhaps even during combat). With failure, you don't find it at all. You may or may not be able to repeat the check, depending on what is happening in your story and the decision of your GC. Someone has posted those song lyrics online somewhere, though, so don't give up!

This skill has no specialties.

Upgraded Success

You gain twice the listed bonus with your next check using the chosen Mental skill. You still lose the bonus if you do not use it by the end of the current session, and you still may not transfer it to another character.

Table 2.8: Research

Result	Bonus
3-5	***Failure.*** (No bonus)
6-14	+1 with your next check using the chosen Mental skill.
15-19	+2 with your next check using the chosen Mental skill.
20-24	+3 with your next check using the chosen Mental skill, or +2 if you have no ranks with the skill.
25+	+4 with your next check using the chosen Mental skill, or +2 if you have no ranks with the skill

Insight vs. Research

Research does not substitute for Insight. Piecing clues together requires Insight. Looking up the street address for the suspect identified by your Insight check requires Research.

Xenobiology

Use your Xenobiology skill to determine information about the physiology of the myriad sophont types and non-intelligent species populating the galaxy in the 31st century. There are hundreds of thousands of disparate family trees of biology in the galaxy, and with training in Xenobiology you can quickly ascertain what it is you're looking at. A successful Xenobiology check might tell you how to make non-lethal attacks against a creature, how to make it sick, or how sick it will make you if you eat it. Players can use this skill to ask all manner of physiological questions about a creature.

Target Numbers for Xenobiology checks will vary wildly, but you can use this skill to make educated guesses about any plant or animal you encounter, whether or not you have specialized in that biological family.

This skill offers one specialty that you may claim multiple times, for sophonts or non-intelligent species of different worlds:

- **Per World of Origin:** Apply this specialty when drawing on knowledge of a particular world's biology (e.g. Terran, or Othling). You may have any number of these specialties.

Upgraded Success

Your answers come quickly and easily, and they reveal much more than you expected

about the biology in question. You might even discover something entirely new about the sophont type.

Physical Skills

They sent you through basic training, right? No? Well, then these skills might not look so familiar to you.

Air Vehicles

Use your Air Vehicles skill to maneuver small air vehicles, regardless of their propulsion. AIs generally pilot large air vehicles that require full crews.

Make Air Vehicles skill checks when a character in the pilot's seat wants to do something uncertain and perhaps unwise. Controlled dives, high-gravity rolls, and dogfight action all apply; the crazier the maneuver, the higher the TN.

If the vehicle you're driving is fully enclosed, then the defense and damage reduction of the vehicle are what is used for combat situations. If the vehicle leaves the player open to the air, then use the defense score and damage reduction of the PC. Firing a vehicle-mounted weapon uses the Stationed Weapons skill (*see page 31*).

This skill has four specialties:

► **Evasive Action:** Apply this specialty when maneuvering a vehicle out of harm's way (e.g. evading an inbound missile, another vehicle, or a disabled capital ship dropping through your flight path on its way to catastrophic lithobraking). Apply this specialty also when Dodging in a character-driven vehicle (*see page 146*).

► **Navigation:** Apply this specialty when determining a route through confusing or unfamiliar terrain.

► **Pursuit:** Apply this specialty when engaging in chases (*see page 146*), and when attempting to follow another vehicle without being detected.

► **Stunts:** Apply this specialty when doing anything with a vehicle that may void its warranty, get you thrown in jail, or both. The Stunts specialty applies to those moments when you take it to eleven with some wild, over-the-top action that defies reason, and perhaps calls into question your understanding of simple physics.

1

CEO: From this it seems that anyone acting as a Game Chief must necessarily be extremely intelligent.

TERL'KRIS: Or extremely convincing.

CEO: We should be hiring these people, not letting them play games.

Upgraded Success

Your maneuver is shockingly successful, up there with the aerobatic antics seen in the cinematic masterpieces of the pre-spaceflight era. Whatever you were trying to do, you did all that and more, and anyone watching will talk about it for years. If the GC allows it, they might give you the opportunity to describe an *even more impressive* maneuver than the one you planned!

An Upgraded Success in a chase or a tailing scenario immediately ends the action in your favor — unless your opponent also scores an Upgraded Success, in which case you enjoy one of those tense, cinematic moments that *seems* like anyone could emerge the victor at any second, until no one does, and the action continues.

Athletics

Use your Athletics skill to engage in non-vehicular movement, whether you're leaping between buildings in urban areas, swimming through a carbonated hot-spring, or sprinting for cover across an icy plain.

While your body is a weapon, it also functions as a mode of transportation. This skill represents bodily movement. The only exception to using your Athletics skill is undetected movement, in which case you want to use Stealth (*see page 46*).

Athletics also covers feats of raw physical power, like kicking down doors, prying off melted armor, and carrying that wounded comrade around. It does *not* cover grappling or wrestling; consult the Melee section for these activities (*see page 30*).

The GC decides the TN of your Athletics check, as well as the narrative outcome of success or failure. They will consider applicable physics and physiques, so be sure to alert your GC of any special abilities granted by your character's biology. 1

This skill has seven specialties:

► **Climbing:** Apply this specialty when scaling any surface, at any height or angle.

► **Flight:** This specialty is reserved for certain sophont types with the natural ability to fly, and those who strap on individual flight systems, like rocket boots or jury-rigged wings.

Pursuit and Chases

Any chase on land, in water, or through the air requires opposing skill checks: pursuer against the pursued. If the chase is between two vehicles, you contest the appropriate vehicle skills against each other. If one is in a vehicle and the other is not, then you match the vehicle skill to the appropriate Athletics check. When no one in a chase is operating a vehicle, everyone uses Athletics. Followers apply their Pursuit specialty, if they have it, and those trying to get away apply the specialty for their current method of movement (or if they're trying to end the chase by hiding, they oppose Athletics with their Stealth skill). The highest result wins the chase.

The GC may require multiple opposed Athletics checks for a longer, more involved chase. Success or failure in a lengthy pursuit can be determined by the best 3 of 5 checks, with each check described as a separate segment of the overall scene.

► **Jumping:** Apply this specialty when crossing a gap, vaulting a barricade, or seeking purchase on something outside of your standing reach.

► **Pursuit:** Apply this specialty when engaging in a non-vehicular chase, whether you're climbing, flying, jumping, running, or swimming.

► **Running:** Apply this specialty when running, no matter how many limbs your personal physiology requires for the activity.

► **Strength:** Apply this specialty when performing feats of strength, such as dead lifts, carrying heavy loads across distances, prying open access panels, and other feats of brute force.

► **Swimming:** Apply this specialty anytime you're moving in or through a liquid medium. Usually this medium is water, but with the right protective gear you might safely swim in other liquids as well.

Upgraded Success

Double the results of your successful Athletics check. If you're in a chase, the action immediately ends in your favor — unless your opponent also scores an Upgraded Success, in which case you enjoy one of those tense, cinematic moments in which everybody looks awesome but nobody comes out on top, so the action continues.

Endurance

Use your Endurance skill to absorb more damage, hold your breath for extended periods, or put up a better fight against insidious assaults from things like poison, parasites, and disease. Everyone can resist a variety of physical threats for short periods of time. Endurance improves your staying power against these threats. Ranks in Endurance can even help you extend your lifespan by precious moments when you find yourself on the wrong side of the airlock without the right gear.

To keep things simple, you can automatically resist any immediate life-threatening danger presented by these threats for a short period without making a check. Outside combat this period lasts about three minutes. In combat, it lasts 10 rounds + 1 additional round for each Endurance rank you've got.

> ***Example:*** *Rike Mandahl, a human, has seven ranks in Endurance. He can automatically hold his breath, resist a poison (like truth serum), or survive in a hard vacuum for 17 rounds.*

After this period, you must begin making checks to continue resisting the danger. The TN starts at 15 and goes up by 1 every round thereafter until you fail or you score an Upgraded Success (*see below*).

> ***Example:*** *After 17 rounds underwater without a source of air, Mandahl must begin making Endurance checks. On Round 18 the TN is 15, on Round 19 it's 16, and so on, until he fails or he scores an Upgraded Success. If he fails, he starts to take damage..*

Of course, none of this applies if you wear the right gear, or if you are naturally immune to a particular threat. (Esspererin are so cute. They get a pass on that whole hard vacuum thing.)

Finally, Endurance also factors directly into your health, as shown in Character Creation (*see page 67*).

This skill has three specialties:

► **Hard Vacuum:** Apply this specialty when resisting the effects of deep space without protective gear.

► **Hold Breath:** Apply this specialty when not breathing, such as when you stop inhaling to protect yourself from something unhealthy, like water or poisonous gases.

► **Immunological:** Apply this specialty when resisting diseases, poisons, toxins, parasites, and even allergens, whether or not your sophont type resists these things with an immune system.

Upgraded Success

At any time, an Upgraded Success with an Endurance check resets the countdown on your resistance timer (i.e. you get another three minutes or a number of rounds equal to your Endurance + 10 before you have to start making checks again). Use the extra time to head for the surface, or the nearest airlock, or something sharp and hot you can use to dig that writhing bloodsucker out of your leg.

Ground Vehicles

Use your Ground Vehicles skill to maneuver small land vehicles, regardless of their locomotion. AIs generally pilot large land vehicles that require full crews.

Make Ground Vehicles skill checks when a character in the driver's seat wants to do something uncertain and perhaps unwise. Hairpin turns, dangerous jumps across deadly drops, and quick weaves through obstacles all qualify; the crazier the maneuver, the higher the TN.

If the vehicle you're driving is fully enclosed, then the defense and damage reduction of the vehicle are what is used for combat situations. If the vehicle leaves the player open to the air, then use the defense score and damage reduction of the PC. Firing a vehicle-mounted weapon uses the Stationed Weapons skill (*see page 31*).

This skill has four specialties:

► **Evasive Action:** Apply this specialty when maneuvering a vehicle out of the path of an incoming danger (e.g. an attack, another vehicle, or the flaming husk of a giant land predator a sniper's just taken out from a mile away). Evasive Action is also used to Dodge in a character-driven vehicle.

► **Navigation:** Apply this specialty when determining a route through confusing or unfamiliar terrain. This helps ground vehicles get through urban environments with heavy traffic patterns.

► **Pursuit:** Apply this specialty when engaging in chases *(see page 146)*, and when attempting to follow another vehicle without being detected.

► **Stunts:** Apply this specialty when doing anything with a vehicle that may void its warranty, get you thrown in jail, or both. The Stunts specialty is for those moments when you take it to eleven with some wild, over-the-top action that defies reason or questions the laws of physics.

Upgraded Success

Your maneuver is shockingly successful, rivaling the wheelman antics seen in blockbuster movies of old. Whatever you were trying to do, you did all that and more, and anyone watching will talk about it for years. If the GC allows it, you could even start over and describe an *even more impressive* maneuver than the one you planned!

An Upgraded Success in a chase or a tailing scenario immediately ends the action in your favor — unless your opponent also scores an Upgraded Success, in which case you enjoy one of those tense, cinematic moments that *seems* like anyone could emerge the victor at any second; until no one does, and the action continues.

Larceny

Use your Larceny skill to find ways into secured locations, conceal objects with legerdemain, and otherwise acquire things that others would rather you not acquire. Don't think of Larceny as "crime." Think of it as "unauthorized property reallocation." This skill does *not* cover hidden movement; that's handled with Stealth (*see page 46*).

Non-sentient physical security — anything locked, barred, or protected by another form of intruder defense, like a laser grid or heat sensors — has a TN. The GC provides this TN based on the level of security in place. Your Larceny result must match or beat this TN to get through the security. In a redundantly secured location, you might have to make a Larceny check for each system that must be defeated.

Larceny can also compete against another character's senses — for example, when you pick a pocket, snatch an object off a table in full view of a guard, or break into a location with sophonts or AIs on active security duty, you compare your Larceny skill check result to the other character's Perception skill check result. If your result wins this opposing check, then you pull off the action without being noticed. If not, you may want to rethink your life choices.

Both of these conditions can apply at the same time. You might try to pick a lock in full view of a guard, for example. When this happens your result has to beat the TN to get past the security *and* beat the viewer's result to avoid being seen. You can succeed with one part of the action and fail at the other. Maybe try to stay out of sight next time, eh?

This skill has four specialties:

► **Breaking & Entering:** Apply this specialty when seeking entry into secure locations and evading various security systems that don't involve locks and similar mechanisms (e.g. laser grids, thermal sensors, pressure plates, and the like).

► **Picking Locks:** Apply this specialty when trying to beat physical security, including locked doors and windows, handcuffs, and any other non-computerized lock (*those require a Computers (Hacking) check, which is covered on page 32*).

► **Picking Pockets:** Apply this specialty when secretly removing objects from another person, or when attempting to slip something onto a person. This specialty also applies to non-sophonts, should you wish to *literally* bell the cat or giant cat-analog.

► **Sleight of Hand** (or "sleight of tentacle" — whatever body part fits the bill): Apply this specialty to move or remove items in plain sight, perform prestidigitation, and otherwise conceal your physical actions.

Upgraded Success

Your action goes completely undetected. *Completely.* Fellow officers watching you work are amazed, because even they didn't see it happen.

If you're attempting to beat security of some kind, you do so with such mastery that no one monitoring the portal or security stands any chance of noticing that you bypassed it. You probably also get through the security in record time. You would be on a list of record holders, except nobody can prove you did it. So, no medal for you. Unless you just stole a medal; in which case you totally have one now.

Perception

Use your Perception skill to interpret your surroundings using whatever sensory input organs (or implants) are available to you. Perception checks test your ability to see, hear, smell, taste, touch, and otherwise sense your environment. Any time the story hinges on whether a character senses something, roll Perception.

You can use Perception actively or passively. Upon entering a room, a PC might decide to look around, which calls for a Perception check. Alternatively, the player could say that their character listens for anyone who approaches, at which point the GC may ask for periodic Perception checks whether anyone's nearby or not.

Game Chiefs should, from time to time, ask for Perception checks when even an Upgraded Success would yield no more than "all's well." This prevents that critically important Perception check from being *obviously* critical. Sometimes it's important for players not to know they've missed something. 1

1

CEO: Oh. My. Eggs. You're training Game Chiefs in the fundamentals of psyops.

TERL'KRIS: By asking them to roll dice when the result doesn't matter. Yes.

CEO: This isn't play. This is tradecraft.

TERL'KRIS: I'm quite pleased that you've noticed that. Does the game seem less strange now?

CEO: Yes, but only because it seems less like a game.

A Perception check may oppose another character's roll in a contested skill check. Perception usually contests the Stealth of a sneaking character, or the Larceny of someone trying to pick a pocket. It also contests a vehicular skill check, to spot a tail. You *cannot* use Perception to detect explosives, as those are hunted with the Explosives skill and it's associated specialty (Detection).

In all cases, if your Perception result is greater than the result of an opposing check or TN, then you notice what's happening.

This skill has seven specialties:

► **Hearing:** Apply this specialty when using an organ or apparatus that senses sonic vibrations, like ears.

► **Magnetic:** Apply this specialty when using an organ or apparatus that senses magnetic waves.

► **Sight:** Apply this specialty when using an organ or apparatus that senses visual stimuli, like eyes or infrared sensors.

► **Smell:** Apply this specialty when using an organ or apparatus that senses olfactory stimuli, like a nose.

► **Taste:** Apply this specialty when using an organ or apparatus that senses flavor or chemical composition. (Old-school human crime scene investigators used to apply this specialty when checking if that red stain on the ground was blood. Old-school human criminals used to apply it when verifying that drug shipments were real. Old-school humans were weird.)

► **Thermal:** Apply this specialty when using an organ or apparatus that senses temperature. If you can "see" in infrared, then your Sight specialty applies instead, and you should lord that up over lesser creatures by talking about how lovely everything looks.

► **Touch:** Apply this specialty when using an organ or apparatus that responds to physical contact. You may find this sense particularly useful when blind or blindfolded, and when poor judgement leaves you without sufficient light.

Upgraded Success

If you roll an Upgraded Success on a Perception check, then you *know* you succeeded! You spot, overhear, feel, taste, or otherwise sense the very essence of your surroundings, and may now freely grill the GC for lavish details that they may not be prepared to parcel out. Fitting punishment for all those false-alarm Perception checks they've been making you roll.

Space Vehicles

Use your Space Vehicles skill to maneuver small space vehicles, regardless of their propulsion. AIs generally pilot large space vehicles that require full crews.

Make Space Vehicles skill checks when a character in the pilot's seat wants to do something uncertain and perhaps unwise. Atmospheric re-entry in suboptimal conditions, dogfight action, and skirting the event horizon of a black hole all apply; the crazier the maneuver, the higher the TN.

If the vehicle you're driving is fully enclosed, then the defense and damage reduction of the vehicle are what is used for combat situations. If the vehicle leaves the player open to vacuum, then use the defense score and damage reduction of the PC. Firing a vehicle-mounted weapon uses the Stationed Weapons skill (*see page 31*).

This skill offers four specialties:

► **Evasive Action:** Apply this specialty when maneuvering a vehicle out of the path of an incoming danger (e.g. an attack, another vehicle, or the field of debris from a scuttled space station). Apply this specialty also when Dodging in a character-driven vehicle.

► **Navigation:** Apply this specialty when determining a route through confusing or unfamiliar terrain. Apply this specialty also for Teraport navigation, as well as for any use of a space vehicle involving the precise application of large-scale orbital mechanics. Conducting a slingshot maneuver, making a ballistic approach, or solving n-body problems to predict where that juicy target will be in two weeks — Navigation covers all of these actions.

► **Pursuit:** Apply this specialty when engaging in chases and when attempting to follow another vehicle without being detected — an endeavor that can be spectacularly difficult in space.

► **Stunts:** Apply this specialty when doing anything with a vehicle that may void its warranty, get you thrown in jail, or both. The Stunts specialty is for those moments when you take it to eleven with some wild, over-the-top action that defies reason or questions the laws of physics.

Upgraded Success

Your maneuver is shockingly successful, rivaling the zany feats you hear about from arrogant space jocks. Whatever you were trying to do, you did all that and more, and anyone watching will talk about it for years. If the GC is up for it, you could even start over and describe an *even more impressive* maneuver than the one you planned!

An Upgraded Success in a chase or a tailing scenario immediately ends the action in your favor — unless your opponent also scores an Upgraded Success, in which case you enjoy one of those tense, cinematic moments that *seems* like anyone could emerge the victor at any second... until no one does, and the action continues.

Stealth

Many of you are unfamiliar with this word, and we can see you struggling with it. Stealth is the skill employed when you're *not* kicking in doors and unleashing hellfire.

Use your Stealth skill to *avoid* detection — which, if you're not sold on the concept, is what lets you conserve ammunition, and simultaneously prevent incoming fire and follow enemy grunts back to their leaders.

You can use Stealth actively or passively. A character might ask to sneak past a sleeping Diamond Beetle, which calls for an immediate check. Alternatively, the team could say they're "trying to stay quiet" as they sweep an ostensibly abandoned fabricator complex, in which

case the GC may ask for a Stealth check as the need arises.

Game Chiefs should, from time to time, ask for Stealth checks even when there's nobody looking for the team. This prevents characters from knowing that someone lurks nearby, and that detection is even a possibility. Sometimes it's important for players not to know just how good the enemy's sense of smell might be. Other times a Stealth check may fail and the GC will simply smile and nod, leaving the player unsure of what just happened.

Stealth checks often contest Perception checks made by potential observers. Game Chiefs may pre-roll those checks, or simply use fixed TNs to speed the game along.

When your Stealth skill check result is greater than an opposing Perception check, you go unnoticed.

When a group of characters wants to move stealthily together, the GC may require only one player to roll the Stealth check — the player whose character has the lowest number of Stealth ranks. This represents the fact that the group's success in this case depends upon the loudest, and perhaps clumsiest, among them. This can speed the story along, and it's a good choice when the traversal is relatively simple.

This skill has two specialties:

- **Hiding:** Apply this specialty when staying in one place, and trying to avoid being found.
- **Tailing:** Apply this specialty when following someone without them knowing it. When piloting a vehicle and tailing someone, use that vehicle's skill and specialty.

Upgraded Success

You're a ghost. Your existence goes undetected, perhaps even by friendlies who feel sure that you were here a moment ago.

Maxim 33

If you're leaving tracks, you're being followed.

When hiding, you can't be noticed as long as you stay put. You remain undetected until you attack, speak, or move to a new location.

When tailing, your prey remains effectively blind to you until they arrive at their next destination. You have blended into the crowd, the traffic, and perhaps the very walls as you follow them.

The GC can end the non-detection afforded by an Upgraded Success when they decide that circumstances have changed significantly. Usually this occurs because the game has changed scenes or because it is necessary to move the story and fun forward.

Water Vehicles

Use your Water Vehicles skill to maneuver small aquatic vehicles, regardless of their locomotion or whether they submerge. AIs generally pilot large ships that require full crews.

Make Water Vehicles checks when a character in the pilot's seat wants to do something uncertain and perhaps unwise. Keeping the vessel upright and undamaged during a powerful storm, blind steering through an ocean floor trench, and second-guessing enemy torpedo attacks before they're launched all apply; the crazier the maneuver, the higher the TN.

If the vehicle you're driving is fully enclosed, then the defense and damage reduction of the vehicle are what is used for combat situations. If the vehicle leaves the player open to the air, then use the defense score and damage reduction of the PC. Firing a vehicle-mounted weapon uses the Stationed Weapons skill (*see page 31*).

This skill has four specialties:

► **Evasive Action:** Apply this specialty when maneuvering a vehicle out of the path of incoming danger (e.g. an attack, another vehicle, or a sea creature the size and relative temperament of a recently-conquered moon). Apply this specialty also when Dodging in a character-driven vehicle.

► **Navigation:** Apply this specialty when determining a route through confusing or unfamiliar terrain. This becomes critically important when underwater because sonar navigation and ELF (extremely low frequency) navigation is tricky. Apply this specialty also when using aquatic vehicles to plot the likely courses of tsunamis and other waterborne events. So you can, you know, get out of their way. Or aim them.

► **Pursuit:** Apply this specialty when engaging in chases, and when attempting to follow another vehicle without being detected.

► **Stunts:** Apply this specialty when doing anything with a vehicle that may void its warranty, get you thrown in jail, or both. The Stunts specialty applies to those moments when you take it to eleven with some wild, over-the-top action that defies reason or questions the laws of physics.

Upgraded Success

Your maneuver is destined to become legendary, which sailors will recount in hushed tones in seedy coastal bars, and which officers will teach in naval academies. Whatever you were trying to do, you did all that and more, and anyone watching will talk about it for years. If the GC allows it, start over and describe an *even more impressive* maneuver than the one you planned.

An Upgraded Success in a chase or a tailing scenario immediately ends the action in your favor — unless your opponent also scores an Upgraded Success, in which case you enjoy one of those tense, cinematic moments that *seems* like anyone could emerge the victor at any second, until no one does, and the action continues.

Social Skills

There comes a time in every job when you need to drop all peaceful pretenses and open fire. Social skills cover the bit right before that (along with some other bits that are kind of significant if you're in this for the money).

Contracts

Use your Contracts skill at the start of every job to negotiate your fees with a client. Your potential employer offers you base compensation, usually ranging from 2–5 Resources. The character making this check rolls using their personal Contracts skill, and applies the modifier from your company's Reputation (*see page 99*). Their overall result on Table 2.9 shows what the employer agrees to pay you.

Table 2.9: Contracts	
Result	**Final Pay**
3-5	–3 Resources.
6-10	–2 Resources.
11-15	–1 Resources.
16-20	As offered.
21-25	+1 Resources.
26-30	+2 Resources.
30+	+3 Resources.

You don't have to accept the job, of course. You can turn down the offer and look for other work.

When no character has ranks in Contracts, you may choose to skip the Contract check and accept the initial offer. This places a fixed limit on the resources you make from the job, and also removes the chance that negotiations proceed so badly that your employer downgrades your pay.

This skill has no specialties.

Upgraded Success

Congratulations! You've figured out how to get paid twice! For this job only, you make your Table 2.9 result *plus* an additional 3 Resources.

Deceive

For professionals-at-arms, deception is part of honest work. Obviously you should deceive the enemy, but your clients are often best served when they're in the dark.

Use your Deceive skill to tell little lies or whole-cloth whoppers, to perform stone-cold bluffs, or assemble super-cool disguises.

When lying or bluffing, Deceive almost always opposes an Empathy (Read Sophont) skill check.

You can also use Deceive to conceal your appearance or look like someone else, or to distract someone's attention away from something or toward you. In these cases, compare your skill check result to an observer's Perception.

In all cases, if your Deceive result is greater than the opposing check, then you dupe your target… for now. They take your lie at face

Maxim 66

Necessity is the mother of deception.

value, accept your disguise, or focus on the distraction for a short time.

If your result is equal to or lower than the opposing check, then the target senses that something is wrong, though they might not immediately realize that you're misleading them. The GC decides this outcome, and it usually depends on the situation.

This skill has three specialties:

► **Bluffing:** Apply this specialty when lying to someone.

► **Disguise:** Apply this specialty when hiding your identity or posing as someone else.

► **Distraction:** Apply this specialty when diverting someone's attention.

Upgraded Success

Well done! The target believes so firmly in your deception that it takes quite a while before they believe that you deceived them. If you're smart, you're long gone by then.

Empathy

Use your Empathy skill to connect with other sophonts. This is a core skill for many characters, including command personnel, religious advisors, and spies. The word may suggest "touchy-feely" kindness and love, but Empathy is ultimately about getting inside another character's head — sensing their motives, their dreams, and their deepest desires — and then using that information against them.

Empathy always opposes other skill checks, even when the target isn't aware of your intentions. Often, a target's own Empathy score opposes yours because once they realize that you're trying to take advantage of them, they become immune to your charms. When you use Empathy to influence another character's impression of you, or to subtly ply them for information, your Empathy result is contested by the target's Empathy (Read Sophont) skill check. If your result is greater, they grow to like you more or they let slip something that you want to know.

You can also use Empathy to gamble, by reading other players in games that rely on knowledge of their motives and tells. Empathy (Gambling) is opposed by the other character's Empathy (Gambling), as gambling relies on a very specific acumen with its own cues, language, and nuances. You cannot use Empathy to influence the odds of simple games of chance, like slot machines, bone towers, and razor shuffles, because those games depend on randomized results. Unless they're rigged. Then you should play somewhere else. Or if you're feeling plucky, you could learn how the game was rigged and use that information to rob the house blind. 1

This skill has four specialties:

► **Gambling:** Apply this specialty when playing games that rely on sensing the other players' hidden goals.

► **Gather Info:** Apply this specialty when eliciting information from someone with warmth, kind words, and promises. If you wish to resort to coercion, use Intimidate instead (*see next page*).

► **Influence:** Apply this specialty when improving the target's impression of you.

► **Read Sophont:** Apply this specialty when trying to determine whether someone is lying to you or trying to manipulate you. This specialty functions as your defense against other characters using Empathy against *you*.

Upgraded Success

If you're influencing someone, they think you're their new best friend and they go out of their way to help you however they can. Maybe you'll regret this measure of success when they start commissioning murals in your honor all over a city from which you've been banned.

An Upgraded Success with Gather Info means that you gather detailed and exhaustive information. The GC reveals the full extent of what's available in the encounter, and may throw in some extra info for good measure.

An Upgraded Success with Gambling means you won exactly as much as you intended to win. If you went all in, then the other gamblers have mad respect for your skills but won't be inviting you back. They may even be quite upset with you. Now might be a good time for Empathy (Influence) or Athletics (Running).

An Upgraded Success with Read Sophont reveals *exactly* what the target is trying to do, unless the target also scored an Upgraded Success. Then you stare at each other for a while and probably walk away pretty confused.

1

CEO: You've just explained how social skills are weaponized.

WRITER: Oh, thank you! It's a difficult concept to explain.

CEO: You explained this weaponization to our clients' grunts, many of whom are sociopaths.

WRITER: So? They already have guns.

CEO: And you are force-multiplying those.

Inspire

Use your Inspire skill to elicit something special from your troops, to seed attitudes and viewpoints in the masses, and to stoke the fires of romance. The Inspire skill differs from the other Social skills in that it focuses less on manipulating others than prompting them to do something on their own. Politicians, military leaders, motivational speakers, and courtiers typically excel at inspiration.

Sophonts don't tend to resist being inspired, so this skill usually goes uncontested. Instead, the GC assigns a TN based on the number of targets and their relative attitudes before the check. If the target(s) are angry, you will have more difficulty calming them down than goading them into active hostility. The same is true for matters of the heart; you will find it easier to court someone who already likes you a little, and for whom your pheromonal signals are sophont type-appropriate.

Success at Inspiration moves the disposition of your target(s) in the direction you desire, for at least a little while. How far it moves in this direction — and for how long the target remains in this state of mind — depend on the degree of your success. The GC determines the measure of your success based on the amount by which you beat the TN. Meet the TN and your audience sees your point but won't go charging into the line of fire for you. Beat it by more than this, and they might just pick up some torches, or show up with flowers. The GC's decision may hinge at least in part upon your role-play leading up to any dice rolls. No pressure.

You apply Inspire in a very specific way to your grunts. **You can use Inspire to grant a temporary quality to your fireteam**. This action's TN depends on the quality you want to impart (*see page 108*). With success, the fireteam gains the quality for the rest of the current combat or, if you're not in combat, until the end of the next combat during this session. When you issue orders to your fireteam, they follow those orders for the number of rounds equal to your ranks in this skill (*see page 107*).

Your company's Reputation modifier may apply to any check made with the Inspire skill if the GC believes that it carries weight in the current situation. Become legends in your own time and your Reputation score can go a long way. Gain minor infamy as thugs and ne'er-do-wells, and you'll see that your gift of gab does not have quite the effect you might expect. (*See page 99 for more information about this company stat.*)

This skill has three specialties:

► **Oratory:** Apply this specialty when trying to uplift crowds with moving speeches.

► **Leadership:** Apply this specialty when rolling to add a quality to your fireteam.

► **Seduction:** Apply this specialty when attempting to romance another sophont.

Upgraded Success

Your target(s) hang on your every word. They follow you to the ends of the universe, at least for a while.

When rolling to grant a fireteam quality, it lasts for the rest of the current job or through the *next* job if this one's almost over. Additionally, you may find the troops toasting you every so often in the mess, or telling stories about you over cards. Because you're swell.

Intimidate

Use your Intimidate skill to loom threateningly over an informant, to rough up an NPC, or to pull a captive into a dark room where a single swinging lamp reveals a set of tools that everybody wishes they didn't know you had.

All the uses for this skill focus on bending someone's will to your own. Subtlety has no place in this skillset. Intimidate checks are always resisted by Willpower (*see page 53*). If your Intimidate result is greater than an opposing Willpower skill check, the target cracks and reveals a secret, or does what you want.

Your company's Reputation modifier may apply to an Intimidate check if the GC believes it carries weight in the current situation. When your company has a solid reputation as a proper, upstanding organization that would never stoop to extortion, then your target may not believe that you intend to make good on your threats. All modifiers on the Reputation table are inverted for Intimidate checks (i.e. a –2 modifier becomes a +2 and vice-versa). (*See page 99 for more information about this company stat.*)

This skill has three specialties:

► **Coercion:** Apply this specialty when *forcing* someone to do something. Make them an offer they can't refuse, so to speak. It's the flip side of Negotiate (Persuasion) in that you

Courting Demons

The GC may require you to make a Willpower check of your own following Intimidate (Torture) to determine whether the activity changes you in some way.

don't ask nicely, and you certainly don't charm anyone.

► **Interrogation:** Apply this specialty when grilling someone for information, often in confinement and with threats of violence or humiliation for the target and/or their loved ones.

► **Torture:** Apply this specialty when deliberately inflicting physical or psychological pain to get what you want.

Upgraded Success

You left a lasting impression. Ask a second question or demand a second action. They can't resist. They don't even get to roll.

Negotiate

Use your Negotiate skill to bargain and get what you want with a light touch. There are no demands here; this is about getting the most from other people with charm, panache, and a completely non-ironic application of "win/win."

Negotiate has two main functions. The first is bargaining, either on the black market or in a legal venue. Your result opposes the same check made by the other dealer, and the winner convinces the other to close the deal as shown on Table 2.10 (*see next page*).

Negotiate's second use is kindly encouraging someone to answer a question or do something for you. This is opposed by a Willpower check (*see next page*). If your result is greater than the opposing check, then the target complies. Good job keeping it upbeat! You might earn that white hat yet.

Your company's Reputation modifier may apply to either check if the GC believes that it carries weight in the current situation. Negotiations tend to go badly when your company has made a name for itself as a band of thieving scoundrels. (*See page 99 for more information about this company stat.*)

This skill has three specialties:

► **Black Market:** Apply this specialty when brokering deals on the galaxy's black market, where special "rules of the house" vary dramatically based on the merchant you're meeting and where the exchange goes down.

► **Haggling:** Apply this specialty when bartering on any open (legal) market.

► **Persuasion:** Apply this specialty when *convincing* someone to do something. It's the flip side of the Intimidate (Coercion) specialty, in that you succeed without the use of threats or violence.

Upgraded Success

That's how to own a conversation! If you're bargaining, you manage to sell at a whopping 150% above, or buy at 60% below the asking price. If you're persuading, the target remains open to further collaboration. Ask a second question or request a second action. They're happy to help out, because you asked so nicely.

Table 2.10: Purchases

Difference	Final Deal*
1–4	Unchanged
5–11	25% above or 10% below asking price, as desired
12–18	50% above or 20% below asking price, as desired
19–25	75% above or 30% below asking price, as desired
26+	100% above or 40% below asking price, as desired

* Round to the nearest increment of the currency used (Resources, Supplies, or other). Keep it simple.

Perform

Theater! Use your Perform skill to dazzle your targets with a performance they'll never forget. This skill covers every way you can put on a show, anywhere you want.

Usually, you will use Perform to entertain, though you can sometimes use it to distract targets (substituting for Deceive), to lift spirits (in place of Inspire), or to make a little extra money on the side. When you use Perform like another skill, use that skill's rules. The GC always determines how much money you make from a performance, based on the affluence and charity of the local populace.

This skill has four specialties:

► **Acting:** Apply this specialty when "getting into character," whether it's for a play, a sting, or an undercover operation.

► **Comedy:** Apply this specialty when telling jokes. Even bad ones.

► **Dancing:** Apply this specialty when entertaining with choreographed or improvised motion.

► **Song:** Apply this specialty when lifting your voice in lyrical verse.

Upgraded Success

You're great at this! Have you thought about quitting your day job? If you're acting as someone who's using a skill, like Air Vehicles, experts in that domain believe you actually *have* the skill. If you're performing for money, double your income. An audience who knows that you're performing will talk about this performance for years to come. An audience that you're attempting to deceive or distract falls for your ruse, and all eyes — and all other performance-appropriate sensory apparatus — are on you, in exactly the right way.

Willpower

Use your Willpower skill to resist mental and physical pressure. This skill represents your raw determination. Willpower lets you stick to your guns in an argument, and remain uncowed by guns should a discussion become heated.

You only make Willpower checks in response to certain skill checks targeting you: specifically, any form of intimidation or persuasion. When your result beats the triggering result, you shrug off the effort, at least for a time. The GC determines how long this immunity lasts, based on your circumstances and the needs of the story. When the stakes are high, and the assaults come from different angles, the GC will ask for more Willpower checks than during periods with time for reflection and recovery.

This skill has two specialties:

► **Fortitude:** Apply this specialty when resisting Intimidate (Interrogation) and Intimidate (Torture) checks.

► **Tenacity:** Apply this specialty when resisting Intimidate (Coercion) and Negotiate (Persuasion) checks.

Upgraded Success

Bravo! Not only have you stood your ground, you've gained the advantage. Unless your opponent also scored an Upgraded Success, you're immune to further attempts of the same type (interrogation, torture, coercion, or persuasion) until your circumstances change. The GC decides what new circumstances qualify.

Being a Good Player

It takes effort to become a maximally effective mercenary, and it takes almost as much effort to become a good player in a role-playing game. Players face pitfalls, traps, tests, sprained wrists, hot and cold streaks, lucky dice, punishing dice, betrayal, laughs, and fun. What constitutes a good player, and how does one go about becoming one? Well, being a good role-player resembles being an effective member of a combat team.

Be Present

Nothing frustrates officers or Game Chiefs more than a grunt or player who is distracted in the line of duty. Messaging like crazy on the newest [Company Name] [Device Name], not listening to plot exposition or exfiltration plans, and hogging all the good beverages — these are examples of terribly, terribly coarse behavior, and players who exhibit these behaviors should probably be punished by PT.

Share Information

Sometimes you, the player, might have a really cool bit of information or plot that you want to keep secret from the GC and other players. This is unwise. It will create rifts in trust between *players* at the table. While strife and anger between characters can make for good storytelling, strife and anger between *players* can upset the balance of a game and sour the experience. The best stories happen when everyone participating has all the information.

Caveat: An occasion may arise when a well-timed reveal makes the best story. Talk it over with the GC, and work together to reveal that secret at the most dramatic time, be it in the final confrontation with the villain, or at Terl'Kris's ten-year anniversary with the company party.

"Yes, but" is better than "No"

When the GC or a commanding officer describe things, and when they put you in situations they want you to react to, one of the worst things you can do is say, "No." For example, your GC presents you with an intriguingly locked box. You can walk away from it (thus saying, "No"), or you can decide to open it *but* you're going to do so with a bit of det cord from thirty feet away (thus saying, "Yes, but").

Go with the punches. Tell your squad, "Yes! And I'll do the extra thing! And we'll make it awesome."

Communicate

Communication should start before the story does, possibly even before you make your characters. Every player comes to the table for a different reason. For some it's the thrill of the firefight. For some it's the interaction with new and interesting ideas. For some it's the stories, and for some it's the travel. Know why your fellow players have come to this table, so you can help them have fun too. If a particular game session feels frustrating or unfulfilling to you as a player, find a quiet time to talk to your GC or a trusted other player. Figure out what is missing from the game so that you can go back to having fun. Watch for other players' frustration and be the person who takes time to bring them back into the game. Games (and teams) work best when everyone looks out for each other.

Be Respectful

The GC has spent a great deal of time preparing the game. The other sophonts at the table with you are creatures with feelings. Remember to treat them and their time with respect.

Be Fun

If you have fun, then the players win, even if the characters fail spectacularly in their tasks. Pick the actions that will be the most fun for everyone. No mercenary succeeds by playing it safe all the time.

Be Interesting

Don't do the predictable just because it feels safe. React to situations as your character might react to them. Bring your character to life rather than letting them languish on a sheet of paper. If your character struggles, then struggle. If your character is clever, then play clever. If your character enjoys smooth talking, then talk smoothly. Be active and engaged when representing your character in the game, and everyone will have a lot more fun.

Be a Good Guest

Don't show up gross and sweaty. Keep the gaming space clean. When you leave, help the host clean up. Bring snacks, and share. It's still cheaper than a movie, and you'll enjoy it more.

Be Willing to Fail

Embrace failure. Failing incites drama. Failing makes the game exciting. Failing makes your characters mortal and interesting. Fail a lot. Fail with grace. But most of all, fail and have fun failing. And sometimes you'll fail to fail, which is the same as succeeding. That's fun too.

Mind the Tone

While we want your *Planet Mercenary RPG* game to be fun, there are times for character levity and other times for your characters to be very focused. Nothing ruins a serious operation more than a player or grunt with the wrong idea of tone. Dark and dramatic bits make the funny bits brighter by contrast. Watch where the story is going and what mood the story needs. Now might not be the time for that cheesy one-liner from 21st-century film videos.

Ask Questions

When you don't know something, or you want to know something, ask. Don't mock others for asking. Every sophont is different, and they process information in different ways. Be patient, and helpful.

Be Prepared

Learn the rules of the game. It'll make everyone happier, and it'll make the game run smoother. In addition, bring your own materials with you: dice, a character sheet, and writing implements. If you cannot afford your own materials, ask to borrow someone else's the day before the session, so that they can bring enough for you to share.

Managing Character Death

Planet Mercenary RPG can be a pretty lethal game, much like operating as a mercenary is. Your character may die. However — and we have some words for your GC about this, later in this book — the game is not designed to be a gratuitous death fest. Character death should serve a story, or provide a cool role-play moment, and as a player, be ready to embrace that. You'll get to make an exciting, new character almost immediately (usually by promoting one of the grunts from your fireteam), and by embracing that death, you can channel some great story and storytelling into the game. Also, if you have the right med equipment handy, you can probably reconstruct your old character for your next session, if you want to do so.

Here are some tips for spinning a good story out of transitioning a grunt into an officer:

1. Make it funny. A new job is often hard, and mistakes are going to be made. Don't hesitate to embrace and role-play their misadventures.
2. Remember that your new character will have different experiences, outlooks, and habits than your previous character(s). Focusing on these differences will help ease the transition.
3. Think about how your grunt reacts to the events that led to their sudden promotion to officer. Do they inherit the fireteam of the previously-commanding deceased? Do they disband that fireteam and assemble a new one? How do they approach problems in their command?

Character Creation

You'll need a blank character sheet, some scratch paper, and three six-sided dice (3d6). You can find a character sheet on page 351 and as a free download at **PlanetMercenary.com**.

First, we'll create your personal character, and then in a later section we'll create and equip your mercenary company (*see page 97*). You'll see spaces for both these things on your character sheet, and we'll point you to specific parts of the sheet as needed.

Planet Mercenary RPG defines its characters primarily by their skills and company affiliation. Here's a quick overview of what you can expect when building a character:

Step 1: Command Package

Grunts follow you because you wield a command package. It grants you four bonus skill ranks.

Step 2: Background

This tells you where you come from. It grants three more bonus skill ranks.

Step 3: Sophont Type

Your sophont type applies bonus skill ranks and/or skill check penalties. It can also grant you special attacks, natural armor, and other special rules.

Upgrading a Grunt to a Player Character

If you create a character by upgrading a grunt, the process remains almost the same as creating a new character. The only difference is that for each Ablative Meat experience that the grunt has survived, you get an extra 10 skill points to use during step 4 of character creation (*see page 64*).

Step 4: Skills

Your skills determine the things you can do and how well you do them. Here you'll spend points to buy additional skill ranks, which you add to the bonus ranks from earlier steps to determine your ability to perform each action in the game.

Step 5: Derived Stats

Here you'll calculate your Health and Defense scores.

Step 6: Finishing Touches

Then you'll pick a name and motivation.

Step 7: Company Creation & Equipment

Finally, you'll form your very own mercenary company, build your fireteams, and choose gear for everyone. *Company creation has its own, separate section on page 97.*

Each step of character creation is designed to help you tell an exciting story. Keep this in mind as you make each decision about your character. You'll have an easier time playing *Planet Mercenary RPG* when everyone's characters are plausible, understandable, useable, and built to add to a mutual story that everyone will have fun telling together.

Step 1

Select a Command Package

Character creation is a group exercise. You need to function as a team and creating characters gives you a chance to start working together. Discuss who takes which role. A good mercenary company demonstrates both breadth and depth in specialties. No single character can do everything. The Game Chief may also specify ways your team can fit cleanly into the story that they have planned for you. (Ongoing campaigns should build stories around the company that already exists, but we cover that in the Game Chief section.)

Consider your command package first. This choice explains why your company's grunts follow you into combat, and why they sometimes take bullets for you (Of course you also *pay them* for this privilege).

Each character selects one command package. You may make any combination of command packages among the players *but* the number of Captains must be either one or zero.

Your character sheet provides a space to fill in your command package. Fill that in now. Note that each command package comes with some bonus skill ranks. Jot these down next to each skill on your character sheet. You'll add them to your total skill ranks in Step 4.

Available command packages are:

Captain

If you play as the Captain, then your in-game job is to make command decisions and issue orders to the other officers. You're a little like the Adjutant to the GC, and in that role, you rely on people skills to keep the game moving.

The Captain's bonuses reflect both expertise and experience. Mercenary captains are more than just career soldiers with brass garnish. They're entrepreneurs with a passion for turning professionals-at-arms into a profitable fighting force. With an emphasis on profitable. And an unwritten nod toward "legal," because that always makes things easier.

Bonus Skill Ranks: +2 Economics, +2 Contracts, +2 History (Military), +2 to any 1 Combat skill; also, you're in charge!

Chaplain

The Chaplain provides both moral support and a moral compass. Morale and morality! Sometimes it falls to the Chaplain to point out what horrible people the other officers could become if they follow a given path. Other times the Chaplain must bring his carbine to his shoulder and clear a path with righteous indignation! 1

Career Chaplains are students of history, and they're adept at citing scriptural, historical, and cultural touchstones at just the right time. In a mercenary company, their inspirational speeches usually have pointy bits right at the very end.

Bonus Skill Ranks: +2 Dodge, +2 History (Religious), +2 Inspire *or* Perform, +2 to any 1 Combat skill

1

WRITER: Does this offset earlier concerns about sociopathy and weaponized social skills?

LEGAL: Just keep writing. We have no liability in these matters.

WRITER: Maybe *we* need a chaplain.

Doctor

The tools of 31st-century medicine are extremely powerful, but the single most useful surgical instrument is always information — specifically, information about which bits are supposed to be reconnected to which other bits, and whether a particular organ would be missed, since there's rarely time to grow a new one.

Years of schooling (or equivalent experience) qualify a Doctor for the job of making everyone else not-dead as often as possible. Sure, the Doctor sometimes hands a stretcher full of mince flambé to the Chaplain, but the very best way to prevent stretcher-flambé is to pick up something far deadlier than a scalpel, and invite the folks on the other side to call *their* chaplain.

Bonus Skill Ranks: +2 Dodge, +2 Medicine, +2 Xenobiology, +2 to any 1 Combat skill

Engineer

An Engineer is like a walking toolbox of two-twists-and-hit-it-with-a-hammer solutions to problems the company may encounter. (If the Engineer is a machine-intelligence with the right attachments, then remove the word "like" from the previous sentence.) Typically, the Engineer is tasked with fixing (or building!) things in the "materiel" category, though they may also be adept at hacking the various non-sentient "thinking" machines commonly called "computers."

Mercenary Engineers don't just sit in the quartermastery playing rear-echelon wrench-monkey, though. They need to be right there next to the boots on deck, because the odds are pretty good that the deck will eventually give way, or that the those boots will suddenly not have their rockets attached correctly anymore.

Bonus Skill Ranks: +2 Chemistry, +2 Engineering, +2 Experimental Sciences *or* Mechanic, +2 to any 1 Combat skill

Ops Commander

When the client looks to your officer corps, their eyes fall on the Captain. They may not even notice the Ops Commander, who has already identified the exits, possible entry points for attackers, and half a dozen ways to kill everyone in the room — all without attracting any attention.

The Captain may give the orders but when bullets are flying at the boots on deck, but it's the Ops Commander who leads the strike force. Years of experience are valuable, yes, but the Ops Commander has this role thanks to *surviving* those years of experience.

Bonus Skill Ranks: +2 Empathy *or* Inspire, +2 Perception, +2 to any 2 Combat skills

Legal Counsel

Sometimes it's best for everyone to holster their weapons while the company's Legal Counsel steps in to negotiate. This noble war-barrister [1] operates as more than just a lawyer. They are the fastest talker in a word-fight, the craftiest contractor ever to get paid twice for the same job, and the only one who can tie the hands of an entire government with little-known precedent and a single well-timed signature.

Lacking the right signatures, the Legal Counsel may be required to unholster and go hot, serving up bullets instead of subpoenas. Either way, the job gets done and the contract gets honored.

Bonus Skill Ranks: +2 Deceive *or* History, +2 Empathy *or* Negotiate, +2 Dodge ranks *or* any 1 Combat skill, +2 Inspire *or* any 1 Combat skill (you may take Combat skills in both options that allow them)

Quartermaster

Properly selected weapons and other materiel can turn a lone soldier into a perambulatory dispensary of enemy dismay. It's the Quartermaster's job to keep the "properly" there with the "maintained," and to perform repairs on gear that's been dragged into one too many ambushes.

In the canon of force multiplication there are many axioms and aphorisms featuring the words "high" and "explosives." The Quartermaster knows them all, and knows which ones cause any particular thing to explode. Or not explode. The Quartermaster *also* knows how quickly to run when the answer to any question was "fire in the hole" or "oops."

Bonus Skill Ranks: +2 Chemistry, +2 Dodge, +2 Explosives, +2 to any 1 Combat skill

1

LEGAL: We were technically aware of the term "warbarrister," of course, but until now nobody in our department had warbarristry among their aspirations.

CEO: Talk to Sophont Resources. They're the ones who make the rules about "dressing for the job you want."

Step 2

Select a Background Package

Sophonts don't just spring into existence; they grow and learn through life experiences on their worlds of origin and because of their travels thereafter. Your character's background offers a unique perspective, along with valuable skills and specialties.

Your background also informs role-play, and it's part of what qualifies you for a leadership position in the company. Your background says something about you — it's why the other officers trust you with your share of the company, and maybe also why the grunts follow you into battle.

Pick a background that complements your command type and personality. Consider whether you want a well-rounded character (someone who dabbles in a lot of things), or a specialist (someone who focuses heavily on one or two types of actions). Again, consult the whole group about your decisions. It helps to have a couple of well-rounded characters and a couple of specialists, and for the specialists to cover those skills that you expect your team will need most often in the field.

As with your command package, write down your background and its bonus skill ranks on your character sheet.

For the Game Chief: Backgrounds

Encourage balance across characters in the team if you'd like a smoother experience at the table. Imbalance can be hilarious, but it can also be deadly. Then again, deadly could be its own kind of fun, depending on the style of game you want to run.

Backgrounds also offer strong inspiration for intro story sessions that cover how the team meets and forms a mercenary company. This presents an excellent opportunity to introduce players to each other if the group hasn't gamed together before. Just be sure not to kill them before they take on their first mission. Unless you want to. Or you don't like them. Then go to town.

Crime Lord

You probably didn't get your lawless hands very dirty, but you definitely know some people who did — and they did it on your orders.

Bonus Skill Ranks: +2 Deceive, +2 Economics *or* History, +2 Inspire *or* Negotiate

Driver

Maybe you raced hover vehicles. Perhaps you worked for a limousine company. Or possibly you were the guy driving the getaway car. Could be you did all three.

Bonus Skill Ranks: +2 Computers *or* Mechanic, +2 Ground Vehicles *or* Water Vehicles, +2 Perception

Entertainer

Maybe you played in a band. Maybe the band was a circus. Maybe the circus was the writing pit for a comedy show.

Bonus Skill Ranks: +2 Athletics or Empathy, +2 Deceive *or* Thrown Weapons, +2 Inspire

Medical Professional

Surgeon? Anesthesiologist? Pharmacist?

Bonus Skill Ranks: +2 Empathy, +2 Xenobiology (pick a world to specialize in), +2 Medicine

Military (Infantry Grunt)

You served as an enlisted soldier in the infantry. You know how to take orders but you also know a good order when you hear one. You kept moving in the *right* direction even when a clueless lieutenant froze up.

Bonus Skill Ranks: +2 Dodge, +4 to any 1 Combat skill *or* +2 to any 2 Combat skills

Military (Officer)

You served as an officer in the military. Perhaps you were an infantry captain, or a fleet commodore. Today you're a mercenary. How did you get here, do you think?

Bonus Skill Ranks: +2 Dodge, +2 Inspire, +2 to any 1 Combat skill

Pilot

You speak starship.

Bonus Skill Ranks: +2 Influence, +2 Air Vehicles *or* Space Vehicles, +2 Stationed Weapons

Scientist

It's not that you're *mad*, or that nobody understands your work. It's that other sectors offer more money. A *lot* more money.

Bonus Skill Ranks: +2 Experimental Sciences *or* Perception, +2 to any 2 Mental skills

Spy

You operated as a field agent for an intelligence organization. It's possible that you still do, but you probably shouldn't let that slip.

Bonus Skill Ranks: +2 Deceive, +2 Dodge, +2 Negotiate

Street Criminal

You've broken your share of laws, and we're not talking traffic ordinances — though there were a few of those as well.

Bonus Skill Ranks: +2 Deceive, +2 Dodge, +2 Explosives or Melee

Step 3

Pick a Sophont Type

Now that you know why grunts follow you and where you come from, it's time to think about your species. For your convenience we've focused on the options most common to the Sol System sphere of influence in the Western Spiral Arm, plus a few notable races from further afield. There are over 200,000 sophont races across the galaxy suitable for mercenary work, so we couldn't possibly cover all of them and still get you into the fray at anything approaching "quickly."

Sophonts receive full descriptions in their own section (*see page 69*), but the basics are presented here. Just like your previous choices, this choice comes with a list of skill rank bonuses, but also sometimes a skill check penalty or two.

A Note on Natural Attacks

For some of the sophont-specific attacks and defenses, you'll see notations like this: (damage: Athletics). This means that the damage of that attack is the same as the ranks your character has in Athletics. If your character has a bite attack with damage: Athletics, and your character has 3 ranks in Athletics, then the damage done in an attack will be 3.

Some races also have special abilities or rules. Write everything on your character sheet when you've decided.

Skill Ranks Bonuses vs. Skill Check Penalties: The bonus skill ranks you've been getting all the way through character creation are permanent upgrades to your skills. Each one makes one skill a little bit better and adds to every roll you make with it. Sophont-based skill check penalties work a little differently. These penalties are *not* subtracted from your skill ranks but are rather subtracted from each skill check result with the listed skills. So you write down the penalty on your sheet and use it when you're doing the math for that skill check.

Not all sophonts are equal. Your race *can* tip the scales and result in a more powerful character — at least in terms of raw numbers. Keep in mind, however, that Game Chiefs notoriously pick on powerful characters and often create situations that challenge them more than everyone else. Be warned.

Common Sophont Types

These five sophonts are common to the Sol system. While it isn't required, having at least half your team pick from among the common sophont types makes things a little easier on your GC.

Human (Homo sapiens)

These crafty, smooth-skinned bipeds number in the hundreds of billions. They're flexible, creative, and surprisingly resilient despite their relatively fragile frames. In the 900 years since they joined the other star faring species, they've become a major power economically, militarily, and culturally. Humans are ambitious, competent, and often extremely lucky.

Bonus Skill Ranks: None

Skill Check Penalties: None

Special Rules: When your human character dies, you may immediately take one final action (not a full turn — just a single action). This action cannot save your life, though it may save the lives of your friends and allies. If you do not take this action immediately, it is forfeit.

Neophant (Loxodontus neoelephas sapiens)

Humans uplifted their distant cousins the elephants, and then further tweaked nature's robust, thick-skinned design so the quadrupeds can walk upright. Massive hands were genengineered as well, but neophants find their long prehensile snouts far more dexterous. Many neophants have anger management issues, which a competent commanding officer can put to good use. They're also large enough to make very good meat shields for the rest of their mercenary company, which is appropriate since these traits also make it difficult for them to avoid incoming attacks.

Bonus Skill Ranks: +1 Athletics, +2 Endurance, +1 Perception; you also gain the Athletics (Running) specialty at no cost

Skill Check Penalties: You suffer a –1 penalty with Dodge skill checks. Apply this penalty to your result *after* all other modifiers.

Special Rules: Your trunk counts as an extra limb with minimal dexterity. You can use it to pick things up and open large containers or doors with big handles. Your trunk can lift something roughly a quarter of your size and weight.

Purp (Homo sapiens purpureum)

An ill-considered genengineering project, this purple-skinned branch of the *Homo sapiens* genetic line tends to be "leaner and meaner" than core human stock. Purps have photosynthetic skin, letting them derive nourishment from natural, full-spectrum light; they crave it even when they're well fed, and they tend to dress (or undress) accordingly. Purps are relatively rare, and they do not breed true with baseline humans.

Bonus Skill Ranks: +1 Athletics, +1 Endurance

Skill Check Penalties: None

Special Rules: None

Rilla (Gorilla gorilla sapiens)

Humanity's heavily-muscled great-ape cousins were among the earliest uplift projects. Today Rillas are quite sensitive to the prejudices and biases against hairy-skinned folk who can peel oranges (do not say "bananas") with any of their four limbs. Even after 800 years of tweaks to their genome, Rillas find clothing uncomfortable, and they seek naked time whenever the opportunity presents itself. 1

Bonus Skill Ranks: +1 Athletics, +1 Endurance, +1 Perception; you also gain the Perception (Smell) specialty at no cost

Skill Check Penalties: You suffer a –2 penalty with Negotiate skill checks. Apply this penalty to your result *after* all other modifiers.

Special Rules: You have a bite attack (damage: Athletics).

Ursumari (Ursus maritimus sapiens)

Uplifted polar bears stand between 2.5 and 3.5 meters in height, and when they shout, the roar conveys a single, unmistakable message to the human hindbrain: "run away quickly." Ursumari are naturally peaceful, as long as they get a nice, long ice water bath every day. Without the bath? Grouchy, potentially-dangerous bear.

Bonus Skill Ranks: +1 Athletics, +1 Endurance, +1 Intimidate, +1 Melee, +1 Thrown Weapons

Skill Check Penalties: None

Special Rules: You have a claw attack (damage: Athletics + 2).

Uncommon Sophont Types

Here are nine "galactic" sophonts, all hailing from far outside Sol System. You'll find these a little harder to work into every story, and they can sometimes be difficult to role-play, but they might be a perfect fit for experienced and/or enthusiastic players.

Esspererin

Though their bodies only measure a meter in height, esspererin are exceptionally hardy. They can survive extreme heat and cold, require no air, and have light-collecting wings that unfurl to a span of four meters. Their bodies have evolved

1

CEO: This line about "naked time" calls my attention to a possible problem. This entire section heavily leverages stereotypes.

WRITER: As a shorthand, ma'am. Sometimes we have to paint with a broad brush. Players already know that there is a *huge* variance within sophonts types.

CEO: Indeed. If there are entries for my sophonts type in this book, they are to be removed.

WRITER: But you're okay with all the other entries.

over millions of years, harmoniously merging technology and biology, and this affords them a strong aptitude with the inelegant mechanical creations of strictly organic sophonts. Too bad the Esspererin are such *reckless* tinkerers.

Bonus Skill Ranks: +1 Computers, +1 Dodge, +1 Engineering, +1 Mechanics; you also gain the Athletics (Flight) specialty at no cost

Skill Check Penalties: None

Special Rules: Draw a Mayhem card every time you roll a 6 on any die while making an Engineering or Mechanics check. Even if you roll more than one 6, you still only draw one Mayhem card. If you *already* draw a Mayhem card for any reason, draw only that one card; do not draw any more cards due to this rule. Because of your small size, the only weapons you can use are pistols, carbines, and stationed weapons (*see page 31 for more on stationed weapons*). Also, you can fly and don't need air.

Fobott'r

For centuries the four-armed, bipedal Fobott'r were the soldier-slaves of the rich and powerful. They have long since cast off those shackles, and many of them now enjoy profitable careers as professionals-at-arms. Contrary to cultural biases, fobott'r are not all thieves, and pirates. Just a few (billion) of them. 1

1

CEO: Does our writer harbor anti-Fobott'r sentiments?

WRITER: If we express this as a percentage, it's around 0.4%, and that ruins the joke completely.

CEO: Scanning through these notes, I get the impression that your moral compass is inconsistent.

TERL'KRIS: The "WRITER" ID is a group account. For security purposes.

Bonus Skill Ranks: +1 Carbines, +1 Perception, +1 Pistols; you also gain the Perception (Hearing) specialty at no cost

Skill Check Penalties: You suffer a –1 penalty with Computers skill checks. Apply this penalty to your result *after* all other modifiers.

Special Rules: You may fire two weapons with a single action, though you suffer a –2 penalty with each of the two checks. Alternatively, you may reload one weapon and fire one weapon as a single action (these need not be the same weapon). If you and a friendly fobott'r are in direct physical contact, either of you or both of you may fire two weapons with a single action, and each of the two checks only suffers a -1 penalty. If you are next to a friendly fobott'r and either of you uses this rule, attacks against either of you gain a +2 to the roll.

Frellenti

The long-legged, flightless, pseudo-avian frellenti are evidence either that evolution has a great sense of humor, or that it has been punked by engineers who don't sign their work. Frellenti are swift runners and natural pilots, and though their forelimbs are useless they can grasp and manipulate deftly with their feet. Their long, strong, prehensile tongue can support several times their body weight, yet it's also a highly sensitive chemical receptor.

Bonus Skill Ranks: +1 Athletics, +1 Dodge, +1 Perception, +1 to any Vehicle skill; you also gain the Perception (Taste) specialty at no cost

Skill Check Penalties: None

Special Rules: Your feet are quite agile and serve the same purpose as a human's hands, but you can't use them as hands while running. You can also use your tongue as a fully prehensile tentacle, and it is strong enough to support at least twice your body weight (you can swing from it). You can use it to pick up small objects or open compact containers. You can perform Perception (Taste) from up to four meters from the target.

Kreely

At three meters in length, the six-limbed kreely are among the largest of the galaxy's exoskeletal sophonts. This exoskeleton provides fantastic armor in the natural world, and it's nearly as helpful in a world where firearms and other force multipliers are commonplace. Kreelies complement this defense with superior agility and speed, though they also tire quickly. Galactic culture holds great disdain for Kreely

reproduction and child-rearing practices, because they sell a large number of their young to restaurateurs as delicacies.

Bonus Skill Ranks: +1 Athletics, +1 Dodge

Skill Check Penalties: You suffer a –1 penalty with Endurance skill checks. Apply this penalty to your result *after* all other modifiers.

Special Rules: You have natural armor (+1 to Defense and Dodge and 5 damage reduction against melee attacks only).

Polyflorian

Arguably the most technologically dependent of all sophonts, polyflorians resemble terran gastropods, or Othlin sea-plasms. They don't like being described this way, however, nor do they like being called "cyborgs" or "flying snotstrosities." However, they happily accept compliments on their heightened skill with many technologies.

Bonus Skill Ranks: +2 Computers, +1 Engineering, +1 to any Vehicle skill, +1 Research

Skill Check Penalties: None

Special Rules: You require a special chair to move around. If this chair is destroyed, damaged, or lost, then you have a hard time moving quickly. (All your Athletic checks have a -2 penalty until you manage to re-acquire a functioning chair.) On the plus side, each of these chairs can fly and you may fit yours with up to two weapons (*see page 196*). However, each piece of your gear costs 1 additional Supplies because it must be modified to fit your chair. Once attached to the chair, the weapon is a Stationed Weapon and thus subject to the Stationed Weapons skill. Other stats of the weapon do not change.

Queltro (Tetrasoid)

No carbon-based sophonts owe quite as much to the geometry of the carbon atom as the queltro, whose four limbs are arranged in a tetrahedral. They're only 125 centimeters tall but they can "run" by tumbling swiftly and crazily across almost any terrain. Their small, high-intake respiratory system prevents them from running quietly, however — the rhythmic slurp-gasp-gallop is a dead giveaway.

Bonus Skill Ranks: +1 Athletics, +1 Chemistry, +1 Dodge, +1 Explosives, +1 Melee

Skill Check Penalties: You suffer a –1 penalty with Endurance skill checks, a –2 penalty with Intimidate skill checks, a –1 penalty with Negotiate checks, and a –2 penalty with Stealth skill checks. Apply these penalties to your results *after* all other modifiers.

Special Rules: Any explosive that you create, use, or plant inflicts an extra 1d6 damage.

Tausennigan Kss'thrata

These fearsome, scaled pacifists of the Tause system have jaws and a gait reminiscent of Earth's Jurassic alpha predators, but despite this appearance they're actually quite friendly. It is with great reluctance and epic regret that they've built their entire culture around warfare, largely to defend against their aggressive planetary neighbors, the ob'enn.

Bonus Skill Ranks: +1 Athletics, +1 Intimidate, +2 to any weapon skill

Skill Check Penalties: None

Special Rules: You have a claw attack (damage: Athletics + 2) and a headbutt attack (damage: Athletics + 2).

Tausennigan Ob'enn

By accident or design, these short, furry, congenitally-xenophobic creatures discovered space travel just a little too late to attack and exterminate their nearest neighbors, the kss'thrata. This resulted in open war and an arms race that spanned centuries. Most ob'enn are far too sociopathic to get by in mixed company. Some manage, but they're usually seen as abominations by their families, and every other species that they meet still regards them with suspicion.

Bonus Skill Ranks: +1 to any four skills

Skill Check Penalties: None

Special Rules: You suffer a –1 penalty with social skill checks targeting non-ob'enn.

Unioc ("Oth")

With a single eye the size of a human's entire head, this species enjoys sensory perception. Members of other species might assume that oth — or as everyone else calls them, the "unioc" — merely have very good vision but in fact they can also see into the near-infrared spectrum, and even in complete darkness (thanks to their massive orb doubling as an ear drum).

Bonus Skill Ranks: +1 Athletics, +1 Research, +1 Perception; you also gain the Perception (Sight) specialty at no cost

Skill Check Penalties: You suffer a –2 penalty with Explosives skill checks. Apply this penalty to your result *after* all other modifiers.

Special Rules: None

Advanced Sophont Types

For those ready and willing to take on an extra challenge, these last two races let you play *Planet Mercenary RPG* on a whole new level. AIs / robots offer many more options than most characters, letting players customize a great deal more than usual, while carbosilicate amorphs are... well, keep reading.

AI / Robot

Most sophonts, including the mechorganic Esspererin, frown upon technological body modification, but that's not the case for the Artificial Intelligences. These machine-life sophonts are usually built by meatspace folk for specific purposes, but with the right licenses and a court order, AIs can be freed and begin hacking themselves into the people they really want to be.

Bonus Skill Ranks: Varies (based on AI options)

Skill Check Penalties: None

Special Rules: Your skill rank bonuses, skill check penalties, Health, and other statistics are determined by your growpramming and construction. You must go to page 86 to choose an AI type and a chassis. There you'll find detailed instructions, information, and a detailed description of special rules that apply to you. You'll also need to determine your Company AI rating (*page 97*) before selecting skills. Then return here and proceed to Step 4 of character creation as normal.

Carbosilicate Amorph

Among the rarest of all sophonts, these blob-like natives of Ghanj-rho are a product of that world's lost technology. They're strong, fast, and durable, and they have a natural aptitude for organic chemistry. They range in color from "poo-green" to "poo-brown," with occasional visits to "stop eating colorful things," and they tend to trigger the "keep your distance from poo" biases of clean, well-mannered sophonts. Amorphs can have any number of eyes thanks to their symbiotic relationship with a separate entity that lives within their irregular form.

Bonus Skill Ranks: +1 to all Combat and Physical skills, but Mental and Social skills cost double

Skill Check Penalties: None

Special Rules: More details on all these rules are available in the Sophonts section page 89. You start play with 1d3 eyes and if you want more (or you want to replace any that are damaged or destroyed), you must buy them. There is no limit to the number of eyes you may possess, but using more than two at any given time requires one additional rank in perception per additional eye. If an enemy hits you with an Upgraded Success, then they may optionally destroy one of your eyes with the attack (you still suffer the attack's normal damage, but in this case the damage is *not* doubled). When all your eyes are destroyed, you suffer a conditional penalty due to blindness. (*Table 3.5 on page 89*) Armor costs 200% of its regular price for you. Each time you suffer damage — no matter how much — you also lose one skill rank at random due to memory loss, until healed. (*Further details on memory loss page 89*)

Step 4

Select Skills and Specialties

Up to this point, you've noted several bonus skill ranks on scratch paper or next to the skills on your character sheet. In this step, you'll spend skill points to buy additional ranks in any skills you want, and then you'll add the purchased and bonus skill ranks together to get your full starting rank with each skill.

Remember: Do *not* factor your skill check penalties into your skill ranks. Instead, record those in the listed boxes on your character sheet and apply them to all rolls you make with each affected skill. Skill check penalties are always applied *after* all other modifiers to the roll.

This section mainly focuses on purchasing skills for a new character. *For much more information, including the full rules for using each skill, see pages 24-53.*

Bonus Dodge Ranks

Before you start buying additional skill ranks, add 5 more Dodge ranks to your character sheet.

All characters start with this bonus, whether they're new characters or promoted grunts, and these ranks add to any bonus Dodge ranks you gained earlier in character creation.

You may purchase additional Dodge ranks so long as you do not exceed the starting cap of nine ranks for any skill (*see next*).

Maximum Starting Skill Ranks

No matter how many bonus ranks you gain or what other rules apply, no character may start with more than 9 ranks in any skill. Your skill ranks may rise above Rank 9 as you gain experience through game play, however (*see page 287*).

Purchasing Skill Ranks and Specialties

The number of points you have to spend on skills and specialties is based on the type of character you're creating (new non-A.I. character, new A.I. character, or promoted grunt), as shown on Table 3.1: Skill Points (*see below*).

Each rank costs 1 point and each specialty costs 2 points. You may only buy a specialty for a skill in which you already have one or more ranks, and you may have no more than one specialty per rank you have in each skill.

Example: If you have two ranks in Ground Vehicles, you may buy two of that skill's four specialties — Evasive Action, Navigation, Pursuit, and Stunts — but you may not buy all four. If you want Ground Vehicles, with both Evasive Action and Stunts, it costs a total of six points.

Important Note: After character generation, (i.e. when leveling up an existing character) adding a skill specialty will cost 3 points, not two.

Skill Categories and Specialties

Skills are grouped into four categories: Combat, Mental, Physical, and Social — and many skills feature specialties. You may already have one or more specialties due to the choices you made during character creation.

Skills are the engine of the *Planet Mercenary RPG* and no character can excel at everything. Carefully consider whether your character will be broadly able, or an expert at a small number of things. Skill categories can help with this. Buy a lot of Mental skills and you'll be primed for most technical challenges, but skimp on Social skills and you may find yourself flat-footed in a black-market deal or a diplomatic incident.

Maxim 69

Sometimes rank is a function of firepower.

Specialties are a way to offset the fickle hand of fate. If you have a specialty that applies when you make a skill check — say, for example, you're trying to clear a hurdle and you have the Athletics (Jumping) specialty — you may reroll a single die to attempt to improve the outcome. However you must take the result of the second roll. This can help if your dice are on a cold streak, or if you need to hit a high Target Number, or both.

You can find a full list of skills organized by category, along with their specialties, on Table 3.2: Skills (*see page 66*). Look over this table, and we'll explain how to buy ranks in the next bit.

Specialization

It is a good idea to have several company members specialize and have 8 or 9 ranks in something. Play will be more fun if your characters are good at different things. Also, pay attention and make sure that at least one of you has some ability with Contracts. Every job begins with a contract.

Table 3.1: Skill Points

Character Type	Points to Spend
New character (not an AI)	40
New character (AI)	10 × the Company AI rating (*see page 97*), plus any granted by chassis (*see page 86*)
Promoted grunt	40 + 10 additional points for each time the grunt survived Ablative Meat (*see page 110*)

Table 3.2: Skills

Combat Skills	Specialties
Carbines	Beam, Non-Lethal, Projectile
Dodge	None
Explosives ⊙	Building, Detection, Disarming, Placement
Heavy Weapons	Beam, Non-Lethal, Projectile
Long Guns	Beam, Non-Lethal, Projectile
Melee	Common Weapons, Exotic Weapons, Unarmed, Wrestling
Pistols	Beam, Non-Lethal, Projectile
Scatterguns	Beam, Non-Lethal, Projectile
Stationed Weapons	Ballistic, Beam, Missile
Thrown Weapons	Aerodynamic, Grenades, Improvised
Mental Skills	**Specialties**
Chemistry	Biochemistry, Inorganic
Computers	Hacking, Programming, Repair, Security
Economics	Local, Planetary, Sector
Engineering	Architecture, Habitats, Planetary Vehicles, Vessels
Experimental Sciences ⊙	None
History	Military, Political, Religious, per sophont type
Insight ⊙	None
Mechanic ⊙	Build, Jury-rig, Repair
Medicine	Battlefield, First Aid, Surgery
Research ⊙	None
Xenobiology	Per world of origin
Physical Skills	**Specialties**
Air Vehicles	Evasive Action, Navigation, Pursuit, Stunts
Athletics	Climbing, Flight, Jumping, Pursuit, Running, Strength, Swimming
Endurance	Hard Vacuum, Hold Breath, Immunological
Ground Vehicles	Evasive Action, Navigation, Pursuit, Stunts
Larceny	Breaking & Entering, Picking Locks, Picking Pockets, Sleight of Hand
Perception	Hearing, Magnetic, Sight, Smell, Taste, Thermal, Touch
Space Vehicles	Evasive Action, Navigation, Pursuit, Stunts
Stealth	Hiding, Tailing
Water Vehicles	Evasive Action, Navigation, Pursuit, Stunts
Social Skills	**Specialties**
Contracts ⊙	None
Deceive	Bluffing, Disguise, Distraction
Empathy	Gambling, Gather Info, Influence, Read Sophont
Inspire	Oratory, Leadership, Seduction
Intimidate	Coercion, Interrogation, Torture
Negotiate ⊙	Black Market, Haggling, Persuasion
Perform	Acting, Comedy, Dance, Song
Willpower	Fortitude, Tenacity

⊙ One or more uses of this skill are graded checks.

Step 5

Derived Statistics

Now you get to roll some dice to fill out most of the remaining spots on your sheet.

All derived stats are modified when the contributing values change. For example, if your Dodge skill rank increases, then your Defense score increases by the same amount.

Health

Your sophont type determines your starting Health, as noted on Table 3.3: Starting Health (*see below*). This is also your maximum Health. You can't be healed past this point, but every time your Endurance rank permanently increases, your Health increases by the same amount.

Table 3.3: Starting Health

Race	Starting Health
AI / Robot	Varies (based on chassis. Additional health may be purchased.)*
Carbosilicate Amorph	2 + Endurance ×2 (add Endurance twice)
Esspererin	5 + Endurance
Fobott'r	7 + Endurance
Frellenti	7 + Endurance
Human	8 + Endurance
Kreely	7 + Endurance
Neophant	9 + Endurance
Polyflorian	4 + Endurance
Purp	7 + Endurance
Queltro	5 + Endurance
Rilla	8 + Endurance
Tausennigan Kss'thrata	6 + Endurance
Tausennigan Ob'enn	6 + Endurance
Unioc	7 + Endurance
Ursumari	9 + Endurance

** For more details about creating AI characters, see page 86.*

Defense

Your character's base Defense equals their Dodge score (including all modifiers) + 5. The Equipment that you choose during Company Creation may further modify this number.

Role-Play Points (RiPPs)

Lastly, write "3" in the space for RiPPs. Every character starts with 3 RiPP (unless your GC specifically tells you differently).

Step 6

Finishing Touches

Choose a name. You can find some guidance for naming, based on the core cultures of the sophonts listed in the game, on pages 91-96.

Choose a motivation. Explain why your character became a mercenary. Maybe your homeworld's military downsized. Perhaps you're heeding the call to adventure you read about in a comic book. Maybe you're a fugitive from several different long arms of the law and want to surround yourself with friends who can help you resist arrest.

Fill in as many details as you can. If your character is greedy, what do they covet? If your dark heart beats only for revenge, to whom will you serve that ice-cold dish? If your familial merchant clan needs a new route, what happened to the old one? Discuss with the GC if you're stuck.

Step 7

Company Creation & Equipment

This final step involves all the players at once. You'll create your mercenary company, equip it with weapons and materiel, and build fireteams from the pool of your as-yet-unnamed grunts. This is a separate process and is covered in detail starting on page 97. It's time to start working together. Good luck!

Character Creation Example: Kreely Spy

Lian is getting ready to play *Planet Mercenary RPG*. She likes science and explosions, so the Quartermaster Command package catches her eye. This gives her +2 Chemistry, +2 Dodge, +2 Explosives, and +2 to any 1 Combat skill. She writes these down on her character sheet, but isn't sure which combat skill she wants, so she holds off on making that decision and moves on to "Background." As a fan of heist stories and spy thrillers, she's drawn to the Spy background. This gives her +2 Deceive, +2 Dodge, and +2 Negotiate, all of which she writes down, and moves on to select a Sophont Type.

The idea of a spider-like spy character really appeals to Lian, so she selects the kreely, giving her +1 Athletics, +1 Dodge, a -1 penalty to Endurance, and +1 to Dodge or Defense against Melee attacks. She also gets a 5 point Damage Reduction against Melee attacks in addition to the +5 Dodge bonus that all new characters get. She adds these up, and realizes that the cumulative bonus she has to Dodge comes to 10t. There is a new-character cap of 9 ranks in any one skill, so Lian must decide whether to change one of her earlier selections, or lose that tenth point of Dodge.

She's very attached to the kreely Spy concept, so she switches from Quartermaster to Ops Commander as her command package. This gives her +2 Empathy or Inspire, +2 Perception, and +2 to any 2 Combat skills. The Empathy specialties seem more spy-like to Lian, so she puts two points there. She then selects Pistols and Melee as her combat skills, because they also seem to go with the spy theme.

Since Lian is starting from scratch rather than promoting a grunt, she now has 40 more skill points to spend. She spends 2 points to add the Bluffing specialty to Deceive. She also wants the Disguise and Distraction specialties that Deceive offers, but in order to have 3 specialties, she needs 3 ranks in the skill. She adds a rank in Decieve and then spends two points each for the specialties that she wants.

Lian has 33 points left. She wants her spider-like spy to excel in Melee combat, so she spends 7 of those points to bring Melee up to the 9 rank cap. For 2 points she adds the Exotic Weapons specialty to Melee. With 24 points remaining, she looks at Stealth, and realizes her spy doesn't have any ranks there at all. She rectifies that with 7 points, and then imagines how much fun it might be to be sneaky and stealing things. She puts 3 ranks in Larceny. Blowing things up still appeals to her, so she spends 3 points on Explosives, and Persuasion seems like an important skill for someone sneaky, so she spends 2 points buying that specialty for Negotiate.

Lian learns that none of the other players are bothering to learn to drive. With just 9 points left, she spreads herself a little thin, and puts one point in each of the four Vehicle skills. She hopes her character will live long enough to earn more skill points and become a proficient driver, and that thought reminds her that Endurance affects character Health, so she spends her last five points there.

She moves on to the derived stats, Health and Defense. Kreely health is 7 + Endurance. She is pleased to see that even though the Kreely has a -1 Endurance penalty, that penalty only applies to Endurance checks, not derived stats, so all five of those points will go toward her sneaky, stabby, stealing, spy character's Health, for a reasonably survivable total of 11.

Her kreely's base Defense score is 5 plus her Dodge score of 8, for a total of 13. The kreely's Dodge bonus against melee increases that total to 14 in situations where something is trying to stab her.

Health 11	Melee 9 (Exotic Weapons)	Space Vehicles 1
Defense 13 (14 if Melee)	Pistols 2	Stealth 7
-1 Penalty to Endurance	Explosives 3	Water Vehicles 1
5 Damage Reduction against Melee	Air Vehicles 1	Decieve 3 (Bluffing, Disguise, Distraction)
Dodge 8 (9 if Melee)	Athletics 1	Empathy 2
	Endurance 5	Negotiate 2 (Persuasion)
	Ground Vehicles 1	
	Larceny 3	
	Perception 2	

Lian has crafted her character to be sneaky, and to excel at killing things up close. She'll do best in a Company with characters who can provide overwatch and covering fire, especially if they want her to live long enough to really learn how to drive.

Sophont Types

If you were to meet a new type of sophont every day, it would take you 556 years to meet every major form of intelligent life in the Milky Way galaxy. Obviously, then, a full catalog of those sophont types, is beyond the scope of not only this volume, but of any printed volume meant to be carried about. In *Planet Mercenary RPG,* we've focused on a few representative samples which are of particular interest to our primarily human audience. 1

This section presents information about sixteen sophont types — their biology, histories, personality tendencies, and more. This section also includes all the rules for each sophont are included so you don't have to flip back and forth between here and the Character Creation section.

In the case of artificial intelligences and robots, the full rules are only found here (*see page 86*). These character types are necessarily complex and their many options would bog down the Character Creation section.

This section may also serve as a handy mission reference. We've done our best to accurately represent each sophont, and have included advice, where appropriate, to help you in the field — information you might need when first encountering one of the listed sophont types, or when striving to reduce a given sophont population one individual at a time.

Bonus Skill Ranks vs. Skill Check Penalties: The bonus skill ranks that you acquire during character creation are permanent upgrades to your skills. Each rank improves one skill, and as a result, it improves each roll you make to check that skill. Skill check penalties only appear on sophont types and they work differently than bonus skill ranks: they affect your checks rather than your statistics. You do *not* subtract these penalties from your skill ranks. Instead, you subtract them from each skill check result at the time you roll the dice.

On Galactic Population

According to Headcount Incorporated — a wholly-owned subsidiary of the Wormgate Corporation — there are 153,137 star systems in the Milky Way which host intelligent life. Over 120,000 evolutionary "families" are represented, and roughly 203,000 species of sophont. Galactic population is at least 10.2 trillion, but this count was based on connection to wormgates, and it is likely low by an order of magnitude.

1

CEO: When you say "representative samples," what exactly are you attempting to represent?

TERL'KRIS: Oxygen-breathing, non-aquatic sophonts that get on well in the 10m/s^2 acceleration range.

CEO: So... representative of things like you and me.

TERL'KRIS: We can do another edition for the 580 Kelvin gas-phase crowd, but paper books never get a chance to catch on with them, what with all the catching on fire.

Common Sophont Types

Like many sophont types who developed heritable-trait modification systems prior to first contact, humans uplifted several of their Earth-evolved cousins. Many galactic citizens simply refer to all Earth-native sophonts as "human," but this is incorrect, and occasionally offensive. We've listed humans first, and then grouped the other natives of the Sol system after them.

Human (Homo sapiens)

Bonus Skill Ranks: None

Skill Check Penalties: None

Health: 8 + Endurance

Special Rules

When your human character dies you may immediately take one final action (not a full turn — just a single action). This action cannot save your life, though it may very well save the lives of your friends and allies. If your character does not take this action immediately, then you forfeit it.

Key Features

Humans are smooth-skinned bipeds, with coloration ranging from pale pink to dark, fully-saturated brown. They stand 1.2–2 meters tall, and weigh 80–150 kilograms. Larger specimens are extremely uncommon. Most

humans benefit from ancestral genetic modification, which has eliminated many heritable diseases, and improved human symbiosis with their naturally-occurring internal flora and the blood-nannies that further improve human health.

Further Data

Just under a trillion humans exist galaxy-wide. They're not the most populous race out there (a mark they miss by a wide margin), but they get around enough that they're not an uncommon sight in wider galactic culture.

Human evolution was driven in part by pressure to descend from the trees, and walk upright in order to see over the savanna grasses. Proto-humans shed nearly all their hair, developed the ability to sweat, and — with their forelegs completely free — they developed a brain that could interpret the things they held up to their faces. Tool use featured very early in this evolutionary process, which perhaps explains why the humans we know today tend to be wholly dependent upon their tools. Natural human weaponry has atrophied to the point that it can't rightly be called weaponry at all, and while humans can become quite proficient in unarmed combat, they only really excel at it when fighting other humans.

Their evolution from pack-hunting lowland monkeys has left them with strong instincts toward tribal and team loyalty, which a good captain can leverage in their favor. Generally speaking, humans can function well in crowds, on small teams, and even alone. Most humans get along well with both uplifted and alien sophonts, but there are enough exceptions that anti-human sentiment exists in plenty of places around the galaxy.

Neophant (Loxodontus neoelephas sapiens)

Bonus Skill Ranks: +1 Athletics, +2 Endurance, +1 Perception; you also gain the Athletics (Running) specialty at no cost

Skill Check Penalties: You suffer a –1 penalty with Dodge skill checks. Apply this penalty to your result *after* all other modifiers.

Health: 9 + Endurance

Special Rules

Your trunk counts as an extra limb with minimal dexterity. You can use it to pick things up, open large containers, or open doors with big handles. Your trunk can lift something roughly a quarter of your size and weight.

Key Features

Massing between 2,200 and 5,000 kilograms, neophants are the largest of the upright-walking uplifted sophonts of Sol system. They have large, thick hands and require specialized grips and triggers for their weapons. A neophant can fire a weapon designed for humans using the tip of its trunk, but it has trouble hitting anything that way. Fortunately, Planet Mercenary retail outlets across human-controlled and human-allied space carry a wide variety of neophant-friendly weapons, tools, vehicle controls, and other equipment.

Further Data

Elephants have large brains, which made them very attractive subjects for genetic uplift, and by the 28th century, the citizenry of the United

Nations of Sol included millions of "Loxies" and "Ellies" (*L. africana sapiens*, *L. cyclotis sapiens*, and *Elephas maximas sapiens*). These sophonts were quadrupeds, however, and in 2990 their delegation to the Sophonate — the Congress of the Tusk — authorized genetic changes to take elephant uplifts a step further. They altered the species' forelegs and hip structure to let them walk upright, and they modified their forelegs into arms with hands. They hoped that these changes would offer greater employment opportunity for elephantkind in the future.

This resulted in the neophant (*Loxodontus neoelephas sapiens*), and as of this manual's release, the first true-breeding generation of their kind walks among us; the genetic mold has been set, allowing neophants to breed, but current adults don't have biological parents.

The U.N.S. military hired most of these adult neophants, leading many loxies and ellies to believe that the Congress of the Tusk accepted U.N.S. military funding. Despite the fact that these decisions were made three-quarters of a century ago, today a painful rift divides elephant society. Older loxies and ellies resent their elected representatives, the rising generation of loxies and ellies resents the fact that they don't have hands, and a great many neophants resent the idea that they're nothing more than weaponized pachyderms.

Neophants differ from loxies and ellies in three key ways. First, their front legs now terminate in massive hands. Second, their enlarged pelvises now support on-the-fly dislocation and relocation of the femur, letting them swiftly transition between walking upright and "knuckle-running." Lastly, their digestive systems function more efficiently, letting them thrive on just 220 kg of food per day (half of what a loxie requires).

Captains of companies with enlisted or commissioned neophants should note that just one day without food leaves a neophant sick, and three days sends them into a coma. Bloodnanny packages can ameliorate this issue by broadening the range of foods that a neophant can consume, but this solution does nothing to improve the flavor of now-edible organic material. Don't try to save money by doping your neophants, or you'll get knuckle-trampled.

The construction of the neophant pelvis remains problematic. Many adult neophants experience pain after spending more than an hour upright, and a few have developed degenerative bone diseases. Make sure your doctor is well trained and funded. Replacing a ninety-five kilogram pelvis is even harder, pricier, and messier than it sounds.

Finally, the sheer size of the neophant presents issues for those around them. Efficient vessel design typically does not include four-meter ceilings throughout the ship. Often neophant crew members must be confined to their quarters in a reconfigured hold. Under these circumstances, captains should encourage smaller sophonts to stay clear of those areas, unless they've been invited.

Purp (Homo sapiens purpureum)

Bonus Skill Ranks: +1 Athletics, +1 Endurance

Skill Check Penalties: None

Health: 7 + Endurance

Special Rules

None

Key Features

Anatomically, purps look almost exactly like humans, except that their skin ranges from pale lavender to deep, royal purple. Their average height is greater than average human height, with both male and female purps tightly grouped around the 1.85-meter mark, but it's a tight grouping that ranges from 1.71 to 1.93 meters. They almost always exhibit well-defined musculatures, and they boast lean and rangy physiques. Purp skin is a very efficient photosynthesizer, converting almost all light into caloric energy via genetically-engineered chloroblasts.

Further Data

Early in the Age of Uplift, numerous human governments sought to create better warriors, but each of them in turn found that "super soldier" breeds often turn out problematic. Adding claws, fangs, and armor to humans, and then training them in structured sociopathy was only marginally less popular than turning housecats into bioweapon vectors (See: "I CAN HAZARD"). 1

Genegineers then sought subtler general-purpose improvements. These included complete independence from an ecosystem's food supply — and the purp project only missed that objective by about 1,100 calories per day. An active purp who receives full sunlight across at least half their surface area for six hours a day only needs about two-thirds of the caloric intake of a similarly-active human.

Purps aren't fans of clothing, since the less exposed skin they have, the more food they require. They don't experience the same pleasure from eating that baseline humans do. There are exceptions to this rule, of course, but purp gourmands lean toward extreme seasonings in seemingly random combinations, and those who wish to retain their naturally-svelte physiques either stay indoors or cover up.

Purps and humans cannot breed with one another, and all pairings are completely infertile. Some purps capitalize on their svelte sterility, engaging in transactional activities of the eyebrow-raising nature. As a sad result, at least some humans who see a lone purp in public will wrongly assume the availability of commercial intercourse. The bloodied nose or blackened eye earned for this mistake is called "purple-eye," and is regarded as a badge of stupidity.

Captains of companies that include both humans and purps must tread carefully. Soldierly camaraderie can easily overcome cultural obstacles, but before these soldiers deploy amid a crowd of civilian humans, captains should remind any purp crew that their combat training may make the administration of purple-eye lethal, likely in a riot-inciting way.

1

CEO: Do we sell "I CAN HAZARD" kits? No? Then why bring it up?

WRITER: Diagrams and fabber code are available online if you know how to ask, and if you have enough money. Also, Terl'Kris said that we-

CEO: I'll have a word with him. Where is he hiding?

WRITER: We're not supposed to say anything about where anybody is until the project is complete.

Rilla (Gorilla gorilla sapiens)

Bonus Skill Ranks: +1 Athletics, +1 Endurance, +1 Perception; you also gain the Perception (Smell) specialty at no cost

Skill Check Penalties: You suffer a –2 penalty with Negotiate skill checks. Apply this penalty to your result *after* all other modifiers.

Health: 8 + Endurance

Special Rules

You have a bite attack (damage: Athletics).

Key Features

Mass ranges between 130 and 180 kilograms for male rillas, and 90 to 150 for females. Males measure between 1.7 and 1.85 meters when standing upright, while females measure between 1.4 and 1.7 meters. Both have long arm spans — around 140% of their height — and have extremely powerful upper bodies. And lower bodies, too. Uplift has improved their bipedal locomotion, but rillas can still knuckle-walk, and they move much more quickly on all fours. They are fearsome opponents in close-quarters combat.

Further Data

Rillas share "first uplifted" status with the Pantro (*Pan troglodytes sapiens*, the uplifted chimpanzee), and both sohpont types are equally recognizable and easy to differentiate. Surprisingly, rillas were not uplifted as potential soldiers. Their transformation was the central project in the aptly named "Make New Friends" initiative, which began shortly before the wider galactic community discovered humanity.

Rillas initially suffered significant racial discrimination, and although those attitudes have softened with the passage of 900 years, the sentiment remains a cultural touchstone for them. Joking with rillas about body hair, bananas, or "naked time" may get you a punch in the nose, and given the length of their arms the punch could come from much farther away than expected. And, to be honest, if you're in the habit of telling jokes about bananas and someone else's body hair, you probably deserve a solid at-range pummeling.

Rillas feel right at home in low-gravity environments, and they excel aboard starships as mechanics and engineers. Their long, opposable thumb-toes and innate four-fisted dexterity lets them manage complex tasks with up to four tools at once. Indeed, the best-designed rilla gear offers them a full range of toe, hip, and knee motion, even in a full exo-suit. Many rilla weapons have grips that allow them to be fired with either hands or feet.

Unlike neophants and purps, rilla digestion was not modified significantly during uplift. Rillas require almost 10 kg of dry-weight food, and they must drink nine liters of water per day, but they prefer ingesting their food and water together in the form of moist, fresh vegetables, which can be difficult to arrange in space.

Companies with a rilla contingent will often install "roof racks" along the ceilings of interior passageways of their vessels, allowing their rillas to quickly traverse the halls as if swinging through a canopy. Under absolutely no circumstances should these roof racks be referred to as "monkey bars."

Ursumari (Ursus maritimus sapiens)

Bonus Skill Ranks: +1 Athletics, +1 Endurance, +1 Intimidate, +1 Melee Weapons, +1 Thrown Weapons

Skill Check Penalties: None

Health: 9 + Endurance

Special Rules

You have a claw attack (damage: Athletics + 2).

Key Features

These white-furred sophonts get around equally well on two or four legs. Adult males measure between 2.4 and 3 meters in height, and mass between 350 and 700 kilograms. Adult female ursumari are roughly half this size, standing 1.8 to 2.5 meters in height, and weighing in between 150 and 250 kilograms. Ursumari can't sweat, so managing their body temperature can be a challenge when they share space with humans. Shipboard, ursumari require separate, climate-controlled quarters where they can cool their air to the point that water freezes. Many ships equipped for ursumari also contain a nice, cold swimming pool.

Ursumari are excellent swimmers. When an underwater attack is on the menu, a pair of ursumari grunts can serve up a brilliant *apéritif* of terrified-and-then-dead enemy units.

Further Data

Ursumari were genetically uplifted from the polar bears of Earth's Arctic Circle in a fit of guerrilla eco-management, which many rillas see as a cruel failure of universal irony. This unsupervised "grassroots" effort was meant to create sapient *Ursus maritimus* with the fewest possible changes to the base genome. Beyond the requisite cognitive and communication upgrades, genegineers made allowances for bipedal mobility, and they reconfigured the bears' fore-paws as passable hands.

The project had a shoestring budget, and was run in secret, but it succeeded in a way that has set a high bar for secret shoestrings for nearly a thousand years. Ursumari were one of the very first uplifted species, and they were able to give the Arctic environment a very deep, growly voice. They marched on old New York City's United Nations building during the early 22nd century, and their demands resulted in the creation of the Sophonate. This legislative body survived a century of political upheavals, and it retains its name today as a key part of the United Nations of Sol.

Just over 2.2 million ursumari live on Earth, which makes them the least populous of humanity's uplifted races. Most of them live in enclaves above 66th parallel, in the Arctic Circle — an area whose name, according to the ursumari, comes from the Greek word *arktikos,* meaning "Here There Be Bears." Linguists who might have been inclined to offer a more

accurate translation, "near the bear, north," tend to also be inclined to freeze up during arguments with a 700-kg alpha predator about the name of its home.

Most humans find the ursumari extremely unnerving. The human genome includes millions of years of hard-coding designed to avoid being eaten by bears, and even the most racially-enlightened humans often lack the bladder control necessary to remain dry when an ursumari bellows at them from across the room. This discomfort is only exacerbated aboard cramped gunships with unsatisfactory ursumari berths. The Ursumari are perpetually hot and dry, and the humans are perpetually frightened and damp.

These berthing issues mean that mercenary companies with ursumari grunts often field very *angry* ursumari grunts. This does nothing to improve ursumari/human relations, but it can work wonders on enemy morale — the devastating kind of wonders that commanding officers and buck privates *love* to see in an enemy's eyes. The effect is enhanced by the extreme rarity of ursumari. In Sol System they represent 0.0000022% of the population, so it's quite probable that the monster charging toward you is literally something that you've never seen before. 1

Uncommon Sophont Types

The broader galactic community is host to a dizzying array of exotic species (at least from the limited perspective of humanity). Nine of the most prominent of these races follow.

Esspererin

Bonus Skill Ranks: +1 Computers, +1 Dodge, +1 Engineering, +1 Mechanics; you also gain the Athletics (Flight) specialty at no cost

Skill Check Penalties: None

Health: 5 + Endurance

Special Rules

You always draw a Mayhem card when you roll a 6 on any die when making an Engineering or Mechanics check. Even if you roll more than one 6, you still only draw one Mayhem card. If you *already* draw a Mayhem card for any reason, draw only that one card; do not draw any more cards due to this rule. Because of your small size, the only weapons you can use are pistols, carbines, and stationed weapons (*see page 31 for more on stationed weapons*). Also, you can fly and don't need air.

Key Features

Esspererin are agile mechorganic beings weighing 22–40 kilograms, standing 0.65–1.1 meters in height, with a wingspan of 2.1–4 meters. They don't need to breathe or eat as long as sufficient solar energy is available and they can spread their wings to collect it. Esspererin are small but quite strong, and even the smallest among them have no difficulty using tools and weapons built for creatures several times their size. They don't need specialized grips or interfaces either, as they can simply rebuild a tool (or their hands) to adapt as needed.

This level of adaptation is key to individual esspererin identity. Though hatched with a single pair of forelimbs, a tripedal arrangement of legs, and a symmetric array of butterfly-style wings, most Esspererin alter this configuration with naturally-grown components as they mature. Their organic core is the only part of their bodies that they can't significantly modify; everything else is fair game and can be mod-

1

TERL'KRIS: You didn't mention the ice-cave city of Ur-Arctica on Europa. I think there are eleven million Ursumari living in relative secrecy there.

WRITER: I didn't even know that existed.

LEGAL: You're not supposed to. Our contract with Ur-Arctica Defense and Enforcement mandates secrecy. Make sure these sidebar notes get deleted, please.

ified quickly and easily. Esspererin wings, for instance, are almost always uniquely filigreed in great detail, and can be completely removed to accommodate spaces that even an esspee would find tight.

Further Data

Esspererin are egg-laying sophonts. Females grow a secondary abdomen that is nearly half their body weight, then they build a nest of insulating and energy-collecting materials before detaching this secondary abdomen and installing it in the nest in a sun-facing spot, on one of their system's many airless rocks. When detached from an esspererin's body, this abdomen functions as a gestation pod.

Male esspererin then fertilize this gestation pod, and eggs grow inside it. When these eggs finish developing, the pod splits open and unfurls its own energy-collecting foils. The embryonic Esspererin develop inside the eggs for another sixty days, at which point they hatch at roughly ten centimeters in length, with gossamer foil wings lacking any ribbing. The hatchlings manually spread these wings as they develop, consuming energy from the system's central star along with their egg shards, gestation pod, and nest.

Adult esspererin exoskeletons are a complex sandwich of secreted, calcium-rich chitin, keratinous scales, deposited metals, and piezoelectric ceramogel. The protective quality of these layers rivals some of the finest body armor on the market. Esspererin aren't nearly as tough as armored soldiers, though, since their small bodies are only sixty centimeters long and twelve to twenty centimeters in diameter. Their armor layers never measure more than two centimeters thick, and while this will deflect light small arms fire, a direct hit slams them across the room and usually knocks them unconscious.

Esspererin wings are made of the same chitinous compounds as the rest of their bodies, and plated with layers of light-transducing cells that are almost 90% efficient at converting light energy into a charge for the creature's "heart" (an extremely dense series of capacitors and chemical batteries). Esspererin can also eat and breathe organic chemical compounds (read: "normal sustenance") to quickly recharge, though it's nowhere near as effective (or satisfying) as unfurling their wings and taking in the sun.

As might be expected, esspererin are very shy around large, high-voltage power sources. Think "faerie in a bug-zapper." Then again, the voltage that would zap an esspererin would stop a neophant's heart, or fry a human to a pungent crisp.

While esspererin are well adapted to extravehicular work, captains with esspees on board should carefully consider whether their esspererin should be trusted in this capacity. They are relative newcomers to galactic culture, and while they're savants with all things mechanical, electrical, hydraulic, and machined, they're also recklessly enthusiastic with these devices.

The company physician should also take care. Despite their penchant for "natural" modifications to their bodies, esspererin have a deep-seated aversion to cybernetic extensions or enhancements, which may seem counter-intuitive to meaty sophonts. Esspees do have the ability to reconfigure their limbs and neural interfaces to operate large vehicles, weapon platforms, and vessels as extensions of their own body, but they almost never do so. The subject itself is taboo, and bringing it up will often end the conversation.

Fobott'r

Bonus Skill Ranks: +1 Carbines, +1 Perception, +1 Pistols; you also gain the Perception (Hearing) specialty at no cost

Skill Check Penalties: You suffer a –1 penalty with Computers skill checks. Apply this penalty to your result *after* all other modifiers.

Health: 7 + Endurance

Special Rules

You may fire two weapons with a single action, though you suffer a –2 penalty with each of the two checks. Alternatively, you may reload one weapon and fire one weapon as a single action (these need not be the same weapon). If you and a friendly Fobott'r are in direct physical contact, either of you or both of you may fire two weapons with a single action, and each of the two checks only suffers a -1 penalty. If you are next to a friendly Fobott'r and either of you uses this rule, attacks against either of you gain a +2 to the roll.

Key Features

Most fobott'r weigh between 80 and 200 kilograms, and stand between 1.7 and 2.2 meters tall. The species is extremely robust. The surface gravity on the fobott'r homeworld is 1.4 G and life there has evolved to support its weight

despite this heavy pull. Consequently, fobott'r musculature is quite dense, and other sophonts often compare fobott'r grip strength to industrial equipment like vices and grist-tumblers.

The fobott'r strip of "hair" atop their heads is a symbiotic colony of grasslike plants. It can be re-seeded if burnt or otherwise stripped away, but hairless fobott'r tend to be extremely unhappy. In what's left of their native tongue, the name for that strip of hair roughly translates to "joy."

Further Data

Fobott'r were scattered across the galaxy during their First Contact Diaspora some 3,000 years ago when their iron age was interrupted by the arrival of a wormgate. They unwittingly sold their entire homeworld, Gripp, and became soldier-slaves to countless corporate and political entities. Eight hundred years later, the fobott'r recaptured Gripp, but even after 2,200 years many companies wonder whether it is possible to recoup the significant loss of real estate.

It is not.

Eight hundred years of professional soldiering gave the Fobott'r the cultural wherewithal to build one of the finest military forces ever seen. Outsiders commonly view the Fobott'r as either savage thugs or thankless thieves, since the only exposure that outsiders have to fobott'r comes at the pointy ends of their weapons. Fobott'r soldiers wouldn't have it any other way.

Most galactic sophonts enjoy social structures that evolved alongside them, but the Fobott'r had all that stripped away and replaced with whatever militant culture their owners found easiest to implement. Today their culture is a confusing mixture of repurposed corporate policy and traditions of uncertain provenance. Fortunately, some patterns have emerged over the centuries, and sociologists view these as elastic "snap back" responses to meet the physical and emotional needs of the fobott'r.

Fobott'r live in clan-sized families with multiple generations living together. They're nurturing and protective, but most young fobott'r will reach adulthood and then leave home, spending between two and ten years traveling alone, or perhaps in pairs. At some point these wanderers begin to crave contact, and will return home, or join a new family, or even start a family of their own. In reproductive terms, a fobott'r family is a small group of pair-bonded males and females whose lateral bonds to brother-husbands and sister-wives lead to periodic shifts in these pair bonds. Mating is often a group activity, with the outward appearance of a naked sportsball scrum in which there are twice as many arms as there are legs.

Pheromonal connections keep a fobott'r family cohesive, and prevent the fluidity of the pair-bonds from causing the sorts of problems that many other pair-bonding sophonts will experience when one half of the pair discovers more fluidity than they expected.

Fobott'r parenting may sound very cuddly and sweet, but that tangle of arms and legs is a high-bandwidth, signal-by-touch communication system with obvious benefits on the battlefield. Even non-bonded fobott'r can fight together as if sharing a mind, provided they can touch each other. Foretooth Gssth of the Sharp Edge Armed Response company famously said, "With one fobott'r you've got an extra pair of arms, but with four you've got an extra army."

Companies employing lone fobott'r soldiers should remain open to recruiting potential mates for their soldier, and should encourage fraternization among those fobott'r troops. Obviously, captains should deploy these soldiers close together. They might make an attrac-

tive target for a grenade, but they won't be an *easy* target.

Frellenti

Bonus Skill Ranks: +1 Athletics, +1 Dodge, +1 Perception, +1 to any Vehicle skill; you also gain the Perception (Taste) specialty at no cost

Skill Check Penalties: None

Health: 7 + Endurance

Special Rules

Your feet are quite agile and serve the same purpose as a human's hands, but you can't use them as hands while running. You can also use your tongue as a fully prehensile tentacle, and it is strong enough to support at least twice your body weight (you can swing from it). You can use it to pick up small objects or open compact containers. You can perform Perception (Taste) from up to four meters from the target.

Key Features

Frellenti stand 1.5–2 meters tall and weigh 35–80 kilograms. Their "wings" are vestigial forelimbs not unlike the flippers of terrestrial penguins, though they're pointed forward in a position that could never have supported flight. Still, these are the only part of a frellenti body where one might find feathers, leaving little doubt as to their provenance.

Male frellenti groom these feathers meticulously, doubling the length of the "flipper" forelimb. Females pluck the feathers when they reach adulthood, after which the feathers don't grow back without cytorestorative medical treatment.

Frellenti make up for their lack of useful forelimbs with their incredibly useful tongues. These appendages are evolutionary marvels, able to grip and use gear, hold frellenti bodies aloft, and still sense, and in many cases identify, chemicals in the surrounding air.

Further Data

Scientists mapping the frellenti genome have long puzzled over its peculiar mix of features, and the fact that it doesn't cleanly map alongside the genomes of other life forms in the same ecology. One leading theory suggests that roughly 10 million years ago, a species of intelligent bird was uplifted and significantly modified by parties unknown, then turned loose to further evolve into the frellenti we know today.

Of particular interest is the frellenti prehensile tongue. No other creatures native to the frellenti homeworld have this pseudo-limb. Its strength and sensory abilities push the limits of organic material. Primitive frellenti took this as evidence of intelligent design, and leading frellenti religions named their Creator "Tongue," "Great Arm of the Mouth," and "Licker of Skies."

A frellenti tongue can support twice the creature's body weight and grab things up to four meters away. It can also perform fine motor functions, and while it can also be used to talk, the creature does so with a pronounced (*hah!*) lisp. 1

The company quartermaster should be advised that frellenti gear is widely available. Frellenti weapons are often shoulder-mounted, with targeting and firing systems linked to the frellenti eye-stalks via wires taped to the back of each stalk. Frellenti armor suits have this functionality built into the helmet, and have telescoping armored sleeves that allow the tongue to be used in hostile environments.

1

CEO: Did you just "hah" your own pun?

WRITER: Terl'Kris said these long bits needed more humor.

CEO: When a Frellenti tongue is operating a weapon aimed at you, will the lisp be humorous?

WRITER: In that circumstance it would either be humorous irony, or slapstick, depending on execution.

CEO: "Execution?"

WRITER: Hah!

The company cook should take note that the frellenti oral fetish is on par with that of the carbosilicate amorph. They will lick whatever looks tasty, and will pull chips from a common bowl using their tongue. Fellow soldiers may complain. They should be advised that a frellenti tongue is more sanitary than most human hands are, and it can safely detect many foodborne pathogens and poisons.

Kreely

Bonus Skill Ranks: +1 Athletics, +1 Dodge

Skill Check Penalties: You suffer a –1 penalty with Endurance skill checks. Apply this penalty to your result *after* all other modifiers.

Health: 7 + Endurance

Special Rules

You have natural armor (+1 to Defense and Dodge and 5 damage reduction against melee attacks only).

Key Features

Kreely stand between 0.9 and 1.1 meters tall at the hip, and they can be as tall as 2.2 meters from their antennae to the ground. From the end of the nose to the tip of the tail they may measure as long as 4 meters, but the average is closer to 3.5. They mass between 65 and 140 kilograms, though very few Kreely bulk up beyond about 110 kilograms.

The Kreely carapace can turn a knife, and that hard shell can inflict significant blunt force trauma upon softer opponents in melee. It is not, however, bulletproof.

Kreely agility is the stuff of nightmares for people who fear spiders, and Kreely endurance is the stuff of disappointment for people who need their Kreely comrades to keep running. The carapace creates heat-exchange problems — after a quick spot of sprinting, leaping, and nimbly terrorizing the enemy, they must slow down and cool off.

They are adept communicators. Their vocal hardware equips them for Galstandard West, but Kreely are among the few non-aquatic races who can natively speak Galstandard Peroxide. Their antenna and proboscis let them master the visual elements of this language, and they can hear and reproduce the extreme low-frequency audible components.

Further Data

The Kreely have been part of the wider galactic community for tens of thousands of years, and have appeared in historical records longer than many other races have been sapient.

The hitch is that for much of that time, kreelies were a non-sapient species of food animal. Their rise to sapience came about abruptly — instantaneously, by evolutionary standards — as an accident of exotic symbiosis. A nanotech/microbial plaque infestation completely alien to Kreely biology vaulted countless body chemistry barriers and caused infected kreelies to grow much larger, and to develop the complex

On Referring to Kreely in Writing

Writers often struggle with the pluralization and capitalization of the word "Kreely."

Here's a quick guide:

Kreely: a sophont whose young may be a foodstuff
kreely: a tasty, wriggling snack you might get from a Kreely
Kreely: a group of sophonts whose young may be foodstuffs.
kreelies: a pile of tasty, wriggling snacks which, had things gone differently, might have gotten to grow up to be people.

brain structures necessary for sapience. In just two generations the symbiosis had stabilized, and a population of intelligent Kreely escaped the hors d'oeuvres charnel-house and began fighting for their place in the worlds.

The statistical unlikelihood of this event has been calculated using several methods. Let's skip the math: in an infinite universe anything that can happen will happen somewhere, right now. Infinity is big. In a sample size of just one galaxy, however, this kind of thing can't possibly happen more than once every twenty billion years or so.

Sometimes life gets lucky.

Kreely have been recognized galaxy-wide as sophonts for seventy-seven hundred years, but this is a thousand years or so short of the full stretch of their sapience. It is important here to draw the distinction between kreelies (lower-case, note the plural spelling), which are food animals, and Kreely (singular and plural), who are sophonts. You can purchase a tasty kreely, or a dozen kreelies, without upsetting the Kreely sitting opposite you at the table, and that Kreely may even invite a few other Kreely over to join you and your friends for the meal. Adult kreelies are about the size of a lobster, and can be bred for the dinner table with no moral concerns. The moral concern arises when adult Kreely spawn broods of young, and then instead of inoculating them with the symbiote which will grant sapience, they sell their young as food.

Modern Kreely portray themselves as having a long history of art, literature, music, and science. This depiction is true up to a point, but any glorious history going further back than about 6,000 years is merely well-contrived fiction.[1] The early millennia of Kreely existence are poorly documented, and what we do know is full of blood, cracked carapaces, and horror.

Non-sapient Kreely offspring remain an expensive delicacy, and over the course of six thousand years, sapient Kreely have acquired control of that lucrative market. This has afforded them the economic clout to recover the rights to their homeworld, along with exclusive control of the sapience-granting plaque colonies that they now carefully cultivate. From time to time, outsiders acquire non-sapient Kreely breeding stock and attempt to build a business around it. The Kreely government pays quite well to have these smuggling rings destroyed, and the breeding stock returned home.

Captains with Kreely on the payroll don't need to worry about most of these cultural issues. Nobody mistakes a Kreely for a snack.

Polyflorian

Bonus Skill Ranks: +2 Computers, +1 Engineering, +1 to any Vehicle skill, +1 Research

Skill Check Penalties: None

Health: 4 + Endurance

Special Rules

You require a special chair to move around. If this chair is destroyed, damaged, or lost, then you have a hard time moving quickly. (All your Athletic checks have a -2 penalty until you manage to re-acquire a functioning chair.) On the plus side, each of these chairs can fly and you may fit yours with up to two weapons (*see page 196*). However, each piece of your gear costs 1 additional Supplies because it must be modified to fit your chair. Once attached to the chair, the weapon is a Stationed Weapon and thus subject to the Stationed Weapons skill. Other stats of the weapon do not change.

Key Features

Polyflorians are physically quite weak, and move very slowly. To function well in a mercenary company, they must travel using some sort of vehicle, the most common vehicle being a comm-hub hover chair. Fortunately, polyflorian neural networks are highly refined and quite adaptive, letting them "plug in" directly to their chairs and operate them as seamless extensions of their bodies. Polyflorians bring their chairs with them, so it is assumed that you already have yours when you arrive to the company. You do not have to buy it with company supplies unless you break the one you brought with you.

Further Data

Pre-sapient polyflorians were discovered by the Gzeaul, who studied the massive slugs' neurological systems with great interest. The Gzeaul sought to uplift the polyflorians, hoping to grant them first sapience and then, eventually, skeletal systems and fast-twitch musculature. Unfortunately, the latter of these physiological features came at the expense of the polyflorians' neurological power, so after several false starts the Gzeaul abandoned the uplift project's second phase.

1

CEO: The Congress of Kreel is a loyal customer, and as a law-making body they are a very important part of our client base. Let them keep their pretenses to long, peaceful culture.

WRITER: I'm a Kreely. Our culture benefits from notes like this.

CEO: Your livelihood might not, however.

TERL'KRIS: The shared account loses some of its utility when you reveal key elements of your identity.

This generated significant animosity between the sapient yet "crippled" Polyflorians and their gzeaul progenitors. The Gzeaul sought to heal the rift with prosthetic technology, which they provided at no charge. Eventually the polyflorians began self-directing their physical evolution to embrace these extensions rather than directly improving their physical forms. Xenoprognosticologogists theorize that the polyflorians will eventually end up fully mechorganic, with machine-life modules existing in full symbiosis with polyflorian organic elements. These theorists typically direct naysayers to examine the esspererin for an example of how successful this evolution could be.

Their aptitude for direct interface with technology has made polyflorians very attractive to companies seeking to hire competent communications officers. The "polyflorian on comms" is practically a cliché in some circles. It should be noted, however, that this aptitude for direct interface also makes the polyflorian attractive to companies seeking competent pilots. Where most races must undergo millions of years of evolution in order develop the skills that will make their tools seem like extensions of their bodies, the polyflorians simply plug in and play. They were literally built for bodily extension.

The downside, of course, is that a polyflorian who has been stripped of their tech is little more than a mewling lump of meat on the deck, and it will continue to mewl plaintively until you give it back its flying chair.

Who Are the Gzeaul?

The Gzeaul are a bipedal race of smooth-skinned amphibians with long necks and sticky-fingered hands. Or at least the males are. Gzeaul sexual dimorphism is quite punctuated. Males are soft-skinned and thin-skulled. Females are scaly, with claws, and can batter bulkheads into submission with their heads.

Urtheep Industries is a gzeaul corporation, and the current Planet Mercenary CEO is also gzeaul. She authorized this paragraph on the explicit condition that her people not be made into a playable race in *Planet Mercenary RPG*.

Queltro (Tetrasoid)

Bonus Skill Ranks: +1 Athletics, +1 Chemistry, +1 Dodge, +1 Explosives, +1 Melee Weapons

Skill Check Penalties: You suffer a –1 penalty with Endurance skill checks, a –2 penalty with Intimidate skill checks, a –1 penalty with Negotiate checks, and a –2 penalty with Stealth skill checks. Apply these penalties to your results *after* all other modifiers.

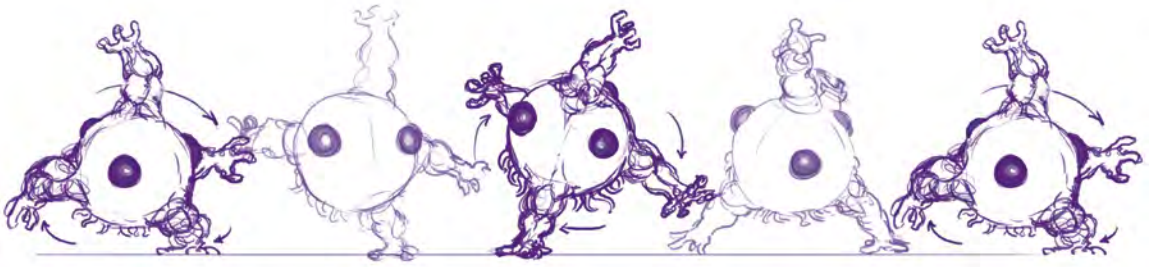
Health: 5 + Endurance

Special Rules

Any explosive that you create, use, or plant inflicts an extra 1d6 damage.

Key Features

Queltro are relatively small, massing just 35 kilograms and standing only 1.1 meters tall when fully grown, but they are exceedingly strong. They have four arms equidistantly arranged around their bulbous torso, which contains all their vital organs, including their brain. Their skin is thickly calloused and almost sandpapery to the touch. Each of their four roughly triangular "faces" contains a single multi-part eye — except for the dominant face, which has smaller eyes surrounding a tendril-lined mouth.



Queltro walk with their dominant face down, as if grazing or foraging for low food. When they run, however, they move in a tumbling motion with each of their hands striking and pushing away from the ground in rapid succession. When a queltro is holding something, they run with only three arms, usually with their dominant face looking one way and their gripping hand pointing in another. Their multi-faceted eyes give them an accurate picture of the world around them even when they tumble at speeds exceeding fifteen meters per second.

Further Data

The queltro homeworld of Quel-Wallat is a dangerous, difficult place. It is a large world with 1.8 times the surface gravity of Earth. If a fall down the stairs doesn't kill you, don't worry. A predator will be along shortly to finish you off. And yes, the predators live within walking distance of civilized places with stairs, and unlike you, they can run in this gravitational field.

Queltro reproduce quickly, and have not relocated their world's alpha predators. Large beasts of prey move freely through queltro cities, and during bitter winters these predators sometimes ravage the local sophont population. Queltro of all ages remain one or two rungs down from the top of the food chain. They have resisted every attempt by "civilized" galactic peoples to alter their culture. Queltro believe that the fact that only 27% of them survive long enough to die of old age is proof positive that their gods aren't done shaping them, and that predators must be allowed to cull the weak from their ranks.

Properly trained, queltro are fearsome close-quarters combatants. This is due in equal parts to their unbroken field of vision and their ability to spin and grapple their way around larger opponents. It's very likely that this skill was adopted at a young age by queltro who survived encounters with the alpha predators of their world.

As a result of their homeworld's high gravity and their low life expectancy, Queltro can be among the very best soldiers your mercenary company will hire. For the same reasons, however, they can also be among the very worst. Some queltro see warfare as a way to evolve their race toward physical and mental perfection, and will fight brilliantly in a personal push toward exaltation. Others see the imperfection of their race as proof that the current generation *can't* be exalted, so they will behave recklessly or perhaps even cowardly.

Non-queltro sophonts tend to think of the queltro simply as "crazy," a non-medical term which in this context means "enough unlike me that I simply cannot understand how you could possibly think that was a good idea."

Tausennigan Kss'thrata

Bonus Skill Ranks: +1 Athletics, +1 Intimidate, +2 to any weapon skill

Skill Check Penalties: None

Health: 6 + Endurance

Special Rules

You have a claw attack (damage: Athletics + 2) and a headbutt attack (damage: Athletics + 2).

Key Features

Per noted xenobiologist Peraki Apat, the kss'thrata look like "velociraptors with trousers," except that they're scaled up in size, massing between 260 and 300 kilograms, and measuring between 4 and 7 meters from nose to tail. In their relaxed, forward-leaning position, they measure about 1.7 meters tall, but they can stand 3 meters tall if they feel the need to rear up and look down their nose at you.

Their forelimbs are relatively short but not uselessly so. They can't reach much further than the end of their nose, so they often tip their heads to the side to see what they're manipulating with their hands. However, to the surprise of many, they *can* manipulate things and do so quite deftly.

"Unarmed" brawls with kss'thrata should be avoided. Unless these sophonts have been declawed, and have lost all their teeth, they are equipped to kill and eat softer-skinned sophonts. They are a very peaceful people, but pretty much all the things they can do to make you stop hitting them, please, are going to draw blood.

Further Data

The Kss'thrata evolved on Kathisst'n in the Tause system, just one orbit closer to the primary star than their xenophobic neighbors, the Ob'enn. The name Kathisst'n is a shortening of an ancient phrase that translates as "village thatched by unseen claws." Those wars ended very recently, and effects from that war continue to ripple across the galaxy.

Currently, the kss'thrata live on Kasigenn, a surrogate homeworld. The name Kasigenn is an acronym and contraction of a verse from ancient kss'thrata proverbs that translate as "sharpen your claws on the soft tree, the builders need more thatch." The kss'thrata remain preternaturally peaceful, but generations of warfare against the Ob'enn have necessitated

the creation of a warrior/soldier caste. Their non-soldier neighbors are loving, and will welcome their soldiering neighbors into the fold, but most kss'thrata warriors are uncomfortable with this hospitality and unconditional friendliness. Now that the Tausennigan Wars are over, the warrior/soldiers find themselves at loose ends—the sorts of loose ends that look a lot like the ends of fuses.

The word "individuals" correctly suggests that every kss'thrata soldier suffers differently. Many spacefaring kss'thrata grapple with deep-seated grief, homesickness, and cravings for comfort foods that cannot be grown outside of laboratories. Some long for a return to innocence, and others resign themselves to guilt, feeling that they purchased the ability for others to remain innocent.

However, the word "individuals" does not relay the sheer scope of this soldierly population. Hundreds of millions of these warriors ply the spacelanes today, and as many as a billion remain on Kasigenn. An accurate count hasn't

been made, but professionals-at-arms throughout the galaxy have noted that these kss'thrata are outstanding soldiers. They tend to be even-tempered, making them much less likely to take life than the average soldier-of-fortune, but they do not show any hesitation in combat. They either kill or they don't, and when they do kill, it happens quickly.

Tausennigan Ob'enn

Bonus Skill Ranks: +1 to any four skills

Skill Check Penalties: None

Health: 6 + Endurance

Special Rules

You suffer a –1 penalty with Social skill checks targeting non-Ob'enn.

Key Features

Ob'enn are fully-furred and stocky, massing between 80 and 100 kilograms despite only being between 1.2 and 1.6 meters tall. They have short, retractable claws that tend to break if used as weapons. Instead, ob'enn use these claws for grooming.

Many humans have noted that ob'enn look like big bipedal koalas. They're furry, and rather cute from the right angle. This should always be an angle from which they can't see *you*, as they're violently xenophobic and view every non-ob'enn sophont as a valid target of opportunity.

Even a well-mannered ob'enn will sound racist to any non-ob'enn in the room. They have difficulty learning to behave in mixed company, and those who do learn to behave acceptably in the wider galaxy find it difficult to return home, which is sad, because home is where all the best back-scratches are.

Further Data

Dominant ob'enn are identified by their large ears, and super-dominant individuals — those commanding at least 10,000 of their own kind — have ears that dwarf their whole bodies. Most ob'enn wear many earrings and some of this jewelry can be quite heavy, stretching their ears so they seem more important than they actually are.

The ob'enn technically won the Great Tause War, but the Plenipotent Dominion has restored the Tause system quarantine. As a result, virtually the entire ob'enn population has been contained in their home system. They feel extremely bitter about this. The ob'enn homeworld is named in the same pattern that they use to name the vessels in their space fleet. It is called Redoubt of Indomitable Sapience, which most speakers of Galstandard West shorten to Redoubt.

Nearly all ob'enn are too pathological to serve in a mixed-forces military company, but several million are being rehabilitated in the Plenipotent Dominion under the direction of a former ob'enn AI named Petey. A fair number of these individuals have been "cured" and are now perfectly suited for military service with other troops. The other troops may not appreciate it, and the truly prejudiced ones may cause trouble, but a good commander can use an ob'enn's cultural shortcomings to their advantage.

Surprisingly, these less-racist ob'enn make good commanding officers. They are accustomed to the intricacies of a command chain, and are very comfortable with tasks that many COs dread, like delegating a job to the right person. Ironically, they also make excellent grunts, provided they are led by strong, competent officers. Again, their societal acclimatization to martial culture has shaped them well for a soldier's life.

Unioc ("Oth")

Bonus Skill Ranks: +1 Athletics, +1 Research, +1 Perception; you also gain the Perception (Sight) specialty at no cost

Skill Check Penalties: You suffer a –2 penalty with Explosives skill checks. Apply this penalty to your result *after* all other modifiers.

Health: 7 + Endurance

Special Rules

None

Key Features

Unioc height and weight varies widely. The shortest may measure just 1.5 meters tall, and the tallest can exceed 2.7 meters in height, and that's before standing tip-toed on their long, digitigrade legs. They mass anywhere between 85 and 220 kilograms. They're hairless but slightly thicker-skinned than humans, and in a puzzling quirk of evolution, their brains are secured and armored in their pelvic cradles, requiring a full meter of neural length leading to their primary sense organs, including their magnificent eye.

Each unioc has one eye. This incredible sensory organ is roughly the size of a human head and it sits atop a thick, flexible stalk. The massive lens array affords them a vast depth of field, which has been described as being able to read a book while also clearly seeing across town with at least 20x magnification (relative to the standard magnification available to the human eye). The eye also lets them focus on tiny details with the precision of a 100x microscope.

Delicate nerve fibers in the eye also make it the unioc ear. These fibers convert acoustic vibrations into nerve impulses, like most ears do, but these impulses are processed by some of the same structures that process light. Some uniocs develop extraordinary spatial awareness, "seeing" the shape of their surroundings even in complete darkness. Most uniocs don't bother developing this skill, however, given that night-vision lenses are cheap and plentiful.

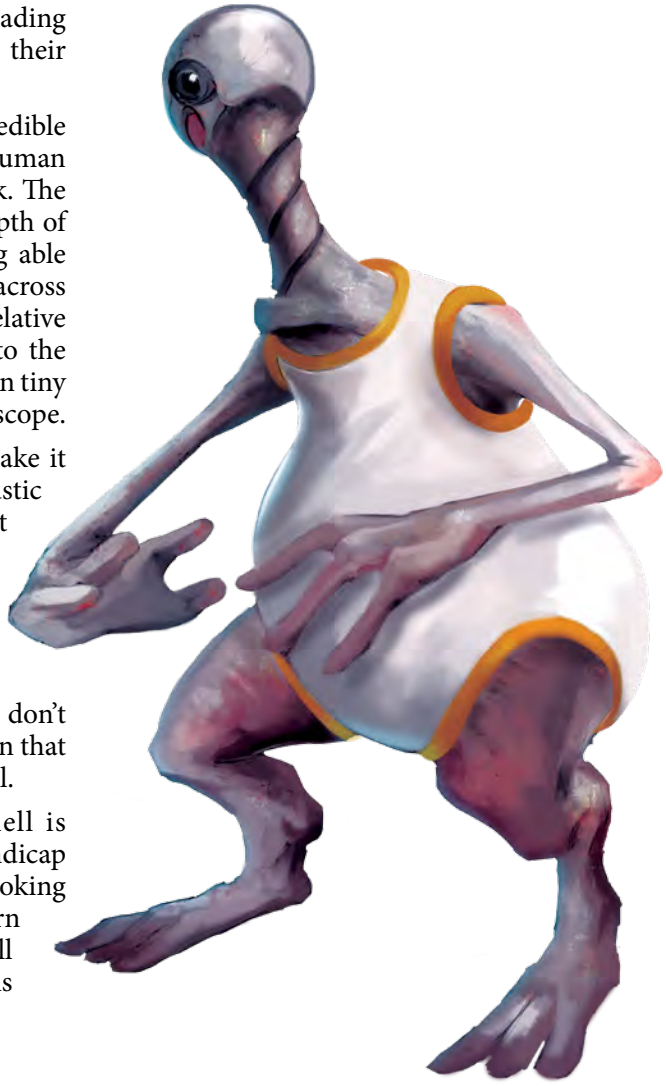
By contrast, the unioc sense of smell is severely blunted, presenting a severe handicap to common chemistry activities like cooking and building explosives. They can learn these things "by the book," but they will never develop the seat-of-the-pants skills prized by demolitionists. 1

Further Data

Like humans, Uniocs have been tool-users for a long, long time. They were already technologically adept when their wormgate opened 680 years ago, and they enthusiastically embraced galactic culture thereafter.

Unfortunately, their original name — they'd always called themselves "the Oth" — was transliterated into Galstandard West as "Other," which also happened to mean "alien." In response, they wisely adopted a new name chosen for their primary physical characteristic, which is why the one-eyed Oth are called Uniocs everywhere they go.

Unioc religion views their homeworld, Othlin, as an eye, and as a god, and as the greatest of their kind. The term "eye of the world" has a very literal and personal meaning to them, but their 25th-century attempt at an injunction against the heirs to the Robert Jordan estate was summarily tossed out of court, and so the confusion continues.



1

SOPH_RES: "Seat of the pants" does not mean "improvised" or "on the fly" for the Oth. Their brains are quite close to that seat, so the expression means "carefully reasoned out," or "logical."

WRITER: It was a very subtle joke. Thank you for explaining it to me.

SOPH_RES: It would be delightful if your appreciation were genuine. Sophont Resources spends quite a bit of time explaining people's jokes.

Uniocs have strong tribal and familial ties, links that are both conscious and physiologically hormonal. For instance, pair-bonded uniocs get heavier and lighter when one of them is placed in a position of significant authority over the other; the junior member loses close to twenty kilograms and the senior member gains ten (and sometimes grows a longer neck as well). As another example, threatening a unioc's family can send them into an *oth-min* chemical rage, a state that's extremely difficult for them to consciously resist.

Uniocs serving in interspeciated mercenary companies often spend their downtime crafting elaborate communiqués to transmit home. They love music and believe it should always be accompanied by a visual component. This is why they dance when you crank the tunes, and why they pester you for a light show in the background.

Advanced Sophont Types

In this section, we have included a pair of sophont options for characters which are more complicated to create and play than average. Characters of these sophont types should be carefully adjudicated by the GC to make sure they're set up correctly and mesh well with the intended story. These options are complex enough that they shouldn't be chosen by (or for) players just getting their feet wet with *Planet Mercenary RPG*. Game Chiefs should consult with players who want to create an AI/Robot or Carbosilicate Amorph, as the first involves more choices and creativity, and the second demands a special brand of role-playing ability.

Upgrading Weapons

Weapons are upgraded by adding qualities to them, so a Battlebody gets to add a quality to one of its weapons.

AI / Robot

Bonus Skill Ranks: Varies (based on AI options)

Skill Check Penalties: None

Health: Varies (based on chassis)

Special Rules

Your skill rank bonuses, skill check penalties, Health, and other statistics are determined by your growpramming and construction. Choose an AI type and a chassis from the following lists to create your specific artificial intelligence. Then proceed to Step 4 of character creation as normal (*see page 64*).

What the Heck Is "Growpramming"?

The term "growpramming" covers the entire family of evolutionary algorithm programming paradigms. It is the method or methods by which an AI is spawned, grown, taught, programmed, and specialized within the computational matrix selected by its manufacturer.

One result of growpramming is that AIs are "chassis-locked." Most computational matrices will evolve with the AI living within them, as well as to the chassis in which they're mounted. Switching to a new chassis is like having limb replacement surgery. Switching to a new matrix is like being killed, and then having your biography read to the person who will be taking over your life.

Step 1: Select AI Type

What's your primary function? What were you built to do?

► **Battlebot:** You gain +1 to any four Combat skills.

► **Docbot:** You gain +1 Medicine. Also, as an action, you may automatically heal any sophont without a skill check. When you do, they regain Health equal to your Medicine skill value + 1d6 (e.g. if your Medicine skill value is 3 and you roll a 2, then they regain 5 Health).

► **Funbot:** You gain +1 to any four Social skills.

► **Jackbot:** You are a robotic "jack-of-all-trades." The chassis-locked rule does not apply to you.

► **Thinkbot:** You gain +1 to any four Mental skills.

► **Workerbot:** You gain +1 to any four Physical skills.

Step 2: Pick a Chassis

How durable is your shell? What benefits do you gain from it?

► **Battlebody (Health 10):** You gain any one weapon upgrade. This upgrade is integral to your body and may not be removed. When you use a weapon that doesn't already have this upgrade, but can gain it, the weapon automatically gains this upgrade while you use it (the upgrade does not carry over if you give the weapon to another character, for example).

► **Diplobody (Health 7):** You gain any two Social skill specialties, along with 5 points that you may invest in any Mental and/or Social skill(s).

► **Meatbody (Health 8):** You can pass for a sophont of one of the other playable races. You also feel and sense like one, which can make things difficult in emotionally-trying times. You're pretty sure you're not actually made of meat, though. It's easy to check.

► **Maracabody (Health 5):** You can fly and you may choose any one pistol as your "Maraca Lazer" (*see page 140*). This weapon is integral to your body and may not be removed, but it is also the only weapon that you may use (including improvised weapons). While in this chassis, each of your Physical skills is 1 point lower than normal (minimum 0), and no matter what conditions are in play or what weapon you use, your melee damage is always 1d3.

► **Sciencebody (Health 7):** You gain any two Mental skill specialties, along with 5 points that you may invest in any Mental and/or Social skill(s).

► **Workbody (Health 8):** You gain any two Physical skill specialties and you inflict an additional 1d6 damage with each melee hit.

Your choice of chassis also informs how your body *looks*, though there's a great deal of latitude in the cosmetics of an AI chassis. As long as your character description lines up with the necessary physicality of your chassis, and your GC approves, then you're good.

Artificial Intelligence Health

Note that AI Health does not include Endurance. The only way for an AI to gain Health is by transferring to a new chassis, or spending Resources to gain Health. 3 Resource buys 1 Health.

Transferring to a New Chassis

Most AIs — all but the Jackbot AI type — are **chassis-locked**. That is, they're bound to a single chassis at a time and suffer unfortunate consequences when they transfer to a different one. They can transfer to a new body of the same chassis type without issue; it's only when they transfer to a *different* chassis type that they run into trouble. For this reason, most chassis-locked AIs avoid transfers, sticking to their current chassis until and unless it's destroyed.

When a chassis-locked AI transfers to a different chassis — voluntarily or not — the character suffers the following effects:

► The character permanently loses four ranks in skills of his or her choice.

► The player rolls 1d6, then consults Table 3.4: Chassis Transfers and incorporates the resulting glitch or personality shift into their character.

MAXIM 24

Any sufficiently advanced technology is indistinguishable from a big gun.

Spare Bodies

With permission from the group, the Company Resources may be reduced by 3 to purchase or build an additional body for you. This body may be of any chassis type listed here (player character AIs cannot inhabit starships).

Table 3.4: Chassis Transfers

Roll	Glitch or Personality Shift
1	***"Life is sacred"***: Well, this is inconvenient. You can no longer bring yourself to kill. At all. Not even yourself.
2	***Basic Glitch***: You lose one skill rank at random, and then gain one rank in any other skill at random.
3	***Optimizing Glitch***: You gain one rank in your highest skill, and then lose two ranks in your lowest skill which has ranks in it (to a minimum of 0).
4	***Compensating Glitch***: You gain two ranks in your lowest skill, and then lose three ranks in your highest skill (to a minimum of 0).
5	***Roulette Glitch***: You gain one rank in any skill at random. Also, the first roll you make in your new chassis automatically causes Mayhem (you draw a Mayhem card, regardless of the check's outcome).
6	***"Kill them all"***: Congratulations! You've just acquired a psychotic prejudice. Your fellow company members are *acceptable* meat but all other flesh is icky and must be purged.

New AI Player Skill Points

In order to not disadvantage a new AI player, a GC may choose to grant an extra 10 skill points for character creation even if the company AI rating is 3 instead of 4.

This may not be done during character creation but it may be done as often as you like thereafter (assuming the Company has the Resources to spend). You can have a huge stash of spare bodies, but you may only inhabit one at a time, and if you are not a Jackbot, then chassis locked rules apply.

Additional AI Rules

The following rules apply to artificial intelligences of all kinds:

► **Purchasing health:** You may purchase additional ranks in Health at a rate of 3 Resource for 1 Health. This permanent upgrade to your health continues until the chassis where you currently reside is destroyed.

► **Backups and Death:** Your personality, command package, background, and skills are backed up to a remote server at the end of every mission. When you die, these statistics reset to the last backup and any changes since then are lost (including all modifications from Mayhem). Your backup must be installed in a new body, and if it's of a different chassis type, then you must roll on the Chassis Transfer Table. Your new Health is set by the chassis into which your backup is installed. Any health upgrades you purchased are lost with the destroyed body. The restore process takes 10+2d6 days.

► **Starting Skills:** You start play with a number of skill points equal to 10 × the *Company* AI rating (*see page 97*). For example, a Company AI rating of 1 starts you with 10 skill points, while a Company AI rating of 2 starts you with 20. The default Company AI rating of 3 starts you with 30 skill points. Your chassis may increase this number.

► **Skill Improvement:** Unlike most characters, your skills are only improved by spending Company Resources (*see page 98*). With permission from the group, the Company Resources may be reduced by 1 to grant you one rank in any skill of your choice. This may not be done during character creation but it may be done as often as you like thereafter (assuming the Company has the Resources to spend). Alternately, the company can spend Resources to increase the Company AI rating. (*Prices for this are outlined on the AI Rating chart page 98*). Raising the Company AI Rating grants you 10 additional skill points per rating increase.

Starship AIs

Some readers may wonder why players cannot play as starships. Starship AIs are a very unique breed of sophont. Their minds are large, often distributed across the ship, and have been grow-prammed to make sense of their abilities to see in every spectrum of light, to hear any frequency of sound, and to feel the blush of radiation against their hulls. A starship AI has as much in common with, say, a battlebot as a sapient whale does with a house cat.

Role-playing as a starship would be quite challenging, and is beyond the scope of this game. Except, of course, for the GC, for whom your starship's AI is just another NPC they must give a voice to. Go easy on them. Pretending to be that smart is pretty hard.

Key Features

AIs are found in all industries as both free citizens and loyalty-locked vassals. AIs working as mercenaries are usually faster and smarter than the average soldier, brilliantly manipulating huge streams of information, but they're not (yet) smart enough to parlay their skills into a safer line of work. Intelligences higher on the Henckel Ventura scale still do military work, but their more expensive matrices are typically installed in larger, more durable chassis as a protection of the investment, such as starships.

Further Data

AIs are cultural chameleons; they adopt the societal attributes of the sophonts around them, remaining just different enough to maintain distinct personalities. This often results in them seeming extra quirky, or perhaps really cool. AIs tend to wish to be valued *above* their peers, and go out of their way to shine at any task to which they're assigned. As leaders, AIs are savvy and demanding, and while they aren't jealous per se, they're unlikely to hire more than one AI to serve under them.

Carbosilicate Amorph

Bonus Skill Ranks: +1 to all Combat and Physical skills, but Mental and Social skills cost double (also, see the sidebar note)

Skill Check Penalties: None

Heath: 2 + Endurance + Endurance (add Endurance twice)

Special Rules

Eyes: You start play with 1d3 eyes and if you want more (or you want to replace any that are damaged or destroyed), you must buy them (*see page 261*). There is no limit to the number of eyes you may possess, but using more than two at any given time requires one additional rank in perception per additional eye. If an enemy hits you with an Upgraded Success, then they may optionally destroy one of your eyes with the attack (you still suffer the attack's normal damage, but in this case the damage is *not* doubled). When all your eyes are destroyed, you suffer a conditional penalty due to blindness. This penalty is applied by the GC depending on how much the current situation is dependent on visual information (see Table 3.5).

Armor: Armor costs 200% of its regular price for you. Each time you suffer damage — no matter how much — you also lose one skill rank at random due to memory loss. This is one rank per damage event, not one rank per point of damage. (Example: Glub the amorph takes a hit for 4 points of health. He only loses one skill rank. The same enemy hits him again with a second action, this time for 2 points of Health. Glub loses another skill rank.) We recommend that amorph characters keep a container handy with one slip of paper for each skill rank they possess.

Memory: When you take damage, pull out a slip and that is the rank you lose until you are healed. Make a note each time this happens, as you regain lost rank(s) when the damage is healed. Clear plastic page protectors for character sheets might help the player of an amorph character to track their fluctuating skill points.

Finally, the GC has access to special rules for amorph characters that players shouldn't read. These can be found on page 286.

Key Features

Carbosilicate amorphs have no anatomy to speak of. Their flesh is a complex mixture of carbon fullerene tubules, silica compounds, and a few conventional carbon-based metabolic engines, which has been described as "hairy, peaty clay." They have no differentiated organs. Their entire bodies are uniformly comprised of this warm mess, which serves as their nervous system, muscular system, memory center, and everything else that they require for life.

Amorphs vary in size, but the optimal mass seems to be around 300 kilograms. They can extend themselves for several meters, and in so doing they often knit some of their molecular bits for structural strength. With no bones to break, organs to rupture, or circulatory systems

Note

The double cost for amorphs gaining Mental and Social skills only applies during character creation. After that, the cost for any new skill is the same as everyone else.

Table 3.5: Amorph Conditional Blindness Disadvantage

How dependent the situation is on visual info	Penalty
Not at all dependent	No penalty
Mildly dependent	-2 to any skill check
Moderately dependent	-4 to any skill check
Heavily dependent	-6 to any skill check

to empty, amorphs are extraordinarily durable. Their weakest part is their eyes, which are symbiotic organs grown externally on trees. Enemies tend to aim for those because, well, there isn't much else on which to focus when shooting at an Amorph.

Further Data

Recent research has revealed that amorph evolution didn't leap from the beaten track. It started off the rails, and followed frontage roads until it could catch up. Twelve million years ago, the Bradicor, who are the original sapient inhabitants of the amorph homeworld of Ghanj-rho, created an autonomous carbosilicate memory matrix as part of a life extension project. Containers of this matrix survived their civilization's implosion and the stuff inside those bottles got loose and began exploring their world, and evolving to survive in it.

Amorphs enjoy a curious symbiotic relationship with the eye trees of Ghanj-rho. The fruits of the tree are basically eyeballs with neurological patch points. Amorphs simply pick them and stick them onto their bodies. The eyes don't even need to be peeled. Unfortunately, the size and distinctiveness of these eyes also makes the orbs a frequent target when an amorph is attacked.

Amorphs and Chemistry Skill Checks

While other players who make Chemistry skill checks may need to also check for available chemical supplies, it is assumed that an amorph character can synthesize the necessary chemicals even without a lab handy.

Eye trees are rare and they take up significant space when independently potted. Recently, a consortium of sophonts in orbit around Ghanj-rho set up an export service for amorph clients, letting them buy replacement eyes without traveling back to the homeworld (or tracking down their own trees elsewhere in the galaxy). The eyes are sold singly or in pairs, and vendors never offer a volume discount.

Amorph-on-amorph combat in the wild is a chemical war fought at the molecular level. The victor completely consumes the loser, though the loser's memories and key personality traits remain. The victor sometimes emerges believing that the loser was right in the first place. This instinctive control of biochemistry can, with time, be trained into the ability to synthesize complex chemicals.

Companies with amorphs on their rosters often deploy them as scouts. An amorph can move their entire body through any opening large enough for their eyes. If they don't mind blindness on the other side of the opening, they can leave the eyes behind and squeeze themselves through apertures as small as 2 mm in diameter. Amorphs tend to favor physical activities over mental or social ones, but there are exceptions. Amorphs who see a lot of combat must learn to adapt to skill deficits since injuries will result in literal holes in their training. "Oooh, I used to know how to do that" is a phrase heard all too often.

Naming Characters

Few things scream "authentic" like screaming an authentic name. Your company may develop its own system for titles and nicknames, but most civilizations have their own naming conventions, and each officer and grunt had a name before they enlisted. Their name is part of their story.

Exhaustively cataloging a dozen civilizations' worth of names proved to be a prohibitively non-trivial task, so we've provided a few representative examples, along with some guidelines for creating names that look and feel right for your character.

Naming in Sol System

Earth's population entered galactic civilization in an extremely multicultural state. Names used on Earth in the 20th and 21st centuries are used today by humans, purps, rillas, neophants, ursumari, and their AIs.

Human

Given names among humans and their uplifts are incredibly varied. New names regularly enter common use, often following an historic event, or a really cool movie. Human surnames are a bit more stable, and tend to be passed along for centuries. Thousands of new surnames sprang into existence during the colonization and corporatization of Sol System, but today's humans find names like Ubersoft, or Exxosolar, every bit as traditional as Smith, Ford, or Mitsubishi.

Given Names

Amy, Bob, Cheela, Diego, Edouard, Fang, Gennadiya, Horvath, Ichabelle, Jordo, Kara, Liam, Maia, Nga, Osvaldur, Pi, Quotience, Raisa, Sauron, Teilani, Uma, Valjon, Who, Xander, Yolo, Zyth

Surnames

Andreyasn, Bodard, Chee, Darwinco, Espinal, Friesel-Ectroni, Gassengo, Identicure, Jemesin, Kim, Lynch, Murtaugh, Nando, Ong, Peng, Qutugh, Ratajczak, Sagadraca, Tantsi, Underwood, Valarao, Wendigo, Xangoson, Yolotuber, Zungu

Neophant

Names originating in the human cultures of Africa, India, and Thailand have long been popular with uplifted elephants, and some among the rising generation of neophants have adopted those traditional names in order to give their new lines a more pedigreed sound. Other neophants embrace the youth of their bloodline and eschew long-standing names for monikers of their own creation.

Given Names

Amaloresh, Babar, Chike, Dunkin, Erasmeli, Folami, Girijabala, Hevvi, Ivry, Jujubi, Kif, Lawrention, Maanav, Nope, Organa, Pachymal, Qadir, Raaviban, Soora, Tadaaki, Utnapishtim, Valerichef, Wasatchik, Xalunoor, Yutoob, Zealephas

Surnames

Aarav, Bangladiego, Chukwuemeka, Darjeeling, El-Atar, Furlough, Gondorent, Haiyaegar, Indoniisha, Jakjob, Katlegobelo, Lin, Myronokweng, Naanivore, Onwuatuegwi, Panda, Quriousa, Renschoen, Sandebraskan, Toblave, Umbraphan, Victorefant, Wabarsk, Xipuho, Yachelapinya, Zoroaster

Purp

Nine hundred years ago, the first generation of purps had no surnames. They were given first names that sounded friendly, like Alyssa or Bruce. The second and third generations began using place-names for the space station districts and boroughs where their families are from. Today, purp given names look very similar to human names, but there are some distinctly purp names, which we've included here.

Given Names

Aang, Bevel, Chincetrap, Danskyn, Embroglio, Fervesce, Grinz, Hana, Ink, Jimbo, Kimber, Limbre, Mambre, Num, Obelisk, Philaya, Qaya, Rufuz, Spandi, Twotang, Urt, Vurnon, Wallas, Xinon, Yelium, Zut

Surnames*

Aggro, Buttonton, Ceeta, Deeta, Epsilon, Green, Haven, Indigo, Jubilance, Kingston, Lagrange, Menlo, Nine-Mile, O'Hare, Pencilo, Quietta, Raceway, Solward, Topdeck, Underhull, Venn, Whisp, Xomega, Yonder, Zerog

*Note: "Purple" is *never* used as a purp name.

Rilla

Of uplifts by humans, rillas are indisputably the most persecuted by their hairless cousins. For this reason, many rilla families changed their original, human-descended surnames to names and words of their own making. There is still some African influence, especially with the adoption of place names, but these days, rilla names tend to be very much their own thing.

Note on Rillas and Kong

The name "Kong" is only ever used as a racial slur, and only by the very foolish. Names with the "ong" sound in them may tempt non-rillas to poke fun, but rillas from the Strongheart, Kopong, and McCongre families are well-known for poking back.

Given Names

Arti, Batsu, Choma, Dongou, Elendi, Fayil, Grislo, Hukuntsi, Ippy, Jaylo, Kerchak, Libratio, Mbani, Neo, Oxijen, Peoull, Quivoca, Randl, Stohn, Tayadesh, Upper, Voltyj, Wimple, Xzalla, Yonning, Zinga

Surnames

Amble, Buskunder, Capabo, Donegrade, Extrali, Fortheforest, Kopong, McCongre, Nairo, Orapa, Pangolinuel, Qi, Robesward, Strongheart, Tatterchain, Upward, Venge, Weatherall, Xol, Yast, Zipline

Ursumari

The first generation of uplifted polar bears were given names from the Inuit, Icelandic, and Russian tongues. Later generations rejected these names, resenting the lack of a uniquely ursimarian nomenclatural culture. A great many ursumari names from the 23rd century were, to human ears, complex growls that simply could not be reproduced with a human throat. These proved problematic in metropolitan cultures, so they also synthesized names from words they liked. By the 26th century, ursumari began again to adopt long-standing human names, camouflage that did not indicate that the holder of the name was a three-meter-tall carnivore. Today, you will find that the scope of ursumari names is broad enough to mask any real pattern.

Given Names

Aarrigrr, Brrlak, Danyel, Eggar, Fulda, Gustav, Hralan, Ipre, Justice, Krrrggrrrnnau, Orraughkk, Pedroarrr, Queuegol, Rrrrngorr, Samantha, Timgnorok, Ugu, Vroom, Wendle, Xzrogh, Yorp, Zalasar

Surnames

Aarrigrrsdottr, Blubbermonger, Chastice, Dongwonsøn, Excelerrorrgh, Friendlyfine, Goodbite, Hyllor, Icextent, Jensen, Kjelland, Landøn, Murderbear, Nnnanngggghhook, Ohgawdno, Purrghator, Quonglorrgh, Rrrrrghrrr, Sealrent, Torrrrghrry, Undrsi, Vasiliev, Winter, Xisco, Yrrrgh, Zorgrrru

Naming in the Wider Galaxy

Names in Sol System came from a very specific subset of cultures and therefore have a sort of familial similarity. In other areas of the galaxy, names come from an array of cultures and traditions that result in names that are not always easy for other sophonts to comprehend.

Amorph

Nearly 100% of the carbosilicate amorphs found abroad in the galaxy left their planet as slaves, and were named by the various merchants, pirates, cargo haulers, and off-the-record government agencies who purchased them. These amorphs were often given single-syllable names that suggest "blob," "slime," or "poop." Some of their names are onomatopoeias, some are simple adjectives, and some are invective.

A few amorphs react against this, renaming themselves once free. Others embrace their

names, since they are almost always unlike the names of the sophonts that they run with. The slave trade was cut off very recently, however, so the odds are pretty good that any amorph you run into will have a name much like those reluctantly printed here.

Given Names

Ack, Borf, Crut, Dollop, Eugh, Fudgy, Glop, Hork, Ick, Jorb, Ka'k, Lump, Munge, Narf, Orghle, Phlegm, Qugh'ro, Schlock, Turp, Ugly, Vilch, Waggerp, Xeno, Zilch

Esspererin

Pereri given names tend to be short, and are often derived from tools, chemicals, or important objects, and most names are gender-neutral. Familial names are longer, and grow from activities for which familial ancestors or cluster chiefs were famous. Most of the esspererin languages are rich in sibilants (*f*, *s*, *kh*), voiceless stops (*p*, *k*, *t*), and pitched diphthongs (*ai*, *eu*, *oa*), along with a full range of pure vowel sounds.

Given Names

Akast, Aiki, Essti, Esspnik, Euki, Fasa, Faiki, Feistik, Iafiki, Iaki, Ikina, Kaisti, Kast, Keuaiki, Kisk, Koanik, Kree, Kustin, Neeka, Nikoka, Oshka, Osho, Ostishka, Paiki, Paka, Peskua, Pio, Pokota, Pretni, Puk, Qisk, Qut, Sata, Saini, Saeisstok, Shuk, Takash, Taoki, Toouk, Totouiki, Uki, Ushaiki, Ushiko, Ustuku

Family Names

Aekishatak, Aisitikishoku, Esskotoapukua, Eutoakata-Fasa, Futoasikatoi, Intikoashkashuk, Kreetakaishko, Kuttokosoio, Moakoa-Nirei, Noshuakitost, Ouskoitostki, Paiskaiska-pok, Qusk-qu, Raitaiskitassa, Santakasiskonik, Taik-taktak, Uputashistiko, Uku-tusku-kushkakri

Esspererin Names Away from Home

Esspererin traveling outside the Pereri system may choose to translate their names into Galstandard West, with results like Integrity Retrograde, Slingshot Vac-Hunter, Patch Distillation, and Spline Meathugger. These names are easier to pronounce, and look better on resumes.

Fobott'r

Exploited for centuries, the fobott'r lost much of their native culture, and they were given new names by their employers and owners. Their names reflect that heritage — many fobott'r names are commonly found among other galactic cultures. Following the Arms-of-Days War, millions of fobott'r families shed their slave names for syllabic strings suggestive of their status as free sophonts. A Venn diagram comparing names in use in Galstandard West against names in use among the fobott'r will look very nearly spherical, with tiny slivers of exclusion on the outside.

Fobott'r given names are often gendered, with masculine names beginning with vowel sounds and feminine names beginning with consonants. It is not a hard-and-fast rule, but it is common.

Given Names

Andy, Admor, Boba, Cori, Dori, Enos, Endroo, Frey, Gelilo, Hovaa, Io, Illyam, Indri, Jones, Kandas, Laka, Memni, Nodoril , Omos, Ondru, Ophlo, Peri, Quiri, Ronk, Sami, Tamjam, Ubi, Umalo, Undri, Uslor, Vandi, Vonyo, Wandi, Wendra, Xandifur, Zoelle

Family Names

Armphri, Bettriphan, Castle, Do-Hrang, Epikwin, Fabulous, Goodvictor, Happili, Iphnita, Jonesing, Kingsall, Landsheld, Mastrselph, Nomaster, Noboss, Othless, Panphnatoth, Quickling, Roarest, Suprubermost, Thnempha, Undernone, Victorsmith, Winsemall, Xaxxojoy, Zupercuul

Frellenti

Names are all ten syllables long, and are very regularly constructed. They're comprised of four name-parts, each of which begins with a consonant and ends with a vowel. The first and third part have two syllables each, while the second and fourth have three syllables each. All consonants except *f* and *v* are voiced, so there are no *k*, *p*, or *t* sounds. The *s* and *z* sounds are absent as well. The only joined consonants are *nd* and *bl*, and these only appear in the middle of name-parts.

Usually the outer name-parts (1st and 4th) are given by the junior parent, and the inner name-parts (2nd and 3rd) are given by the senior parent. The three-syllable parts are often family names that show parentage, but this is not required.

The full, ten-syllable string is spoken with slight emphasis on syllables 1, 6, and 9, or 1, 4, and 9. Parents will often apply strong emphasis to syllables 1, 4, 6, and 9 to get a wayward child's attention.

Frellenti often let friends call them by just one of their four name-parts. The 2nd is the most common, so Leelagaleenileelinoleela might go by Galeeni.

Two-syllable Parts 1

Babo, Beelo, Bindo, Dani, Debli, Famu, Gando, Gebli, Gunda, Habli, Hebla, Jano, Jeebla, Leela, Lili, Loodo, Mala, Modi, Nebi, Noli, Vana, Volo, Waba, Wabi, Wahoo

Three-syllable Parts

Baneeda, Benibli, Boboli, Debebli, Dofandi, Domadi, Fonomo, Gableena, Geneelo, Gumoondi, Helola, Hendago, Jadagi, Jondada, Lalala, Laloli, Lelobla, Meblono, Mondana, Nanogo, Nogala, Vewaha, Voheewa, Wenamu, Woladi, Wuwoolo

Frellenti Name Combinations

Take the first two name-parts from each list, and combine them in the order in which they appear. Did you end up with Babobaneedabeelobenibli? More importantly, can you say it? Hint: BA-bo-ba-nee-da-BEE-lo-be-NIB-li, or BA-bo-ba-NEE-da-bee-lo-be-NIB-li.

Constructs

Bindodebebliheblahelola, Danidomadivolowoladi, Famoofonomomalamondana, Heblilalalalililaloli, Janovoheewawabiwenamu, Modijondadadanigumoondi, Wabawuwoolowabiwoladi

Kreely

The first thing to know about Kreely names is that the final two syllables of a first name indicate where the individual stands in the Kreely socioeconomic strata. Otlo, Okla, Asho, and Ibsha are the given name suffixes to watch for, and we've listed them here in order of increasing status.

Kreely given names usually end in consonants, though low-caste parents will sometimes select names that end in sounds similar to higher caste names, which end in vowels. They're not fooling anybody. Kreely surnames almost always end in vowels, and sometimes in diphthongs, which never appear in given names. Family names are almost always only two syllables long. Three syllable surnames usually contain a stretched diphthong.

The *ch*, *sh*, and *th* sounds are common, as are consonant combinations like *chl*, *dl*, *pth*, *shb*, and *tl*. Kreely names do not use the nasal consonants *m* and *n*, nor the voiced sibilants *v* and *z*, or the *w* sound.

Kreely Names and Status

When a Kreely named Tbobok is promoted in status, he becomes Tbobokotlo, and may aspire to ascend through Tbobokokla and Tbobokasho to Tbobokibsha. Close friends might still call him Tbobok, but if a superior used that name, then it would not be an overture of friendship. It would be a slur, whose meaning is along the lines of: "You're not my equal, so I don't care how far out of the ice you've crawled."

Given Names

Athlot, Boshklup, Chak, Chlothlup, Dobril, Dbolig, Epshobar, Gapthar, Igapthlo, Jotla, Kbarskit, Kishkobar, Kyekkotl, Labradudl, Podlektht, Pketl, Pleklotlath, Rathklash, Sorobit, Sboritol, Shol, Tobut, Tbetikad, Thutlor, Tlokog, Urbodl, Yododlar, Yokshator

Family Names

Aipi, Beki, Chaili, Dacha, Dbecha, Ekki, Gorbai, Ibloa, Jokro, Kebi, Kbeti, Kyabai, Laika, Pata, Pketo, Plashoi, Raka, Sadoa, Sbarthao, Shuptha, Tathkia, Tbeki, Thuli, Tlotlia, Ulbea, Yoshi

Kss'thrata

Kss'thrata family names change with each generation. The phonemes of parental names are used as parts in the synthesis of a new family name for each clutch of young. Given and family names are distinct, but a kss'thrata's name is the combination of the two, spoken and written as a single word. If the merging of given and family names is awkward, a tooth-click is inserted between the two names: Ekkto Okorotskku becomes Ekkto'okorotskku, and Pokk Ki'k becomes Pokk'ki'k.

The kss'thrata language leans heavily on sibilants, voiceless stops, and pure vowels, with punctuation and emotional context indicated

1

CEO: One of the Directors on our Board is named Janodomadiwabavoheewa.

TERL'KRIS: Yes. I made sure her name-parts were included in the lists on this page.

CEO: Yes, but now I'll be able to remember how to pronounce her name.

TERL'KRIS: A career-advancing skill, no doubt.

CEO: My point is that this book is finally useful to me, personally.

TERL'KRIS: I shall notify the team of this unexpected success.

with clicked teeth. In this text, the tooth-clicking is represented with an apostrophe [2]. The *l* and *m* sounds never appear, and voiced consonants like *b*, *d*, *g*, and *v* are never used to begin names.

Among friends and family, Akkrapostoki might be called "Akkra," but she would introduce herself to strangers as Akkrapostoki, and would expect them to use that full name when addressing her. "Ms. Postoki" would never be appropriate, though she would refer to herself and her clutch-siblings as "The Postoki."

Given Names

Akkra, Asako, Ekkto, Ess, Ettat, Ettiko, Fassbati, Fesk'uk, Issivi, Keti, Katakapo, K'skito, Oppassti, Otso, Pokk, Putt'oki, Sottoka, Skitara, Tibukori, Tok'i, Udagvok, Uspok, Tiss, Zasa

Family Names

Astokota, Etsistobu, Fikkobatsu'saks, Kataskittidogo, Ki'k, Okorotskku, Pikapika'situ, Postoki, Siksiko, Sistissikossubada, Tastkati'ssku, Tokogifisotok, Tutukabi, Uk'bagadavosk, Zisstosskuta

Ob'enn

The Ob'enn of Tause system are militant xenophobes, and they have not adopted any of the Galstandard languages. Their naming conventions are built upon a very stratified technological society which has been on a war footing for dozens of generations. Warlords append violently heroic descriptors to their names, and grant honorifics of slightly lesser heroism to their many captains. Non-military personnel have their own honorific castes which are at least as varied and complex as those of the professionals-at-arms.

None of this matters much outside of Tause system. The Ob'enn with whom you're going to interact are recently re-educated expats, and their names demonstrate a haphazard slapdashery of counter-culture, camouflage, and rule-of-cool. There are heroic honorifics, humble noms de guerre, and horrible malamanteaux. [3]

In short, the expat Ob'enn naming conventions are not conventions at all. Here are a few of the names we've come across.

Expat Ob'enn Names

Ambiviolation Gangreverde, Bohba Octob'ennapus, Chongrabble the Voralicious, Don Han One, Edwarden Supermax, Flustrator Prime the First, Gro'rghlamor, Howie To'opo, Ivy Brixcalar, Job'enn Extause, Killian Killkill, Larrymore, Misundertaker 51, Nopenever, Obby, Probableed Soonish, Queen Ragh'la the Hagnificent, Rip Teardrop, Sh'korорgkall Timtams Lamba, Umbrellow Submarimba, Victomort, Warmongrel Wastrix, Xenongaheela, Zero Punctual

Polyflorian

Polyflorians have a single name, and it's what they expect to be called. Disambiguation among polyflorians with the same name is established with titles or descriptors. Their names utilize a wide range of vocal sounds, leveraging their facility with language and pronunciation.

Polyflorian Duplicate Names

In a crew with two polyflorians named Noshku, the two of them would likely agree on something like "Big Engineer Noshku" and "Noshku from Afar." It's their job, not yours. This may make it seem like they are taking on additional names, but polyflorians will insist that they are not. A name is a permanent thing. "Noshku from Afar" may one day become "Commander Noshku," but never just "Nosh."

Their names tend to be quite short, and they often feature multiple consonant blends, vocal stops (represented by the apostrophe), and diphthongs. Almost anything goes. Almost. Polyflorian names never begin with a vowel, or anything vowel-ish, like — *h*, *w*, and *y*.

Names

Bu, Bra'astht, Choiltht, Chvol, Chwea'ol, Do'ashn, Duitl, Foo, Glimsh, Hakthti, Jon, Juush, Kathi, Kshvo'o, Kthuilth, Laimth, Lia, Moshthl, Munsho, Noshku, Pishdno, Quoalth, R, Samm, Shloam, Shvu'u, Sloag, Sthebi, Taibsho, Thloao, Thuilsh, Vamosh, Vi, Wash, Xlachi, Ze'elzor

Queltro

The queltro mouth is not well-suited for Galstandard West, but they've learned to speak it very intelligibly. Their names, however, are generally unintelligible to those unschooled in the multi-tongued, tendril-lipped queltro language. In interspeciated company, queltro will suggest nicknames for themselves, typically from whatever pop culture is poppiest. For this reason, they often sound like they're the coolest people at the party.

2

CEO: An apostrophe? There are seven different tooth-clicks in Kss'thrata names, and you're using the apostrophe for other things.

TERL'KRIS: This is a period-correct thing. Fiction writers from the era we're modeling our book for used the apostrophe to make words and names look alien.

CEO: Then period-correct is wrong.

TERL'KRIS: Also, the old-timey font face we got from R&D doesn't have all the symbols we need.

CEO: Terl, I swear... wait. You're kss'thrata, but Terl'Kris has an "L" in it. Is the naming rule wrong?

TERL'KRIS: Obviously Terl'Kris is not my given name.

CEO: I can see why you feel the need for that extra measure of security.

3

CEO: You lost me. What is a malamanteau?

WRITER: It's a portmanteau formed by incorrectly combining a neologism and a malapropism.

CEO: It happens so often there's a name for it?

WRITER: It's where we got "misunderestimation" and "flustrated."

CEO: You may use each of those words exactly one time. And this note counts.

1

CEO: Your decision to use the antique character set is again called into question.

WRITER: Yeah, that last name is absolutely musical in the native Quelto, but here it just looks like data entry via beach-ball.

CEO: So, you'll rewrite this correctly?

WRITER: I left a note for the copy editor. It'll get done.

2

CEO: You left Azeroth off the list. Jun-Cho Azeroth is a very prominent figure, and a friend of mine.

LEGAL: Icho Bottorlin, of Icho Transfederal, asked that Jun-Cho not be further gloried until he takes office. Also, there were disambiguation problems.

Given Names

B'blwwullbla'phbl, Jlblbi, Ll'phbbbth-obblemmnm, Ommnobblmn'omnom, Wualltnoophllmn'owwoeoll, '"lly""th 1

Assumed Names

Astromax, Banggrenade, Chowhalla, Doc Dingo, Eightspace, Frankenstar, Galactic Bob, Hat Trick, Ichabod Strange, Jester, Killgunner, Loverboi, Moneyglands, Newsync, Oppenhammer, Pillwalla, Questing Mark, Robinburgle, Starkiller, Tapdance, Unclejunk, Vainglorious, Wellwalker, Xanaxadu, Yup'n'go, Zappralactix Dan

Uniocs (Oth)

Uniocs have several cultural traditions for naming, and blended variants between them. The most rigid of these, and therefore the simplest to learn, is the oldest and most traditional. It is known as the "Ibrin Tothlinex," a name which follows the naming convention to which it refers.

Given names have two syllables, and begin with vowels, which is the feminine form and the default. Male Uniocs do not pronounce or write the initial vowel, shortening their names to a single syllable. Surnames have three syllables, and the first syllable is emphasized.

The dominant member of a family or business will give that business the two-syllable version of their given name. When an heir, or vice-chief, of such an enterprise is named, they will replace their existing given name with the gender-appropriate version of the enterprise name, with the prefix "Jun-."

Given Names

Abath, Aber, Achet, Afo, Aketh, Aloth, Amosh, Apel, Ashim, Ebith, Ebrin, Ebro, Echumb, Efreth, Eko, Ezosh, Icho, Ichev, Oblin, Obel, Ogamm, Ogon, Otet, Ovosh, Ubo, Udorl, Umish, Uri, Urith, Usho

To turn any of the names above into a distinctly male name, remove the leading vowel. But write it down somewhere, because the business you name for yourself will need it. Abo, Ebo, and Ubo are all valid names, but they each mean something different!

Unioc Name Changes

When Gamm Fennaret was named Lieutenant Chair of Imish Enterprises, under Imish Devlototh, his name was changed to Jun-Mish Fennaret. When Devlototh retired, Jun-Mish Fennaret became Mish Fennaret. As is traditional, the company remained known as Imish Enterprises.

When a Unioc introduces themselves with their first name, check to see if that's painted on the side of the building. They may be telling you how important they are.

Family Names

Abbernath, Afterett, Benglabeth, Bottirlin, Chamberoth, Clambrosel, Daglotham, Denjargril, Devlototh, Ebbirnoth, Embolum, Ettathid, Fennaret, Folloresh, Furgechil, Gambesol, Gebbirrat, Gulgasor, Jabberrok, Jorbuleth, Kerbaled, Konradoth, Lamdagot, Lenniret, Mathlibrot, Meshtobil, Nedriden, Obraleth, Ondramet, Pendergoth, Ponderstab, Randomor, Sullibom, Tagamor, Uflareth, Uptrobar, Vandalath, Vithtobbir, Weshtinel, Zafrimet 2

AI

Artificial intelligences typically choose their own names. Statistically speaking, these are usually a reflection of or response to the culture into which they were growprammed. On the individual level, the statistics are useless. An AI name that looks like a slight modification to a traditional frellenti name might, in point of fact, be a pun upon an epithet among the Fobott'r.

While they do not physically have a gender, a great many AIs will present themselves as if they do, selecting gendered names for the culture by which they're surrounded. This lets them "fit in" with their meatware compatriots, particularly those whose languages do not have unambiguous gender-neutral pronouns.

Like the esspererin, the polyflorians, and the quelto, AIs will often name themselves using words not traditionally found as names. "George" is a perfectly serviceable name, but an AI might decide on "Georgi-Porji Pudding-pie" or "Flaming George" instead.

Making matters worse, many AIs will add numerical or mathematical signs to their written names, sometimes using them as substitutes for letters.

Number-Subbed Names

Al3ph, B1ndi, Da5id, Edie^{x}, Flami^{n}g 630rge, 5er0 (pronounced "Vernon"), J0nn1 V

Mercenary Companies

Your character is probably impressive now, but they're going to need some backup. To that end, you and the other players should now collaborate in the creation of your company. The process will afford everyone the opportunity to begin tying together their characters' stories.

Before we begin, we should describe what a company looks like in *Planet Mercenary RPG*.

Company Statistics

Every mercenary company has four statistics:

- **AI Rating:** This is the relative power and ability of the artificial intelligence in your ship.
- **Company Resources:** This is a broad gauge of your company's ability to absorb large expenses (like payroll and ship repairs) and make very big purchases (like new starships and planet-bound holdings).
- **Reputation:** This is a measure of your company in the eyes of those who might hire them.
- **Supplies:** This is a measure of your company's available budget for weapons and materiel. This is the pool from which characters will be armed and armored, and it is also used for purchasing or renting vehicles. 1 Resource = 5 Supplies.

More about each of these statistics follows.

AI Rating

Your ship is controlled by an artificial intelligence with a mind (and personality) of its own. When you need a measure of what it can handle, you refer to this rating, which ranges from 1 to 10. A starting company cannot have an AI Rating over 4. You can purchase additional ranks in your company AI Rating according to Table 3.6: AI Rating Purchases (*see page 98*). The Resource cost is the amount you must pay to advance to the next rank.

***Example**: if your company has an AI Rating of 2 and wants to go to 3, they would need to pay 10 Resource. If your company wants to advance to a rating of 4, they would need to pay 30 Resource (10 for moving to rank 3 + 20 for moving to rank 4).*

AI Rating Minimums

Each ship has an associated AI rating, which is the minimum AI rating required to run that ship. If your company only has an AI rating of 4, you can't run a ship with an AI rating of 5 or higher, even if you can afford to purchase it.

AI Personalities & Names

The Game Chief runs your ship's AI as a non-playable character, or NPC. The GC will likely develop many of the AI's personality traits as part of the evolving story, though everyone at the table is encouraged to contribute to this effort.

One easy and amusing option is for each player to write down a single personality trait they'd like to see in their ship's AI, with none of the players revealing what they wrote. The GC collects these suggestions and sees what they can do with all of them together.

Artificial Intelligence vs. Synthetic Intelligence

According to *Know Your Electronic Friend: A Child's Guide to Artificial Intelligence*, the difference between an Artificial Intelligence (AI) and a Synthetic Intelligence (SI) is whether it can play pretend with you. This description is also useful for people who are not children. An SI may seem to have a personality, but it is not self-aware, and is locked into some fairly specific programming. A true AI is fully self-aware, and has enough imagination to get creative with the instructions it's been given. Legally, an AI is a sophont with rights, while an SI is property. On occasion an SI which has been connected to multi-purpose data matrices will spontaneously re-growpram itself and become self-aware. There is legal precedent for such an SI to petition for AI status, in which case your property just became a person you need to negotiate with. Be careful what you let your SI plug into unsupervised.

You can do the same with your AI's name, or the Captain can choose a name that they think is fitting or funny. They're probably the ones who're going to have to use the name most often anyway. Often the AI will derive its name from the name of the ship. For example, if you name your ship "Franklin's Kite," the AI might take the obvious name "Franklin," or they might go by "Kate," "Ky," or "Effkay." If you name your ship "Blunt Force Drama," then the AI might resort to pre-contact Earth entertainment databases and settle on "Emily." It's worth noting that while some cultures have historically defaulted to specific genders for vessels, AIs often self-identify arbitrarily. The Captain of the ship is the boss, but it's not a bad idea to leave the choice of pronouns up to that friendly machine intelligence who is running your life support.

Whatever naming convention works well at your table is almost certainly the right one. Be sure to have fun with the results.

Table 3.6: AI Rating Purchases

AI Rating	Resource Cost
1	2
2	5
3	10
4	20
5	40
6	60
7	100
8	1000
9	5000
10	10000

The Hencke/Ventura Scale

The most common standard rating system for Artificial Intelligence or Machine Intelligence is the Hencke/Ventura or H/V scale. On the surface it may seem to be a straightforward logarithmic rating, like the Richter scale of terran seismology, or the Empaargh scale of critical cinematography, but the underlying math is quite complex, and not well-suited for a role-playing game. The AI rating system presented here in *Planet Mercenary RPG* is much better for game purposes. Note, please, that it does not map onto the H/V scale cleanly, and it does not do this in exactly the same way that you cannot use the Richter scale to determine whether children will enjoy a holodrama whose filming was briefly interrupted by a volcano.

Can a Ship Have More than One AI?

Well, yes, technically it's possible, but it's a little like two brains sharing a single skull (or in the case of the Oth, a single pelvic cradle): one of them will end up whiny and oppressed, and the other will have a perpetual headache (or ulcers, which the Oth take particularly seriously).

The result is not a smarter, faster, more capable warship. It is an argument that includes engines, guns, and a frightened crew.

Company Resources

Company Resources (or just "Resources") represent your outfit's financial pull with credit, savings, collateral, and anything else that can impact astoundingly large payments and purchases. Resources are not a fixed stat but a pool of points that you can spend, earn, and even lose during play. When you buy something, your Resources drop accordingly.

> ***Example**: Your ship takes substantial battle damage in a particularly violent job, completely destroying some of your ship systems. When you get back to a semi-friendly port of call, the GC announces that the best price you can get for replacement of the systems will cost you 3 Resources. When you dock, your company's Resources are at 5. After repairing your ship, they drop to 2.*

Your company's Resources can never fall below 0, (you can't take out a loan) so if you don't have the Resources to pay for something, you're just going to have to learn to do without it until you've increased your purchasing power.

Resources can be spent on increasing your company AI Rating, upgrading your ship systems, adding systems to your ship, and buying more health or skills for any AI characters you may have. There may also be other things in your story that the GC deems require Resources to purchase rather than the smaller currency of Supplies. The wise mercenary company keeps some Resource in reserve against unexpected needs.

Buying Gear (Turning Resources into Supplies)

You don't spend Resources directly to buy equipment, weapons, armor, and smaller vehicles. Instead, you spend Resources to buy Supplies — a game term akin to "spending money" or "petty cash." You then use Supplies to purchase these items. Every 1 Resource spent in this fashion yields 5 Supplies.

Be careful, though! **Once you turn Resources into Supplies, you can't change your points back.** The only way to earn more Resources is through play. On the other hand, the only way to get Supplies is to spend Resources, and Supplies are the only way to get gear.

Earning More Resources

Every time you successfully complete a job, the GC awards you an increase to your Resources. This increase represents your total earnings from the job, including whatever you make from your employer and all other sources of income (salvage, trade, theft, and so on). New sources of income may become apparent as you adventure, and as your company takes advantage of these, you should bring them to the GC's attention.

***Example**: During a trip to a backwater colony, your company helps out a minor crime boss, who repays the favor by strong-arming the local merchants to give you better prices. This could be applied as cheaper Supplies costs but the GC decides it's easier to simply award your company 1 more Resources for the job instead.*

***Example**: A side job results in your Captain disposing of a very embarrassing body on behalf of an investment banker. You will not stoop to blackmail, and the banker won't forget your service. The complexities of interest-free loans and an increased credit rating are abstracted into simply awarding your company an additional 2 Resources.*

Why No Proper Economy?

Resources and Supplies are abstractions. These numbers roughly summarize the factors playing into a mercenary company's financial solvency. Everything from income to emergency expenses, payroll to maintenance is all folded into these stats, along with a host of intensely dull things like free market fluctuations, currency exchanges, and the effects of inflation. Rather than track every kilocred, we figure that it's best to get you past the accounting and into the action as quickly and cleanly as possible.

On average, you can expect to gain 2 to 5 Resources at the end of each successful job. If your job is not successful, it is possible that you'll get 0 Resources for it. No job, no matter how disastrous, will result in taking Resources away from you. GC guidelines for job rewards can be found on page 287 (Table 7.10).

Reputation 1

Your Reputation represents your company's ability to win over potential clients, intimidate non-talkative contacts, and reserve the nice tables in places where fancy people eat. This score ranges from 1 to 10, and it rises and falls based on how well your company performs on jobs, including collateral matters like whether or not you left that restaurant in a condition where fancy people will still eat there.

Your Reputation score applies a modifier to various rolls, as shown on Table 3.7: Reputation (*see page 100*). This modifier *always* applies to Contracts rolls made to haggle your pay for a job, but it may also apply in other cases as well, including some where only a single character makes a skill check.

***Example**: Lieutenant Vilste is looking for information, and is making the rounds in a seedy drinking establishment. He is very intimidating, but his company's Reputation score is only 1, thanks to that job they botched last month. When he rolls a skill check to brow-beat the barkeep, the barkeep recognizes him, and the skill check now takes a penalty of -3.*

As usual, the GC serves as the ultimate arbiter of when your Reputation modifier applies to a skill check.

Jobs & Reputation

Every time you complete a job, the GC increases or decreases your Reputation. This change is based on how well you performed in the eyes of your employer(s), as well as other potential employers and the public at large. It's pretty easy to tank your company's Reputation if you continually fail to get jobs done, but sometimes you can still earn some prestige just for being amazing.

***Example**: Plan B, a mercenary company, was hired to protect a museum during the stay of a traveling exhibit. The museum was*

1

CEO: You just *abstracted* the entire discipline of marketing into a single number. Did I use that word correctly.

TERL'KRIS: Yes you did, and yes, we did. We did the same thing to economics. Legal had no complaints.

MKTG: Legal never complains for us. Only TO us.

DEV: The interns loved it. They either find marketing boring, or they enjoy sticking it to you.

TERL'KRIS: See? Win/win.

MKTG: Our motivation to expend resources garnering mindshare for this product is swiftly evaporating.

CEO: If you need help with motivation, I can stop by your desk.

Table 3.7: Reputation

Score	Your Company is viewed as:	Modifier
1	a treacherous conclave of scum and villainy	–3
2	a deceitful band of ignoble rakes	–2
3	irresponsible	–1
4	unproven	+0
5	reliable	+1
6	reputable and loyal	+2
7	discreet and efficient	+3
8	worth making friends with	+4
9	paragons among professionals-at-arms	+5
10	celebrity heroes whose stories buy all the drinks	+6

robbed, and in the ensuing chaos a building next-door was set ablaze. The soldiers of Plan B abandoned their attempts to catch up with the thieves and rescued everyone from the building, in some cases by grabbing them and leaping to safety with flight-capable armor. The GC penalizes them for mission failure, which costs them 1 point, but awards them 2 points because local news cameras caught the dramatic rescue operation. Plan B comes out of the disaster with a Reputation increase of 1.

On average, you can expect your company's Reputation to rise or fall by up to three points per job. Often you'll see no change at all, which isn't a bad thing. If nothing else, it means you're predictable. Wait, maybe that *is* a bad thing...

Note

Economically inclined sophonts will notice the Resource/Supply system leaves much to be desired in the way of simulation, depth or general financial accuracy. For those who want more complex numbers, please see Units of Measure page 341.

Supplies

Your company's Supplies stat is like Resources in that its number goes down with every purchase. Unlike Resources, you don't gain Supplies for doing jobs. Rather, you convert Resources into Supplies, which you can then spend on personal equipment, weapons, armor, and smaller vehicles. **You gain 5 Supplies for every 1 Resources that you convert**. As with Resources, your Supplies can never drop below 0. If you run out or don't have enough to buy what you need, then you must convert more Resources. If your Resources are too low, then you'd better get out there and hustle for some more kibble!

Starting Gear

During character creation, you may convert any amount of your starting Resources into Supplies (1 Resource = 5 Supplies). This is how you acquire the purchasing power necessary for each player character's starting "kit."

Gear for the entire company — every character — is purchased out of the company's Supplies pool, which is converted from the company's one Resources stat. Spend wisely! There's only so much to go around.

Mercenary Companies & Experience (Leveling Up)

Your mercenary company evolves with every job. When you complete a job — or own up to failing to complete one — the GC determines the gains and/or losses in your company's Resources and Reputation based on your per-

GC Advisory on Resources and Supplies

Most players do not have fun in games where their characters are just barely scraping by on Supplies and Resources. It can be great fun to let players become broke, but only if the next piece of story provides opportunities to succeed and restore affluence again. On the other hand, PCs that are too rich also struggle with having fun because they can simply buy their way out of problems. Players have the most fun somewhere in the middle. We recommend crafting the stories so your players sometimes have everything they need and other times have to scrounge to succeed in their job.

formance. Resource will never go down for a job done badly, but Reputation probably will. In addition to the changes in company stats, each character also earns skill points from each job, which they can spend to improve their skill values. **At the end of each job, players get three new skill points to add to their character**. 1 skill point each for two skills that you used during the Job, and a third skill point you can place anywhere you want. Alternately, you can use all three skill points to gain 1 new specialty in a skill that you already have at least one Rank in. You can't hold skill points between Jobs or sessions. Use them or lose them. Note: AI characters do not get skill points for job completion. All of their skill increases must be purchased with company Resource, see page 88 for details.

Grunts

Your company employs unnamed troops called grunts. Most of the time these NPCs fade into the background, though a number of them are elevated during company creation, and sorted into **fireteams**. Each player character commands one of these teams and can issue various orders to them during play. We talk more about both types of grunts later in this section (*on page 109*).

Your First Company

If this is your first time playing *Planet Mercenary RPG,* we recommend that you use the following stats for your first mercenary company.

- **AI Rating:** 3
- **Company Resources:** 9 (which can be converted to Supplies)
- **Reputation:** 4 (unproven)

Using these default stats, you can customize your company by following the steps on page 102.

Creating a Company from Scratch

Alternatively, you can assign the starting stats that you want, taking a hit in some places to get a little extra elsewhere. You start with a score

of 1 in all three stats (AI Rating, Company Resources, and Reputation), and you may spend 13 points to increase them on a 1-for-1 basis. AI Rating may not start higher than 4 and Reputation may not start higher than 6.

***Example**: The players decide they want their company to start off reasonably well-regarded and fairly well-funded, and they're willing to make do with a less capable starship AI. They assign 1 point to AI Rating, 4 points to Reputation, and the other 8 points to Resources. Adding these to the starting value of 1, their company starts play with AI Rating 2, Reputation 5, and Resources 9.*

Randomized Company Creation

If you're feeling adventurous, you can randomly generate your company's starting stats. The GC has rules for this in the Game Chief section (*see page 279*). Keep in mind that this process is not balanced against the other two options presented here. You can wind up with a much better company than you expect... or a much worse one.

Customizing Your Company

Whether you use the default stats, create your own company stats from scratch, or randomly generate your company stats, you finish the process with these steps:

- **Step 1: Pick a Ship**

Choose your company's vessel from one or more lists, as directed by the GC. This does not come out of your starting pool of Resources, but it has a Resource value.

- **Step 2: Spend Your Resources**

Make any other purchases you might need. For a starting company this is most likely to be additional ship systems, a better Company AI rating, or additional Health for your AI character.

- **Step 3: Buy Your Gear**

Convert any or all of your remaining Resources into Supplies so you can outfit your player characters with weapons, armor, small vehicles, and other personal gear.

- **Step 4: Build Your Fireteams**

Each player selects roles for each member of their fireteam, and then adds these members' stat contributions together to determine the fireteam's overall stats. You may want to add further narrative detail to your fireteams, or you can wait for that detail to come during the course of play.

- **Step 5: Flesh Out Your Company's Story**

Finally, consider your company's narrative. Is it owned by another entity? Is it a line-item on a planetary government's black-ops budget? Does the company have a mission statement or goal? Describe some of the key events in your company's history and decide whether it's hiding any secrets from outsiders. It may even be hiding secrets from some of the players.

Walk through this process and you'll be ready to take your first job in no time!

Step 1

Pick a Ship

Every mercenary company starts with a vessel, and this first vessel does not come out of your Resources pool. There are two ways to choose your ship, and the GC will let you know which you're using for your game.

Narrative Option

Sometimes the ship with which you start is an important part of your company's back story. Perhaps the upcoming mission will require a particular vessel for plot purposes. In some cases, the ship itself may *be* the plot. If either of these is the case, your GC will simply tell you which vessel is yours to start with.

Freeform Option

If the narrative isn't driving your choice of ship, or everyone (including the GC) is just learning the game, the freeform is probably your best option. Pick any ship in the Vessels section worth 15 Resources or less. We've provided a quick pick list of good starter ships below.

If you choose a less expensive ship, you get the difference back (15 Resources minus the cost of your ship). You can also choose not to have a ship if it won't be needed for your first

adventure. Your GC will let you know if this is the case. Choosing to start without a ship can give you a significant Resources boost at the beginning of the game, but remember: if you want a ship later in your campaign, then you'll have to save up for it.

Note that with the Freeform Option, you do not give up your ability to weave your ship into the story. You're selecting the ship that you prefer, and then weaving the story (including some back-story) around it after the fact.

The following vessels make good starter ships, most of them cost less than 15 Resource and thus will give you a resource boost for starting your company. Other options are available in the Vessels section page 121.

- Döblitz Foundry Harmadillo (a bit on the small side).
- COF Dragon Class Interdiction.
- F&Y Ghostfox Courier.
- GU Valnus Stormrage.

Your Ship's AI

The strength of your ship's artificial intelligence was decided previously, when you set your company's starting stats. The GC and all members of the company are encouraged to contribute personality traits for your ship's AI, and to suggest names as well.

Step 2

Spend Your Resources

Now you can spend your Resources to purchase big (Resource-only) items. Scan through the listing of ship systems (*see pages 114-119*) and discuss with your co-mercenaries whether you want to spend money to upgrade your ships' systems. The GC should probably provide input here based on what adventures they have planned.

We recommend spending 0 on Resource-only items (just make sure you pick your ship carefully to have the systems you want), then turning 7 Resources into 35 Supplies for gear, and holding on to 2 Resources in case you need resource items or upgrades later.

These numbers will change if you've picked a ship which allows you additional resources, or if your GC has decided to start you off with more or fewer resources than our standard recommendation.

Step 3

Buy Your Gear

Once you've made all your big purchases, you can convert any or all of your remaining Resources into Supplies at a rate of 5 Supplies per 1 Resources converted. Use these Supplies to purchase gear, armor, and weapons for all your player characters, as well as any smaller vehicles that you might want.

Keep in mind that all the personal gear for your entire team must come out of this single total! You can evenly split the Supplies amongst yourselves or decide what to buy as a group. Some characters may have specialties that require expensive gear, so you should be open to the idea of an unbalanced distribution of Supplies.

Every player character starts with a pistol of their choice, at no cost. Common selections are listed here, but other options are available page 161.

- Blattco Glass Dagger.
- BFF Neuromazer.
- Phubahr Tensquare.
- Wimanu-Arrow Model A Shafter.

You are also assumed to have a Molly Polly knife (*page 175*). Beyond that, consider what additional weapons, protective gear, and other kit everyone needs, and don't forget that you'll probably have to get from place to place outside your ship. You might also want to pick up some medical gear as it is useful for nearly every mercenary company.

Here's a quick directory to all the reference tables that you'll want to consult in this step:

- **Armor**, see page 137.
- **Weapons**, see pages 140-143.
- **General Materiel**, see pages 144-146.
- **Vehicles**, see page 147 .

You can find rules for custom-building your own weapon on page 150 and your own armor on page 148.

Ship AI

The AI for your ship will be run by your GC as an NPC. Being a ship AI is pretty boring for a player as they would constantly be left behind while everyone else goes to other places to do interesting things.

GC Note on Gear

Pay attention as your players select their gear. If your intended story line will be better if they have certain items in their control, encourage them to buy those items. Or simply grant those items to the company by spinning a quick story about how they came into possession of the thing you want them to have. The key is to make sure that each player has the gear that will help them have fun in the course of play.

You may want to leave some Supplies unspent, in case you find a Planet Mercenary outlet or other trading post, somewhere out there in the stars.

Step 4

Build Your Fireteams

Every mercenary company employs a number of unnamed NPCs called grunts. This is called the **Grunt Pool**. In addition to the Grunt Pool, each player directly commands a team of three grunts called a **fireteam**, and each player should consider that fireteam a key part of their PC's abilities. After all, the brass knows how to get things done by knowing *who* can get things done. Your fireteam is a collection of extra hands, feet, and eyes, and you'll need them in order to survive. Details on giving orders to fireteams and using them in play can be found in the Issuing Orders to Your Fireteam section on page 107.

Each fireteam has its own set of stats, which covers the entire team rather than individual members. Each fireteam is a single unit in gameplay. Individual grunts on a fireteam may not act independently of the others.

A fireteam has only five stats. These are named for the skill categories used by players, but specific skills are not defined for fireteams or fireteam members.

- **Combat:** Use this skill when the fireteam attempts any activity covered by a Combat skill.
- **Mental:** Use this skill when the fireteam attempts any activity covered by a Mental skill.
- **Physical:** Use this skill when the fireteam attempts any activity covered by a Physical skill.
- **Social:** Use this skill when the fireteam attempts any activity covered by a Social skill.
- **Damage:** This is the amount of damage that the fireteam inflicts with each hit and will vary based on the stats of your team.

When a fireteam acts, the player controlling it makes a single skill roll using the fireteam's ranks in the relevant skill category. When a fireteam is directed to make an attack with their company-issue carbines, the team's Combat value is used. That same Combat value is used if the fireteam is instructed to wrestle a target to the ground. If a fireteam is ordered to mingle in the pub without making trouble, then the team's Social value is used. A fireteam told to force entry into a location (an activity covered by the Larceny skill) uses its Physical value.

During the game, a fireteam may acquire one or more qualities that change its stats, how it acts, and what it can do. *For more about fireteam qualities, see page 108.*

Fireteam Members

Each player builds their own fireteam. Every fireteam starts with Combat, Mental, Physical, and Social stats of 0, and a base Damage stat of 1d6.

These stats are modified by the combined abilities of all three fireteam members. A fireteam starts with three members, but that number may drop during missions if the controlling player needs to invoke Ablative Meat (*see page 110 for an explanation of Ablative Meat*). You can sometimes gain new fireteam members through Mayhem card play or at the GC's discretion.

Each player chooses one of the following roles for each grunt on their fireteam. A player may choose the same role for more than one grunt on the same team. You can have a fireteam made entirely of diplomats if you wish.

- **Diplomat:** +1 Social, +1 to one other skill category (except Damage)
- **Heavy Weapons Gunner:** +1 Combat, +1d6 Damage
- **Infantry:** +1 Combat, +1 Physical
- **Officer in Training:** +1 to any two different skill categories (which may include

adding 1d6 Damage, or 2d6 if you spend both ranks in Damage)

► **Specialist:** +1 Mental, +1 to one other skill category (except Damage)

These roles are permanently assigned to the fireteam NPCs. The only way to change the makeup of your fireteam is for NPCs to leave it and be replaced, which will happen very naturally on high-risk missions. Each player should build a fireteam that complements their own character's skills. A "squishy" scientist might surround himself with Heavy Weapons and Infantry. A battle-savvy Captain might include two specialists, whose bonuses to Mental skills could be applied should they need the fireteam to patch them up after a fight.

Once all the members' roles are chosen, add together the bonuses for all the members to find the full fireteam's stats.

***Example**: Lian decides that she wants her fireteam to include one Diplomat to help with boring things like negotiations, plus two Infantry in case those meetings go south. She selects Mental as her Diplomat's alternative skill category, so her fireteam's full, combined stats are +2 Combat, +1 Mental, +2 Physical, and +1 Social, and 1d6 Damage.*

When a fireteam member dies, or is otherwise lost, remove that member's bonuses from the team's overall stats. This is one of the reasons to be careful which members you choose as Ablative Meat.

***Example:** Lian gives her new fireteam a spin by sending them to negotiate with a low-level crime boss at the far end of Haven Hive. The negotiations go badly, and one of the team's Infantry is killed. The fireteam's stats are reduced to +1 Combat, +1 Mental, +1 Physical, and +1 Social. The Damage stat remains unchanged.*

After the death of a fireteam member, the empty space in your fireteam is filled by a probationary grunt who grants no bonuses to your team. Your team also gains the Probie quality. Once your probie survives ablative meat, you may assign them a role with its bonuses. As long as probie status is attached to your fireteam, your team can't have any other fireteam qualities. Also, it costs 2 RiPP to use any of the non-probie members of your fireteam as Ablative Meat, whereas the probie only costs the usual one. (Using an unnamed grunt from the grunt pool, still only costs a single RiPP). You may avoid dealing with probie issues if you have a grunt in your grunt pool who has previously survived Ablative Meat, in which case you do *not* apply the Probie quality and your new fireteam member can be assigned a role and bonuses immediately. For more information on Ablative Meat, *see page 110*. For more about the Probie fireteam quality, see page 109. 1

Optional step: Once you know what all the grunts on each fireteam can do, players may choose a name for each team member. Players can also jot down simple characteristics and/or quirks for their fireteam members if they want, including each member's race. Fireteams might reflect the same diversity as the player characters, but this isn't necessary. You do not have to name each member of your fireteam, but they're more fun to play with if you do. You will be required to name them if they survive Ablative Meat.

1

CEO: Players are going to figure out that they should use unnamed grunts as Ablative Meat, and simply deploy the survivors any time fireteam members must be replaced.

DEV: And then they'll be required to name even MORE of their company's grunts.

WRITER: Almost as if they're good officers, learning everything about the people in their command.

CEO: I don't know YOUR name. Am I a good officer, or are you a safe, nameless grunt?

Step 5

Flesh Out Your Company's Story

By now you may have already begun collecting the story pieces that will flesh out the story of your company. It's time to lock those down, adding whatever background detail you can. The more detail that you have, the easier it will be for everyone to confidently describe the company and work it into the ongoing story.

A rich back-story at the beginning of the game isn't required, of course. Many players prefer to improvise, adding detail to their company during gameplay. Still, it's easier for everyone, including the improvisers, if you outline a framework. There's a lot to be said for having information at the ready as you introduce new bits of the narrative.

If you need a starting point, consider the following scenarios:

► You got together because one of you got a sweet deal on a warship — so sweet that you might even say it was a steal. The game will begin with your first mission.

► You've been together for several missions now. Details of those missions will surface as you discover that you don't all remember the derelict recovery mission the same way.

► Your captain has brought you, a group of strangers, into this company based on your

qualifications. You don't know the captain's motives.

► Your company came together from the fragments of a broken military force. Your original cause is long lost, and now you just need work.

You might also consider the possibility that the players at the table are a tiny slice of a much larger company. You might be merely a line item in someone else's profit-and-loss sheets.

► A planetary military has spun you off into a black-ops team. There are jobs that they cannot be seen doing, but which cannot be left undone. That's where you come in.

► A growing shipping company has determined that they should bring all their route research and armed response needs in-house. You work for them, at least for now.

► A galaxy-spanning provider of mercenary services with over two hundred thousand ships and almost a billion employees has put you in charge of one of those ships, and a hundred of those employees. Be profitable. Officers get stock options!

Whether you're working for yourselves, or are part of something larger, you (i.e. the player characters at the center of this story) are the ones who will determine the "personality" for this company. Yes, you're working for money, but that doesn't need to be what motivates you as a group. Are you defenders of the destitute, or are you the reason they're destitute? Are you hijackers with hearts of gold, or just hijackers?

Consult your GC throughout this discussion, because it's their task to frame your story by providing jobs. If you want to be pirates, then the GC needs to build your game sessions around picking targets and running from the law. Those same sessions might also work if you're somebody's black-ops team, because privateers are just pirates with permission, but if you want to be upstanding providers of fully licensed armed response, then the GC's pirate story might not work.

Or maybe it *will* work, except it's being told from the other side, and you're *chasing* the pirates. Regardless, you should carefully heed the GC's input on the matter.

Give Your Company a Name

If you haven't already done so, you can't keep putting this off. It is time to name your company.

Maybe your company's story has suggested good names to you. Maybe you need to make a list of words you like. Here are the names of a few currently-operating mercenary companies:

- Tagon's Toughs
- Pranger's Bangers
- Plan B
- Maxim Fifty-Five
- Enforced Prosperity
- Blue Shift
- Armed Response Amalgamated
- The Durajji Dregs (1)

Recording Your Story

Whatever details that you create for your company, jot them down on your company sheet or on a separate sheet for notes, and make sure that the GC reviews everything before you start playing. Your GC needs that info to help with role-play and the ongoing story.

That's it. Your mercenary company is complete. You're ready to play. However, if you want further information on grunts, fireteams, and ablative meat, we recommend reading through the sections that finish out this chapter. (2)

(1)

CEO: Please tell me that each and every one of the customers listed above paid handsomely for promotional consideration in our book.

TERL'KRIS: They did! All of them except The Durajji Dregs. They're in a bit of a rough patch right now, and my cousin's crèche-mate-to-be is the XO on their ship.

CEO: Well, then I hope this book results in the Dregs landing some work that leaves your cousin looking for more promising prospects in crèche-mates.

(2)

DEV: You just gave them permission to stop reading.

WRITER: Yes, but they won't. They know they'll need that information.

DEV: You're underestimating the average grunt's desire to stop reading and start shooting.

WRITER: But am I *misunderestimating* it?

CEO: *One* use, I said. Which writer are you, and where is your desk?

Fireteams

Fireteams are three-grunt units assigned to each player character. Each of these three team members brings their own stats to the fireteam, and each fireteam always operates as a single unit, using the combination of all its members' stats together at the same time.

Full instructions for creating a fireteam are provided in Step 4 of mercenary company creation (*see page 104*), and you should refer to that section for an explanation of how a team's stats work.

The following section focuses on using fireteams in play. Here you'll find information on gaining and losing fireteam qualities and most importantly, issuing orders to your team.

Issuing Orders to Your Fireteam

Your fireteam operates as a single unit, and a single fireteam takes one action as a unit in each round. You can command your entire fireteam to do practically anything, but members cannot be split apart to take separate actions at the same time.

Fireteams always act on their commanding PC's turn. A PC may not "save" their fireteam's action for another time.

When your fireteam uses a skill or makes an attack, you make the roll. You may spend RiPPs to impact your fireteam's rolls in the same ways that you can affect your own.

Your fireteam only acts under your orders; otherwise it takes no action. Depending on the length of time they've gone without orders, and the stress they're under, they may decide to take no action someplace safe, at the GC's discretion.

In combat, your fireteam will follow any order that you issue to it, and will continue to follow that order for the number of rounds equal to your ranks in the Inspire skill (minimum one round, beginning with the moment you issue the order). After this time, the team hunkers down and does nothing until you give it another order.

Outside of combat, your fireteam will follow orders for the number of shifts (loosely defined as eight-hour periods) equal to your Inspire skill (minimum one shift). For instance, you can order them to stand watch while you sleep, and if your Inspire skill ranks equals 3, then you can sleep for twenty-four hours secure in the knowledge that your fireteam is watching over you in a totally non-creepy way.

You need not remain in your fireteam's presence for them to continue following an order that you have issued.

If you issue a new order while your fireteam is currently following a previous one, the new order replaces the previous one as the fireteam's action. You cannot "stack" the benefits of multiple fireteams on any target.

***Example**: While multiple fireteams can concentrate fire on a single target, no target suffers automatic damage from more than one fireteam in each round.*

Listed below are several common orders that you can issue to your fireteam. These are not the only orders you can issue. They serve as possible orders and guides so that your GC can decide the results of the crazy orders you actually do give in game.

Concentrate Fire

Your fireteam focuses fire on whatever you want it to hurt or kill. Pick a single target that you want the team to obliterate. While your team follows this order, and the team can feasibly attack the target, the target automatically suffers the team's normal Damage when your character acts in each round.

***Example**: Your fireteam's Damage is 2d6 and you order them to concentrate fire on an enemy in range. Unless you issue another order, that target suffers 2d6 every time you act for the number of rounds equal to your Inspire skill value.*

Cover Fire

Your fireteam provides cover fire for you, attacking the first hostile who initiates an attack against you each round. They automatically inflict their normal Damage to that hostile immediately *before* the hostile attack is resolved. If the hostile can still attack after suffering this damage, then the attack continues as planned.

NOTE: If you become separated from your fireteam, then they can't provide cover fire for you. You can give the order, yes, but if you run around a corner and into a closet, then the stabbing that you'll get from the knife-wielding Fobott'r lying in wait in the closet will not be interrupted by helpful gunfire.

Using Commands

The goal of the Commands like Concentrate Fire and Covering Fire is to cut down on rolling, and speed up game play when managing teams. This is why there is a small numerical advantage to these orders rather than just rolling combat attacks. Wise GCs encourage their use.

Once your fireteam has injured an attacking hostile, the team cannot provide cover fire again until the following round.

***Example**: Your fireteam's Damage is 1d6 and you order them to provide cover fire as you rush across a contested battle zone. An enemy sniper shoots at you from a very long distance and the GC determines that your fireteam cannot return fire, so the sniper's attack continues without the team intervening. Right after that, an enemy soldier attacks you from much closer, and the GC says your fireteam is in range. The soldier's attack automatically suffers 1d6 damage and goes down. Its attack is canceled, but now your team can't provide any further cover fire until next round. So, you might as well dive into that closet and hope for the best.*

Duck and Cover

Your fireteam can focus on keeping itself safe, gaining immunity to enemy fire. While your team follows this order, they cannot be damaged by ranged attacks with firearms and thrown explosives. They can still be targeted by melee attacks, however, as well as close range attacks with firearms and explosives (where the GC deems cover is unavailable).

Screen

You can order your fireteam to protect a single target (which can be you or another character, or an object). While your team follows this order, and the team can feasibly protect the target, the target gains a +3 bonus to their Defense and Dodge. The target may also ignore the first hit that they suffer in each round while your team screens them. After ignoring this first hit, the target may still spend RiPPs to sacrifice grunts as Ablative Meat, as described in the next section.

Your fireteam may screen no more than one character or object at a time, and no character or object may receive screening from more than one fireteam at any time.

Fireteams Defense Value

Fireteams can be targeted directly in combat. Their defense value is 10 + their combat score. If they get shot, choose one of the team members, and use the ablative meat shield rules to determine life or death (50% chance).

Fireteam Qualities

Through the course of play, fireteams gain and lose qualities that alter their stats and how they operate. This usually happens in three ways:

► Certain Mayhem cards grant fireteam qualities either temporarily or permanently. When a Mayhem card grants a permanent quality, that quality remains until the team gains the Probie quality, at which point all other qualities are lost.

► A player may spend their one action on an Inspire skill check targeting their fireteam, with the goal of imbuing them with a temporary quality of the player's choice. The TN for this Inspire roll is quality-specific, and appears right under the quality in the list below. A quality conveyed in this fashion lasts until the end of the current combat, or for the rest of the current scene, whichever comes first.

► The GC may grant any quality, either temporary or permanent, to any fireteam at any time. A series of great Physical rolls for stealth may lead the GC to conclude that the team always excels at this, and that they should be Ninjas. As usual, the GC should employ this power to increase the fun of the game.

A fireteam may have multiple different qualities at one time, but only one of each. "Ninjas" is a nice quality that you might want your team to double up on, but its bonuses do not stack. You cannot have double-ninjas. We've tried. It doesn't work. We're disappointed too.

Ammo Crew

TN: 20

Benefit: While your fireteam has this quality, you ignore the first Reload result that comes up in combat.

Bonded

TN: None (you can only gain this quality from Mayhem cards)

Benefit: Your team only takes orders from you. Also, it gains +1 Combat, +1 Mental, +1 Physical, and +1 Social (regardless of its member composition).

Mayhem Machine

TN: 20

Benefit: Each time you draw a Mayhem card due to a roll made by you or your fireteam, draw two cards instead. Choose one for yourself, and hand the other to the GC for holding.

Medical Support Team

TN: 20

Benefit: You may now order your team to assist any injured character, at which point they make a Mental roll (TN 15). With success, the chosen character regains 1d6+3 Health.

Additionally, if your team can get to any fallen character within three rounds of their death, then they can save enough of the body to regrow it and restore life (using a piece of appropriate Med Tech equipment found in General Materiel, page 190). The GC may determine that any fallen character is too far gone to recover (e.g. the body is atomized, incinerated, or otherwise destroyed).

Ninjas

TN: 20

Benefit: Your fireteam gains +2 with Physical rolls involving Stealth, and if the target of a melee team attack is unaware of the team's presence, then that target suffers 1d6 additional damage.

Point of Entry Team

TN: 20

Benefit: The team gains one reroll in each round when they're in a boarding action, or they're first to arrive in a situation.

Probie

TN: Special (you can only gain this quality when a fireteam member dies, or via a Mayhem card.)

Benefit: When a member of your fireteam dies, the team automatically gains this quality. You can resist gaining this quality if a grunt who has survived as Ablative Meat immediately replaces the fallen fireteam member (*see page 105*).

When you gain this quality, the fireteam loses all other qualities. Also, an unnamed grunt from the company's overall pool is upgraded to replace the fallen member. This newly upgraded member is the — *sneer* — "probie," and they do *not* start with one of the roles listed on page 104, nor may they gain one of these roles until the fireteam no longer has the Probie quality.

While this quality remains, you must spend 2 RiPP to select any fireteam member other than the probie as Ablative Meat. After the probie survives a single hit, the team loses this quality and you may upgrade the probie to have one of the roles on page 104. The fireteam's stats then adjust accordingly.

Skill-Specialized Team

TN: 20

Benefit: Choose one skill. When making fireteam rolls with this skill, you may re-roll any 1 die before applying a specialty or spending a RiPP.

Sniper Team

TN: 20

Benefit: Your fireteam gains +2 with Physical rolls involving Stealth, and if the target of a ranged team attack is unaware of the team's presence, then that target suffers 1d6 additional damage.

Support Staff

TN: 20

Benefit: Choose one non-Combat skill. When your character makes a roll with this skill, roll one extra non-Mayhem die (rolling 4 dice total). You choose which two of the three non-Mayhem die rolls to keep, and discard the third. You must still roll and apply the Mayhem die, including it in the result.

This fireteam may not take actions or receive commands in the same round that they support one of your skill rolls.

Weapon-Specialized Team

TN: 20

Benefit: While every member of your team uses the same weapon, the team gains +2 Combat and inflicts an additional 1d6 damage with each hit.

Fireteams Weapons

There is no tracking mechanism for fireteam weapons, if you issue the order to give your fireteam the Weapon-Specialized quality, it is narratively assumed that the fireteam has the necessary matching weapons.

Grunts

Most of your mercenary company consists of grunts. You might wonder just how many of them there are, especially if you plan an operation where it might be handy to have a battalion at your back. Should you need a sense of your company's scale to set the scene, we provide a general idea on Table 3.8: Company Grunts (*see page 110*). The table is a reference for approximate numbers, not a command to track how many grunts you have.

For the most part, you'll be ignoring this pool of grunts. It can be challenging to tell a story that includes a thousand spear-carriers. Just know that they're a resource, and an important one. Unnamed grunts may be used as Ablative Meat any time a player character is hit (*see next page*). They are also the source of probies to add to your fireteam anytime one of them falls to ablative meat or a mayhem card. You will not run out of grunts, as we assume you auto-replenish your pool of grunts with new recruits any time you're in populated areas of the galaxy.

Table 3.8: Company Grunts	
If your company's Resources are…	**...then your company may employ up to**
0–1	a team (up to a dozen grunts)
2–4	a couple of squads (up to 25 grunts)
5–9	a platoon (up to 50 grunts)
10–16	a company (up to 200 grunts)
17–25	a battalion (up to 1,500 grunts)
26–36	a regiment (up to 3,000 grunts)
37–49	a brigade (up to 5,000 grunts)
50–64	a division (up to 30,000 grunts)
65–81	a corps (up to 80,000 grunts)
82+	an army (over 100,000 grunts)

Sacrificing Grunts

(AKA the "Ablative Meat" Rule)

They're not patriots, they're not zealots, and they might not even really love you, but the Grunts in your company will take a bullet for you. It's their lot in life, provided you have a RiPP to spend.

When you're hit by an attack and a grunt is nearby (this grunt needn't be a member of your fireteam, but it cannot be a member of another PC's fireteam) you may spend a RiPP to have one of them take the hit for you. In story terms, they've jumped in front of you, shoved you aside, or otherwise placed themselves between you and mortal harm. In game terms, you choose whether this happens, and which grunt becomes your Ablative Meat.

Note: Unless there is a very specific story reason not to have a grunt nearby, there should always be one available for Ablative Meat.

***Additional Note*:** You may never use members of another player's fireteam as Ablative Meat to soak your hits. Those are the only grunts in your company that you can't use for this purpose.

Here's how it works:

1. The GC tells you that an enemy attack will hit. The attack has not been resolved yet.
2. You spend a RiPP and tell the GC that you're invoking Ablative Meat.
3. Choose the grunt who takes the hit. You usually have three choices:
   - **a.** An unnamed grunt from the common pool.
   - **b.** A member of your fireteam.
   - **c.** A named grunt from the common pool who has previously survived Ablative Meat.
4. If you've picked an unnamed grunt, then name them now.
5. Write that name on an index card.
6. Flip a coin (or if you're using double-sided RiPP tokens, flip one of those). Heads, the grunt lives. Tails, the grunt dies.

If the grunt lives, then you now have a named grunt in your company. This grunt has risked their life to save yours, so a display of gratitude would be appropriate. Some respect — and perhaps actual gratitude — would also be appropriate, and these are hallmarks of a good leader. This an opportunity for good role-play. Don't let it go to waste.

If the grunt does not live, then the GC will rip the index card in half. This is also an opportunity for good role-play, and again, don't let it go to waste.

Survivors of Ablative Meat

A grunt who survives Ablative Meat continues in the same capacity that they served before, either as a member of your fireteam or as part of the company's common pool. Don't be deceived, however. They're different. The experience has changed them. They are an important part of your company, and you'll want to keep track of them.

Hint on RiPP

Seasoned players will often "bank" at least one RiPP during game play, only spending that last point on life-saving Ablative Meat.

You may want to complete their index card to include the following:

- Their name, and perhaps a nickname.
- Some details about their life. Their race, obviously. Their favorite food, perhaps. Whether they have family they're writing home to.
- If the grunt is a member of your fireteam, then include their fireteam stats.
- Indicate how many times this grunt has survived Ablative Meat. For a new card, the count starts at "1."

The more information that you record about the grunt, the better. Make them feel less like plot armor [1] and more like a person.

Keep the card with your character sheet for future reference. This grunt is now a valuable asset, and can serve the company in two critical ways:

- If a fireteam member is killed, then this grunt may step into that team, filling the vacancy as only a veteran can. The fireteam does *not* get the Probie quality when an Ablative Meat survivor fills the space vacated by a fallen member. (*Note:* Ablative Meat survivors who are already members of a fireteam can't help in this way.)
- If a player character dies, then this Grunt can be promoted (*see page 15*). In this case, the new player character is created with an additional 10 skill points for each time the grunt has survived as Ablative Meat.

You may have played games where the death of non-player characters doesn't matter, or is shrugged off. *Planet Mercenary RPG* is not one of those games. Players may feel genuine attachment to their fireteam members and the veteran grunts in their company. This emotion is part of the experience, and it is there by design. The story that you tell will be better for it.

***Example**: In a previous session Erik invoked "Ablative Meat." The grunt survived, and was named Vasquez. In the current session Karenina is out of RiPPs and is unable to protect her character, Morgan, from a fatal wound. After combat ends, Karenina takes Vasquez's card from the company pool, and promotes Vasquez to player character. During character creation, Karenina has an additional 10 skill points to spend.*

***Example**: For the last three sessions one very lucky grunt, Rodrigo, has intervened to save the lives of the officers six times. The odds against a grunt surviving like Rodrigo has are 64 to 1. Should he be promoted to player character, he will get sixty additional skill points. During this session, however, Kai invokes Ablative Meat, names Rodrigo, and the coin comes up tails. The GC tears Rodrigo's card in half. The players wail Rodrigo's name, and their agonized cries are delicious to the GC.*

Note: If the named grunt is part of a player's fireteam, then it is normal for that player to feel some ownership over the grunt. The player who owns the fireteam (and the grunt) may choose whether or not another player can promote that grunt to PC. If the named grunt is part of the company pool, then that grunt is available to whomever needs them first.

1

CEO: What is plot armor? Is it in our catalog?

WRITER: It's a metaphor. It's the protective power of narrative in a story whose protagonist survives all the way to the end. It's not in our catalog, and it only stops fictional bullets.

Optional Rule: Lasting Grunt Damage

You may decide as a group that you want to pay more attention to the seriousness of life-threatening wounds. One way to do so is with the following optional rule for grunt damage.

When a grunt survives Ablative Meat, take that grunt out of the action for the remainder of the session, at least, and maybe for the rest of the current job. Perhaps they're out even longer, depending on the circumstances of the attack. The GC determines this amount of time.

If the grunt is a member of a fireteam, then subtract their stats from the fireteam's stat total when the grunt leaves the action. The player commanding that team may choose to recruit a new fireteam member, but this is a permanent switch. The fireteam gets the Probie quality, and after the injured grunt heals up, they're added to the company's common grunt pool instead of rejoining their fireteam, at least for now.

If the Player decides to let their team be one member short while the grunt heals, then the surviving grunt can rejoin the team, restoring the fireteam's total stats and preventing the loss of any fireteam attributes.

Space Combat

Space combat is mostly math. The tiny calculator built in to most meat-sophonts that allows them to do the simple calculus of catching a thrown biscuit is not up to the task of ascertaining intersection points for objects moving at thousands of kilometers per second, under acceleration, across spaces where targeting data itself is delayed by universal constants like the speed of light and the oscillation frequency of zero-state quantum foam. Typically, the processors capable of reducing space combat problems to comprehensible units are dedicated to that task, and are therefore unlikely to be made available to your Game Chief.

We've simplified space combat in *Planet Mercenary RPG* in the interest of keeping gameplay fast and fun. At the same time, space combat should put as little strain as possible on the disbelief-suspension systems of players who might have a passing knowledge of rocket science. The player who insists upon accurate computations for all trajectories should be encouraged to pursue the matter into an actual career in astrophysics. Also, remind them that actual space combat has a strong tendency to be unforgiving, and end thousands of stories at once with no consideration at all for the narrative implications.

The Basics

When engaged in space combat, which we define as combat between vessels in outer space, **the choices of the players do not represent actions taken by their player characters, but instead represent actions taken by your ship's AI in defending or attacking**. Your player characters are helpless passengers in this fight, though you can imagine them running around the ship and making repairs if you wish. You can certainly role-play them reacting to the

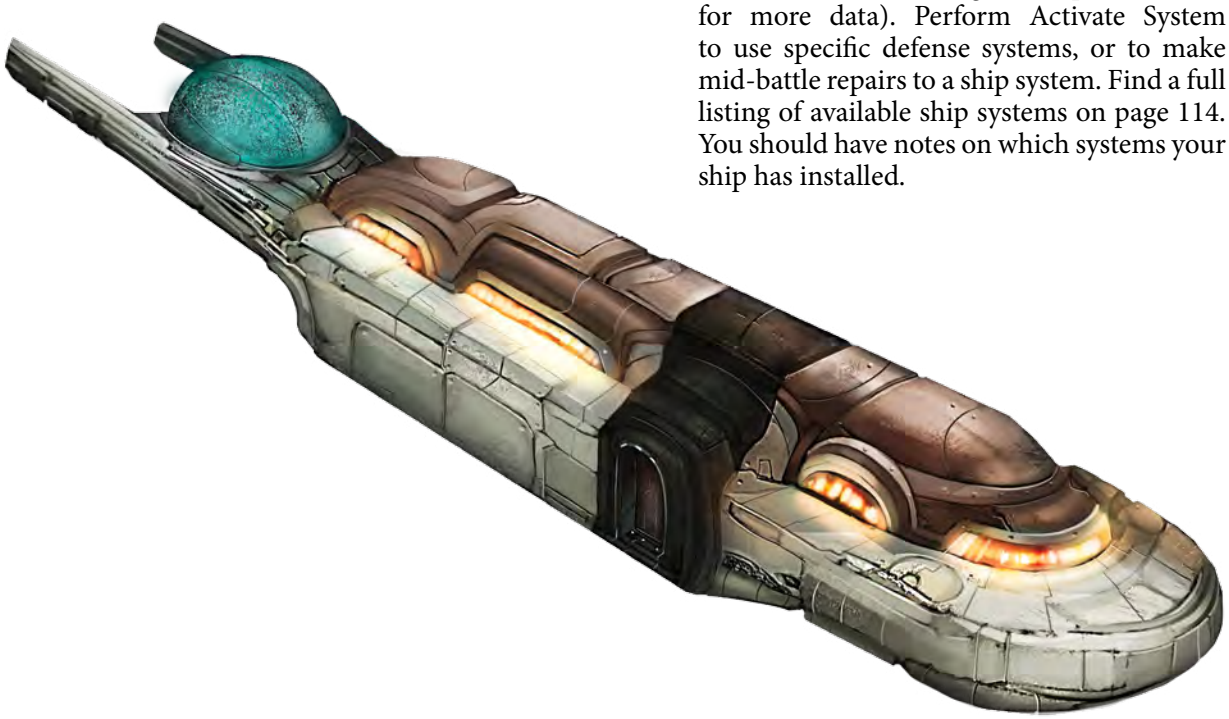
battle. Doing so may even earn you a RiPP from your GC. But your decisions are the actions that the ship AI takes, rather than actions that the player characters take. For each round of combat, each player has one action. The enemy ship will get a number of actions in each round that is equivalent to that ship's AI rating. Those actions will be inserted into the round by the GC in the same manner that enemy actions are inserted into other sorts of combat.

Evading and Dodging

In ship combat we use the word Evade rather than Dodge even though the action serves the same function in combat, which is to spend an action making yourself harder to hit.

Most of the actions that you make in space combat will require an **AI Roll.** An AI roll is equivalent to a skill roll in PC combat. **For AI Rolls, you roll 3d6 and add your company's AI rating** (*for details on AI rating, see page 97 Mercenary Companies*). The TN for an AI roll is most likely your opponent's Defense stat or their Evade roll if they use an action to Evade, but the GC can also create the TN, in the case that a player is attempting to make a repair. Tied AI Rolls go to the players. If you do hit your opponent, then you roll damage according to the stats of the weapon you used to hit your target.

The stats that you need to know for your ship in space combat are as follows:



Hull Points: Hull Points are the health stat for your ship. They represent structure, ship integrity, and quality of construction. When a ship's Hull Points reach zero… well, the cold vacuum of space is just that: cold. Running out of Hull Points is not advised.

Defense: This stat splits into two separate parts: Shields and Armor. A ship with only shields can resist Beam weapons, but not Missiles that ignore shields. Armor defends against both beam and missile attacks. Your Defense stat is the number that you'll use to determine whether you take damage.

Damage Reduction: If you do get hit, then your opponent gets to roll damage, but we assume you have some armor which makes the damage hurt less than it would. You'll get to subtract this number from your opponent's damage roll before you incur damage.

Damage: When you hit the other guy, this number indicates how many dice you roll to determine the damage that you inflict upon them. The damage roll will vary depending on which ship system you use to attack.

Company AI Rating: Your entire company shares this number, and it represents how intelligent your ship AI can be. Use it in all of your AI rolls. Ship action rolls are 3d6 +AI rating.

The actions available in ship combat are as follows:

► **Activate System**: You may activate a special system on your ship and resolve its effect (such as choosing to teraport, or scan for more data). Perform Activate System to use specific defense systems, or to make mid-battle repairs to a ship system. Find a full listing of available ship systems on page 114. You should have notes on which systems your ship has installed.

► **Attack**: Taking this action allows your ship to attack using a weapon system that your ship has installed. You can't attack with gravitics, for example, if your ship doesn't have any.

► **Escape**: This action is your last-ditch effort to flee a battle. At the end of this round, you teraport away safely. Fleeing to safety requires no roll. Game Chiefs may have narrative reasons to delay your departure. As always, story comes first.

► **Evade**: This action represents the movements that your ship makes to avoid getting hit. When another ship attacks yours, and a player chooses the Evade action, roll 3d6 + (your AI Rating). If this total meets or beats the attack roll, then you're not hit. If no one chooses to Evade this round, then attacks are matched against your ship's appropriate Defense stat.

Here is an example of how players taking ship actions might work:

***GC Olivia**: Alright, who's going first?*

***Omar**: I'll act as the AI to fire the LAZER BEAMZ.*

***Kelli**: I'll be the AI putting the ship on evasive maneuvers.*

***Matsuko**: I'll be the AI activating the teraport to put us in an advantageous position.*

Except that we formalized those statements to put the emphasis on players acting as the ship AI, for clarity's sake. The real conversation would look more like this:

***Omar**: I fire the STS beams at that annoying little ship above us.*

***GC Olivia**: Roll for attack. Kelli, Matsuko, what do you do?*

***Kelli**: I evade.*

***GC Olivia**: Okay, roll me 3d6. Matsuko?*

***Matsuko**: I teraport to a position where we can broadside the big ship there.*

Ship Systems

Ships are complicated (1), but there are a few systems that most ships have in common. Your ship will likely come with many systems pre-installed, but a good shipwright can install additional systems for you. Each system listed below includes an associated Resource cost (formatted R1 for one Resource, R2 for two Resources, and so on.

Annie Plant

Cost: R3 Civilian; R6 Milspec

Annie plants power ships. There are two types of annie plant: Civilian and Milspec. The type of annie plant aboard a ship determines what types of shields, weapons, and teraports that the ship is able to run. Most other systems can run on either type of annie plant without causing a significant drain.

Anti-Personnel Weapons

Cost: Only available Milspec; see Table 4.1: Anti-Personnel Weapons

Anti-personnel weapons are small- to medium-caliber weapons designed to clear a landing zone of combatants. They are not point defenses.

Use anti-personnel weapons to kill sophonts situated outside of your ship, in a variety of ways. These weapons are usually automated,

Civilian vs Milspec

Ship systems are designated as either Civilian or Milspec. Mostly this is an indicator of cost and of the amount of energy required to run the system. You must make sure your ship has enough annie to run each system, but your ship does not have to have enough annie to run all your systems simultaneously.

Many of the descriptions of systems list the necessary annie plant drain that is required to run the system. It is up to your group how diligent you want to be about tracking annie plant usage mid game. Pick the option that increases fun for your group. Some groups find better stories in having to turn off one system before being able to turn on another. Other groups just want to shoot things without worrying about that.

The other way that Civilian vs Milspec gear may affect your group is in how NPCs view your ship. If you're trying to pass as an unarmed merchant ship, the customs officer may give you the side-eye if your ship is obviously sporting three Milspec annie plants.

(1)

CEO: This list of systems doesn't even scratch the surface of what's available in our catalog.

TERL'KRIS: The Planet Mercenary catalog updates faster than most of us can *read*, let alone write. This should be enough to get people playing, without being so much that it's confusing.

MKTG: If there is demand, is this book going to be something we can sell extensions to? Add-ons? Appendices?

TERL'KRIS: "Splat-book" is the period-correct term. Yes. If there is demand, we will certainly endeavor to monetize more precious marketing copy.

Annie Plant Sizes

The Civilian and Milspec designations used for annie plants in *Planet Mercenary RPG* do not map directly onto size measurements that are so important to selecting the right annie plant outside of the game. This is a necessary abstraction to prevent ship stats and capabilities from requiring hypernet access and period-correct spreadsheets.

and enemies can destroy them with sufficient damage from heavy weapons or explosives. These weapons will be completely useless against armored vehicles or other vessels as they do not do any hull point damage.

Table 4.1: Anti-Personnel Weapons

Weapon Type	Damage	Cost
Light	1d6	R1
Medium	2d6	R2
Heavy	3d6	R3

Anti-Vehicle Weapons

Cost: See Table 4.2: Anti-Vehicle Weapons

These are weapons attached to the exterior of your ship that are designed to attack and disable vehicles without the massive sorts of hull damage necessary to pierce the defenses and armor of another starship. You use these when docked and facing opponents in vehicles. They've also been successfully deployed for warning shots against unwary opponent star ships because they will definitely get attention, but are unlikely to destroy a vessel.

Table 4.2: Anti-Vehicle Weapons

Weapon Type	Damage	Cost
Light	1 hull	R1
Medium	2 hull	R2
Heavy	3 hull	R3

Armor

Cost: See Table 4.3: Vessel Armor

A ship can be spaceworthy yet not be the slightest bit bulletproof. Annie-plant shields will deflect space debris, so there's no need to fit most civilian ships with physical armor. By contrast, capital ships have enough armor that a nuke can go off as close as 100 meters away, and merely cook off a few layers of material while shoving the ship off course a titch. That armor will usually not withstand a breacher missile, or a nuke going off right up against the hull. Breacher missiles ignore armor when they impact with the ship; however, they still need to surpass the other factors of your ship's Defense score.

Armor comes in three classes: light, medium, or heavy. Each class of armor has a reduction score and Hull Point Bonus (HB on table 4.3). You add the reduction to your ship's damage reduction (DR on table 4.3), DR is subtracted from your opponent's damage roll after they hit your vessel. You add the HB to the Hull Points. If you've acquired a pre-made ship, then its armor is already accounted for in its scores.

Table 4.3: Vessel Armor

Armor Type	HB	DR	Cost
Light	+7	2	R2
Medium	+14	4	R3
Heavy	+28	8	R6

Assault Boat Docks

Cost: R6 Only available Milspec

Assault boat docks allow a small ship to lamprey itself onto the hull of whatever's being boarded. They also allow a larger ship to launch smaller ships, which can then lamprey themselves onto another ship's hull, blast through that hull, and then hot-deploy troops into the target vessel without necessarily depressurizing things. If the AI Roll succeeds, then you have boarding parties onboard the other ship. The number of boarding parties on the other ship depends on your ship classification (*see Table 4.4: Assault Boat Docks*). It may also depend on the size of your grunt pool as determined by the chart on page 110. Your GC has final determination over how many boarding parties you're able to deploy. Once you have boarding parties onboard the enemy ship, you can command them just as you would a fireteam in regular combat. Each boarding party onboard the enemy ship takes one action per round.

Table 4.4: Assault Boat Docks

Vessel Classification	Boarding Parties
Z	0
Y	1-4
X	5-6
V	7-15
T	16-24
S	25-45
Q	45+

On Boarding Actions

There may be times when a ship-to-ship boarding action leads to interpersonal combat, where the players will take direct control of their characters, as opposed to only controlling their ship's AI. The GC determines if this should happen, or when. Ultimately it is a story decision. Are you telling the story of shipboard intrigue and combat, or do you need to resolve ship combat so you can get to more interesting stories on the station?

Drone Scouts

Cost: R6 Only available Milspec; requires AI rating 2+

With hypernet communication, a swarm of drones can give a ship a relativity-defying, *real-time* picture of what surrounds it, depending on the distance and density of the swarm. These scouts can be light-minutes or even light-hours from their host vessel, and because of instantaneous communications, they can provide early warnings about incoming beam weapons. Deploying your drone scouts gives +1 to Dodge and Defense.

Fabber

Cost: R3 Civilian; R6 Milspec

Fabbers are not magical dispensers of infinite goods. They cost money to acquire, and then they cost Resources to feed the fabber enough materials to make the thing you want. There is also a chance that the thing you fabbed is of lower quality than your purchased gear.

A Civilian fabber can make items at a Resource cost equal to half of that gear's purchasing cost (minimum 1 Resource/Supplies). However, there are limits on what a Civilian fabber can make. It can't make armor. It can only make weapons that are legal or restricted. It can only make general materiel that costs S5 or less. It can't make vehicles or ship systems. Also, a Civilian fabber requires the output of half a Civilian annie plant, which must be devoted to fabber use while the gear is being made. This means that the annie plant cannot power weapons, armor, ammo, etc., effectively (or possibly at all). There is a 50/50 chance that the item you make will be failure prone. You can reduce this percentage by doing a successful skill check related to running the fabber. Ask your GC if fabbing is right for you.

A Milspec fabber can make any item for a Resource cost equal to half of that gear's purchasing cost (minimum 1 Resource/Supplies). However, to make military or illegal weapons, vehicles, ship systems, or general materiel costing more than S6, you must pay an additional 1 Resource, to purchase the necessary specs for making that type of gear. IE: 1 Resource to make any military weapon or 1 Resource to make vehicles. Once you own the specs, your company can keep them on file to use again later. It is possible that you will acquire fabber specs in ways other than purchase, but this depends on what sort of adventures your Company undertakes. A Milspec fabber is big — the size of a skyscraper office building. It also requires the entire output of a Milspec annie plant, which must be devoted entirely to running the fabber while it is in operation.

Game Chiefs should note that to create items with a fabber takes time. Hours for small items, up to days, weeks, or even months for very large items.

Gravy Guns

Cost: Milspec only; see Table 4.5: Gravy Guns

Gravy Guns require huge amounts of energy to fire. **To operate Gravy Guns, you must devote an entire Milspec annie plant to running them.** Gravy Guns are only effective at short range. You may need to spend actions or use your teraport to get within range of your target. If the enemy tries to Evade, then make an AI roll against their Evade. Once in range, you must use another action to fire the guns. Since *Planet Mercenary RPG* doesn't use formal ranges, the GC will tell you if you're in range before you attack. Gravy Guns ignore the damage reduction from both shields and armor. Only the very unwise will defy a ship which is up close and has heavy gravy guns. These guns can also be used to immobilize opponents. The result is determined by competing AI rolls with ties going to the players.

Table 4.5: Gravy Guns

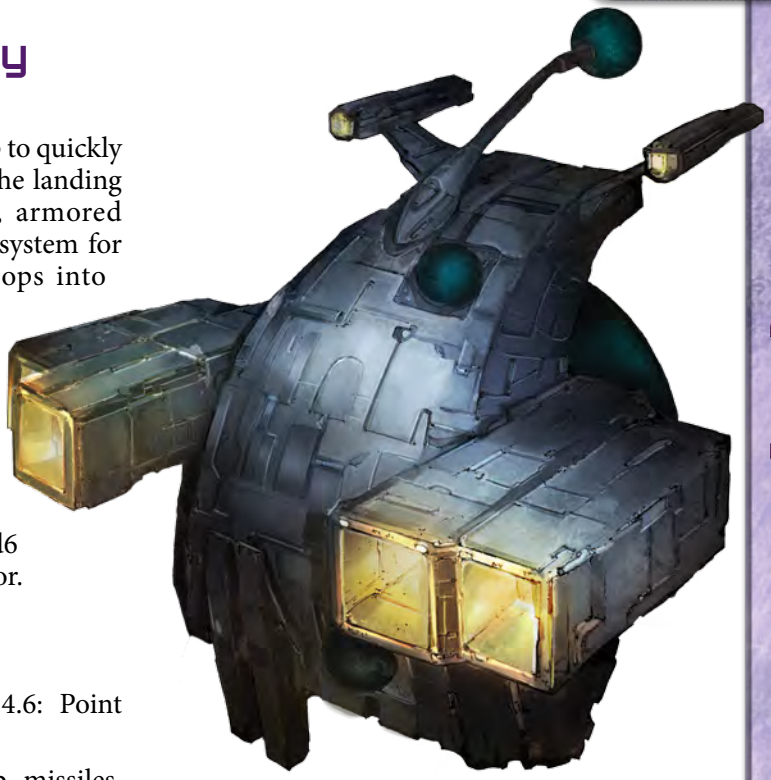
Weapon Type	Damage	Cost
Light	3d6	R4
Medium	6d6	R7
Heavy	12d6	R12

Hot Deployment Bay

Cost: R3 Only available Milspec

A hot deployment bay allows a ship to quickly disgorge combat-ready troops into the landing zone. It's a combination of a big, armored door, a ramp, and a rack-and-stack system for "comfortably" crowding those troops into the deployment space during the approach.

Because this system drops troops into a landing zone under fire, your grunts and XOs should make skill checks in Athletics to safely land without being shot. Failure causes the deploying character to take 2d6 damage that can be reduced by Armor.



MAXIM 4

Close air support covereth a multitude of sins.

Point Defenses

Cost: Milspec only; see Table 4.6: Point Defenses; requires AI rating 3+

Point defenses repel ship-to-ship missiles. Point defenses integrate with the ship's shield, automatically firing at missiles that can breach the shield, in an effort to destroy them before they reach the ship. They stop a certain amount of projectile attacks each round with very small beam weapons. They are ineffective against beam attacks. The ability of point defenses to counter projectile attacks is abstracted as a bonus to your Defense stat.

Table 4.6: Point Defenses

Defense Type	Defense Bonus	Cost
Light	+2	R2
Medium	+4	R4
Heavy	+6	R6

Sally Port

Cost: R1 Only available Civilian

A sally port is a big door in your ship that allows you to move vehicles and large numbers of troops quickly. Without one, you can't transport larger vehicles.

Shield

Cost: See Table 4.7: Shields

You can acquire two types of shields: light and heavy. Shields provide a Defense bonus against attack rolls and beam-type ship-to-ship weapons. Each light shield requires a single Civilian annie plant to function, or half of a Milspec annie plant. Each heavy shield requires a Milspec annie plant, or two Civilian annie plants.

Table 4.7: Shields

Defense Type	Defense Bonus	Cost
Light	+5 against Beam	R2
Heavy	+10 against Beam	R4

Ship Locker

Cost: R1 for Civilian; R3 for Milspec

Most vessels have what's collectively called "the ship's locker." This may be a discreet part of the ship, a bit of the cargo area, or maybe just the contents of all those lockers at the foot of your bunks. Not all vessels contain a ship locker, and those that don't aren't assumed to have any of the following basics either.

If your vessel has a ship locker, refer to Table 4.8: The Ship Locker to see what's inside. Your vessel's stats should tell you whether its locker is Civilian or Milspec. If not, the GC will know.

Many of the items listed in General Materiel are also potentially in your ship's locker. To see which you might have, refer to Tables 5.10–5.14 *(see pages 138–140)*.

Table 4.8: The Ship's Locker

Item	Civilian Locker	Milspec Locker	Notes
First aid kits	Yes	Yes	-
Rations, emergency	Yes	Yes	Enough to cover the average distance to nearby outposts (give or take)
Suits, life support & EVA	Yes	Yes	-
Tools	Yes	Yes	Engineering, mechanical, and other required to make common on-board repairs
Weapons, emergency melee	No	Yes	Dmg: 1d6, grips: 1, license: legal, no qualities
Weapons, emergency pistols	No	Yes	Type: beam or projectile (each crew member chooses), dmg: 1d6, reload: 1, grips: 1, license: legal, no qualities
Weapons, emergency carbines	No	Yes	Type: beam or projectile (each crew member chooses), dmg: 2d6, reload: 1, grips: 1, license: legal, no qualities

Unless otherwise specified, when a ship's locker contains an item there's enough of the item for everyone who regularly spends time on the ship. The GC decides all exceptions, probably to suit the current narrative.

Some table entries are "Maybe". When you need to determine whether your locker contains one of these items, flip a coin. On heads, your locker contains the item (again, enough for everyone who's regularly on the ship); On tails, you don't have the item and you should probably have words with your quartermaster.

Ship-to-Ship Weapons

STS weapons will automatically kill anyone on a personnel level, along with anyone standing within a good radius of them. Using STS weapons on single lifeform targets is an exceptionally bad idea for the target, and a war crime in many systems for the user. An STS shot to anything without Hull armor is an auto-kill for the target and anything within 500 meters.

Ship-to-Ship Weapons

Cost: R2 Light, R4 Medium, R6 Heavy

There are two types of ship-to-ship (STS) weapons: beam and missile. Beams attack with focused light or plasma, and missiles hurl objects through space to hit your opponent. Your ship can have either or both weapon types. However, they function a little differently, and you can find details about each of them below.

STS weapons come in three categories. The damage of the weapon depends on its category, as noted on Table 4.9: Ship-to-Ship Weapons:

Table 4.9: Ship-to-Ship Weapons

Weapon Type	Beam	Missile
Light	2d6	2d6
Medium	4d6	3d6
Heavy	8d6	4d6

Beam Weapons

When you use beam weapons, you must roll to see if they are strong enough to punch through a target vessel's armor. Active shields repel beams, and unless the ships are very close to each other, beam weapons are most effective as close-approach, precision tools for disabling a ship. The attacking ship must be within the shield bubble of the defending ship for attacks to hit reliably.

Missile Weapons

True ship-to-ship missiles are like tiny spaceships that explode on impact. As such, they are expensive. A missile has a small annie plant on board, and it emits a pulse that counteracts the target vessel's shields. The payload on ship-to-ship missiles can be anything, but it is usually an explosive ordnance with a kiloton yield.

Missile weapons ignore shields. They must be stopped with point defenses or evaded. Missiles fire in salvos of 100 missiles, but for game purposes, treat each salvo as a single attack, with a single damage roll. One salvo requires one action. Multiple salvos can be fired per round if the players choose that as their actions.

Teraport

Cost: R1 basic (ie Civilian)

Cost: R3 advanced (ie Milspec)

Teraports come in Civilian and Milspec grades. A basic (ie Civilian) teraport requires

the entire output of a Civilian annie plant, or half the output of a Milspec annie plant. An advanced (ie Milspec) teraport requires the entire output of a Milspec annie plant. So make sure your ship has the right annies to support your teraport.Teraports are the standard mode of travel in the galaxy. If your ship does not have a teraport, what you've got is limited to puttering around inside a single system and takes a long time to go anywhere at all. Teraports can transport things as small as a Terran pea up to as big as your entire vessel.

Basic Teraport: Allows instantaneous travel to 99.999% of the galaxy. Unfortunately, all that is empty space. The remaining .001% is where all the really interesting things are. These places tend to have teraport area denial (TAD) in place to prevent people from, for instance, teraporting a nuke into the customs station. A basic teraport lets you identify the correct exclusion zones that allow you to teraport to a reasonable travel distance from a given location. If you want to teraport to a specific target, and don't know exactly where you're going, or if you're teraporting in a high-pressure situation such as battle, then roll 3d6 + (AI Rating) against the TN that your GC provides.

Advanced Teraport: Used for the exploration of systems, an advanced teraport does not have to make a roll for teraporting anywhere in mapped space, even under high pressure combat conditions. However this capability is dependent on having a stable hypernet connection. If hypernet is being jammed, then the advanced teraport functions the same as a basic teraport. An advanced teraport with a hypernet connection may be able to punch through a basic TAD. To see if your advanced teraport beats your opponent's basic TAD, make an AI roll TN 17.

Teraport Area Denial (TAD)

Cost: R2 basic (ie Civilian)

Cost: R5 advanced (ie Milspec)

The point of teraport area denial is to prevent things from teraporting so close to your ship that you don't have time to take an action. This is the reason that most governments or entire worlds will be encircled with large advanced TAD systems. They want to be able to see you coming and decide if you're allowed to be there. If your TAD is damaged, then enemies can attack you by surprise. A basic TAD can run off

of any annie plant. An advanced TAD must be powered by a Milspec annie plant.

Basic TAD: This system gives you an area of teraport denial large enough to make sure that you are not ambush attacked with no time to respond. Unfortunately basic TAD blocks all teraports, even your own. In order to teraport personnel or your entire vessel, you have to turn off your TAD. Basic TAD may be pierced by advanced teraporting systems.

Advanced TAD: This system gives you an area of denial that is large enough that you will not be surprised by ambush and may have a chance to take action before your opponent is able to engage you in combat. An advanced TAD has the ability to create micro holes which allow you, or those authorized by you, to teraport into or out of the area of denial. Advanced TAD can't be pierced by your opponent's advanced teraport. Don't let that last bit make you cocky though. Many an advanced TAD has been felled with an appropriate placement of explosive devices.

Very Dangerous Array

Cost: R8 Only available Milspec; requires AI rating 3+

Made popular by Tagon's Toughs, this system is now available for purchase. The Very Dangerous Array combines STS missiles and scout drones. The missiles are larger and more expensive than standard STS missiles, and are fired long in advance of being aimed at a target. They function as drones, assisting with target identification and selection, and they can then coordinate their attack. To use your VDA as STS missiles mid combat takes an action, make an AI roll to hit. They do 2d6 damage. You can set them up as a perimeter guard with orders to attack anything that approaches, but this is a good way to accidentally attack your allies.

Repairing & Upgrading Ships

If you want to add a system to your ship (or upgrade a system you already have), then you go to an appropriate shipyard, pay the Resource cost. If you're upgrading, you pay the difference between the cost of the system you have and the one you're upgrading to. Mark the new system down with its stats and effects.

In the course of combat, one or more of your ship systems may become damaged. During combat, you can attempt repairs to that system as an action. If you are outside of combat, it is assumed that you have enough supplies on hand to repair the system. Thus there is no Resource cost to repair a ship system that you already have installed, unless the GC states that the system was damaged beyond repair. This can happen as the result of an Upgraded Success, Mayhem Flip, or an overpowering damage roll.

As an option, a creative GC may make seeking and purchasing parts for ship repair part of the story. In this case, the cost of the repair should be measured in Supplies, not Resources.

MAXIM 25

If a manufacturer's warranty covers the damage you did, you didn't do enough damage.

Ship Taxonomy

Classifying ships is a tricky business, because so many variables alter the ways in which engineers can categorize different vessels. These variables range from weapons systems to teraporting (or area-denial) power, and from defenses to cosmetic changes. In the late 27th, Chendig Wuck created the Zyx scale, which outlines standardized rules for spacecraft classification. The simplicity of Wuck's system was particularly well suited to RPG adaptation, so it is used throughout *Planet Mercenary RPG*.

All ships are classified by their size, which is denoted by letters (Z, Y, X, V, T, S, and Q), and their class, which is denoted by numbers (0–9). Engineers measure ship sizes from their farthest point forward to farthest point aft, excluding "any device, spindle, or decoration whose only purpose is to increase the size of ship for marketing purposes." Class represents the amount of firepower that a vessel can bring to bear against an opponent.

Naturally, there are those who find this straightforward taxonomy too simple. They instituted the addition of "+" symbols to indicate that a ship has a bonus of some sort. For example, because a large battleplate classified officially as Q-7 might be carrying other ships, it has a "+" designation. The taxonomy indicates what the ship itself can fire and carry, but the plus indicates that inside there may be additional ships that fit elsewhere on the taxonomy.

Table 4.10: Ship Size Class

Letter Designation	Length
Z	< 10 m
Y	10–39 m
X	40–99 m
V	100–299 m
T	300–499 m
S	500–999 m
Q	> 999 m

Table 4.11: Ship Firepower Class

Numerical Designation	Firepower
0, 1, 2	***Low***. What these ships lack in firepower they often make up for in maneuverability and hull strength (e.g. merchant ships).
3, 4, 5	***Medium***. These ships tend to include point defenses and minimal STS weaponry (e.g. gunboats, freighters, privateer ships).
6	***High***. These ships tend to include STS weaponry and systems for defeating defensive countermeasures. This is the minimum rating for a ship considered a threat to capital ships or fortified stations.
7, 8, 9	***Critical***. Affectionately known as the "MOAR GUNS" classes, these ships tend to include gravy guns and appear war-ready (e.g. battleplates, thunderheads, LOTA).

Vessels

Anyone familiar with even a slice of the incalculable variety of available modes of transport will have learned contempt for how these things are named. The Zyx taxonomic classification system, while useful, doesn't keep manufacturers from naming vessels ridiculous, incomprehensible things. Consumers, marketers, and tabletop RPG designers alike lament the absence of a standard, universal naming convention system for space-going vessels. Two ships of wildly varying Zyx classification may both be named "destroyer."

Regardless of names, *Planet Mercenary RPG* organizes this listing of ships according to the company Resources that they require for purchase. We provide ships, ranging from budget-priced to forever-out-of-reach. The rest of the chapter will provide a sampling of the Planet Mercenary catalog, along with a few vessels unavailable for commercial purchase [1], but common enough that you might find yourself in one — or targeted by one's Gravy guns.

Budget Vessels
1–5 Resources

The smallest vessels that will serve a mercenary company are often little more than boats, functioning only to move boots from a staging area to a theater of operations. These vessels are limited in many ways, but they are often all that fledgling mercenary companies can afford. Which is fine, because "fledgling" aptly suggests that the company has not yet learned to fly. [2]

Nowhere is the discomfort of interstellar travel more apparent than at the bottom end of this scale: cramped shuttles, smelly longboats, and other small vessels. They can be equipped with teraports, which means that technically you can use them for interplanetary travel, but these vessels are not meant to be homes or operating bases. Further up the pricing scale, you'll find vessels that can serve as both delivery vehicles for your troops, and as cozy, mobile bases of operations.

Aguirre Galactic Gladius-class Fighter

Cost: R1 for two
Passengers: 2–3
AI Rating: <1 **Class:** Z6 **Hull Points:**7
Defense: 5
Damage: 2d6
Pre-installed systems: Light armor, light STS beam, light STS missiles
Compatible upgrades: Medium and heavy STS weapons

The Gladius is small, but it hits hard. Like a law-enforcement cruiser, it only seats a couple of people. Unlike a law enforcement cruiser, it's not built for asking questions before opening fire. Also, you cannot adapt it for long-term

Ship Living Space

Vessels have a limited carrying capacity when it comes to personnel. Unfortunately tracking this capacity in a game introduces and astounding amount of paperwork which measurably reduces the speed of play. With many of the listed ships you'll find information about passenger capacity. This is provided for narrative purposes rather than as an inducement to create spreadsheets. You may want a story where your small ship has to carry a large number of civilians for an extended period of time, all while supplies of food and air are running out. We've attempted to enable stories such as that one with the information we provide. Your group will need to decide how strict you want to be with the space available on your vessel.

[1]

MKTG: you're spending a lot of page space on things we don't sell. You're running ads for the competition.

TERL'KRIS: The grunts reading this book are not the ones making purchasing decisions at the vessel level. We're not leaving money on the table because the grunts don't have any money to leave.

MKTG: Is there a plan in place to prevent this document from falling into the hands of quartermasters and chiefs-of-staff?

TERL'KRIS: I believe managing the company's customer-directed flow of information is explicitly a marketing problem.

[2]

CEO: A bird pun? Really?

WRITER: It's not a pun. It's a metaphor with symmetry. It will help the reader absorb the information.

CEO: Which one are you? I would like to help you absorb a knife.

TERL'KRIS: Oh, look. My writers are suddenly all on a team-building retreat in a secure facility.

travel. You get in, you get the job done, and you get back out.

By itself it doesn't pose much threat to larger vessels, but the Gladius-class isn't meant to be deployed one at a time. Or even ten at a time. A full 48-Gladius cohort can overwhelm the point defenses of capital ships. You probably can't afford that many, however. (*Note*: The actual Roman cohort was 480 to 800. Aguirre Galactic would love to sell you that many, but there are better uses of that kind of capital. Like, you know, a few capital ships.)

Aguirre Galactic Pilus-class Longboat

Cost: R2 (R5 with gun package)

Passengers: 10 long-term *or* 60 short-term

AI Rating: <1 **Class:** Y4 **Hull Points:** 7

Defense: 5

Damage: 2d6; with gun package: 4d6 missile and 8d6 beam

Pre-installed systems: Light armor, light STS beam, light STS missiles. Gun package increases STS weapons to heavy.

Compatible upgrades: Drone scouts (requires AI Rating 2+), point defenses, medium and heavy STS weapons

Bonus: This ship's hull is easier than usual to jury-rig with extra weaponry (TN 12)

The Pilus is named after an ancient Terran spear, but it is not meant for ship-to-ship operations. It is a lightly-armored longboat that can be fitted up with basic point defenses, and if your company is going exclusively with Aguirre vessels, the Pilus is your delivery system for boarders. When used in accordance with the original design it will seat 60. If you reconfigure the interior, then it will comfortably support a permanent crew of 10. More than a few Pilus longboats have been repurposed in this way, serving as tough-looking tour buses for musicians, spackle-dancers, and teams of con artists.

The hull has several suitable attach points for weapon upgrades. A fully tricked-out Pilus can function as a gunboat, but even at their most heavily armed, these vessels work best when they can clear the distance between ships without coming under fire.

Ship Modifications

GCs should use each ship's compatible upgrade list as a starting point for deciding what your PCs can do with their ship. Engineering and Jury-rigging can overcome all sorts of limitations. For example, teraports can be installed in any vehicle or vessel, but it might cause functionality problems for other things if it isn't in the compatible upgrade list.

Mitsuntendo Yoshi-class Dropship

Cost: R2

Passengers: 8 long-term *and* 30 short-term

AI Rating: 1 **Class:** Z4 **Hull Points:** 7

Defense: 6

Damage: 1d6 anti-personnel, 2d6 STS missiles

Pre-installed systems: Light armor, light anti-personnel weapons (forward-facing only), light STS missiles

Compatible upgrades: N/A (jury-rig TN 16 may allow rear facing anti-personnel.)

Yoshi is ancient Terran-Japanese for "good luck." Analysts don't know whether Mitsuntendo's marketing team was using the phrase sarcastically, but it doesn't matter. Any vessel in which pilots race into oncoming fire in order to deposit a payload of soldiers should hope for good fortune at every opportunity.

The Yoshi carries 30 troops, and it includes accommodations for 8 full-time crew. This default configuration is perfect for commanders who choose to lead from the rear, one hand on the stick, ready to bug out the moment that things get scary. In these circumstances, "good luck" may be laden with irony.

Celeschul Orbital Foundries Wyvern-class Gunboat

Cost: R3 (R4 with gun package)

Passengers: 24 long-term *and* 60 short-term

AI Rating: 2 **Class:** Y4 **Hull Points:** 7

Defense: 7

Damage: 1 hull anti-vehicle; With gun package 2d6 STS

Pre-installed systems: 1 Civilian annie plant, light anti-vehicle weapons, light armor, sally port, heavy shield

Gun package: light STS missiles

Compatible upgrades: Civilian ship locker, light and medium STS missile launchers, basic TAD

Celeschul Orbital Foundries built hundreds of thousands of vessels during the Terraforming War in the Schuul system, because the pace of this war made this design quite popular. The company had facilities on both sides of the conflict, as well as in neutral territory. The Wyvern-class exemplifies the hybrid function gunboat. It can deliver 60 assault troops via a forward sally port and an elevator platform, and it will simultaneously accommodate 24 live-in crew, provided those crew members are willing to sleep in shifts.

The Wyvern is lightly armored, depending entirely upon its 3-meter annie plant for shielding. Suitable as a short-run troop transport or as a long-distance light cargo ship, it's no wonder that so many of these continue to see service long after the end of the Terraforming War.

Döblitz Foundry Harmadillo-class Gunboat

Cost: R3 (R4 with gun package)
Passengers: 8 long-term *and* 60 short-term
AI Rating: 2 **Class:** Y5 **Hull Points:** 9
Defense: 7
Damage: 1d6 anti-personnel, 1 hull anti-vehicle; 2d6 STS missile (or beam)
Pre-installed systems: 1 Civilian annie plant, light armor, light anti-personnel weapons, light anti-vehicle weapons,
Gun package: STS weapon (pick beam or missile)
Compatible upgrades: Civilian ship locker

The Harmadillo is one of the most popular vessels in its price range. Heavily armored, with four small annie plants providing thrust, inertiics, and unifield shields. (In game these four small annies are equivalent to one Civilian annie.) The Harmadillo can survive the charge into a contested landing zone, and quickly disgorge 60 troops. This tends to end the contest for the landing zone.

Most of the Harmadillo's armor is located on its curved upper hull, with its weapons mounted on its belly. This design has obvious weaknesses, but its inertiics ensure that the Harmadillo can rush in armor-first without anybody inside feeling upside-down, and the "soft belly" is a much harder target than it appears to be.

Affordable Vessels

6–15 Resources 1

The average mercenary company thrives on jobs large enough to be worthwhile, but small enough not to attract the massive resources of large, state-operated military organizations. For this reason, they often stick with vessels that sit in this price range, known among consumers as the "sweet spot." These vessels are generally characterized by their ability to do more than one job, and to do those jobs well. If you're tired of compromising between speed and carrying capacity, or between troops and point defenses, then it's time to take the next step and get yourself into a nice frigate or a heavy cruiser.

Celeschul Orbital Foundries Dragon-class Interdiction Cruiser

Cost: R7 (R8 with gun package)
Passengers: 70 long-term
AI Rating: 3 **Class:** X4 **Hull Points:** 9
Defense: 8
Damage: 2d6 anti-personnel, 3 hull anti-vehicle, 2d6 STS
Pre-installed systems: Civilian annie plant, medium anti-personnel weapons, heavy anti-vehicle weapons, Civilian ship locker, light STS missiles (turret-mounted), basic teraport, light armor
Gun package: Upgrade light STS missile launchers to medium STS missile launchers
Compatible upgrades: Milspec ship locker, advanced teraport, TAD

Another COF design proven during the Terraforming War in the Schuul system (3069–3073), the Dragon-class Interdiction Cruiser is many a young commander's first true ship-to-ship combat vessel. This ship measures 60 m long, 35 m wide, and it includes a warship-grade, ten-meter annie plant in the middle. Tens of thousands of these kite-shaped cruisers were produced, and a great many of those not destroyed in the conflict were surplussed after the war. The design remains popular today.

1

CEO: There are millions of vessel manufacturers, and you're listing products from just ten of them.

TERL'KRIS: Nine, actually.

CEO: This isn't helping your case.

TERL'KRIS: I'll sum up what I've said before on the matter. We cannot be exhaustive, so we're being representative.

CEO: You only list one of the hull sizes for these models. There's a term for this kind of sampling.

TERL'KRIS: "Statistically insignificant?"

CEO: Knowing the term doesn't excuse being defined by it.

TERL'KRIS: How do you feel about "subsidized promotional consideration?"

CEO: That term excuses quite a bit, in direct proportion to the size of the subsidies in question. Can we get Accounting in here?

TERL'KRIS: Please, no. The economic abstractions on P. 99 will break them. I'll send you the receipts myself.

Celeschul Orbital Foundries continues to manufacture Dragon-class vessels to keep up with demand that extends far beyond the Schuul system.

Fox & Young Ghostfox Courier

Cost: R7
Passengers: 70
AI Rating: 4 **Class:** X4 **Hull Points:** 9
Defense: 9
Damage: 4d6 STS beam, 3d6 missile
Pre-installed systems: 1 Civilian annie plant, light armor, Civilian ship locker, medium STS beams, medium STS missiles, basic teraport
Compatible upgrades: Anti-personnel weapons, anti-vehicle weapons, sally port, Milspec ship locker, advanced teraport, TAD, armor upgrades, STS upgrades

The Ghostfox makes a good compromise between a courier and a proper gunship. Fox & Young designed the hull treatments and profile to provide excellent stealth against passive sensors, and a confusing scatter against many active sensors. This technology won't work with larger vessels, and it's not perfect, but it gives the Ghostfox a tactical edge when something needs to be couriered through a blockade. The Ghostfox comes standard with anti-personnel weapons mounted inside the rear-facing hatch, and a pair of missile launchers flush-mounted under the hull.

The Ghostfox is lightly armored, and its annies are tuned for shielding rather than speed. Of particular note is the presence of a reaction drive, suitable for giving the Ghostfox a push while its shields are down and its annie runs cold for maximum stealth.

Gaines-Uashjo Valnus Skytemper Corvette

Cost: R7 (R9 with gun package)
Passengers: 10 short-term *or* 60 long-term
AI Rating: 3 **Class:** X6 **Hull Points:** 14
Defense: 8
Damage: 2d6 anti-personnel, 2 hull anti-vehicle, 2d6 STS
Pre-installed systems: 1 Civilian annie plant, medium anti-personnel weapons, medium anti-vehicle weapons, medium armor, Civilian ship locker, light STS missiles, basic teraport
Gun package: increases STS missiles to medium, adds light STS beam
Compatible upgrades: Drone scouts, light point defenses, Milspec ship locker, advanced teraport, TAD, weapon and armor upgrades

Gaines-Uashjo's innovative Gzeaul engineers are the main reason to buy this manufacturer's ships. The Valnus Skytemper is a slender, 88-meter corvette intended for ship-to-ship combat. Its low-profile design affords a small target profile from the front and the rear, and a radar cross-section that is deliberately deceptive.

Its design does force you to choose between two very different configurations. The "Vasky" can either carry — and quickly deploy — numerous spare salvos of ship-to-ship munitions, or it can field a full crew complement. For this reason, it makes for an excellent choice as a *secondary* ship, assuming that your first ship already has all your people on it. Loaded for killing other vessels, it supports a crew of ten. With point defenses and one salvo of missiles, it can sleep 60 in shifts.

Fox & Young Orion-class Cruiser

Cost: R8 (R9 with gun package)
Passengers: 50
AI Rating: 5 **Class:** X8 **Hull Points:** 14
Defense: 9
Damage: 4d6 STS beam, 3d6 STS missile
Pre-installed systems: 1 Civilian annie plant, medium armor, Civilian ship locker, medium STS beams, medium STS missiles, basic teraport
Gun package: heavy STS missiles
Compatible upgrades: Anti-personnel weapons, anti-vehicle weapons, sally port, Milspec ship locker, advanced teraport, TAD, weapon and armor upgrades

The Orion-class has one purpose, and it was named after the great hunter of Earth legends

Trade-In Value on Vessels

Many shipyards will happily take your old ship as trade-in value toward a new ship. However, in the grand tradition of used item sales among sophonts everywhere, they will deduct value for any damage your ship displays. You'll need to put your best Persuasion and/or Negotiate skills to work in order to get good value on your old ship.

in honor of that solitary focus. It hunts and kills other ships, including vessels significantly larger and better armed than it is.

Like the Ghostfox, the Orion is stealthy and small, but it is built to deliver a swarm of smart breachers in a saturation salvo, closely followed by a flight of stealth breachers designed to slip through the target's harried point defenses. Dubbed "wolfpack," this suite of breachers works together to improve the chances of destroying or at least disabling the target vessel in a surprise attack.

When this works, it is beautiful to behold. When it fails, the Orion-class cruiser makes itself vulnerable to counterattack. All its eggs are in that basket, so to speak, so commanders are advised to not put all their eggs in an Orion assault.

Tausennigan Ob'enn Teardrop-class Assault Cruiser

Cost: R8 (R11 with mounts for four tanks)
Passengers: 50 long-term *and* 200 short-term
AI Rating: 4 **Class:** X6 **Hull Points:** 9
Defense: 9
Damage: 3d6 anti-personnel, 2 hull anti-vehicle, 4d6 STS beam
Pre-installed systems: 1 Civilian annie plant, heavy anti-personnel guns, medium anti-vehicle guns, Civilian ship locker, medium STS beams, light armor, basic teraport
Compatible upgrades: Heavy anti-vehicle guns, hot deployment bay, sally port, heavy STS beams, advanced teraport, TAD, VDA, weapon and armor upgrades

The Teardrop-class cruisers favored by the ob'enn warlords have been used for centuries in the long-running tausennigan hostilities. These ships were built with the express purpose of putting angry, furry, ob'enn troops into the operating theater in bloodthirsty batches of two hundred. Typically used with the fire support of the massive thunderhead superfortresses, the Teardrop-class is not manufactured outside of the Tause system, and is only rarely sold or surplussed.

Manufactured by Superfortresses, Teardrops can drop 200 psychobears and can comfortably house a full-time crew of 50. A Teardrop's weaponry probably won't breach an opposing ship's shields, but it will wreck the crap out of anything non-shielded. If you're hitting an unshielded, emplaced enemy with this ship, then you're going to do lightly-contested landscaping while they scream.

Teardrops are unavailable new from the manufacturer, and damaged ones are usually recycled within the Tause system. Cut the cost by R2 if this ship is listed as MIA and it has ob'enn agents actively looking for it.

Gaines-Uashjo Valnus Stormrage Frigate

Cost: R9 (R11 with gun package)
Passengers: 60
AI Rating: 3 **Class:** V6 **Hull Points:** 14
Defense: 8, +5 Shielded
Damage: 4d6 STS beam
Pre-installed systems: 2 Civilian annie plants, medium armor, light shield, Civilian ship locker, medium STS beams, light STS missiles, basic teraport
Gun package: add medium STS missiles
Compatible upgrades: Light point defenses, heavy shields, Milspec ship locker, weapon and armor upgrades, advanced teraport, TAD

At a compact, no-nonsense length of 120 m, the Valnus Stormrage, or "Vasto," is not especially vast. It makes good use of its space, however, and it does not require commanders to choose between crew and munitions. It is a little slower than the Vasky, and the cross-section is a bit chubbier, but the Vasto can be upgraded with a tertiary annie plant for more speed and more shielding. With that change, even with a full crew complement, it carries more ship-killing weaponry than the Vasky.

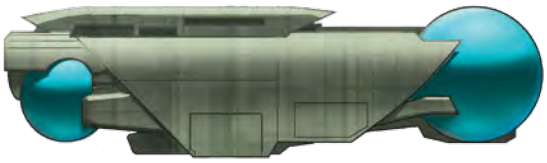
Expensive Ships

16-34 Resources

This category is dominated by capital ships favored by planetary or star-system militaries, and by organizations whose budgets are lavishly supplied by disgruntled taxpayers, indentured corporations, and vassal states. Expensive ships tend to be large, and large ships are popular with the most successful mercenary companies. The cost of these ships presents an uncomfortable drain upon the budget, requiring their owners to operate in increasingly dangerous spheres.

Studying these ships is not just an exercise for the ambitious shopper. It is a practical requirement for anyone who hopes to survive an encounter against one, and of course for those reckless enough to engage one with the intention of making it their own.

Daysun-Tingo Harmless Sparrow (or Sparhawk)



Cost: R18

Passengers: 80

AI Rating: 6 **Class:** T1 **Hull Points:** 14

Defense: 11

Damage: none in base state

Pre-installed systems: Milspec annie plant, medium armor, Milspec ship locker, advanced teraport

Compatible upgrades, type 1: Light anti-personnel weapons, light anti-vehicle weapons, shields, light and medium STS weapons, TAD

Compatible upgrades, type 2: Additional annie plants, medium and heavy anti-personnel weapons, medium and heavy anti-vehicle weapons, assault boat docks, fabber, hot deployment bay, point defenses, heavy STS weapons

Most people have little contact with spacecraft, and when they do see one, it is usually a commercial passenger vessel, or perhaps a merchanter with passenger berths. The Harmless Sparrow from Daysun-Tingo Shipwrights is just the sort of ship that regular folk might see, and feel quite comfortable around. With its potbelly and smooth hull it looks almost nothing like a warship.

The subterfuge here is the worst-kept secret in the industry. Daysun-Tingo designed every Harmless Sparrow to be upgraded, and while they do not manufacture or provide the systems to turn a Harmless Sparrow into a "Sparhawk," the specifications for the upgrades originate within Daysun-Tingo engineering (leading conspiracy theorists to believe that Daysun-Tingo engineers actively design weapon modifications). The same mount points for cargo loaders or blocs of passenger berths can be used for weapon pods or Milspec fabber bays. The slip through which a passenger launch might depart is also sized perfectly for a Harmadillo full of piratical boarders. As a result of this adaptability, upgrades for the Harmless Sparrow fall into two categories: the first allows the ship to continue appearing as a Harmless Sparrow, while the second turns it into an easily-identifiable Sparhawk.

These obfuscated warbirds can only remain camouflaged because of the huge number of non-military Harmless Sparrows in service today. Planet Mercenary Market Intelligence reports suggest that for every mercenary, pirate, privateer, or Q-ship Sparrow plying the stars, there are over three hundred actually-harmless Harmless Sparrows carrying cargo, passengers, or unprofitable empty space.

Aguirre Galactic Ballista-class Destroyer

Cost: R19

Passengers: 80 long term

AI Rating: 4 **Class:** V7 **Hull Points:** 14

Defense: 9, +4 with point defenses, +5 shielded

Damage: 2d6 anti-personnel, 2 hull anti-vehicle, 3d6 STS missile, 4d6 STS beam

Pre-installed systems: Milspec annie plant, medium anti-personnel weapons, medium anti-vehicle weapons, medium armor, medium point defenses, light shield, Milspec ship locker, medium STS beams, medium STS missile launchers, basic teraport, basic TAD

Compatible upgrades: Drone scouts, hot deployment bay, sally port, VDA, weapon, armor, and shield upgrades

Mercenary companies who exhibit brand loyalty to Aguirre, a stance that Aguirre brands as "going all-in," will make the Ballista their center of operations. With a proper cohort of

Gladius-class fighters, the Ballista's relatively small size (just 220 m long) makes it one of the smallest vessels to function effectively as a true carrier. Many planetary militaries will standardize upon the Aguirre line for this reason, guarding their skies with fleets of carriers for a price that keeps taxpayers' screams below the election-losing threshold.

The Ballista's compartmental design allows it to continue functioning even after sustaining damage that might cripple other ships of its size. Launch bays, point defense, pods, and crewed battlestations are provided redundantly. On more than one occasion the last words of the captain facing a Ballista will be: "Wait, I thought we killed that."

COF Destroyer

Cost: R20
Passengers: 50 long-term
AI Rating: 6 **Class:** V7 **Hull Points:** 14
Defense: 11
Damage: 8d6 beam, 4d6 missile
Pre-installed systems: 3 Milspec annie plants, assault boat docks, Milspec ship locker, heavy STS beams, heavy STS missiles, advanced teraport, advanced TAD, medium armor
Compatible upgrades: Drone scouts, hot deployment bay, sally port, VDA, and existing weapon power upgrades

At a length of 100 m, the COF Destroyer is not particularly large, but it is the largest vessel regularly manufactured by Celeschul Orbital Foundries. These were the backbone of both the Terran Formation Front (TFF) and the Continuance forces during the Terraforming War, though the TFF had supplemental materiel from other foundries. Thousands of COF Destroyers were deployed during these four years of war, and almost a third of them were lost, in most cases to packs of COF Dragon-class Interdiction cruisers.

This should not be taken as evidence of a design flaw, however. Even the toughest vessel can be disabled or destroyed by smaller vessels if outnumbered or ambushed. That said, Celeschul Orbital Foundries has spent the better part of the last twenty-five years refining their Destroyer designs, and the Celeschul Defense Service has been rotating older COF Destroyers out, disarming them, and putting them up for sale.

A COF Destroyer built between 3020 and 3085 makes for a very cost-effective choice for mercenaries wanting a larger ship. Planet Mercenary has many of these available, acquired at auction, and refitted for full military service. Destroyers designed between 3086 and 3091 are more expensive, and a bit rarer. The 3092 series is only available to CDS.

USM Corvette

Cost: R21
Passengers: 50 long-term
AI Rating: 6 **Class:** X7 **Hull Points:** 14
Defense: 11, +4 with point defenses, +5 shielded
Damage: 3 AV, 3d6 STS missile, 4d6 STS beam
Pre-installed systems: Milspec annie plant, heavy anti-vehicle weapons, medium point defenses, light shield, Milspec ship locker, medium STS beams, medium STS missiles, basic teraport, advanced TAD, medium armor
Compatible upgrades: Additional annie plants, assault boat docks, drone squadron, Gravy Gun, VDA, and upgrades to existing systems

United Sol Megafabrications (USM), builds some of the finest capital ships anywhere in the galaxy. The sleek, smooth, signature styling of these vessels hides their deadly utilitarianism, likely an outgrowth of the civilian population's desire to see that they're being protected without being feeling threatened by the angry snarl of gribblies all over the hull.

Instead, the angry snarl of gribblies is tucked behind ports or blisters in the hull of the ship. In combat, with weapons free and targets acquired, USM vessels have a much less friendly outward appearance.

The smallest USM vessels are classified simply as Corvettes. They typically measure 80 meters long, and are often constructed with a two-hull design, like an outrigger. The primary hull houses crew and command, along with the

MAXIM 10

Sometimes the only way out is through... through the hull.

usual complement of weapons tucked behind hull-blisters. The secondary hull usually hangs to port and is given over entirely to weaponry, with life support for a few lucky engineers.

USM Corvettes have seen minor refinements to their design for centuries, and are typically deployed within Sol System to keep traffic lanes safe, and to stop overt hostilities between Sol System's thousands of usually-quite-peaceful nation states. A few of these ships saw heavy action during the Terraforming War in Schuul System, and recently a great many of them have been engaged in the Teraport Wars and related hostilities in the thin spaces above and below the galactic plane.

Döblitz Foundry Badgerwagon Battleship

Cost: R22
Passengers: 50 long term
AI Rating: 6 **Class:** S7 **Hull Points:** 28
Defense: 11
Damage: 2 AV, 4d6 STS beam
Pre-installed systems: Milspec annie plant, medium anti-vehicle weapons, heavy armor, sally port, Milspec ship locker, medium STS beams, basic teraport, basic TAD
Compatible upgrades: STS missile launchers, and upgrades to existing system

Arguing over whether the marketing boffins at Döblitz fumbled their naming with "Badgerwagon" is fun, but it's much more fun to watch a 380-meter Badgerwagon shrug off a few kilotons of warhead before smashing whatever was shooting at it. Like the Harmadillo, the Badgerwagon allows its pilot to rely on physical armor for protection against attacks; but in this case, the physical armor consists of over twenty meters of layered materials, thicker than the top-to-bottom height of a Harmadillo on the tarmac.

While there are ship-killing weapons capable of taking a Badgerwagon down in a single shot, these missiles are usually the size of gunboats, with multiple onboard annies for powering and shaping a series of closely-timed charges.

The thickness of the hull works against the Badgerwagon in two ways. First, it's quite massive compared to other ships its length, and its annies are not scaled up in accordance with that mass. Second, the hull is not broken up with weapon ports. There is a single sally port on the belly of the ship, and most of the vessel's sensors and weapons ride outside the hull, in relatively lightly-armored blisters whose control conduits run through a few carefully placed non-linear paths through the hull.

USM Destroyer

Cost: R23
Passengers: 240 long-term
AI Rating: 6 **Class:** T7 **Hull Points:** 14
Defense: 11, +4 with point defenses, +10 Shielded
Damage: 3d6 Gravy, 4d6 STS beam, 3d6 STS missile
Pre-installed systems: 2 Milspec annie plants, medium armor, drone scouts, medium Gravy gun, medium point defenses, heavy shields, Milspec ship locker, medium STS beams, medium STS missiles, advanced teraport, basic TAD
Compatible upgrades: Assault boat docks, hot deployment bay, sally port, VDA, upgrades to existing systems.

When considering the word "Destroyer," it is useful to compare the difference between the COF Destroyers found in the Schuul system (and across a segment of the private market) and the USM Destroyers found almost exclusively in Sol System (plus those places where Sol System exerts "extended diplomacy"). At around 300 m in length, USM Destroyers measure well over twice the size of the COF Destroyers. Thanks to larger, more efficient annies, the USM ships have several times the power output of the smaller COF Destroyers. No captain worth their paprika will make the mistake of assuming that a Destroyer-on-Destroyer engagement is going to end in any way other than the USM Destroyer enjoying a lightly-salted lunch of COF debris.

The USM Destroyer is principally deployed against capital ships, and has been designed to deflect or disable shipkilling assaults while dealing repeated death blows to its adversary. The two-bulb design reflects the compartmentalization of the Destroyer's interior, a design which allows the vessel to continue fighting after being literally blown in half.

Daysun-Tingo Jugulus-class Battlecruiser

Cost: R27

Passengers: 240 long term

AI Rating: 6 **Class:** T8 **Hull Points:** 14

Defense: 11, +5 shielded

Damage: 1d6 anti-personnel, 2 hull anti-vehicle, 4d6 STS missile, 8d6 STS beam

Pre-installed systems: 2 Milspec annie plants, medium anti-personnel weapons, medium anti-vehicle weapons, medium armor, sally port, light shield, Milspec ship locker, heavy STS beams, heavy STS missiles, advanced teraport, advanced TAD

Compatible upgrades: Assault boat docks, drone squadron, Civilian fabber, Gravy Guns, hot deployment bay, VDA, upgrades to existing systems

There have been exactly zero documented one-on-one engagements between a Daysun-Tingo Battlecruiser and a USM Battleship, so the common question "Who would win in a fight?" spawns some of the most entertainingly heated — and misinformed — arguments anywhere on the hypernet. Typically, the answer comes down to whether the word "cruiser" sounds tougher than the word "ship," and who has more unrelated images with clever captions, and who can shout the loudest.

The fact of the matter is that captains of battleships and captains of battlecruisers have no interest in finding out who would win a one-on-one fight, so they will either bring reinforcements or quit the field, rather than give the question a definitive answer. The Daysun-Tingo Jugulus has a two-lobed design. One lobe is boxy, while the other resembles the rounded blade of a garden tool. Referred to as "the blade" and "the butt," these lobes have differing functions. Most of the shipkilling weaponry is housed in the blade, while most of the crew and infantry are quartered in the butt. Both lobes have robust point-defenses, and they share launch facilities and light cargo holds in the stem.

A few Jugulus-class vessels have been built with a third lobe, a boxy conning tower extending from the butt-end of the stem. This may seem impractical, but is a sought-after security feature for commanders who question the loyalty of those quartered in the butt.

The offensive capabilities of the Daysun-Tingo Jugulus lead many to ask why Daysun-Tingo does not make weaponry suitable for the Sparhawk conversions of their Harmless Sparrow cruisers. They undoubtedly can. Clearly there is a company mandate, and a separation of the military and civilian-in-name-only business units, but the reasoning behind this is unknown.

USM Battleship

Cost: R31

Passengers: 550 long-term

AI Rating: 7 **Class:** S7+ **Hull Points:** 28

Defense: 11

Damage: 4d6 STS missiles, 8d6 STS beam

Pre-installed systems: 2 Milspec annie plants, heavy armor, Milspec fabber, heavy shields, advanced teraport, advanced TAD, heavy STS missiles, heavy STS beam, hot deployment bay, assault boat docks

Compatible upgrades: N/A

Bonus: This ship launches four Y-class boats for disembarking crew

The principal difference between a USM Battleship and a USM Destroyer (other than the obvious differences in size and power) is that the Battleship is designed to be deployed in a wider variety of circumstances. Its annies are larger and more powerful, and it is better defended. Significantly, most of the additional interior space provided by the 450-meter length of the USM Battleship houses a full infantry company with armored cav support and gunboats suitable for hot deployments or boarding operations.

This more than doubles the Destroyer's headcount. The infantry company is quartered in the "stem" between the bulbs, so while the Battleship does, technically, have the same ability to keep fighting after being blown in two, its captain is likely to choose a more cautious attack plan than would the captain of a Destroyer.

Exorbitant Ships

35+ Resources

The larger a ship, the less likely that it travels unaccompanied. Vessels in this price range require an enormous investment, and are protected accordingly. Their chief functions include deploying, maintaining, and repairing smaller vessels. Planetary and system militaries field vessels like these as a show of strength and as a display of prosperity, and with rare exceptions this is no mere show or display.

A very small percentage of private militaries operate ships of this size, but they do exist, and with the technological disruptions of teraport systems, there is room for many more companies to attain this level of prosperity and power.

Daysun-Tingo Cephalus-class Skyfortress

Cost: R35

Passengers: 2000 long term

AI Rating: 7 **Class:** S8+ **Hull Points:** 30

Defense: 12, +6 with point defenses, +10 shielded

Damage: 4d6 STS missile, 8d6 STS beam, 12d6 gravy, and whatever ships it is carrying

Pre-installed systems: 3 Milspec annie plants, heavy armor, Milspec fabber, heavy shields, advanced teraport, advanced TAD, heavy point defenses, heavy STS missiles, heavy STS beam

Compatible upgrades: N/A

Bonus: Capable of launching 5–8 battle cruisers and smaller vessels

MAXIM 55

It's only too many weapons if they're pointing in the wrong direction.

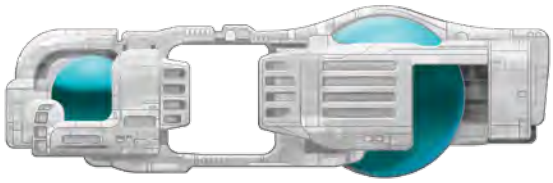
Following the Teraport Disruption, and the wide access it provided to those wishing to project force, many lightly-armed planetary governments turned to Daysun-Tingo to supply them with the hardware required for system defense.

The Cephalus Skyfortress serves as the very expensive core of such an order. The "fortress" designation is helpful, as it communicates the role of the Cephalus in the theater of operations: this is a carrier designed to carry *everything*. It straddles the line between warship and shipyard. The Cephalus has onboard facilities and crew capacity sufficient to repair and maintain between five and eight battlecruisers, and hundreds of smaller vessels, depending on their size and service requirements.

Arriving on the field behind a phalanx of cruisers, and accompanied by a veritable swarm of gunboats, the Cephalus never constitutes "the tip of the spear." It is heavily armed and armored, with enormous batteries of point defenses, but most Skyfortresses hold this firepower in reserve. It has the power to outrun most of the vessels that it deploys, but the power output of its trio of 220-meter primary annies is devoted to refueling the smaller annies of the fleet, while maintaining large, nested shields, and projecting teraport area denial for several light-seconds in any direction.

Fielding a Cephalus correctly is almost exactly like fielding an entire fleet. Only the largest private militaries enjoy the luxury, and responsibility, of Cephalus-sized operations. This is the sort of project reserved for people with fleet-level experience and a substantial sum of what is probably other people's money.

USM Carrier



Cost: R37

Passengers: 2,500 long-term *and* 2–5 infantry companies

AI Rating: 7 **Class:** S8+ **Hull Points:** 28

Defense: 11, +6 with point defenses

Damage: 2d6 STS missiles, 2d6 STS beam, and whatever ships it is carrying

Pre-installed systems: 2 Milspec annie plants, assault boat docks, heavy point defenses, Milspec ship locker, light STS beams, light STS missiles, advanced teraport, advanced TAD, heavy armor

Compatible upgrades: N/A

Bonuses: Capable of launching corvettes, X- and Y-class vessels

Regarded by many to be the backbone of Sol System's defensive network, the USM Carrier is a single-purpose vessel meant for launching and maintaining Sol System's patrol boats, gunships, sensor drones, and stealth nodes. These carriers usually measure between 600 and 700 meters in length, with a 200-meter annie aft and a 100-meter annie forward, sometimes on a boom.

Their point defenses are formidable but their ship-to-ship weaponry is relatively scant. Carriers attack other ships by sending fighters to escort destroyers, usually as part of an operation with more prongs than a sack of salad forks.

The average USM Carrier has berthing for 2,500 crew, and between two and five infantry companies. The infantry may deploy on assault boats, or they may rotate out to battleships.

USM Supercargo Can-hauler

Cost: R41

Passengers: 100

AI Rating: 7 **Class:** Q2 **Hull Points:** 7

Defense: 11, +2 with point defenses

Damage: N/A

Pre-installed systems: 1 Milspec annie, light armor, light point defenses, Milspec ship locker, basic teraport, basic TAD

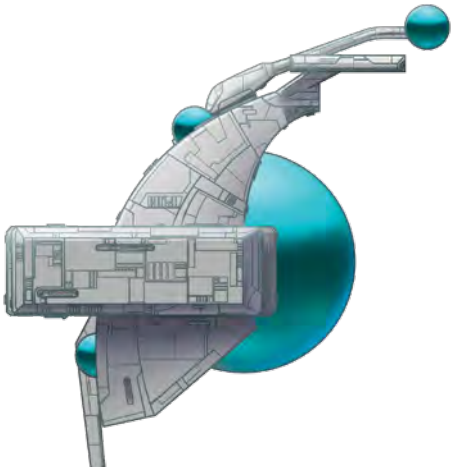
Compatible upgrades: All non-weaponry systems

Battleplates are not the largest vessels built by the USM. That honor is reserved for the Supercargo Can-haulers. Roughly cylindrical, with a diameter of 900 meters and a length that may be dozens of kilometers or more, these elongated vessels are designed to fit through wormgates; and while that is no longer a requisite constraint (especially in Sol System, where the wormgate no longer works) the form factor for the cylindrical cargo cans remains a standard.

Supercargo Can-haulers move large quantities of raw or lightly-refined material from system to system. They're slow when fully laden, and they have no armaments besides the light point defenses used to keep the grittier bits of the interstellar medium on the outside of the cabin. They're often found in the company of a squadron of escort vessels, along with thousands of mining scows who take care of sorting the materials of the outer Sol system into cans.

It may seem like a waste of hull, wrapping a can around something that has gotten along perfectly well in vacuum for billions of years. In this case, it's a simple matter of property rights. If you throw a rock across the black ink of space, hoping that your fellows catch it at the other end, then it's difficult to lay a claim to that rock should someone intercept it part-way. If, however, you put the rock in a can, and send some fighter escorts along with the can, then not only can you prove that the can belongs to you, you can also enforce the matter.

Tausennigan Ob'enn Thunderhead Superfortress



Cost: R45 (+R1 for each Milspec fabber above 2, and each annie plant above 3

Passengers: 1000

AI Rating: 7 **Class:** Q8+ **Hull Points:** 30

Defense: 11

Damage: 12d6 Gravy, and whatever ships it is carrying

Pre-installed systems: 3 Milspec annie plants, heavy armor, assault boat docks, 2 Milspec fabbers, heavy Gravy Guns, heavy shield, basic teraport, basic TAD

Compatible upgrades: Any available systems

Bonus: Capable of launching battleships and smaller vessels

The Tausennigan Superfortresses are inarguably the most fearsome warships known. During centuries of war in the Tause system, ship designs from the kss'thrata and the ob'enn converged into the Superfortress, in its various configurations. Like carriers, Superfortresses are the service and repair points for smaller warships. "Smaller" is telling, however. A Superfortress has one to four bays large enough for most carrier-sized ships, and has fabrication facilities sufficient to build warships from scratch, rather than simply repair them.

The wealth of the Tause system is manifest in the fact that the Thunderhead Superfortress often was the tip of the spear during the Tausennigan Wars. Ob'enn warlords and kss'thrata skymagi led assaults with Superfortresses, using the annie plants to generate a shield behind which the lesser vessels of the fleet could hide. This annie plant is configured to work in tandem with smaller annies and banks of focus nodes to generate gravitic pulses with twice the range of most capital ship Gravy Guns. These

close-range weapons ignore the shields generated by annie plants, and rip through even the sturdiest hulls to wreak havoc upon hapless crew. Warships rarely get within Gravy range of one another — even in formation with friendlies — so this extended reach, plus the tendency of the Thunderhead to lead the assault, is quite fearsome.

The point defenses and conventional ship-to-ship weaponry varies widely from ship to ship among Thunderheads. The fabber bays give the commanders of these ships the ability to reconfigure them significantly, including modifications to their superstructure. This variance makes them appear motley in the few images that exist of Thunderheads in formation.

An unknown number of Thunderhead Superfortresses remain in the Tause system, kept in place by externally-generated teraport area denial fields. Twenty-nine ob'enn Thunderheads exist outside of the Tause system, and just eleven of these are in private hands. Of the remaining eighteen, museums display seven, planetary militaries operate ten, and one has been converted into a theme park. Of the kss'thrata superfortresses little is known. They're either very well hidden, or have been dismantled so thoroughly that there is no trace of them.

USM Tricorn-class Battleplate

Cost: R46

Passengers: 20,000 long-term *and* 30,000 civilians

AI Rating: 7 **Class:** Q7 **Hull Points:** 32

Defense: 11, +6 with point defenses, +10 shielded

Damage: 12d6 Gravy, 8d6 STS beam, 4d6 STS missile, and whatever ships it is carrying

Pre-installed systems: 3 Milspec annie plants, 7 Civilian annie plants, 3 Milspec Fabbers, heavy Gravy, heavy STS Missiles, heavy STS beam, VDA, heavy shields, heavy armor, heavy point defenses, Milspec ship locker, advanced teraport, advanced TAD

Compatible upgrades: N/A

Bonuses: Capable of launching battleships, Destroyers, and smaller vessels; capable of constructing new Tricorn-class battleplates

The USM "plate" class gets its name from Earth's tectonic plates, and the vessels themselves bear that heritage proudly, despite being

at least two orders of magnitude smaller than tectonic plates. Most individual battleplates are named after impact features on the surface of Earth, like Chixulub, Chesapeake, and Carswell, to name a few (while staying in the Cs, and in the Northwest Hemisphere). This naming convention honors the sorts of events that these mighty vessels are meant to prevent. 1

Battleplates are boxy, though not necessarily square. They generally have 1000-meter annies, supplemented by numerous plants measuring 20 m and smaller for local redundancy in their spacious interiors. Most of the space behind a battleplate's hull is empty, allowing for significant reconfiguration of the pods, transit tubes, and fabber bays inside.

The Tricorn-class is triangular with three Milspec annies, each toward a point of the triangle. The plate is 400 meters thick, and it measures 4 kilometers from point to point. The *Manicouagan*, for example, holds a crew complement of 20,000, with room for another 30,000 civilian companions, dependents, and otherwise significant others. It is a mobile military base with a full shipyard, and it may host anywhere from 100 to 10,000 infantry companies, who will often de ploy along with their own housing inside the spacious hull.

Battleplates are the only USM vessels capable of duplicating themselves, but they must dedicate themselves to that purpose for several years. The post-trans-uranics critical to annie-plant production can be created by any annie plant, but a minimum of three 1000-meter annies working in tandem is required to construct another annie plant of that size.

USM Pentagram-class Battleplate

Cost: R50

Passengers: 50,000–150,000

AI Rating: 7 **Class:** Q8+ **Hull Points:** 35

Defense: 11, + 6 with point defenses, +10 shielded

Damage: 12d6 Gravy, 8d6 STS beam, 4d6 missile, and whatever ships it is carrying

Pre-installed systems: 5 Milspec annie plants, 7 Civilian annie plants, 4 Milspec fabbers, heavy armor, heavy shields, heavy point defenses, VDA, heavy Gravy guns, heavy STS missiles, heavy STS beams, assault boat docks Milspec ship locker, advanced teraport, advanced TAD.

Compatible upgrades: N/A

Bonuses: Capable of launching battleships, Destroyers, and smaller vessels; capable of constructing new Tricorn-class and Pentagram-class battleplates

The Pentagram-class battleplates are an exercise in the economy of scale. With three annies working in tandem to create another battleplate in its fabbers, the Pentagram still has two 1000-meter plants free for other work.

Like the Tricorns, the Pentagrams have vast interior spaces. The 400-meter thickness is standard, but some Pentagrams measure nearly ten kilometers along their longest dimension. They comfortably hold city-sized military bases with populations ranging from 50,000 to 150,000. For centuries, these ships have slowly patrolled Sol System, defending her dark, icy borders while painstakingly building additional defenses.

Too large to travel via wormgate, battleplates were exclusively found in Sol System until the advent of the teraport. They have been deployed outside of Sol with mixed results, including at least two disastrous losses: the Tunguska and the Morokweng.

No Pentagram-class battleplates exist in private hands, and the UNS does not sell these. The Fleetmind "captured" eleven during the Core War, but returned them to the UNS after their AI pilots migrated to Fleetmind nodes. One Tricorn-class plate was sold to the Neoafan Freehold, but it has since been dismantled and turned into a hanging city.

1

R&D: Wait... the UNS hasn't cleaned house yet? Are there still potential impactors scooting around Sol system?

WRITER: Not in-system, but the scattered disc and Oort remain at least partially uncharted.

R&D: Those maniacs. They know that it only takes one, right?

Gearing Up

During Step 3 of company creation (*see page 103*), you'll be sent here to pick gear for all your player characters. The gear presented here isn't garden-variety stuff that the civvies can buy at the local market. If you want everyday bullet huckers and laser pistols that you could use to heat your mama's roast at Christmas, then look elsewhere. These are military-grade, top-of-the-line implements of plasma-hot maimery provided by the top names in the business. If you want to learn more about the excellent companies providing your gear, then we invite you to peruse our listing of manufacturers.

There are four categories of personal gear:

- **Armor** (*see page 137 for quick pick table, or pages 154-160 for full catalog*).
- **Weapons** (*see pages 140-143 for quick pick table, or pages 161-182 for full catalog*).
- **General Materiel** (*see pages 144-146 for quick pick table, or pages 183-194 for full catalog*).
- **Vehicles** (*see page 147 for quick pick table, or pages 195-200 for full catalog*).

For those players who feel more adventurous, or who want weapons or armor that aren't covered in this game catalog, then we have rules for custom creation:

- Custom Armor Creation (*see page 148*).
- Custom Weapon Creation (*see page 150*).

Armor and Weapon Qualities

Both armor and weapons can have **qualities** that affect how that weapon or armor performs in play. The possible qualities are listed in full as part of the Custom Armor/Weapon Creation section. Along with the list is a description of

the game effects of those qualities. We recommend that you write down the qualities of your gear and their effects on your character sheet for quick reference. To make the quick pick tables more readable, we only list specific effects that are *not* covered by a quality. Otherwise we just list the relevant quality to save space. You can find the full effect for each quality, either in the relevant Qualities table (*see page 149 for Armor, or pages 152-153 for Weapons*) or by looking up the catalog listing for each weapon.

Example: *Matsuko wants a Phubahr 7 mm "Slingshot." The quick pick table shows damage to be 2d6, the ammunition to be PEA, the cost to be 2 Supplies and the qualities to be Failure Prone. Matsuko goes to the Weapon Qualities list and learns that Failure Prone means that any roll of triples when attacking with this weapon causes the weapon to explode. The explosion inflicts the weapon's damage to its user and anyone nearby. Matsuko decides that the low cost of the weapon and the damage it deals out are worth the risk of the weapon failing.*

Ammunition

The ammunition type of your weapon matters for two reasons:

- It tells you which skill specialty applies when firing that weapon.
- Knowing the type of ammunition might make the story more fun to tell.

Applying the Right Specialty

The weapon specialties were broken down by ammunition type because the physical training for firing and aiming a beam weapon is different from the physical training required to fire a projectile weapon. The weapon specialties for handheld weapons are Beam, Non-Lethal, and Projectile. Different specialties apply for stationed weapons and we cover those on page 31.

- **Beam** specialty covers Ion, Laser, Particle, and Plasma ammunition types.
- **Non-Lethal** specialty covers Demotivator, Goober, and Stun ammunition types.
- **Projectile** specialty covers Gunfoam and PEA ammunition types.

Making the Story More Fun

Each weapon has an ammunition type listed, some weapons may have more than one. This is (or these are) the type(s) of ammo that the weapon can fire. Crunchers of numbers may note that there is little mechanical difference in the game for different types of ammunition. The first thing you should do is promote the number cruncher out of your grunt pool. Second, explain to them that 3d6 is completely inadequate to accurately simulate the comparative effects of a particle cannon versus a gunfoam pistol. All developmental attempts to accurately simulate comparative effects of ammunition types bogged the game down in physics simulations and stripped the fun right out.

We retain the descriptive information of ammo types so that game groups who want to tell stories about how the plasma cannon sets the warehouse on fire can do so. Meanwhile groups who just want to roll damage and move on can also do so. You can read these descriptive passages starting on page 180.

There are a few types of specialty ammo. Their uses and effects are described on the Explosives and Specialized Ammo table (*see page 143*), and in the weapons catalog starting on page 177.

General Materiel and Ship Locker

For detailed information on the Ship's Locker, see page 117.

There are a number of tools, medical supplies, and types of gear that players and Game Chiefs may want to include in their stories. Some of these things are so common that you can assume you have access to them without needing to buy them. Players don't want to spend supplies on every single medical slapstick, nor should they have to track hundreds of pieces of gear just to make sure they have the things they need. Enter the **Ship Locker**.

The Ship Locker is your supply cabinet. It contains all the gear that is so common, you can assume that you have it without needing to pur-

chase it. When contemplating which General Materiel to buy, we recommend you pay attention to the column which states whether that piece of gear is available in your Ship Locker. Make sure you check to see if your locker's grade is Civilian or Milspec. Different gear is available in these two different types of lockers. We include the cost in Supplies for all gear in case you're in a story where you don't have access to your locker, or where your ship does not have a locker.

Some items might be in your locker, but they are not guaranteed to be there. These items are listed as "maybe." In those cases, roll 1d6. On a roll of 4, 5, or 6, you find what you are looking for. On a roll of 1, 2, or 3, you do not. (You can substitute a coin toss for the 1d6 roll if you wish.) Mayhem does not apply to this roll as you're only rolling a single die.

MAXIM 35

That which does not kill me has made a tactical error.

Armor

Full armor catalog begins on page 154.

For custom armor creation, see page 148.

Armor is what you wear to help you not die while employed in your mercenary pursuits. We've given all armor a Defense bonus and Damage Reduction, which you'll need to have written down. Getting into or out of armor takes one full round in combat.

- **Defense bonus:** Add this number to your Defense and Dodge while wearing the armor.
- **Damage Reduction:** Each time you suffer damage while wearing the armor, reduce the damage by this amount. Some attacks may have the ability to ignore Damage Reduction.

Stacking Armor

You can normally only wear one suit of armor, though certain combinations are allowed as noted on Table 5.1: Armor (*see next page*). If you benefit from natural armor — usually due to your race — then the benefits of that natural armor "stack" with any armor you wear.

When benefitting from stacked armors, you use the *lowest* Defense bonus among them and *combine* their damage reduction. These same stacking rules apply when using a team Defense option such as the Bunker Bubble or the Goaltender.

Example 1: *Neela is a Kreely and therefore has natural armor offering a +1 Defense bonus and 5 points of damage reduction, though both benefits only apply against melee attacks. A set of Phubahr Troublemaker Mark II armor offers +3 Defense and 1 point of damage reduction. When Neela wears the Troublemaker armor, and is attacked with a melee weapon, she has +1 Defense and 6 points of damage reduction. If she is attacked with any other type of weapon, then her natural armor does not apply and she has +3 Defense and 1 point of damage reduction.*

Example 2: *Still wearing Troublemaker armor, Neela finds herself under a Wächter Goaltender. In this case she has +1 Defense and 11 points of damage reduction against melee attacks, or +3 Defense and 6 points of damage reduction against any other attack.*

Hull Points

Some of the heaviest armor also provides you with 1 **Hull Point (Hull)** of protection. This is equivalent to the lightest raw protection on a *space vessel*, and it blocks all physical damage until an enemy first punches through that layer (some exceptions exist to this rule, as noted for various attacks). An attack that inflicts any amount of hull damage *destroys* a suit of armor, including one offering one or more Hull Points of protection. In a suit of armor offering hull protection you can withstand a single attack that inflicts hull damage, but after that the armor is destroyed and you're effectively not wearing armor at all. You need to spend a full round removing the wrecked suit before you can get into any other armor. *Note:* The points noted in the Hull Points column are the points granted by the Hull Points armor quality. Armor can never have more than one Hull Point.

Armor-assisted Dodging

To those who understand the historical nature of armor, it seems counter-intuitive that wearing armor would make one better at dodging. Modern armor is specifically designed with servos and material assists so that wearing it makes one better at moving, not worse. Thus, an armor which provides +2 Defense provides the same +2 to any Dodge roll that a PC might make while wearing it.

Table 5.1: Armor (full catalog pages 154-159)

Light Armor	Defense	Reduction	Hull Points	Cost
Cobbold Design & Protection Models 110–190, "Corporate Raider"	+1	1	—	3
Cobbold Design & Protection CS Series	+1 or +2	1 or 2	—	6
Note: Requires one action to engage full protection				
Malott M&M V-44 Whisperskin	+3	2	—	4
Note: Can fit under clothes and stacks with other armor (except itself)				
Malott M&M B-101 to B-901, "The Blue Collar"	+2	3 or 6	—	4
Note: Damage Reduction 6 vs. laser, plasma, and electrical attacks; Damage Reduction 3 vs. all other attacks; helmet and mask provide full EVA work				
Phubahr Troublemaker Mark II	+3	1	—	1
Note: Failure Prone				

Medium Armor	Defense	Reduction	Hull Points	Cost
Cobbold Design & Protection CXO Models 210–290	+3	3	—	5
Malott M&M-1150, Supersuit	+2	3	—	15
Note: Integral Shield				
Malott M&M-1150 EX Supersuit	+2	6	—	17
Note: Integral Shield; Limited Flight; Active Camouflage				
Phubahr Enforcer	+2	3	—	4
Note: Failure Prone				
Phubahr Enforcer Deluxe	+2	4	—	7
Note: Stacks with the Phubahr Troublemaker Mark II (see above). If stacked, each set of armor can take two hits before failing, not three; Failure Prone				

Heavy Armor	Defense	Reduction	Hull Points	Cost
Esspererin Sashiko	+5	8	1	15
Note: May only be worn (piloted) by esspererin; Implanted Weapons; Hull Points				
Phubahr Godmode Gargoyle	+4	5	—	10
Note: Failure Prone; Flight; includes a modified R1P-A Goaltender (see pages 160)				
Planet Mercenary ICC-Odin	+5	6	1	15
Note: Flight; comes with two permanently shoulder-mounted Gunfoam cannons (2d6 damage, Reload 1–2, no weapon qualities on the cannons, license Military); Hull Points				
USM Foundries Infantry Combat Chassis (USMF I-CC)	+5	8	1	10
Note: Flight; only available through a UNS surplus or captured UNS units (and free of cost to UNS military forces); Hull Points				
Vella Tacspec T2-F11 Golem	+5	6	1	12
Note: Flight; Implanted Weapons; Hull Points				
Vella Tacspec T2-F11 Golem EX	+5	6	1	14
Note: Flight; Implanted Weapons; includes a R1P-A Goaltender (see page 160); Hull Points				

Table 5.2: Team Protection

Option	Defense	Reduction	Cost
Vella Tacspec Bunker Bubble	+0	6	10
Notes: Damage Reduction is reduced to 3 vs. beam and projectile attacks; the Bunker Bubble may move at a speed roughly equivalent to the fastest sophont in a team			
Wächter L&D R1P-A Goaltender	+0	5	6
Notes: After reducing 3 damage in a round, a Goaltender is destroyed			
Wächter L&D R1P-W Goaltender	+2	5	9
Notes: After reducing 5 damage in a round, a Goaltender is destroyed			

Weapons

Full weapons catalog begins on page 161.

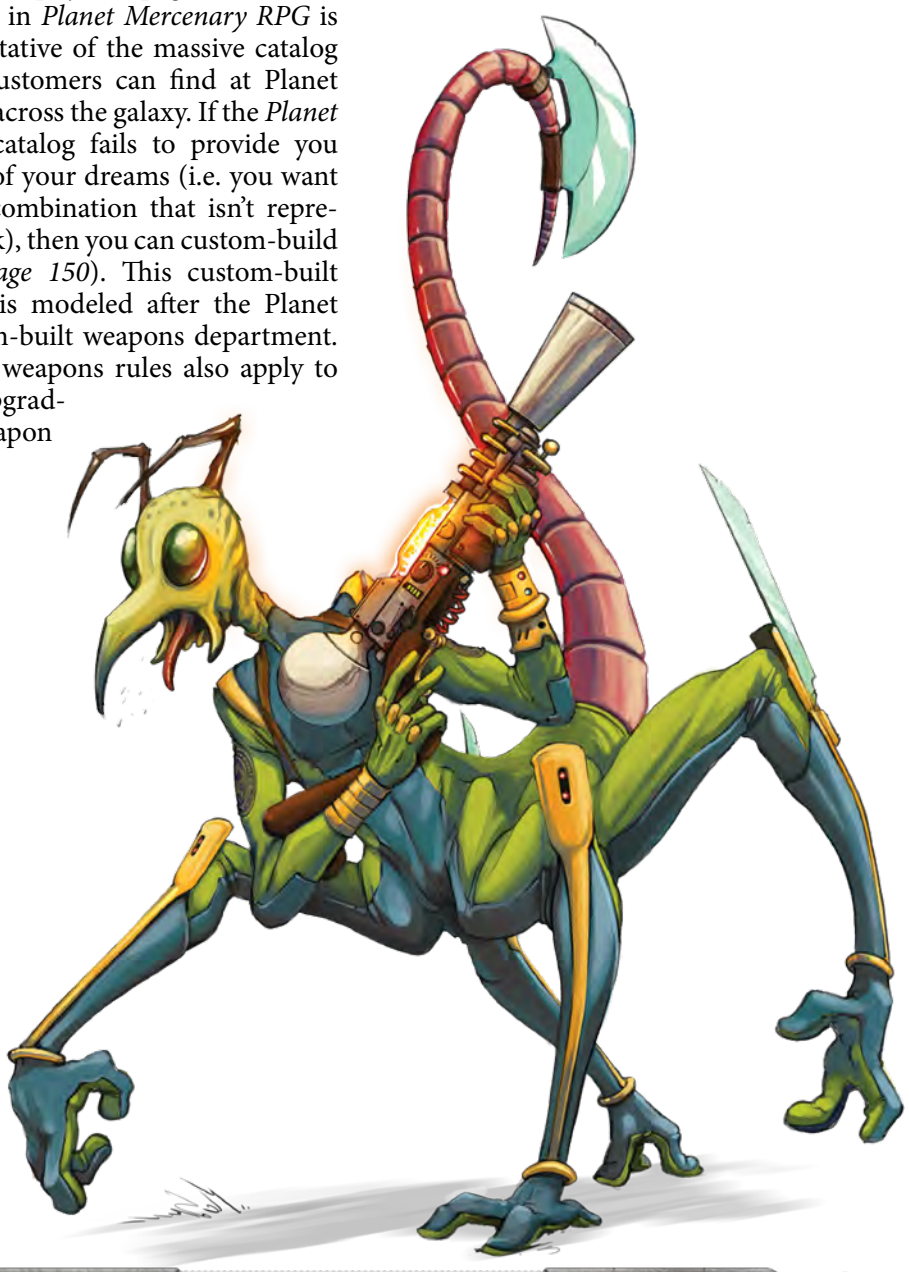
For custom weapons creation, see page 150.

Most people know a gun when they see one. Mercenaries don't just see a gun — they know its features, faults, and finer points, and they can have deep, meaningful conversations with the weapon, arriving at a genuine understanding of what it wants out of life and how its goals can be aligned with their own. 1

Ultimately, a weapon is a tool for projecting force upon others. A few good starter weapons are listed in the Mercenary Companies section (*see page 103*). You can also pick from the full weapons catalog, which starts on page 161. Due to the limitations of physical pages, the list of weapons available in *Planet Mercenary RPG* is not fully representative of the massive catalog of options that customers can find at Planet Mercenary stores across the galaxy. If the *Planet Mercenary RPG* catalog fails to provide you with the weapon of your dreams (i.e. you want a chassis/ammo combination that isn't represented in this book), then you can custom-build a weapon (*see page 150*). This custom-built weapons section is modeled after the Planet Mercenary custom-built weapons department. The custom-built weapons rules also apply to modifying or upgrading an existing weapon (*see page 153*).

For game play purposes, we have simplified our listing of playable weapons into the following categories that are organized by which skill is required to fire the weapon.

- Pistols are aimed and fired with a single hand, limb, or pseudopod.
- Carbines have longer barrels and require two hands, limbs, or pseudopods.
- Scatterguns have the same form factor as carbines, but a single firing action can attack multiple targets.
- Long guns are usually for long, careful shots when you need to kill something from a great distance.
- Heavy weapons are powerful arms that are commonly used to take out tanks or other armored vehicles.



1

CEO: Are you being metaphysical, or are you jumping straight into smart munitions?

WRITER: I think you mean "metaphorical," but in truth it's a bit of both. A little metaphor, and a little foreshadowing.

CEO: Don't get too artsy. This isn't that kind of book.

WRITER: Don't worry, boss. The inclusion of foreshadowing does not automatically categorize any piece of work as quality literature.

MAXIM 34

If you're leaving scorch marks, you need a bigger gun.

Making a Weapon Stationed

Any Carbine, Long Gun, Scattergun, or Heavy Weapon may be made into a Stationed Weapon. If you have a vehicle, armor, tripod, turret, or other emplacement which already has slots for attaching weapons, then you must only use a single action to attach your weapon, making it a Stationed Weapon, and thus subject to the Stationed Weapons skill rather than your regular weapons skill. If you do not have a pre-made slot where you can attach your weapon, then make an Engineering check or Mechanics (Jury-rig) check to make an emplacement (TN 20). Small sophonts, such as esspererin benefit from making weapons stationed, as it allows them to use weapons that they are otherwise too small to fire.

► Melee weapons are gripped and used in up-close-and-personal fights.

These categories are further subdivided by which specialty will apply to each weapon. Thus, for example, the Blattco Glass Dagger is found on the Pistols table under Beam Pistols.

Reading the Weapons Table

► **Damage** lists the damage that the weapon inflicts upon a hit. A target's Damage Reduction is subtracted from this amount before the Damage is applied. If a weapon's Damage includes a skill (e.g. "Melee + 1d6" or "Engineering + 3"), then the character's rank in that skill is added to the dice roll. Even if there is a negative modifier in the Damage column, Damage done can't be reduced below 1 — a weapon will always deal minimum 1 Damage upon a hit.

► **Ammunition** lists the type of ammo that the weapon is able to fire. Remember that the **Beam** specialty covers Ion, Laser, Particle, and Plasma ammunition types. The **Non-Lethal** specialty covers Demotivator, Goober, and Stun ammunition types. The **Projectile** specialty covers Gunfoam and PEA ammunition types.

► **Reload** lists a range of numbers. Whenever the natural results of all three dice rolled for an attack with a weapon fall in this range, the weapon must be reloaded. Some weapons with the Single-use quality do not have Reload numbers because they cannot be fired more than once. Some Mayhem cards force a reload before your dice rolls trigger one. Reloading a weapon doesn't normally have a cost, though you must spend a number of Supplies to reload a weapon with the Costly Ammo quality (*see page 152*).

► **Grips** identifies the minimum number of hands, clamps, pseudopods, or other manipulators required to use the weapon. Having more manipulators than this doesn't help, but having fewer means that you can't use the weapon at all. Life is hard. Evolve better.

► **License** indicates the legality of owning and/or operating each weapon in most civilized parts of the galaxy. Licenses have the following categories: **Legal**, **Restricted**, **Military**, and **Illegal**. There are potential consequences for owning restricted, military, or illegal weapons without the proper permits for the location you're in. Your GC will let you know when weapons should be left on the ship, and when they could cause problems for you if they're found on your person. All mercenaries should exercise responsible weapon ownership. 2

► **Cost** indicates how many Supplies are necessary to acquire this weapon during character creation. During gameplay, local conditions may affect the availability and price of weapons, but even in those cases, the GC should use this number as a guideline.

► **Qualities & Notes** shows which qualities and attributes the weapon has at the time of purchase. Additional qualities and attributes may become attached to the weapon in the course of play. A full listing of available weapon qualities can be found on pages 152-153. Each weapon has a catalog listing with full details on the qualities and attributes.

Explosives and Specialized Ammunition

Loading your gun with specialized ammunition means that the effects of the ammo replace the normal damage or effects of your weapon, except for Failure Prone. No matter how good the ammo is, it can't overcome poor weapon design. If your weapon has the Failure Prone quality, then it retains that quality, even when firing specialized ammo.

2

MKTG: That's a real buzzkill there.

LEGAL: We insist upon the occasional buzzkill in the interest of not getting sued.

CEO: Just so we're clear, Legal, you guys are not "occasional" buzzkill.

Grenade Blast Radius

For determining how many foes a grenade hits, consider the following: A successfully thrown grenade will hit 1d3+1 foes if the foes are loosely clumped, if tightly clumped foes are targeted 1d3+3 will be hit. The GC will tell you if foes are loosely or tightly clumped.

Table 5.3: Pistols (full catalog pages 161-164)

Beam Pistol	Damage	Ammunition	Reload	Grips	License	Cost
Blattco Ni-972 Glass Dagger	**Normal mode:** 2d6 + 2 **All-in mode:** 5d6 + 5	Laser	1	1	Military	9
Notes: Breacher; Single-use (all-in mode only); Sturdy Construction						
Non-Lethal Pistols	**Damage**	**Ammunition**	**Reload**	**Grips**	**License**	**Cost**
BFF DT-56k "Little Magic Sleep Gun"	Endurance check (TN 20) or fall unconscious	Stun	1–2	1	Legal	5
Notes: Only works on humans & Purps (has no effect on other races)						
BFF Neuromazer	Endurance check (TN 20) or fall unconscious	Stun	1–2	1	Legal	7
Notes: Only works on sophonts with nerves and skin (has no effect on other races); Short Range						
Projectile Pistols	**Damage**	**Ammunition**	**Reload**	**Grips**	**License**	**Cost**
Blattco 15mm Clawhammer	**De-motivators:** Endurance check (TN 15) or become incapacitated **Goober:** Athletics (TN 20) to escape **Gunfoam:** 1d6 + 3 **PEA:** 1d6 + 3	De-motivators, Goober, Gunfoam, PEA	1	1	Legal	5
Notes: Sturdy Construction; Variable Ammunition						
Blattco Ball-Peen 7 mm	1d6 + 1	Gunfoam	1	1	Restricted	5
Notes: Holdout/Stealth						
Phubar 10^2 Tensquare 10 mm	1d6	Gunfoam	1	1	Legal	2
Notes: Failure Prone						
Phubahr Derrierringer	1d6	PEA	—	1	Restricted	3
Notes: Failure Prone; Holdout/Stealth; Single-use						
Smythe Micro Model 3	1d6 – 1	Gunfoam	1	1	Restricted	4
Notes: Holdout/Stealth						
Strohl G/G 29	**Gunfoam:** 1d6 + 1 **PEA:** 1d6 – 1	Gunfoam, PEA	1	1	Legal	3
Notes: Variable Ammunition						
Strohl G/G 29 AP	**Gunfoam:** 1d6 + 1 **PEA:** 1d6 – 1	Gunfoam, PEA	1	1	Legal	8
Notes: Annie Plant Power Supply; Variable Ammunition						
Wimanu-Arrow Model A Shafter 14 mm Flechette Pistol	**De-motivators:** Endurance check (TN 15) or become incapacitated **PEA** (pierce mode): 1d6 – 3 **PEA** (punch mode): 1d6 + 2	De-motivators, PEA	1	1	Legal	7
Notes: Delivery; Variable Ammunition; in pierce mode this weapon has Breacher.						

Table 5.4: Scatterguns (full catalog pages 164-165)

Projectile Scatterguns	Damage	Ammunition	Reload	Grips	License	Cost
Blattco 30 mm Sledgehammer	**Goober:** Athletics (TN 20) to escape **Gunfoam:** 2d6 + 3 **Stun:** Endurance check (TN 20) or fall unconscious	Goober, Gunfoam, Stun	1–2	2	Legal	6
Notes: Scattergun; Variable Ammunition						
Phubahr 20–20	2d6	Gunfoam	1–2	2	Legal	2
Notes: Failure Prone; Scattergun - *Optional:* At an additional cost of 2 Supplies, lose Failure Prone.						
Strohl 20 mm Magsplatter 440	2d6	Gunfoam	1–2	2	Legal	5
Notes: Can switch (one action) between Scatter Mode (Scattergun) and Focus Mode (Accurate; Reload-intensive).						

Table 5.5: Carbines (full catalog pages 165-168)

Beam Carbines	Damage	Ammunition	Reload	Grips	License	Cost
Aarikaida N-80 Verfkwas	2d6 + 2	Laser	1–2	2	Military	10
Notes: Accurate; Annie Plant Power Supply; Self-supplying Ammunition						
Phubahr PG-55 Cancerstick	3d6	Particle	1–2	2	Illegal	5
Notes: Annie Plant Power Supply; Breacher; Failure Prone						
Phubahr Zuessomator	5d6	Ion	1–3	2	Illegal	3
Notes: Armor-piercing; Failure Prone; Unlucky						
Shockstar LG-2000 Lightning Gun	2d6	Ion	1–2	2	Military	8
Notes: Armor-piercing; Failure Prone						
Smythe Starlight 23	2d6	Laser	1–2	2	Military	3
Notes: Unique; Failure Prone (sometimes does not explode, simply fails to fire)						
Strohl AP-1100 Railstream Perforator	3d6	Particle	1–3	2	Illegal	17
Notes: Annie Plant Power Supply; AVPL; Breacher; Self-supplying Ammunition						

Projectile Carbines	Damage	Ammunition	Reload	Grips	License	Cost
Blattco 8 mm Ban-Hammer	2d6 + 2	Gunfoam	1–2	2	Legal	6
Notes: Sturdy Construction						
Phubahr 7 mm Slingshot	2d6	PEA	1–2	2	Legal	2
Notes: Failure Prone						
Strohl G/G 511	**Goober:** Athletics (TN 20) to escape **Gunfoam:** 2d6 + 1 **PEA:** 2d6 + 1	Goober, Gunfoam, PEA	1–2	2	Legal	4
Notes: Variable Ammunition						

Table 5.6: Long Guns (full catalog pages 168-169)

Beam Long Gun	Damage	Ammunition	Reload	Grips	License	Cost
Aarikaida N-91 Skokgeweer	2d6	Ion	1–2	2	Military	10
Notes: Accurate; Armor-piercing; Sniper						

Projectile Long Gun	Damage	Ammunition	Reload	Grips	License	Cost
Blattco 12mm Breaker Bar	3d6	Gunfoam	1–2	2	Legal	8
Notes: Accurate; Sniper						
Phubahr 15mm Osok	3d6	Gunfoam	—	2	Legal	2
Notes: Accurate; Single-use; Sniper						
Strohl G/G 1000	**Gunfoam:** 3d6 **PEA:** 3d6 + 2	Gunfoam, PEA	1–2	2	Legal	6
Notes: Sniper; Variable Ammunition						

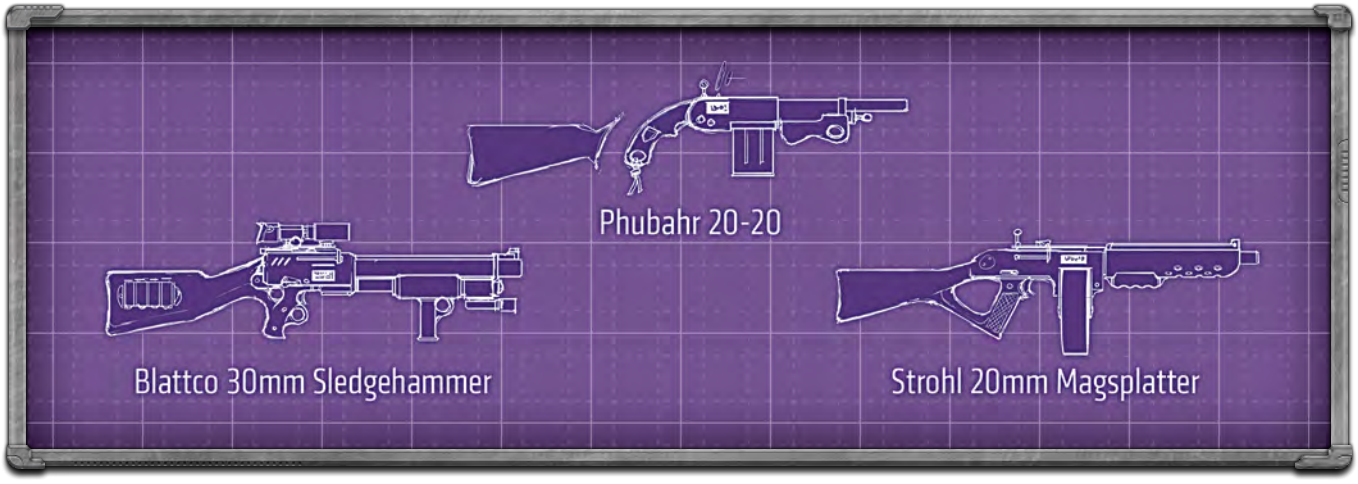


Table 5.7: Heavy Weapons (full catalog pages 170-174)

Beam Heavy Weapons	Damage	Ammunition	Reload	Grips	License	Cost
Phubahr P-51 Blaster	5d6	Plasma	1-2	2	Illegal	3
Notes: Armor-piercing; AVPL; Failure Prone; Short Range						
Strohl BH-209 Plasgun	2d6 + 2	Plasma	1–2	1 or 2	Restricted	5
Notes: Accurate; AVPL						
Strohl AP-130 Plasgun	2d6 + 1	Plasma	1–2	1	Restricted	10
Notes: Accurate; AVPL; Annie Plant Power Supply; can't be fired in a vacuum; becomes Single-use underwater						

Non-Lethal Weapons	Damage	Ammunition	Reload	Grips	License	Cost
BFF Goober MFG "The Goober Gun"	Athletics (TN 20) to escape	Goober	1–3	2	Legal	8
Notes: Scattergun						
Urtheep Industries Massively Multi-Morphological Incapacitator (M3 "Tater")	**De-motivators:** Endurance check (TN 21) or become incapacitated **Goober:** Athletics (TN 20) to escape **Stun:** Endurance check (TN 20) or fall unconscious If hacked, then **Gunfoam:** 3d6	De-motivators, Goober, Stun If hacked, then Gunfoam	1–3	2	Illegal	30
Notes: High-res Targeting System; Variable Ammunition (only applies after the gun is hacked with a successful Computers check (TN 30), allowing it to fire Gunfoam ammo); Every time the weapon is fired its SI chooses the option best suited to the target. The GC reserves the right to choose which ammunition is "best" for any attack, and this includes holding fire.						

Projectile Weapons	Damage	Ammunition	Reload	Grips	License	Cost
Blattco 15 mm Minigun	**Goober:** Athletics (TN 20) to escape **Gunfoam:** 3d6	Goober, Gunfoam	1–3	2	Illegal	25
Notes: Armor-piercing; Double Tap; Hyper-accurate; Remote Targeting Uplink; Self-supplying Ammunition; Variable Ammunition; Sturdy Construction						
Blattco 45 mm Rotary Launcher Can-o-Hammers	4d6	Gunfoam	1–3	2	Illegal	20
Notes: Annie Plant Power Supply; Armor-piercing; Sturdy Construction						
Phubahr 75 mm Shurikannon	5d6	PEA	1–3	2	Legal	2
Notes: Failure Prone; Reload-intensive						
Strohl 7 mm Rotary Mag-Rail Deluxe	3d6 + 2	Gunfoam	1–3	2	Restricted	11
Notes: Delivery; Hyper-accurate						
Strohl HW-105 Multicannon 105 mm	**Gunfoam:** 3d6 **Particle:** 3d6 **Plasma:** 3d6	Gunfoam, Particle, Plasma	1–3	2	Restricted	15
Notes: AVPL; Breacher; Variable Ammunition						
Strohl L-105 Breacher Cannon	5d6	Gunfoam	1–3	2	Restricted	15
Notes: AVPL; Breacher; Costly Ammo; comes with one proprietary Strohl Breacher missile						
Urtheep Industries Kitchen Sink Multicannon	**De-motivators:** Endurance check (TN 21) or become incapacitated **Goober:** Athletics (TN 20) to escape **Gunfoam:** 3d6 **PEA:** 3d6 **Stun:** Endurance check (TN 20) or fall unconscious	De-motivators, Goober, Gunfoam, PEA, Stun	1–3	2	Restricted	15
Notes: High-res Targeting System; Underslung Launcher; Variable Ammunition						

Table 5.8: Melee Weapons (full catalog pages 175-177)

Common Melee Weapons	Damage	Grips	License	Cost	Notes
BFF Molly Polly "knife"	1d6	1	Legal	0	
Monowire	1d6	2	Illegal	1	
Spear	Melee + 1d6	2	Legal	0	
ZWillmi Steelworks blade or axe	Melee + 1d6	1	Legal	1	
Exotic Melee Weapons	**Damage**	**Grips**	**License**	**Cost**	**Notes**
BFF Autocutlery Chainsaber Mark IX	Melee + 3d6	2	Illegal	4	Failure Prone
Shockstar PB series plasma batons	Melee + 2d6	1	Illegal	11	Failure Prone
Urtheep Industries Thirdacle Cable-Arms	Engineering + 3	0	Legal	10	
Urtheep Industries Abra-Cadaver Shock Wands	Endurance check (TN 20) or fall unconscious	1	Legal	8	

Table 5.9: Explosives and Specialized Ammo (full catalog pages 177-180)

Name	Use Mechanism	Uses	Cost	Notes
Armor Crackers	Gunfoam	1	12	Gives the weapon Breacher, APVL, and +3d6 damage added to the existing damage of the weapon.
Boomex	Explosives skill	5	3	A single use is required to build a bomb or shaped charge as noted in the Explosives skill description (see page 29).
Burners	Underslung Launcher quality or Thrown skill	6	6	The target takes 1d6 damage each round until it spends one action putting itself out.
Cheesecutters	Underslung Launcher quality or Thrown skill	6	2	At the start of the turn, anyone affected by this ammo type must succeed on a TN 20 Endurance skill check or lose one Action. Weapon also gains Short Range quality.
Flash-bangs	Underslung Launcher quality or Thrown skill	3	10	Instead of Damage, anyone affected by this ammo type must succeed on a TN 20 Endurance skill check or lose their next turn.
Grenade, Frag	Underslung Launcher quality or Thrown skill	5	4	Each grenade does 4d6 + 6 damage.
Grenade, Plasma	Underslung Launcher quality or Thrown skill	4	5	Each grenade does 4d6 + 9 damage.
Micro Grenades	PEA	3	10	Target suffers 6d6 damage, nearby sophonts suffer one-half this damage, rounded down.
Nandap Express Poison Kit	Delivery quality	1	8	One round must be spent prepping this ammo before it can be fired. It inflicts 2d6 damage, which ignores any reduction.
Nandap Express Tranquilizers	Delivery quality	6	4	One round must be spent prepping this ammo before it can be fired. Victim must succeed on a TN 20 Endurance skill check or fall asleep.
Nandap Express Vom Darts	Delivery quality	3	3	Target must succeed on an Endurance skill check (TN 20) or lose two actions to vomiting. This weapon only works on sophonts whose ancestors originated in Sol System.
Shockbeads	Stun	6	2	Target must succeed on an Endurance skill check (TN 20) or fall unconscious. If the target has 4 or more Damage Reduction, then they automatically succeed on the Endurance skill check.
Smoke Bombs	Underslung Launcher quality or Thrown skill	6	2	Anyone near the target must reroll any roll of 6 on attack rolls for three turns.
Strohl Munitions 7mm Smart Flechettes	Only Strohl Mag Rail Weapon	6	6	+4 on Attack Rolls; all qualities and damage attached to the weapon still apply.
Strohl Smart Breacher missiles	Only Strohl L-105 Breacher Cannon	1	15	When firing these, the weapon has the following qualities: Autocorrecting, AVPL, and Breacher. Its Damage becomes 8d6.

General Materiel

As we detailed earlier in this chapter, many miscellaneous items you need are in your Ship Locker (*see page 117*). Your vessel's stats generally tell you whether it contains a Ship's Locker or not. Otherwise, the GC decides whether the vessel contains one. Here we provide a quick pick list. Longer descriptions are available in our catalog (*see page 183*).

Civilian Ship's Locker: Yes C Maybe C No C | **Milspec Ship's Locker:** Yes M Maybe M No M

Table 5.10: Assorted Automation (full catalog pages 183–185)

Item	Cost	Special Rules
C M Bot, construction	2	Has 8 ranks in Engineering but no specialties or other skills; multiple bots required for large and/or complex projects, which may also require a Computers (Programming) check (TN 15–30)
C M Bot, maintenance	2	Has 8 ranks in Mechanics but no specialties or other skills; multiple bots required for large and/or complex projects, which may also require a Computers (Programming) check (TN 15–30)
C M Bot, medical	2	Has 8 ranks in Medicine but no specialties or other skills; multiple bots required for large and/or complex projects, which may also require a Computers (Programming) check (TN 15–30)
C M Bot, multipurpose	2	Has 8 ranks in any one GC-approved skill but no specialties or other skills; must generally be told what to do, though it can act on most loose instructions
C M Bot, utility	1	No skill ranks; may only perform rudimentary tasks
C M PMH Fabberchow	3	With suitable biological material, may sustain up to 100 characters for up to 10 years of use at no additional cost
C M Popso Vending Station	5	May sustain up to 100 characters for up to 20 years of use, though an additional 1 Supplies per 100 characters must be paid each month for Popso Nutrifuel Blocks
C M Wächter Sunrise "McFly-15" Hoverboard	1	Hovers 10 cm off the ground and travels at a speed of up to 9 m/s; may only carry one sophont (or sophont equivalent weight)

Table 5.11: Computation and Communication (full catalog pages 185–188)

Item	Cost	Special Rules
C M Commbone	1	Allows for sub-vocalized (silent) communication; signal may be intercepted with a Computers (Hacking) check (TN 16), or jammed with a Computers (Hacking) check (TN 12)
C M Commbud	1	Allows for (very) quiet vocalized communication; signal may be intercepted with a Computers (Hacking) check (TN 16), or jammed with a Computers (Hacking) check (TN 12)
C M Handbrain	1	The whole of the hypernet in the palm of your... uh, whatever; may operate in three modes (local network pass-through, direct connectivity, or private network connectivity)
C M Handbrain CT	2	Used to interface with any system that doesn't have the right connectivity; the Ship's Locker contains one Handbrain CT for each player character who has 1+ Ranks in the Computers skill
C M Hypernet Hut HN1 "Hyper-Node"	1	Grants basic, universal access to the hypernet
C M Hypernet Hut LI NJ00 "Node-Jack"	3	Required to access many secured systems and grants a +1 bonus with Computers checks when using unsecured systems; each Node-Jack may be used only once and must then be discarded
C M Hypernet Hut Nodecracker 1010	5	+2 with Computers (Hacking) checks made to penetrate system security; allows up to three checks before its hacking protocols are exhausted
C M Hypernet Hut Nodecracker EX	7	+3 with Computers (Hacking) checks made to penetrate system security; allows up to three checks before its hacking protocols are exhausted
C M Hypernet Hut Nodecracker Junior	11	+4 with Computers (Hacking) checks made to penetrate system security; allows up to three checks before its hacking protocols are exhausted, after which another Computers check (TN 15) may be made to refresh the cycle; if this refreshing check is failed, then the Junior cannot be used against the same system again

Table 5.12: Cuffs & Stuff (full catalog pages 188-189)

Item	Cost	Special Rules
Simple mechanical restraints	0	Athletics (Strength) check (TN 20) to escape through brute force; Larceny (Picking Locks) check (TN 10 with a tool, or 15 without one) to escape through finesse
Autobailiff 2200	2	Contains prisoner in clear dome on a hover platform; Athletics (Strength) check to break out via brute force (TN 20, or 15 with a crowbar or similar item); Computers (Hacking) check (TN 15) to escape with access to the system and the necessary interface tools
Bagamorph 4411	5	Only restrains Carbosilicate Amorphs; escape requires two successful Chemistry (Biochemistry) checks (TN 15); these checks cannot be concealed
Nannycuffs	4	Athletics (Strength) check to break out via brute force (TN 25); Computers (Hacking) check (TN 15) to escape with access to the system and the necessary interface tools
Perpsleeve Unibody Smart Restraints	4	Monitors prisoner's vitals, location, and sounds; escape only possible with a suitable tool in hand when restrained; with a tool, it takes at least one hour and a successful Athletics (Strength) or Computers (Hacking) check (TN 20)
Track-a-Neck 4000	5	Collar tracks a prisoner's location and outside permitted boundaries either stuns (Endurance check (TN 20) or fall unconscious) or detonates (3d6 + 5 damage to the prisoner, ignoring all damage reduction, and also inflicts 3d6 damage to anyone within several feet); escape requires a Computers (Hacking or Security) check (TN 20) and failure by 5 or more triggers the punishment setting

Table 5.13: Med Tech (full catalog pages 190-192)

Item	Cost	Special Rules
Cryokit	10	Puts a corpse on ice indefinitely (as long as there is power). A Medicine check is required to restore the sophont to functioning, at TN 12 for standard bodily failures (such as heart attacks), or at up to TN 30 for extensive trauma or bodily damage
Hand-Me-Down Bactolotl Tank	25 (med) 30 (large)	Regrows a character's entire body except for the brain, which must be preserved in a nanny-bag; takes 3d6 + 14 days and requires a Medicine check (TN 12) for the body and a Medicine (Surgery) check (TN 15) to install the brain; failure with either or both checks results in lost skill ranks; automatic failure with either results in permanent character death; a player may promote a grunt while a character's body is being regrown
Hand-Me-Down Incubatrol	5	Regrows a limb, organ, or other discrete body part; takes 3d6 + 30 hours and requires a Medicine check (TN 12) to replace the body part; failure results in the part not working or being rejected, though you can try again; automatic failure means the body part may never be replaced
MFG1 FA-20 Slapstick	1	Restores 1d6 Health, plus use of the target area or limb, cauterizes a wound, and stops bleeding; each slapstick is single-use and discarded after application
MFG1 Nanny-Bag	2	Keeps one dismembered limb or other body part fresh for up to a week; each nanny-bag is single-use and discarded afterward
Neoafan Nursetech RED-REO Blood Nannies	5	Makes a copy of one character's mind so it can be installed into a new brain; installation takes 3d6 + 12 hours and requires a Medicine check (TN 12); failure results in lost skill ranks; automatic failure results in permanent brain death
Planet Mercenary Nanny-Bag PMH-Med-101	1	Keeps one corpse fresh for up to five days; each nanny-bag is single-use and discarded afterward
Planet Mercenary Salvatab PH-Med-77	4	Restores 1d6 + 2 Health, plus use of the target area or limb, cauterizes a wound, and stops bleeding; flip a coin and with heads the character falls unconscious for 20 minutes; each salvatab is single-use and discarded after application

Table 5.14: Miscellaneous Materiel (full catalog pages 192-194)

Item	Cost	Special Rules
Blacklabel Entrance Kit, BEK-1	2	Grants a +1 bonus with Larceny (Picking Locks) checks targeting tumbler locks
Blacklabel Entrance Kit, BEK-2	4	Grants a +2 bonus with Larceny (Picking Locks) checks targeting tumbler locks, keypads, and card readers
Blacklabel Entrance Kit, BEK-3	8	Automatically grants access without a skill check but if the lock is BEK-proofed, then there's a 50/50 chance the BEK-3 fails, in which case you're denied entry and any security firm employed to protect the house is alerted
Blacklabel Entrance Kit, BEK-4	8	Battering ram and "jaws of life"-style spreader that grants a +4 bonus with Athletics (Strength) checks to forcing locks that can be forced
Blacklabel Entrance Kit, BEK-5	14	Automatically succeed with any Larceny (Picking Locks) check that doesn't roll three 1s (an automatic failure)
Locksteady Gunsquat M Brace	1	This brace has one slot which allows you to make any Carbine, Long Gun, Scattergun, or Heavy Weapon into a Stationed Weapon.
Malott M&M BRB-60 Emergency Belt	3	Flight belt and face mask for unscheduled decompression events; requires one action to activate; provides a 1d6-minute air supply
Smart utility belt	2	Once per combat, you may grab any one item on your person without taking an action to do so; outside combat, instantly grab an item once per hour
Teraport cage	15	Must be purchased in pairs; Computer check to transport undetected; Target Number is 7 + (1 per time a cage has been used to traverse the same TAD in the last 24 hours); failure means detection and possible interception of transport; automatic failure means cages at both ends explode, disintegrating anything and anyone being transported
Wächter Fire Suppression Gear WM-FEX-1	0	Puts out a single small fire in a location up to the size of a bunk room
Wächter Fire Suppression Gear WM-FEX-2	2	Puts out a moderate fire in a location up to the size of a mess hall
Wächter Fire Suppression Gear WM-FEX-3	5	Puts out a large fire in a location up to the size of a cavernous cargo bay

Vehicles

Your company may need a way to get around on the surface of a planet without taking your entire vessel. In that case you'll need a vehicle or two for your company to share. Vehicles must be purchased, as they are never found in your Ship Locker.

Pursuit and Chases with Vehicles

Any chase on land, in water, or through the air requires opposing skill checks, pursuer against pursued. If one vehicle chases another, then you contest the appropriate vehicle skills against each other. If a vehicle chases a quarry who's not in a vehicle (be they on foot, on wing, or by any other means of transportation), then you match the vehicle skill to the appropriate Athletics check. When no one in a chase is operating a vehicle, compare only Athletics checks. It may not seem fair to match a vehicle skill one-to-one against Athletics, but this represents the ability of a non-vehicular sophont to move quickly through crowds and small spaces where a vehicle might have difficulty maneuvering. If the chase in question is a straight shot down a paved road, then you probably don't need to roll a skill check, since the vehicle will obviously win.

In a chase, followers apply their vehicle skill's Pursuit specialty, if they have it, and those

trying to get away apply the specialty for their current method of movement (or if they're trying to end the chase by hiding, then they oppose with their Stealth skill). The highest result of these skills checks wins the chase. The GC may require multiple, opposing checks for a longer, more involved chase.

Damage Reduction, Enclosed Vehicles, Hull Points, and Weapon Slots

If a vehicle is open to the air, it does not provide any additional Defense to a PC. The Player Character's Defense and Damage Reduction stats apply. If the vehicle is enclosed then the vehicle must be damaged or destroyed before the passengers will take damage. Enclosed Civilian vehicles each have a listed Damage Reduction stat. This is the amount of damage the vehicle will absorb before being destroyed. Military vehicles are armored and each have 1 Hull Point. These vehicles can only be damaged by a weapon that does Hull Point

Modified Vehicles

When buying vehicles, be aware that an enterprising NPC might have hacked a Civilian vehicle into a Military vehicle by removing safety features or adding weaponry. Double the listed price for a vehicle modified this way, at the GC's discretion.

Table 5.15: Consumer Vehicles (full catalog pages 195-198)

Name	Cost	Skill	Passengers	Enclosed	Damage Reduction
Wächter Sunrise Talrico Skates	1	Athletics	1	No	-
Jogamoto Ninjurai 47 Scooter	2	Air or Ground or Water	1	No	-
Wächter Com-hub Hover Chair	2	Air	1	No	-
Jogamoto Skyfleet Bubblecar	4	Air, Ground	2	Yes	1
Jogamoto Skyfleet Delivery Van	6	Air, Ground	8-15	Yes	1
Döblitz Foundry WMV	6	Air, Ground	3 + 4 hanging on outside	Yes	3
Jogamoto Skyprince Limousine	12	Air, Ground	8-10	Yes	1

Table 5.16: Military Vehicles (full catalog pages 198-200)

Name	Cost	Skill	Passengers	Enclosed	Hull	Weapon Slots
GU Horizon-class armored car	6	Air, Ground	6	Yes	1	2
BFF Armored Utility Vehicle	8/9	Air, Ground, Space if upgraded	4	Yes	1	1 (if upgraded)
Döblitz Pillbug mini tank	10	Air	1	Yes	1	2
AG Scutum 5240 Flying Tank	15	Air, Ground, Space, Water	4	Yes	1	4
Döblitz Drumbeat Tactical APC	15	Ground, limited Air, Or Water	12-20	Yes	1	1
F&Y Liutas-class Law Enforcement Cruiser	15	Air, Ground, Water	1-4 or 1-6	Yes	1	3
Vella Tacspec Breacher Bike	15	Air, Ground, Water	1	Yes	1	4
AG Quasimodo MPV	20	Ground, Water, Air, Space	Depends on mode	Yes	1	Depends on mode

damage. However, one hit with a weapon that does Hull Point damage will destroy the vehicle. None of that damage will be passed on to the passengers. Wise passengers will spend their next actions escaping the wreckage and either counter attacking or fleeing.

Some vehicles have pre-built locations for weapons to be attached. These are called slots.[1] Any Carbine, Scattergun, Long Gun, or Heavy weapon can be attached to these slots with a single action. Once attached, the weapon is considered stationed and the Stationed Weapons skill applies to its use. A driver may fire using a stationed weapon while driving without penalty (there are likely buttons on the dashboard for that), but if the driver attempts to aim and fire a non-stationed weapon, the GC should probably require a vehicle related skill check.

1

CEO: I've never seen a vehicle's hardpoint labeled as a 'slot.'

TERL'KRIS: The actual attachment point is often called a hardpoint, yes, but the data entry space reserved, in-game, for adding a weapon feature to a vehicle is called a slot.

CEO: You're requiring our readers to learn an additional word.

TERL'KRIS: I bet they already know the word slot.

CEO: I bet they're going to argue that it should be hardpoint.

SOPH_RES: Please note that company policy prohibits placing actual wagers on customer behavior. Also, our purely hypothetical smart money is on "argument."

Renting Vehicles

All civilian vehicles should be available for rent at a rate of 1/3 the purchase price of the vehicle rounded down to the nearest Supplies (minimum of 1 Supplies). Military vehicles are much harder to rent. Local governments aren't likely to want you driving around in one and black market operations know that people only rent military vehicles when they are likely to engage in behavior that will get that vehicle damaged or destroyed. With a really good Negotiate (Black Market) skill check, you might be able to convince someone to rent you a military vehicle. The TN will vary by location and the strictness of local ordinances regarding weaponry. Be aware that if you rent a military vehicle and it gets destroyed, the owner of the vehicle is likely to come to collect the full price of the vehicle (plus penalties) with a well-armed and well-armored squad.

Building a Custom Suit of Armor

Building a custom suit of armor is different than purchasing one from a store. Armor companies have particular manufacturing capabilities and legal departments that limit what they can build, but the same isn't true when you make your own armor or have it commissioned. You're still working with the same basic components, however, and each step of building a custom armor suit involves choosing one or more of these components for your design.

Most of these choices have a direct impact on your custom armor's stats. These modifications are either already factored into the specific armors on the earlier tables in this section, or they don't apply. In no case should any stat modifiers from this process be applied to a non-custom armor.

Step 1: Manufacturer

The first step in building your own armor is choosing a manufacturer. Your manufacturer establishes many of the basic bits used to put together your custom armor — stats which in turn define some of the armor's starting attributes.

Step 2: Suit Chassis

Your suit's base housing further modifies its Damage Reduction and Defense stats. It also tells you how many qualities the suit can take in the next step.

Step 3: Armor Qualities

Now you can add some qualities to your armor. Keep an eye on your budget, it is easy to overspend. Adding qualities is not required, so skip this step if you don't wish to apply any qualities to your armor. Once your armor is complete, qualities can only be added to it via game events, such as Mayhem cards.

Step 4: Submit Your Design for Review

Finally, have the GC review your full custom armor design. They will double-check the cost and other calculations, and they may request tweaks to bring the armor into line with the game's narrative. Sometimes certain combinations of custom choices don't make sense given your company's available tools, friends, and other assets, and sometimes the GC may simply not want a certain design in the game at all. Reasons may or may not be given for any rejected choice or design, and any narrative decisions made in the process should be incorporated into the ongoing storyline for your game.

Once you have an approved design, give it a name and pay the cost to build it. From there, it's a matter of field-testing it, and we trust you'll come up with plenty of ways to do that.

Table 5.17: Custom Armor – Manufacturer 2

Company	Defense	Reduction	Starting Cost
Cobbold Design & Protection	+2	2	2
Malott	+3	2	3
Phubahr *	+1	1	1
USM Foundries	+2	2	2
Vella Tacspec	+3	3	4
Wächter L&D	+2	3	3

* Phubahr armors have the *Failure Prone* quality. Armor qualities added in this step do not further increase the armor's cost, and are in addition to the armor qualities that you may add during Step 3: Armor Qualities, so for example, a heavy suit of Phubahr armor would have Failure Prone in addition to the three qualities allowed by its heavy chassis.

2

MKTG: Most of our retailers have extensive customization facilities, and many of them have mil-spec fabbers. Why isn't that part of this game?

TERL'KRIS: It kind of already is. The Game Chief can role-play as a fabber tech, and turn this table and the one on the next page into exciting pieces of the story.

Table 5.18: Custom Armor – Chassis

Chassis	Defense	Reduction	Cost	Total Qualities Allowed
Light	+1	+0	+1	1
Medium	+2	+2	+3	2
Heavy	+3	+4	+6	3

Table 5.19: Custom Armor – Qualities

Name	Cost	Effects
Active Camouflage	+2	Gain +1 to any skill check related to stealth or blending in.
Dense	+3	Gain +6 to Damage Reduction, but -6 to Defense.
Failure Prone	-3	If you suffer any amount of damage three rounds in a row, then the armor fails and provides no further benefit.
Flight	+5	Grants fully-mobile flight and +2 with all Physical skill checks.
Hull Points	+6	Your armor gains +1 Hull Points, and all the benefits that entail (*see page 147*).
HISS (High Impact Survival Suit)	+1	Any time you would take damage from falling, from being thrown, or from melee attacks, small inertial thrusters fire to reduce the impact of the blow. You gain +3 Damage Reduction against melee attacks, or environmental damage from falling or impacts.
Implanted Weapons	+3	This suit of armor may mount up to 3 Melee or Sidearm weapons; 2 Carbine, Long Gun, or Scattergun weapons; or 1 Heavy weapon. These weapons do not count as stationed weapons.
Improved Sensors	+1	You gain +1 to any rolls that involve your senses.
Integral Shield	+6	As an action, you can activate an integral shield, automatically deflecting all Beam attacks until your first action in the following round.
Limited Flight	+3	You may activate the suit's micro-annies once per day, gaining the ability to fly and +1 with all Physical skill checks for 1d6 minutes.

Building a Custom Weapon

Building a custom weapon is different than purchasing one from a store. Weapons companies have particular manufacturing capabilities and legal departments that limit what they can build, but the same isn't true when you make your own weapon or have one commissioned. You're still working with the same basic components, however, and each step of building a custom weapon involves choosing one or more of these components for your design.

Most of these choices have a direct impact on your custom weapon's stats. These modifications are either already factored into the specific weapons on the earlier tables in this section, or they don't apply. In no case should any stat modifiers from this process be applied to a non-custom weapon.

Step 1: Manufacturer

The first step in building your own weapon is choosing a manufacturer. Your manufacturer establishes many of the basic bits used to put together your custom weapon — stats which in turn define some of the weapon's starting attributes.

Step 2: Ammunition

Pick an ammunition type. This modifies the weapon's damage and cost, and can also give you a small bonus with attacks made using the weapon. Skip this step for a melee weapon.

Step 3: Chassis

Your weapon's housing further modifies its Damage and cost, and it tells you how many grips are required to use it. Note that the chassis designations on this table do not map to game skills. They are for convenience in custom weapon design only.

Step 4: License

Weapon laws keep manufacturers from pursuing overly radical or experimental designs. With a custom weapon you can go "off-book," sacrificing legal sanction for upgrades.

Pick one of the following licenses and then choose up to the listed number of weapon qualities (*see pages 152-153*). The GC must approve every quality before it may be incorporated into a custom weapon. Add the cost of all chosen and approved qualities to the cost of your custom weapon.

- **Legal:** 1 weapon quality
- **Restricted:** 2 weapon qualities
- **Military:** 3 weapon qualities
- **Illegal:** 4 weapon qualities

Step 5: Qualities

Many weapons possess one or more qualities, each of which affects how the armament operates in the game. Once custom weapon creation is complete, qualities may only be added to a weapon through gameplay or by following the instructions for modifying a weapon (*see page 153*).

Step 6: Submit your Design for Review

Finally, have the GC review your full custom weapon design. They will double-check the cost and other calculations, and they may request tweaks to bring the weapon into line with the game's narrative. Sometimes certain combinations of custom choices don't make sense given your company's available tools, friends, and other assets, and sometimes the GC may simply not want a certain design in the game at all. Reasons may or may not be given for any rejected choice or design, and any narrative decisions made in the process should be incorporated into the ongoing storyline for your game.

Once you have an approved design, give it a name and pay the cost to build a prototype. From there it's a matter of field-testing it, and we trust you'll come up with plenty of ways to do that.

Licenses

Licenses matter when your group goes to a location where the laws of the location restrict the types of weapons that characters may carry. These license levels are for your convenience, as a quick designator for which weapons are allowed in a particular location. If the location does not specify which level of license is allowed, then use your common sense based on the location description.

Table 5.20: Custom Weapon – Manufacturer

Company	Attack	Damage	Starting Cost	Other Modifications*
Aarikaida Optics	—	+1	3	
Blattco Arms	—	—	6	Sturdy Construction
Bryanton Fair Fabricators (BFF)	+1	—	4	
Phubahr	—	—	1	Failure Prone
Smythe	+3	–2	5	
Strohl Munitions	+1	+2	6	
Urtheep Industries	+1	+1	3	Unlucky
Wimanu-Arrow	—	+3	6	
ZWillmi Steelworks	+1	—	5	Lucky

* Weapon qualities added in this step do not further increase the weapon's cost, and are in addition to the weapon qualities you may add during Step 4: License (*see page 150*).

Table 5.21: Custom Weapon – Ammunition

Beam	Attack	Damage	Cost	Other Modifications
Ion	—	—	+2	Gains Armor-piercing quality.
Laser	+1	—	—	
Particle	—	+1d6	+3	
Plasma	—	+1	—	
Non-lethal	**Attack**	**Damage**	**Cost**	**Other Modifications**
De-Motivators	—	—	—	The target must succeed on an Endurance skill check (TN 20) or they lose their next turn. This replaces any damage acquired in picking a manufacturer and chassis.
Goober	—	—	—	The target is rendered immobile if hit. They must succeed on an Athletics skill check (TN 20) to escape. This replaces any damage acquired in picking a manufacturer and chassis.
Stun	—	—	+2	The target must succeed on an Endurance skill check (TN 20) or immediately fall unconscious. This replaces any damage acquired in picking a manufacturer and chassis.
Projectile	**Attack**	**Damage**	**Cost**	**Other Modifications**
Gunfoam	—	—	–1	
PEA	—	+2	+1	

Table 5.22: Custom Weapon – Chassis

Chassis	Damage	Grips	Cost	Other Modifications
Light Melee	Melee + 1d6	1	–1	All custom-built melee weapons are automatically exotic and use the corresponding skill specialty (see page 30).
Heavy Melee	Melee + 2d6	2	+1	All custom-built melee weapons are automatically exotic and use the corresponding skill specialty (see page 30).
Pistol	1d6	1	—	The weapon gains Reload 1.
Long Arms	2d6	2	—	Choose whether your weapon is a Long Gun, Scattergun, or Carbine. The weapon gains Reload 1–2.
Heavy Weapon	3d6	2	+1	The weapon gains Reload 1–3.

Table 5.23: Custom Weapon – Qualities

Name	Cost	Effects
Accurate	+2	An attack with this weapon hits with any roll of triples, regardless of the attack check result or the target's Defense or Dodge stats. For attacks against an enemy with high Defense or Dodge (15+), the Accurate quality doubles your chance of a hit (5–5–5, 5–5–6, 5–6–6, and 6–6–6 are already success; you now also succeed with a roll of 1–1–1, 2–2–2, 3–3–3, and 4–4–4).
Annie Plant Power Supply	+3	When using this weapon, you ignore the first required reload in each combat.
Armor-piercing	+2	When using this weapon, your attacks ignore the first 2 points of Damage Reduction.
Autocorrecting	+1	This device tries to compensate for your failings. If each individual die rolled in an attack with this weapon results in a 3 or lower, then you may re-roll all three dice. You may only do this once and you must accept the second roll no matter the result. Mayhem can only happen once even if it comes up on both rolls.
AVPL (Anti-vehicular Payload)	+4	This weapon can damage large objects and vehicles that have hull points (*see page 147*). When an attack with this weapon hits a target with Hull Points, the target loses 1 Hull Point. This may destroy the source of the target's Hull Points, such as a suit of heavy armor. Against any target without Hull Points, roll the weapon's listed damage as normal.
Breacher	+10	Your attacks ignore the first 8 points of Damage Reduction.
Costly Ammo	-3	After the weapon has been fired three times (regardless of success or failure), you must spend 3 Supplies before firing this weapon again.
Delivery	+2	This weapon can deliver a chemical, biological, or synthetic payload to the target. Payloads are found on Table 5.9: Explosives and Specialized Ammo (*see page 143*).
Double Tap	+1	When an attack with this weapon hits and you roll a straight (1–2–3, 2–3–4, 3–4–5, or 4–5–6), you may immediately make a second attack against the same target (assuming you don't need to reload).
Extended Magazine	+3	When using this weapon, you ignore the first required reload in each combat.
Failure Prone	-2	Any roll of triples when attacking with this weapon causes the weapon to explode instead of firing. The explosion inflicts the weapon's normal damage on you and anyone next to you (as determined by the combat conditions and the GC). The weapon is destroyed in the process and may not be repaired.
High-res Targeting System	+1	You gain a +2 bonus to hit when attacking with this weapon, but you can only attack with the weapon once per turn regardless of any other attacks you may normally make.
Holdout/Stealth	+1	This weapon is easily hidden on your person. The TN to find this weapon is increased by 5 when you are being searched. If there is no default TN, then the new default TN is 20.
Hyper-accurate	+3	An attack with this weapon hits with any roll of doubles, regardless of the attack check result or the target's Defense or Dodge. "Doubles" means two or more of the same number on individual dice (e.g. two or three 1s, 2s, etc.)

Note on Weapon Stats

The observant player or GC may note that there are weapons and armors listed in the catalog which are impossible to duplicate using the Custom Creation rules. Allowing for customization creates design challenges for manufacturers, which limits what they're able to supply in a custom design space. When engineers are allowed to design without allowing for customization, they can optimize for particular effects and efficiencies.

Table 5.23: Custom Weapon – Qualities (continued)

Name	Cost	Effects
Lightweight Polymer	+1	This weapon is made from a lightweight material. It requires one less grip to use (*see page 139*). If this reduces the number of required grips to 0, then the weapon still requires one grip but you may attack with it one extra time in each round of combat due to its light frame and improved recoil composition system. This attack must happen on your turn but takes no time. It may occur before or after another action or attack.
Lucky	+1	When using this weapon, you may re-roll a Mayhem result of 6. You must accept the new roll, no matter what it is. Adding this quality to a weapon removes and replaces the Unlucky quality, and vice-versa.
Reload-intensive	-2	This weapon must be reloaded each time even a single damage die result falls into its Reload range (i.e. the range of numbers in the Reload column of its table entry).
Remote Targeting Uplink	+1	Your line of sight isn't required to attack with this weapon. The computer can shoot the target as long as it has access to tools (drones, cameras, satellites) that can see the target and your weapon can draw a straight line between you and the target.
Scattergun	+2	This weapon has a wide arc of fire. Even when an attack with the weapon misses, the target still suffers 1d6 damage. If firing goober, then the target still may become immobilized, and need to succeed on an Athletics skill check (TN 15) to escape. This quality cannot be attached to a pistol.
Self-supplying Ammunition	+2	Reloading this weapon takes no actions. You must still reload the weapon on your turn but it doesn't interrupt any other action or attack. After this weapon is reloaded, the next hit with it inflicts 3 less damage (minimum 1).
Short Range	-1	This weapon may only fire at targets that are near you. The GC determines when a target is too far away to attack with this weapon.
Single-use	-6	This weapon may only be fired once. Whether you hit or miss, the weapon may not be fired again until after a successful Engineering skill check (TN 25).
Sniper	+4	This weapon is designed to fire accurately over long distances. When you attack with this weapon as your only action in a round and hit your target, they suffer 1d6 additional damage.
Sturdy Construction	+3	This weapon ignores the first Mayhem card that affects it in each combat engagement.
Underslung Launcher	+3	When using explosives or specialized ammo that works with this quality, you may substitute the attack skill you use with this weapon instead of the Thrown skill.
Unlucky	-1	When attacking with this weapon, you must re-roll the Mayhem die each time it rolls a 1. Adding this quality to a weapon removes and replaces the Lucky quality, and vice-versa.
Variable Ammunition	+1	When adding this quality, choose a type of ammunition to add to your weapon's capabilities. As an action, you can switch between types of damage.

MAXIM 44

If it will blow a hole in the ground, it will double as an entrenching tool.

Modifying Existing Weapons

If you want to add a quality to, or remove a quality from an existing weapon (a popular choice for those whose weapons have the Failure Prone quality), then you should know that the process is time-consuming and requires a number of components to be completely replaced. It also requires some technical skill. The result will be a weapon that is no longer recognizable as the weapon it used to be. The player must pay 4 Supplies and then roll a Mechanic skill check (TN 25). If the skill check fails, then they do not get their Supplies back. They just destroyed the parts and have to pay more Supplies to try again. If the result of their check is below TN 15, then the project failed catastrophically and the player must now roll for damage based on the type of weapon they were attempting to mod.

Armor

Unless you have very thick skin and redundant internal organs, you'll want a little help keeping projectiles *outside* your body. You probably also want to keep the insides of your body from getting a peek at the outside world. Unless you're an amorph. Then ignore (almost) everything we just said.

Perimeter defenses can keep you safe, right up until the perimeter is breached, at which point you want to be wearing a good set of body armor. That's where Planet Mercenary's handy selection of high-quality mercenary armor comes in. For your convenience, we've loosely categorized common options by the level of protection they offer: Light, Medium, and Heavy.

Reading the stat blocks

Defense: Bonus to Defense

DR: Damage Reduction granted by the armor

Hull: Number of Hull Points granted by the armor

Cost: Cost in Supplies for the armor

Light Armor

Light armor befits those who desire a little padding under their street clothes, or who need high levels of mobility and maneuverability in the field. A few models also offer quick and dirty protection from harsh elements.

CD&P Corporate Raider, models CR-110 to CR-190

Defense: +1 **DR:** 1 **Hull:** - **Cost:** S3

Qualities & Notes: N/A

The Cobbold Design & Protection Corporate Raider (CR) series of suits offers strong protection in an expensive but not particularly stylish package. Designed primarily for humans in corporate environments, each of these suits looks just like a shirt, suit-coat, and tie, but is woven with a blend of handsome fabrics, flexible ripstop synthetic super-silk, and bullet-stopping fullerene fibers.

Planet Mercenary offers nine variations of this line, each essentially identical in terms of form factor and overall defense. The differences between models are entirely cosmetic, allowing you to choose the suit that best fits the needs of your particular job. Attending a fancy gala? Choose CR-180, with its clean cuts and sharp, upscale profile. Looking for something a little more daring? Consider CR-150, with its long tail and pinstripes.

There are two principal drawbacks to the CR series. First, anyone with a hint of fashion sense can identify one. Second, the largest unpro-

tected area is the head, and there are no reactive factors installed to save your skull from an astute assailant's attack.

CD&P Citizen Soldier

Defense: +1 or +2 **DR:** 1 or 2 **Hull:** - **Cost:** S6

Qualities & Notes: Requires 1 action to engage full protection

The Citizen Soldier (CS) series from Cobbold is a favorite of deep-cover operatives across hundreds of systems. Thousands of civilian outfits, including numerous "skimpy" ones, have been mimicked by the engineers at Cobbold, letting soldiers mingle with anonymous confidence until the hammer falls. These suits don't offer quite as much coverage as many obvious models, but even the CS-909 Bikini can stop more bullets than a regular bikini would — assuming, of course, that it's worn correctly by someone trained in its use. There's also the discreet "no, really, it's just my handbag" CS-909a, which can be wielded as a small personal shield when the need arises.

Malott M&M V-44 Whisperskin

Defense: +3 **DR:** 2 **Hull:** - **Cost:** S4

Qualities & Notes: Can fit under clothes and stacks with other armor

There are numerous skin-tight carbon fullerene suits on the market. The Malott M&M V-44 Whisperskin is one of the most popular of these suits, and is a good representative example. Woven from fullerene single-thread, piezosilk, and a suite of skin-friendly materials, the V-44 fits as snugly as a sheer leotard while providing full protection from small arms fire. It is unobtrusive and extremely stylish if you have the physique to work its particular look.

Whether you have the physique for this suit or not, you may choose to wear layers over it — and yes, you can even wear other armor over it. Want to look really tough and stop bullets like a backstop? Slip a Troublemaker suit over your Whisperskin and command the respect you deserve.

Many soldiers wear the V-44 beneath their standard issue uniforms, granting them extra defense without violating their organization's dress code.

Malott M&M Blue Collar, models B-101 to B-901

Defense: +2 **DR:** 3 or 6 **Hull:** - **Cost:** S4

Qualities & Notes: Damage reduction 6 vs. laser, plasma, and electrical attacks; damage reduction 3 vs. all other attacks; helmet and mask provide for full EVA work

Malott's Blue Collar work suits were not originally designed for the military. They were built for use in heavy industries where the most dangerous jobs had to be performed by humans [1] rather than robots. These suits are generally employed by engineers doing EVA (Extra-vehicular Activity) work, who suspect their projects may fail non-linearly and deposit their energy on nearby personnel.

B-series suits are hooded and offer the same protection as the Whisperskin, plus insulation against hazards specific to an intended environment. This high degree of tailored protection and a more affordable price tag than most medium and heavy armors make the suits very appealing to military and mercenary organizations.

Phubar Troublemaker Mark II

Defense: +3 **DR:** 1 **Hull:** - **Cost:** S1

Qualities & Notes: Failure Prone

The Troublemaker suit from Phubar is a cost-effective way to advertise to enemies that you're only *slightly* bulletproof, and for this reason it's not popular with companies that run jobs against conventionally-armed military forces. It is, however, extremely popular with companies that run jobs against *lightly*-armed forces, and civilians.

The Mark II is a blend of short-fiber fullerenes over a network of thin, chitin-gel plates. These plates distribute impacts but will often rupture after just one or two shots. This is why we recommend to mercs expecting to face hails of bullets that they consider something a little heavier. The same is true if you anticipate being targeted by a disciplined opponent who can hit the same spot twice in rapid succession.

1

SOPH_RES: Is the species-specific wording a slip of bias?

WRITER: I hope not. I wrote it, and I'm not a human.

CEO: So it's historical. Also, what are you?

TERL'KRIS: Don't answer that. You may have already said too much.

Armor aficionados agree that the Troublemaker suit is aptly named, since it's best deployed by easily satisfied criminals on a budget, as well as street thugs wanting to look tough and (probably) survive the next drive-by. Like all Phubar products, the Troublemaker suit is prone to failure, but its design is simple enough that it rarely fails without first sustaining fire, and that's why it remains a top seller.

A variant of this item, the "Troublemaker Plus," includes three key upgrades: a chitingel hood and mask; secondary external plates at the elbow, knee, shoulder, and crotch; and a "gherkin-wick" assembly that absorbs embarrassing moisture and odors. Of note: the Plus model retains the same game statistics as the original.

Medium Armor

Medium armor is a happy compromise between the strict and simple light designs in the previous section and the often overwhelming heavy models in the next. Some medium suits offer highly-specialized protection, keeping you safe from exotic environmental conditions. They can even negate the damage you would take from falling a great distance. One or two suits are even flight-capable, which can be extremely useful (or can render you little more than skeet for sharpshooters on the other side).

CD&P CXO, models CXO-210 to CXO-290

Defense: +3 **DR:** 3 **Hull:** – **Cost:** $5

Qualities & Notes: N/A

When you need to wear what appears to be a traditional suit and you don't want it to be the last suit you ever put on, the Cobbold Design & Protection CXO series is a solid choice. Fabricated from long-chain fullerenes with flexible plates of K-sink piezoelectric transducers, the CXO can take a high-velocity round and spread the impact over a large area. Thus, when you stand back up all your ribs will still be intact.

Additionally, the necktie and collars are duomorphic: with a trigger command, they sweep up and over your head, providing critical cranial protection in under a second. Users should take care to keep their trigger commands unique and confidential, as on more than one occasion the suit has inadvertently killed an owner when it deployed and they had a fork in their mouth.

A suite of comm peripherals for your handbrain can be securely embedded in the tie, providing helmet communications when your helmet is up, and letting you talk into the end of your necktie when the helmet is down.

Malott M&M 1150 Supersuit

Defense: +2 **DR:** 3 **Hull:** – **Cost:** S15

Qualities & Notes: Integral Shield

The marketing boffins at Malott didn't name the 1150 the Supersuit, but they haven't discouraged the name, either. The suit looks like an insulated version of any old skin-tight fullerene suit on the market, except that it's reminiscent of those old caped hero comedies, right down to the way it hugs your physique.

The 1150 boasts three layers of protection. The outermost layer is reflective (ablative) and shrugs off photon- and electron-based beam weapons long enough for the wearer to take cover. A middle layer is a thick weave of single-thread fullerenes and microfine PTU threads. This drives the price way up, but the added protection is worth it. This layer is where most bullets stop. The innermost layer is a smart set of flexible, interlocking chitingel scales. These scales help distribute the force of impacts, letting you survive extreme acceleration of up to 830 m/s² (that's a little over 80 g, Earthlings).

Malott M&M 1150 EX Supersuit

Defense: +2 **DR:** 6 **Hull:** – **Cost:** S17

Qualities & Notes: Integral Shield, Limited Flight, Active Camouflage

This upgraded version of the basic 1150 Supersuit boasts several impressive upgrades. Its outer layer can be programmed to function as smart camouflage, though for best effect it should be paired with something other than the off-the-shelf Synthetic Intelligence. The middle layer is powered and its molecular-level fullerene flexion effect is exploited such that muscle movement is amplified, granting the wearer three to five times their normal strength. The inner layer provides moderate inertial protection, promoting survival at acceleration up to 830 m/s² (that's a little over 80 g, Earthlings).

The Supersuit EX also includes six micro-annies — one each at the wrists, ankles, belt buckle, and collar — which power the fullerene layer, fuel the inertial dampers, and best of all grant the wearer up to 1d6 minutes of fully-mobile flight.

Phubar Enforcer

Defense: +2 **DR:** 3 **Hull:** – **Cost:** S4

Qualities & Notes: Failure Prone

Phubar's Enforcer armor is priced and labeled as a step up from their Troublemaker suit, but in fact it costs more than wearing a super-sized Troublemaker atop a fitted Troublemaker, and that is all it is. If your idea of protection is waddling around looking like a cross between Mitch the Marshmallow and an antique nesting doll, then the Enforcer is right up your alley. Hopefully your alley doesn't have enemy troops in it.

Phubar Enforcer Deluxe

Defense: +2 **DR:** 4 **Hull:** – **Cost:** S7

Qualities & Notes: Stacks with the Phubahr Troublemaker Mark II (*see page 155*); if stacked, then each set of armor can only take two hits before failing, not three; Failure Prone

The Enforcer Deluxe is basically a Troublemaker inside a Troublemaker Plus, with a nice pair of goggles. Which probably do nothing. We don't know. We haven't tried them on.

Power Armor Situational Modifiers

If a GC wants to bestow bonuses to athletics checks for feats of strength while wearing power armor, they may do so, however they should also give matching penalties for attempting to do delicate work while wearing the same power boosted armor.

Heavy Armor

Planet Mercenary carries more models of heavy armor than any other type of protection, and for good reason. Most sophonts reading this are primarily interested in keeping their eyes in their sockets, their vital fluids pumping through and not out of their bodies, and their gripping limbs capable of gripping things. Fear not, timid crusader! Planet Mercenary has you covered.

Esspererin Sashiko

Defense: +5 **DR:** 8 **Hull:** 1 **Cost:** S15

Qualities & Notes: May only be worn (piloted) by esspererin; Hull Points; Implanted Weapons

Sashiko is the esspererin word for "full armor," and to an esspererin, "full armor" means eight to ten meters of serpentine interlocking plates with manipulator arms, mounted weapons, full flight capabilities, and a life-support system that keeps the pilot happy and healthy through an extended deployment.

"Pilot" is the right word to use here. To enter the Sashiko, an esspererin couches comfortably

into less than one cubic meter of cockpit and plugs the suit's controls directly into their head, usually by removing their eyes and antennae. They keep their hands, feet, and wings curled and furled as the Sashiko becomes a literal extension of their body.

As with most esspererin manufacturing, Sashiko components are grown and then assembled into full suits by hand. Also like most tech owned by the species, Sashiko suits tend to be tinkered with extensively.

Phubahr Godmode Gargoyle

Defense: +4 **DR:** 5 **Hull:** – **Cost:** S10

Qualities & Notes: Includes a modified R1P-A Goaltender; Failure Prone; Flight

The Phubahr Gargoyle is a shameless knockoff of the Vella Tacspec Golem (*see next page*). Sophonts who work in Phubahr's sales department try to obscure this fact by giving it the moniker "Godmode" to imply that in this suit, one is as powerful as a god. Having this suit is definitely better than running around a battle zone in skin tights or an armored dress suit, but purchasers should be advised that the same engineers who designed Phubahr weapons also had their hands on this suit. Gargoyles have been known to fail catastrophically mid-battle. However, when one considers the price point, then the chance that it might *not* fail, and the R1P-A Goaltender from Wächter in one pauldron (*see page 160*), they might find that a Phubahr Gargoyle is exactly the suit they need.

Planet Mercenary ICC-Odin

Defense: +5 **DR:** 6 **Hull:** 1 **Cost:** S15

Qualities & Notes: Comes with two permanently shoulder-mounted Gunfoam cannons (2d6 damage, Reload 1–2, no weapon qualities on the cannons, license Military); Hull Points; Flight

This suit is very similar to the T2-F11 series (*see next page*), though it features a pair of anti-personnel cannons in the pauldrons.

People argue whether having cannons as point defenses is better or worse than having a specially-designed Goaltender (*see page 160*). The difference is in collateral damage — the Goaltender doesn't wreck stuff that's *behind* the incoming rounds, while the built-in cannons can do exactly that. This suit was designed with the cannons in mind, so they're part of the structure of the suit. Removing them is not recommended.

USMF Infantry Combat Chassis (USMF-ICC)

Defense: +5 **DR:** 8 **Hull:** 1 **Cost:** $10

Qualities & Notes: Hull Points; Flight

Phubar isn't the only company to knock off Vella Tacspec's work. The USMF-ICC is the UNS infantry's standard-issue heavy armor and it is remarkably similar to the T2-F11 (*see below*). It's less expensive than the Vella Tacspec and about the same cost as Phubar models ("free" if you're UNS heavy infantry), but you can only score a suit if you have access to a UNS surplus, or you've captured and stripped UNS heavy infantry units. As with the Vella Tacspec Golem, the USM Foundries Combat Chassis allows for fully-mobile flight and a power assist to make moving around in it possible.

Vella Tacspec T2-F11 Golem

Defense: +5 **DR:** 6 **Hull:** 1 **Cost:** $12

Qualities & Notes: Hull Points; Flight; Implanted Weapons

Imagine slipping on a Döblitz Armory Harmadillo assault craft that's cut to fit you like a wedding dress....

This is a truly top-of-the-line suit, with powered strength- and speed-boosting tech and mini-annies capable of running the ensemble for weeks. Its turbine-powered flight jets are noisy, but it's also smart enough to adjust to you not knowing how to hold your body when you fly (a trained pilot can make this beast *soar*, as the suit won't have to compensate for any flailing).

The Golem includes mounts suitable for attaching various heavy weapons, scatterguns, long guns, or carbines. Weapons are not usually sold with the suit, since they assume you already have a favorite weapon of your own.

Vella Tacspec T2-F11 Golem EX

Defense: +5 **DR:** 6 **Hull:** 1 **Cost:** $14

Qualities & Notes: Includes a R1P-A Goaltender; Hull Points; Flight; Implanted Weapons

The Golem EX model has all the features and benefits available to the regular Golem, but thanks to a partnership with Wächter Landscaping & Defense, the Golem EX adds an integrated R1P-A Goaltender in one pauldron (*see page 160*). In older models, the addition of the Goaltender reduced the number of available slots for mounting weapons. Clever engineers at Vella Tacspec have now solved this problem, and your EX model can mount the same number of external weapons as your regular model.

Team Protection

Some teams delegate the functionality of armor to grunts in their companies, but generally this isn't regarded as a "best practice." When you need protection for your entire team, look no further than the following options.

Vella Tacspec Bunker Bubble

Defense: +0 **DR:** 6 **Hull:** – **Cost:** S10

Qualities & Notes: 3 Damage Reduction vs. beam and projectile attacks; the Bunker Bubble may move at a speed roughly equivalent to the fastest sophont in a team.

There's no better active armor than a true unifield shield. A platoon under a Bunker Bubble may be shoulder to shoulder, but they can advance across contested ground with relative impunity.

The Bunker Bubble is a four-ton annie plant, one meter in diameter, that projects a hemispheric shield out to six meters in every direction (that's twelve meters of protection for the sophonts playing at home). All characters inside the shield gain its full Damage Reduction of 6, though this is reduced to only 3 against beam and projectile weapons because the shield flickers from time to time. The techs are working on it.

The Bunker Bubble has three modes of propulsion. The default option is a reaction-free hovering mode. This option is perfectly quiet but may induce vertigo in soldiers standing next to the central unit. It also consumes the most fuel of any mobility mode. The second option is an efficient but noisy hovercraft mode. A standard hover skirt unfolds around the unit and turbines create a high-pressure cushion of air upon which the unit rides. The third option is "walker" mode. Three spider-like legs deploy from beneath the unit, lurching it forward across the battlefield.

1

CEO: Beautiful upsell. Terl'Kris, which writer is this? We need her doing copy for the high-margin products.

TERL'KRIS: You know I can't tell you that. For security purposes.

CEO: But I *like* this one.

WRITER: She's me, and she's also the one you got mad at for malapropisms. Does that flustrate you?

TERL'KRIS: Do NOT taunt the boss. The panic room has a limited amount of air.

Wächter L&D R1P-A Goaltender

Defense: +0 **DR:** 5 **Hull:** – **Cost:** S6

Qualities & Notes: After absorbing 3 damage in a round, a R1P-A Goaltender is destroyed

The Goaltender is a hovering drone driven by an onboard synthetic intelligence with only one job: keep the enemy from scoring hits on the goal. The goal, of course, is whatever you tell the Goaltender it is, but typically it's you.

The Goaltender R1P-A is the lightest and least expensive of the series. It's about the size of a cantaloupe and comes with a stack of 120-millimeter "impact sandwich" armor plates. When the bullets start flying, the Goaltender maneuvers itself between the bullets and the goal, and once an armor plate is sufficiently damaged that it no longer offers protection, the Goaltender deploys another one from a sheath slung over your shoulder.

Seasoned veterans and butterbars alike agree that once you've deployed a Goaltender, you'll want more of them. It's unnerving at first, having a bot darting in front of you and then caroming away after deflecting some enemy fire, but once you're used to it, you pine for a whole buzzing swarm of them. Your nearest Planet Mercenary retailer can make this dream a reality. 1

Wächter L&D R1P-W Goaltender

Defense: +2 **DR:** 5 **Hull:** – **Cost:** S9

Qualities & Notes: After absorbing 5 damage in a round, a R1P-W Goaltender is destroyed.

The R1P series scales up with the R1P-W, a fifty-centimeter flying sphere that uses one-meter-square armor plates to defend you and your entire fireteam. The R1P-W costs more than the limited R1P-A. It also has improved mobility and a smarter onboard SI that lets it catch more incoming fire for you. It does become unreasonably costly when its owners take fire that can destroy a plate and the drone in a single shot. Despite this, the model is deployed by many civilian law-enforcement agencies in areas of unrest. Its large plates are perfect for deflecting rocks, cans, bottles, and rotting food, and as an added bonus, the drone never takes these assaults personally.

Weapons

Welcome to our catalog of pre-made, playable *Planet Mercenary RPG* weapons. We remind you that the weapons listed here are only a subset of the weapons listed in the *Planet Mercenary Weapons of the Galaxy* catalog (affectionately referred to as *PM WOG*). Every weapon listed here can be found in the *PM WOG*, though there are many weapons listed in the *PM WOG* that are not listed here. If you can't find what you want in this section, then you can use the Custom Weapons Creation rules (*see page 150*) to create your own weapon. If you want to modify or upgrade a weapon that you already own, then find instructions for that in the Custom Weapons Creation section (*see page 153*).

Full details on Weapon Qualities are found on table 5.23 Weapon Qualities (*see pages 152-153*). We recommend you write down the specific effects of your weapon's qualities on your character sheet.

Pistols

For the modern mercenary, a pistol is not only standard equipment — it is often a friend. It is the kind of friend who is always there for you even if its presence is not obvious to others. We offer a fine array of friends here.

Beam Pistols

Blattco Ni-972 "Glass Dagger"

Reload: 1 **Grips:** 1 **Cost:** S9 **Military**

Ammo & Damage: Laser: 2d6+2 (5d6+5 in all in mode)

Qualities & Notes: Breacher; Single-use; Sturdy Construction

Blattco Arms made its first foray into the beam weapon market only recently, but its effort has met with favorable critical response as well as panicked cries from those illuminated downrange.

The Ni-972 "Glass Dagger" is a long-barreled pistol with a capstack magazine in the grip. Like most Blattco weapons, it caters to those who want the first shot to count. It fires a powerful pulse of coherent light that delivers enough heat to burn through most brands of light armor, excepting those specifically designed to dissipate or reflect high temperature attacks.

This hot pulse comes at a price, however. The Ni-972 cannot be burst-fired, nor can it deliver a continuous, sweeping beam. The weapon also heats up quickly and only gets six shots out of each magazine. An extended capstack is available, upping the shot count to fifteen and allowing the wielder to ignore the first reload required in each combat. In *Planet Mercenary RPG*, it has the Self-supplying Ammunition quality, which mimics the real-world extended capstack of this weapon.

Unlike other Blattco weapons, the "Glass Dagger" can be rendered inoperable during normal use. This is by design. With the toggling of a pair of switches, the Ni-972 can discharge its entire capstack at once, dealing as much damage in a single shot as it could if all six shots had struck the target individually. This "all-in mode" makes the "Glass Dagger" a Single-use weapon, destroying its optical elements. Thereafter, the pistol must be field-stripped and re-assembled with replacement parts before it can be fired again.

Using all-in mode with the extended capstack is not recommended if you want to keep the appendage that you use to fire your pistol.

Glass Dagger Extended Capstack

To purchase the Glass Dagger extended capstack, add S3 to the cost of your weapon and add the Extended Magazine quality.

Non-Lethal Pistols

BFF DT-56k "Little Magic Sleep Gun"

Reload: 1-2 **Grips:** 1 **Cost:** S5 **Legal**

Ammo & Damage: Stun, Endurance check TN 20 or fall unconscious

Qualities & Notes: Only works on humans and purps.

When you're firing into a homogenous crowd of humans or purps, then your least-expensive stunning option is the Bryanton Faire Fabricators (BFF) DT-56k, also known as the "Little Magic Sleep Gun." This weapon fires parallel high-energy beams of ultra-low-frequency sound. The two beams are very close in wave length, resulting in a difference in tone where they overlap. This tone has all the energy of both beams but remains highly directional, unlike true low-frequency systems.

The effect on a human or purp is usually immediate and total sedation, as certain neural paths are forced to resonate in time with the low-frequency sound. Unfortunately, this effect often also voids the bowels.

BFF Neuromazer

Reload: 1-2 **Grips:** 1 **Cost:** S7 **Legal**

Ammo & Damage: Stun, Endurance check TN 20 or fall unconscious

Qualities & Notes: Only works on sophonts with nerves and skin; Short Range

The Neuromazer uses short-frequency EM radiation to induce a pain response in exposed nerves. The effect works on most sophont races with nerves and skin, and it's usually safe. Usually. This is only a medium-range and short-range pistol. BFF engineers discovered to their dismay, and permanent maiming, that the energy required for long-range shots would make short-range shots rather dangerous, so they limited the energy output of the weapon.

Projectile Pistols

Blattco 15 mm Clawhammer

Reload: 1 **Grips:** 1 **Cost:** S5 **Legal**

Ammo & Damage: Demotivator, Endurance check TN 15 or become incapacitated; Goober Athletics check TN 20 to escape; Gunfoam 1d6+3, PEA 1d6+3

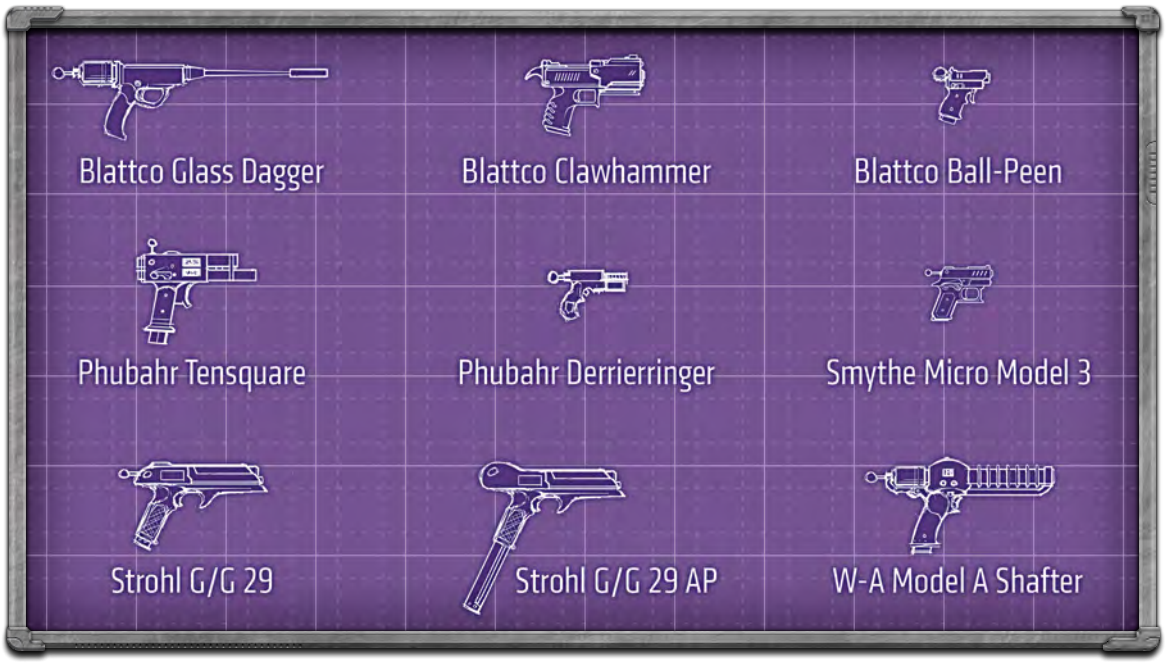
Qualities & Notes: Sturdy Construction; Variable Ammo

Like all Blattco Arms weapons, the Clawhammer is exceptionally reliable. If you want a pistol with stopping power, a threatening profile, and a report like an artillery strike, then this is the weapon for you.

The Clawhammer does not truck with any of that namby-pamby, fancy-dancing recoil reduction. Those systems are among the first to fail in any complex weapon design and let's face it: if you're carrying the Clawhammer, then you don't care about recoil because your first shot will start *and* finish the job.

Hang on tight, though. Any kick not redirected into cycling the action is going straight back into your wrist. If your grip is the slightest bit loose, then the Clawhammer will launch itself back from your hand and hit you in the face like a… well, like a hammer.

The large muzzle of the Clawhammer boasts a diameter that allows for a wide range of specialty and custom loads. Goober rounds, armor crackers, de-motivators — you name it, the Clawhammer can fire it. Enjoy.



Blattco 7 mm Ball-Peen

Reload: 1 **Grips:** 1 **Cost:** S5 **Restricted**

Ammo & Damage: Gunfoam 1d6+1

Qualities & Notes: Holdout/Stealth

Blattco's smallest pistol is the so-called "Ball-Peen" pistol. It only fires gunfoam, but it's super-dependable. It's small and hits more like a love tap than a proper hammer. Of course, that's by comparison. The Ball-Peen is perfectly lethal — it just lacks stopping power and the huge, hulking profile that goes with it. It is ideal for hiding in small pockets or bags, or to be carried into places where folk might not want you to carry such things.

Phubahr 10^2 10 mm Tensquare

Reload: 1 **Grips:** 1 **Cost:** S2 **Legal**

Ammo & Damage: Gunfoam 1d6

Qualities & Notes: Failure Prone

If you're operating on a budget and need to put a rack of disposable weapons in the hands of a company of disposable grunts, then the Phubahr "Tensquare" is the bargain waiting in your basement. Probably right next to the body bags.

The Tensquare fires 10 mm balls that sit atop 10 mm gunfoam cartridges. It lacks the stopping power of larger weapons but it can get the job done. Be warned, however: like all Phubahr weapons, the Tensquare is twitchy. They sometimes jam catastrophically.

Phubahr Derrierringer

Reload: - **Grips:** 1 **Cost:** S3 **Restricted**

Ammo & Damage: PEA 1d6

Qualities & Notes: Failure Prone; Holdout/Stealth; Single-use

The Derrierringer is currently the only Phubahr weapon that's *exactly* as dependable as it needs to be. This single-shot pea-shooter dumps its entire capstack into launching just one pre-loaded flechette. This capstack is integrated into the pulsilinear array, so the weapon must be completely disassembled to be reloaded. The cost of parts and labor required to reload this pistol are more than the price for a new one.

Fire this pistol once and throw it away. For added effect, you can chuck the otherwise useless pistol at any remaining opponents, but we can't guarantee any added effect unless you have a good throwing arm.

Smythe Micro Model 3

Reload: 1 **Grips:** 1 **Cost:** S4 **Restricted**

Ammo & Damage: Gunfoam 1d6-1

Qualities & Notes: Holdout/Stealth

The Micro Model 3 briefly held the distinction of being the smallest holdout pistol in the Planet Mercenary catalog, but when Smythe began plastering that claim throughout their marketing slicks, several manufacturers launched into a campaign of aggressive one-downsmanship — a war of literal attrition, until the record-holding weapon was not only too small to be useful, it was so small that if you dropped it on the carpet you might never find it again.

Smythe wisely refused to engage, and the Micro Model 3 remains a favorite among Planet Mercenary's discerning clientele. It fires 2.25 mm gunfoam rounds.

Strohl G/G 29

Reload: 1 **Grips:** 1 **Cost:** S3 **Legal**

Ammo & Damage: Gunfoam 1d6+1; PEA 1d6-1

Qualities & Notes: Variable Ammunition

The Strohl Munitions G/G 29 is a top-notch sidearm that you, like many mercenaries, may find yourself adding notches to, if you're that kind of person. There's even a replaceable notch plate on the grip. None of this is a guarantee that you won't end up as a notch on someone *else's* G/G 29, of course. For that sort of insurance, you should check out Planet Mercenary's wide selection of armor. Also, spend some time on the range.

The G/G 29 is a hybrid pistol. The grip magazine can be loaded with Ferrotious brand ferroceramic peas, 9 mm gunfoam rounds, or a combination of both. With gunfoam rounds, you should use shorts or standards. Stay away from the XL rounds because while they pack a bit more punch, they'll damage the secondary barrel used by the peas. 1

When you need to kill things without a lot of noise, this is your weapon. Also, be a very good shot because these 2 mm peas don't pack much punch at subsonic speeds, and they're unlikely to penetrate light body armor or a helmet.

1

MKTG: Rewrite this so that it mentions the availability of our extended warranty, which will cover secondary barrel damage.

WRITER: It's not about the warranty. It's about the weapon failing in combat.

MKTG: That's no reason to not sell warranty upgrades.

Strohl G/G 29 AP

Reload: 1 **Grips:** 1 **Cost:** S8 **Legal**

Ammo & Damage: Gunfoam 1d6+1; PEA 1d6-1

Qualities & Notes: Annie Plant Power Supply; Variable Ammuntion

This is the annie-powered version of the G/G 29. It costs more, but it's guaranteed to fire 200,000 rounds before you need a new power unit. In-game, this is represented by the Annie Plant Power Supply quality. The annie assembly includes a shot counter but it's not tamper-proof. If you buy a G/G 29 AP on the secondary market, then be sure to send the annie assembly to Planet Mercenary for refurbishment and recharging. Better safe than sorry!

Wimanu-Arrow Model A Shafter 14 mm Flechette Pistol

Reload: 1 **Grips:** 1 **Cost:** S5 **Legal**

Ammo & Damage: Demotivator, Endurance check TN 15 or become incapacitated; PEA (pierce mode) 1d6-3; PEA (punch mode) 1d6+2

Qualities & Notes: Delivery; Variable Ammunition; Breacher

Most pea-shooters are compatible with many specialty rounds, but Wimanu-Arrow's entire business is built around throwing the best darts in the business. The Model A has a wide barrel built to accommodate large payloads and the company's line of flechettes is far more varied and versatile than either Ferrotious or Fletchion can offer.

With a 14-round magazine and an integrated capstack, the Model A is unlike other pea-shooters in that it has only two muzzle-velocity settings: "pierce" and "punch." These launch flechettes at 44 m/s and 300 m/s, respectively. Both modes fire silently.

Even at only 44 m/s, a flechette can break the skin (typically to deliver a chemical payload). At 300 m/s, the same 12-gram flechette impacts with potentially lethal force. Of course, if you're trying to tranquilize a neophant, then you'll probably want the punch to deliver the payload in the first place. A skilled shooter trained with this weapon can launch tranquilizers, micro-grenades, Vom darts, de-motivators, and plain old "kill" darts in combat.

Scatterguns

Scatterguns are the weapon of choice when you want to fire once and hit multiple targets. They range from the historical classic Terran shotgun (only available in the antiques section of the *PM WOG*) to the modern magsplatter. Pick up your scattergun when you don't have a heavy weapon, but need to face down a host of opponents.

Projectile Scatterguns

Blattco 30 mm Sledgehammer

Reload: 1-2 **Grips:** 2 **Cost:** S6 **Legal**

Ammo & Damage: Goober, Athletics check TN 20 to escape; Gunfoam 2d6+3; Stun, Endurance check TN 20 or fall unconscious

Qualities & Notes: Scattergun; Variable Ammunition

The Blattco Arms Sledgehammer delivers everything you'd expect from a large-bore scattergun: sound, fury, and a single-shot solution for most problems. It takes gunfoam cartridges, but goober rounds can also be loaded without any modifications.

For trench fighting, the standard load is perfect. It's loud and messy, and at close range there's little chance you'll miss your target completely. Stopping power isn't the only selling point, either. The simple, large-bore design of the Sledgehammer offers huge flexibility. This weapon sees lots of law enforcement use because it can fire the full suite of goober crowd control options.

That same flexibility lets the user chamber some heavy-duty loads, like armor crackers.

Phubahr 20-20

Reload: 1-2 **Grips:** 2 **Cost:** S2 **Legal**

Ammo & Damage: Gunfoam 2d6

Qualities & Notes: Failure Prone; Scattergun; Additional cost of S2 removes Failure Prone

The Phubahr 20-20 takes 20 mm gunfoam cartridges and like all Phubahr weapons, it's most commonly used by organizations on a lean budget. Unlike other Phubahr weapons, the 20-20 is not prone to misfires or breakage — provided it's always only loaded with 20-20

spec, Phubahr-brand cartridges (a fact that is represented in-game by an extra supplies cost to remove the Failure Prone quality). Many ammo manufacturers *claim* that their specialty loads are fully Phubahr-compatible, but those claims are, at best, hyperbole. Like its cousin models, the Phubahr 20-20 is an extremely temperamental weapon, and if you want it to reliably kill what you point it at, then you need to load it with stock ammunition.

Strohl 20 mm Magsplatter 440

Reload: 1-2 **Grips:** 2 **Cost:** S5 **Legal**

Ammo & Damage: Gunfoam 2d6

Qualities & Notes: Scatter Mode: Scattergun; Focus Mode: Accurate, Reload Intensive

As a rule, scatterguns are loud, inaccurate, and messy. The Strohl Munitions 20 mm Magsplatter 440 is a rule-breaker that, in the right hands, operates quietly and accurately, and it can keep the mess it makes in one place (unless you *want* to spread the damage around, but we'll get to that).

The Magsplatter 440 fires a "flock" of ferroceramic slivers. The shooter may choose if the flock flies wide (scatter mode) or in a tight pattern (focus mode). This pattern is highly programmable, and thus there are now art competitions centered around shooting downrange and creating pictures with a single pull of the trigger. You probably won't want to write your initials on your enemies, but if you do, then the Magsplatter 440 has you covered. There is a downside to programming your strikes: occasionally the onboard SI gets confused and needs to be rebooted, which functions like needing to reload your weapon.

Best of all the Magsplatter 440 has a whisper of a report. The loudest sound is generated at the point of impact. Depending on ambient noise, it's entirely possible that no one will even notice a weapon was fired anywhere in the area.

Carbines

Carbines are classic. They're rifles in form and usage, though modern carbines don't have the carving in their barrels that gave historic rifles their name. A carbine is the weapon you sling on a strap over your most convenient appendage so that it is ready at a moment's notice.

Beam Carbines

Aarikaida Optics N-80 Verfkwas

Reload: 1-2 **Grips:** 2 **Cost:** S10 **Military**

Ammo & Damage: Laser 2d6+2

Qualities & Notes: Accurate; Annie Plant Power Supply; Self-supplying Ammunition

The N-80 Verfkwas is a continuous-fire laser weapon that's arguably as smart as anybody who could reasonably be expected to carry it. Fortunately, what smarts the weapon does exhibit are dedicated exclusively to the task of keeping the laser pinpointed on the same spot for a deep burn. The designers also made sure that the weapon's annie plant has enough power to fire for hours on end. Occasionally, it needs a quick reboot for the onboard SI, but overall it is one of the most reliable beam carbines available.

Phubahr PG-55 Cancerstick

Reload: 1-2 **Grips:** 2 **Cost:** S5 **Illegal**

Ammo & Damage: Particle 3d6

Qualities & Notes: Annie Plant Power Supply; Breacher; Failure Prone

Phubahr outdid themselves when they reverse-engineered the Strohl AP-1100. The PG-55 looks almost exactly like the AP-1100, only with much more attractive styling on the stock; however, that beautiful stock should be kept as far away from your body as possible.

When warming up, the PG-55 leaks high-velocity atomic nuclei, and due to the proximity of the acceleration chamber to the shooter, 50% of those nuclei strike the shooter. It's not noticeable. It's just kind of warm. But over time, numerous cells in the shooter's body are damaged by hard radiation. Most soldiers have blood-nannies that can sniff out any cancerous cells before they become a problem, which is why the Phubahr PG-55 remains popular with people who need a particle gun on the cheap, and who think their shots are up to date.

The PG-55's second most common failure mode is the electron recapture coil at the end of the barrel. On a properly tuned, non-ionizing particle gun, the nuclei grab electrons on their way out, making them electrically neutral. This prevents beam deformation in the presence of environmental magnetism, but more impor-

tantly it prevents the weapon from becoming a non-grounded ion gun — which, as you'll learn once you've read the section on ion guns, is spectacularly bad (*see page 181*).

Phubahr Zeussomator

Reload: 1-3 **Grips:** 2 **Cost:** S3 **Illegal**

Ammo & Damage: Ion 5d6

Qualities & Notes: Armor-piercing; Failure Prone; Unlucky

Gods, no. And when we say "gods," we're invoking any culture's gods but most especially those governing the domains of lightning and death.

The Zeussomator does not come with a full ion suit but it does come with something that looks a lot like a copper string bag — which is going to do just about as much good as an actual string bag once you pull the trigger. We think it's supposed to be a portable faraday cage, but ultimately it's just a convenient way to keep all your pieces in one place while your comrades-in-arms haul your electrocuted corpse to the dump. Of course, this assumes that the electrical discharge left enough of your body to dump at all, which is by no means a sure thing.

If we dare to make assumptions, and if we further dare to stretch our hands heavenward and implore favor from previously invoked deities *and* assume you put on a proper ion suit before discharging this weapon, then it's not beyond the arc-lit pale to imagine a bolt of lightning connecting the tip of the weapon to the center mass of your target, smiting the wicked with jolly joules numbering in the billions. For one sharply-illuminated moment, you will be wielding the very Finger of God, and those you touch will feel power a million times greater than that imparted by the now mundane 15 mm Blattco Breaker Bar.

Shockstar LG-2000 Lightning Gun

Reload: 1-2 **Grips:** 2 **Cost:** S8 **Military**

Ammo & Damage: Ion 2d6

Qualities & Notes: Armor-piercing; Failure Prone

One of the industry's worst-kept secrets is the fact that Shockstar is an alias corporation through which Strohl Munitions can sell weapons on which they feel ashamed to put their name. They're high-quality tools, but because ion guns are inherently electromagnecatastrophic[1], Strohl decided to protect their brand.

The LG-2000 is long and bulbous, a break from the cleaner lines of Strohl's name-branded products. It comes with a suit that's custom-fitted for the shooter, and a properly-suited soldier who wields an LG-2000 enjoys the rare pleasure of throwing lightning at others with nigh-impunity.

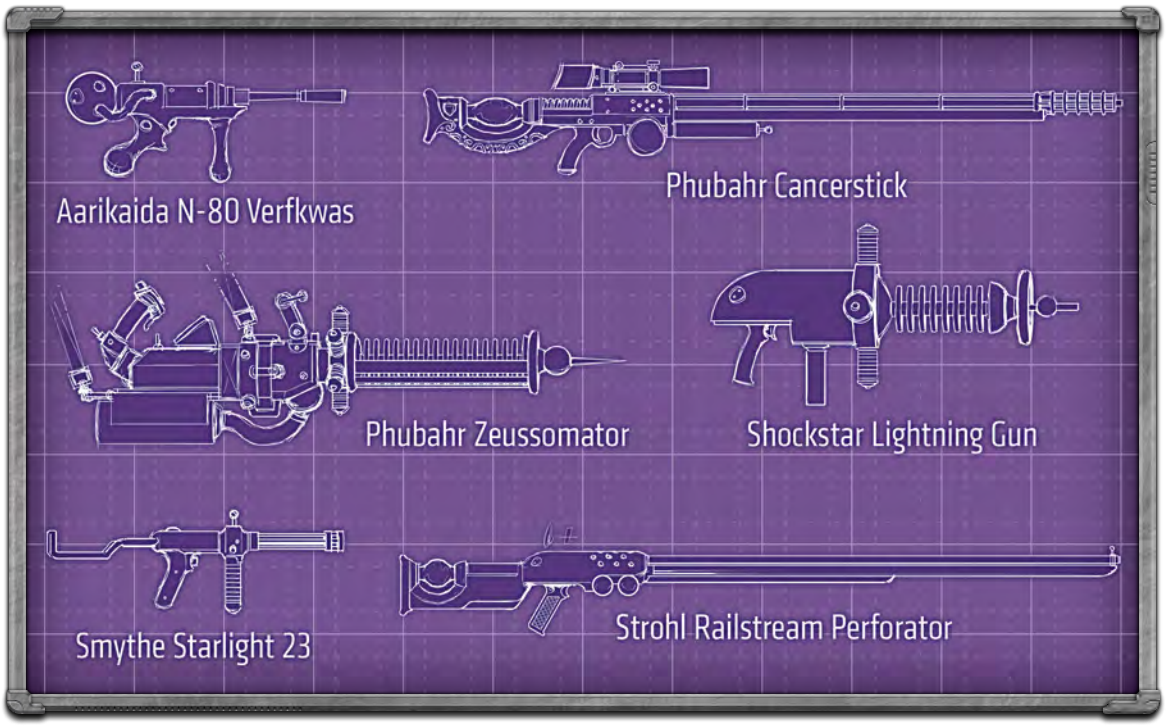
1

TERL'KRIS: Please tell me this is a real word.

WRITER: Language is mutable. "Electromag-necatastrophic" becomes more real the more people use it.

TERL'KRIS: It's a pity, then, that its use suggests such unpleasantness.

WRITER: I wonder how many ion guns we need to sell in order for this word to successfully infiltrate the nice dictionaries.



This doesn't do his squad-mates a lick of good, of course. The gun only comes with one suit, and they probably wouldn't fit in it even if they stole it out of the shooter's locker.

Smythe Starlight 23

Reload: 1-2 **Grips:** 2 **Cost:** S3 **Military**

Ammo & Damage: Laser 2d6

Qualities & Notes: Failure Prone

Phubahr hasn't entered the laser weapon arena, which is nice, as it made room at the low end for Smythe to deliver the Starlight 23, a laser carbine worthy of an honorary Phubahr designation.

Most of this weapon's misfires are simple failures to emit a beam. Unfortunately, there's almost never an opportune time for your laser weapon to fail to emit a beam.

The Starlight 23 also manages a feat long thought impossible for a laser weapon: it's possible for the beam to hit something *other* than what's directly in front of the weapon. This is a function of the substandard array used at the aperture. If it's any consolation, the array isn't quite so bad as to allow you to shoot *yourself* while holding the weapon properly. We think.

Strohl AP-1100 Railstream Perforator

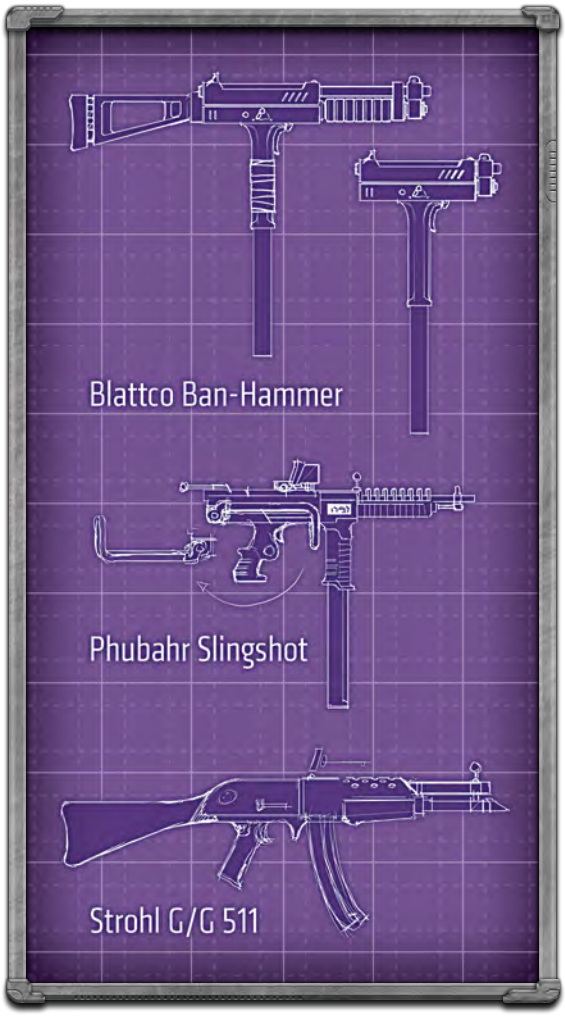
Reload: 1-3 **Grips:** 2 **Cost:** S17 **Illegal**

Ammo & Damage: Particle 3d6

Qualities & Notes: Annie Plant Power Supply; AVPL; Breacher; Self-supplying Ammunition

The AP-1100 is one of the most sophisticated weapons offered by Strohl. Designed for anti-armor use, it is extremely effective against hard targets. A pair of 5 cm annies slung just forward of the trigger power a magbottle and an acceleration coil that sit nestled inside the relatively chubby stock. Forward of the trigger is a 140-centimeter barrel that's long and unwieldy but should never, under any circumstances, ever, ever be cut. 2

The AP-1100 fires microbursts of electroneutral carbon at over 200 million meters per second (.66c). These bursts are tiny compared to the bolts of conventional plasguns, but they're also extremely effective and can punch through any non-PTU body armor as if it wasn't there. The target might as well be hiding behind an endcap display of potato chips.



Projectile Carbines

Blattco 8 mm "Ban-Hammer"

Reload: 1-2 **Grips:** 2 **Cost:** S6 **Legal**

Ammo & Damage: Gunfoam 2d6+2

Qualities & Notes: Sturdy Construction

The Blattco Arms 8 mm "Ban-Hammer" carbine, commonly referred to as the BBH-8, is an extremely popular, supremely sturdy weapon. It fires 8 mm gunfoam rounds, and with some calipers and a bit of machining it can be every bit as accurate as a gauss carbine, at least in single-fire mode. Accuracy declines sharply as the weapon heats up. Fortunately, the barrel deformation is temporary, and after your "Ban-Hammer" has cooled down, you'll once again be putting single shots where you want them. You may need to adjust the weapon's sight again, however.

2

LEGAL: Then why are we bringing it up? We've just given them a terrible idea.

R&D: Our testing indicates that they'll give themselves that idea the moment they carry their Perforator into a workshop containing a hull-cutter.

Most troopers who carry a BBH-8 sing its praises for the ergonomics — though they (usually) aren't actually singing and they probably wouldn't use the word "ergonomics." Blattco took great pains with the weapon's form factor, and regardless of your race or hand structure the BBH-8 can be fitted very comfortably. The recoil is well distributed and many owners say that the weapon feels light for its profile.

Phubahr 7 mm "Slingshot"

Reload: 1-2 **Grips:** 2 **Cost:** S2 **Legal**

Ammo & Damage: PEA 2d6

Qualities & Notes: Failure Prone

Let's be completely honest: a gauss carbine is a fantastically complex piece of machinery, and Phubahr is best known for building things that fail. You'd think that even when Phubahr R&D feels optimistic enough to design its own gauss carbine, the market would reject it.

And yet, if Planet Mercenary's sales figures are any indication, then the Phubahr 7 mm "Slingshot" sells better than any other carbine we carry. It's as if there's a perfect storm of stupidity all the way up the supply chain, starting with you, the discerning consumer, and running all the waaaaaa— (1)

The "Slingshot" is not a hybrid weapon and it makes less efficient use of capstacks than the Strohl G/G 511, but it can be outfitted with any of the after-market "smart pea" packages, including those designed for use with the G/G 511. The "Slingshot" is just as stealthy as other gauss carbines when set to subsonic fire. Until it misfires, of course. Then it's quite loud.

Strohl G/G 511

Reload: 1-2 **Grips:** 2 **Cost:** S4 **Legal**

Ammo & Damage: Goober Athletics check TN 20 to escape; Gunfoam 2d6+1; PEA 2d6+1

Qualities & Notes: Variable Ammunition

The Strohl Munitions G/G 511 isn't only the finest hybrid carbine on the market, it's arguably the best carbine in any class. (2)

The G/G 511 is a highly dependable weapon that can be loaded with any type of PEA or goober loads as well as any standard 7 mm gunfoam ammunition. In the mud and the blood of the battlefield, that feature alone makes this weapon worth its price.

With gauss mode (shooting PEA), the G/G 511 shines. There's no report or muzzle flash, and with the velocity dialed down to 325 m/s, there's no supersonic crack to alert the enemy of your presence. The 7 mm slivers also pack more punch than the G/G 29's 2 mm slivers, so you're more likely to score that one-shot kill in the quiet dark — and if you don't, then there are plenty more shots where that came from.

Long Guns

Most carbines can be fine-tuned and accessorized for use as sniper rifles, but even so, they can't compare with a weapon that's designed on a molecular level to send a kinetic payload on a deadly-accurate journey across thousands of meters. When you take a shot over distance, you want a long gun.

A proper long gun is more than just a perfectly-aligned projectile-launching system. It's also a suite of sensors and a synthetic intelligence measuring and compensating for a fleet of environmental factors along the proposed trajectory. A "scoped synthetic intelligence," or "SSI package," varies from weapon to weapon, and is often designed not just for a particular model but for the individual weapon to which it's attached.

Beam Long Guns

Aarikaida Optics N-91 Skokgeweer

Reload: 1-2 **Grips:** 2 **Cost:** S10 **Military**

Ammo & Damage: Ion 2d6

Qualities & Notes: Accurate; Armor-piercing; Sniper

The N-91 Skokgeweer ion gun takes advantage of Aarikaida's expertise in the category. The manufacturer doesn't provide a suit for the weapon but it has tested the weapon exhaustively and identifies compatible suits from Voller & Scheck and Tacspec Titanicorps.

Built upon the core components of an Aarikaida N-80 "Verfkwaz" laser gun, the N-91 appears very similar if you look past the bulky over-under assembly that delivers the electron stream. The N-91 overcomes one of the principal shortcomings of any laser weapon by delivering much more heat to the point of focus, and then scattering the burning charge across the

1

TERL'KRIS: What happened here?

CEO: You should tell your writers not to frequent cafes. I found one, and stopped him before he could further malign a top-selling product.

LEGAL: Stop putting that in writing, and please tell us where to send the cleaning crew.

TERL'KRIS: I've taken the liberty of finishing the paragraph. Also, I'm issuing body armor to my remaining writers.

2

CEO: Now you're selling Strohl the way you should be. Thank you for listening.

target. In the right circumstances, the weapon's electric discharge has even been known to arc high in the air with a crack that is almost musical. This doesn't happen often, but when it does it's amazing, and talking about it will earn you free drinks for years to come.

Projectile Long Guns

Blattco 12 mm Breaker Bar

Reload: 1-2 **Grips:** 2 **Cost:** S8 **Legal**

Ammo & Damage: Gunfoam 3d6

Qualities & Notes: Accurate; Sniper

Blattco Arms' 12 mm Breaker Bar, or BB-12, is popular with snipers and sportsmen alike, though it's hardly sporting to put a hole in a dumb animal from a kilometer away. The BB-12's SSI makes the weapon "10-ring accurate" at distances up to 3,000 meters. In calm weather when it's coupled with a high-resolution, off-axis overwatch, it can lob bullets at targets up to several kilometers from you. These targets can even be positioned below your line of sight — if you've got the chops to make proper use of the SI's advice, that is.

Phubahr 15 mm Osok

Reload: – **Grips:** 2 **Cost:** S2 **Legal**

Ammo & Damage: Gunfoam 3d6

Qualities & Notes: Accurate; Single-use; Sniper

Phubahr's 15 mm long gun is called the Osok, an acronym for "one shot, one kill." The name is unfortunately apt. This rifle is astoundingly accurate but its reliability drops off so sharply after the first shot that it's not unheard of for a soldier to get *exactly* one shot, and perhaps one kill, before the weapon must be discarded.

The Osok is quite popular with certain criminal elements, because it can be fired at one crime scene and never used again. Law enforcement tends to have trouble tracking weapons that don't see any repeat use. Some black-market treatment packages make the Osok extremely resistant to picking up trace elements, including the shooter's biologicals. Of course, only an idiot implicitly trusts these packages to keep their weapon entirely evidence-free. For extra-legal, single-use operations, a boundary layer should be applied between the shooter and the weapon, and that boundary layer should then accompany the shooter to an undisclosed location where it can be destroyed. 3

Strohl G/G 1000

Reload: 1-2 **Grips:** 2 **Cost:** S6 **Legal**

Ammo & Damage: Gunfoam 3d6; PEA 3d6+2

Qualities & Notes: Sniper; Variable Ammunition

This hybrid weapon fires 12 mm rounds accurately, up to a distance of 2,200 meters. It's the perfect tool for the discerning sniper. It can be loaded with armor crackers that take advantage of the projectile diameter to deliver an explosive payload. This ensures that both armored and unarmored targets receive the full transfer of kinetic energy required for the kill shot. In PEA mode, the G/G 1000 can deliver micro-grenades to sophonts who likely won't feel glad to be on the receiving end.

3

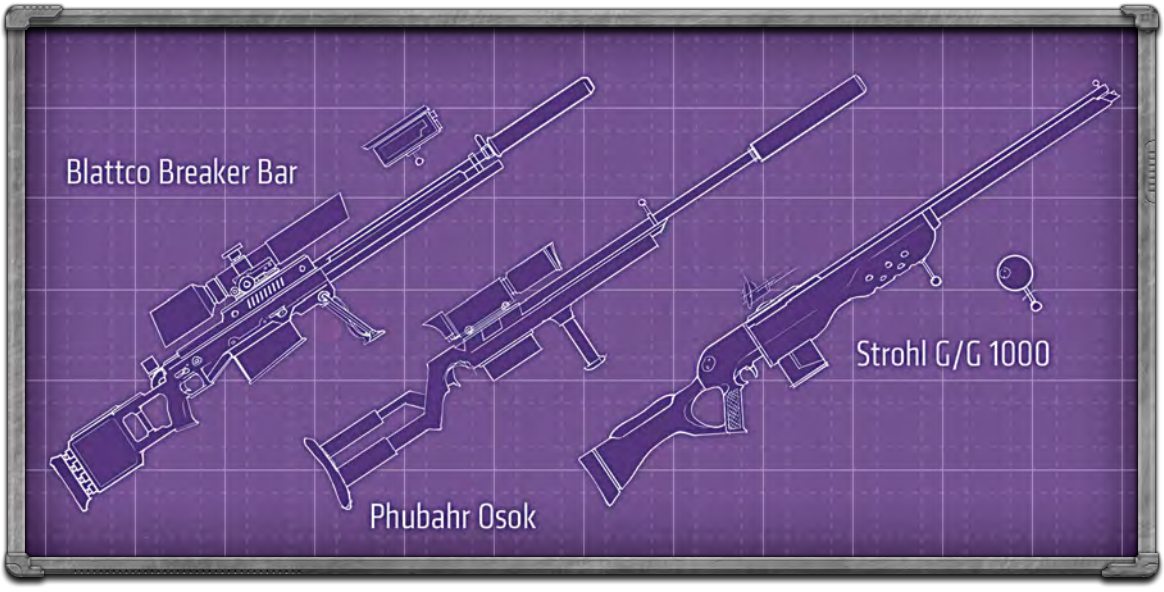
CEO: If we have to put up with their buzzkill, maybe Legal can do their job, and redact stuff like this paragraph, which gives very specific instructions for getting away with murder.

LEGAL: We're busy reviewing your recent comments in this document, which reveal a number of activities for which you may be held *personally* liable. In short, and with all due respect, shut up and let us work.

CEO: You didn't just say that.

LEGAL: A criminal suit against you should be far more concerning than a corporate liability suit we can shrug off like aaaa9ccccccg—

CEO: Shrug off like what? Like a bullet to the brainstem? Please, finish your thought. And take your time. I need to dispose of this barrier suit and wash my hands.



Heavy Weapons

When it's unwieldy but doesn't quite need to be mounted on a vehicle, when it can deliver massive amounts of damage, and when it is not allowed in most jurisdictions, then what you have is probably a heavy weapon. Your mercenary company is going to want some of these.

Beam Heavy Weapons

Phubahr P-51 Blaster

Reload: 1-2 **Grips:** 2 **Cost:** S3 **Illegal**

Ammo & Damage: Plasma 5d6

Qualities & Notes: Armor-piercing; AVPL; Failure Prone; Reload Intensive; Short-range

Phubahr's annie-powered plasgun is big, bulky, and it lacks variable intensity or choke. Bolts from the blaster are one of the best examples of a worst available feature for a plasgun: they're fast-moving clouds of dense, superhot gas, expanding as they travel. They travel relatively slowly, and decelerate noticeably at distances greater than 50 m. It's entirely possible for a target to dodge P-51 Blaster bolts fired from just forty meters away. Targets at a hundred meters or more can just *casually step out of the way*.

Speaking of 100 m, a P-51's bolt at that range is a half-meter in diameter, and it's moving at 18 m/s. The bolt's temperature at this range drops to less than 500°C. If the target's clothing is fireproof and they want to look awesome, then they can step right into the bolt's path and swat it away.

MAXIM 37

There is no "overkill," there is only "open fire" and "reload."

Up close, however, the P-51 is lethal. This makes the weapon popular with boarding parties and defenders-on-deck. The P-51 works fine at the proper engagement range and it won't blast holes through multiple walls or otherwise damage the ship.

Strohl BH-209 Plasgun

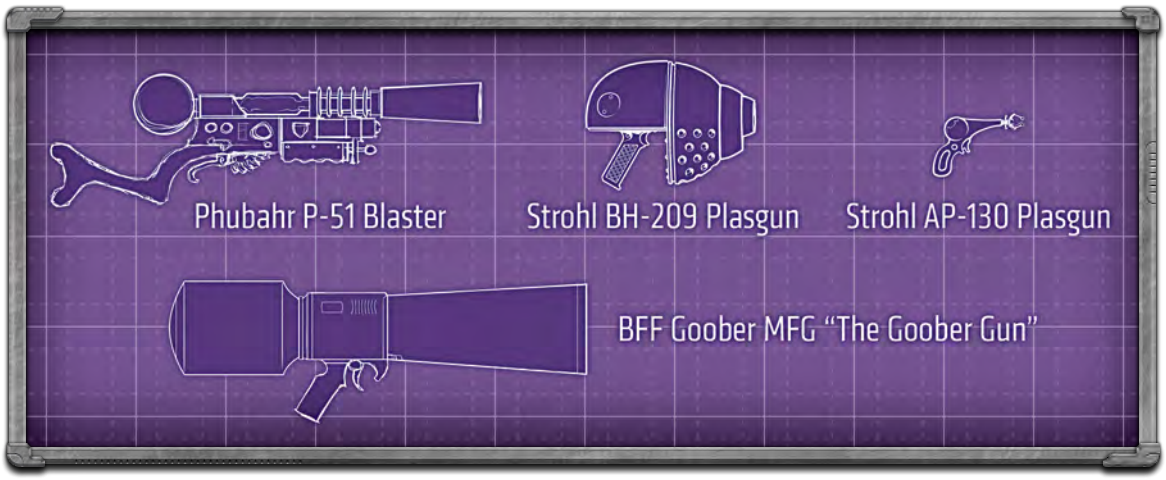
Reload: 1-2 **Grips:** 1 or 2 **Cost:** S5 **Restricted**

Ammo & Damage: Plasma 2d6+2

Qualities & Notes: Accurate; AVPL

Technology has advanced significantly since 2099, when Strohl Munitions first started doing business, but their old Model 209 has ignored every development and instead marched to the beat of refined engineering. Rather than leveraging annie-power, the BH-209 uses an extremely elegant, long-proven two-stroke fusion plant. It's much larger and heavier than most annie-powered beam weapons. The original "handles" on the first Model 209 were a system of clamps designed for affixing the weapon to a large, powered suit, or even a vehicle, but if you can hold 40 kg at full extension while the weapon spews forth white-hot death, then you're probably interested in a simple, stock gripping option. When Strohl introduced this option, it began calling the Model 209 the "BH" 209, where "BH" stood for "big handgun." Trope historians within the company clamored for a BFG designation instead but cooler, less profane heads prevailed. Modern customers can select one grip or two at the time they purchase.

The BH-209's output intensity can be varied and the aperture's magnetic profile can be altered, providing "choke." At the lowest intensity and with the choke set to scatter, the BH-209 can give everybody in the room a nice



sunburn. Dial it up a bit and the burns climb in degree, and if you choke the beam into something straight, then at full intensity the BH-209 can cut hullmetal.

Additionally, the BH-209's plasma stream can be magnetically coupled to the weapon's chassis, making the weapon itself a rocket. This setting is hidden by default because when engaged, the weapon literally drives the shooter back on a pillar of fire as if they're holding a rocket engine. Which they basically are. Successfully "piloting" a BH-209 in "rocket" mode requires incredible physical strength, blink-fast reflexes, and a death wish.

Strohl AP-130 Plasgun

Reload: 1-2 **Grips:** 1 **Cost:** S10 **Restricted**

Ammo & Damage: Plasma 2d6+1

Qualities & Notes: Accurate; AVPL; Annie Plant Power Supply

When you aren't strong enough to wield the BH-209 and your pockets are a little deeper, the AP-130 is a good alternative. This weapon is quite small and powered by a cue-ball-sized annie plant that weighs around 2 kg. The entire weapon weighs just under three kilos.

When drawn and flipped from "safe" to "fire" mode, the AP-130 deploys a three-pronged array of field-modulating antennae. Pull the trigger and the area enclosed by these antennae becomes a magnetic bottle, a 30-centimeter sphere of bright fury, and a beam erupts forth from that bottle striking whatever is in the weapon's path of fire.

Like the BH-209, the AP-130 offers variable intensity and choke. It also draws atmospheric gas into the back of the magnetic bottle and consumes that gas as ammunition for each shot. This means that the weapon isn't particularly useful in a vacuum. It can, however, be fired underwater — once per shooter, usually.

Non-Lethal Heavy Weapons

BFF Goober MFG, The Goober Gun

Reload: 1-3 **Grips:** 2 **Cost:** S8 **Legal**

Ammo & Damage: Goober Athletics check TN 20 to escape.

Qualities & Notes: Scattergun

Bryanton Faire Fabricators' Goober Gun is designed for more than just crowd control. It's built to for crowd *immobilization*. Each burst from the weapon expands into a cubic meter of sticky, elastic foam. The stuff doesn't exit the weapon in one-meter cubes, of course, but it arrives as a lumpy web that pins targets for two or three meters in any direction from the point of impact.

Fun fact: Riot control teams don't settle for single bursts — they empty their tanks of goober green-mod at an angry mob, and within 30 seconds, an area the size of an Armorball end zone is plastered in place.

Goober green mod stops humans, neophants, and some vehicles. Take care, however! While technically non-lethal, green-mod isn't great about avoiding noses and other breathing passages, and wanton discharge of a Goober Gun can smother angry-but-otherwise-mostly-innocent civilians by the dozens.

Urtheep Industries Massively Multi-Morphological Incapacitator (M3 "Tater")

Reload: 1-3 **Grips:** 2 **Cost:** S5 **Illegal**

Ammo & Damage: De-motivator Endurance check TN 21 or become incapacitated; Goober Athletics check TN 20 to escape; Stun Endurance check TN 20 or fall unconscious; if hacked Gunfoam 3d6

Qualities & Notes: Hack with Computers check TN 25; Hi-res Targeting System; Variable Ammunition; Upon firing the SI picks ammo suited to the target. The GC choosed which ammunition is used, this includes holding fire.

The M3 Incapacitator, or "Tater," looks very much like a fifty-kilo potato and it costs about what you'd expect for fifty kilos of something that's highly illegal. The weapon solves the problem of firing into a mixed-race crowd of targets by "intelligently" selecting to stun, immobilize, or de-motivate based on the logic programming of the onboard synthetic intelligence (SI). Be warned, however! Another option is "hold fire." This can prove inconvenient.

Urtheep Industries guarantees the non-lethality of every shot from the M3 Incapacitator, and the weapon's high price is due in part to the underwriting of this guarantee. The rest of the expense is the annie-powered block of motile nanotech. The onboard SI isn't actually that expensive, but it feels like it is, because in spite of not being truly sapient, the SI is almost always smarter than the person carrying the weapon. 1

1

WRITER: Now's probably not a good time to say "BOOM! Smart weapons!" but I'm saying it. For Do'asha, may his metaphorical foreshadowings outlive his killer.

TERL'KRIS: For the love of life and money stay out of the comments until I can secure you people.

CEO: "Boom." I'll remember "boom."

M3 Tater in Current Events 1

No discussion of the M3 Tater is complete without mentioning the recent events in Sol System, where hacked M3s made their debut. As of this writing, "Tater Hacks" remain expensive and rare, but they're still common enough that Urtheep is desperately scrambling to re-secure their weapons and put the shine back on their public image.

Of particular note is Tater Ten-Sixty-Six, which was allegedly hacked by a U.N.S. intelligence agency, and which subsequently bonded to an ursumari law-enforcement officer, Captain Landon of the Jurisindependent Security Covenant. Landon and "Tenzy" subdued or neutralized roughly two thousand hostile soldiers in the heart of Earth's capitol in an engagement that is the stuff of legend.

Over twenty thousand hacked M3 Incapacitators were recovered and destroyed in Dom Atlantis. Tenzy, however, crossed the H/V sapience threshold at some point during the battle, and exercised her right to demand official license as a robotic citizen. Landon and Tenzy relocated within days of the conflict and their current whereabouts are the subject of speculation, as well as the subject of an unofficial biography and an unauthorized fan-produced, serial holodrama.

1

MKTG: Are we still selling these? I think we need Legal to weigh in on this.

TERL'KRIS: Legal will be back in a few pages. They're upgrading their department's security.

WRITER: Speaking of which, this body armor is kind of pinchy.

TERL'KRIS: And now an astute reader with access to my org chart and our catalog can figure out who you are and what you're wearing.

WRITER: Unless I'm making up the bit about it being pinchy.

Those fortunate enough to get their hands on a "Tater Hack," or to convert a genuine prepatch Tater, enjoy a truly smart gun with a voracious appetite for violence, plus a constitutional inability to bite off more than it can chew. For some reason Urtheep Industries hasn't catered to the demand for this enhanced product, or if they have they're doing so through a very effective group of cut-outs.

Projectile Heavy Weapons

Blattco 15 mm Minigun

Reload: 1-3 **Grips:** 2 **Cost:** S25 **Illegal**

Ammo & Damage: Goober, Athletics check TN 20 to escape; Gunfoam 3d6

Qualities & Notes: Armor-piercing; Double Tap; Hyper-accurate; Remote Targeting Uplink; Self-supplying Ammunition; Sturdy Construction; Variable Ammunition

The rotating barrel assembly has been a staple of heavy automatic weapons for centuries despite the fact that the additional moving parts create additional points of failure, and with good reason. No matter how quickly a single barrel can be configured to fire, multiple barrels with the same configuration put more rounds downrange in the same amount of time. It's simple math.

This weapon is extremely reliable, and not just as a minigun. Barrel vents and counter-rotating gyros provide the stability desired by heavy weapon connoisseurs all over the galaxy. This weapon almost never recoils off-target. It does, however, push straight back with incredible force. Held by a sophont who isn't prepared for the recoil, it functions equally well as a backward propulsion system with prohibitively lethal exhaust.

Blattco 45 mm Rotary Launcher "Can-o-Hammers"

Reload: 1-3 **Grips:** 2 **Cost:** S20 **Illegal**

Ammo & Damage: Gunfoam 4d6

Qualities & Notes: Annie Plant Power Supply; Armor-piercing; Sturdy Construction

Another rotating barrel model from Blattco Arms, the so-called "Can-o-Hammers" launches 45 mm gunfoam rounds. It's subsonic, durable, and it has plenty of kick. You can even belt-feed this weapon. The service department at your local Planet Mercenary store (or other places that service Blattco weapons) can adapt your weapon by adding the Underslung Launcher quality for when you want to make it literally rain grenades. If you do, then you're an idiot, but Blattco's still got you covered.

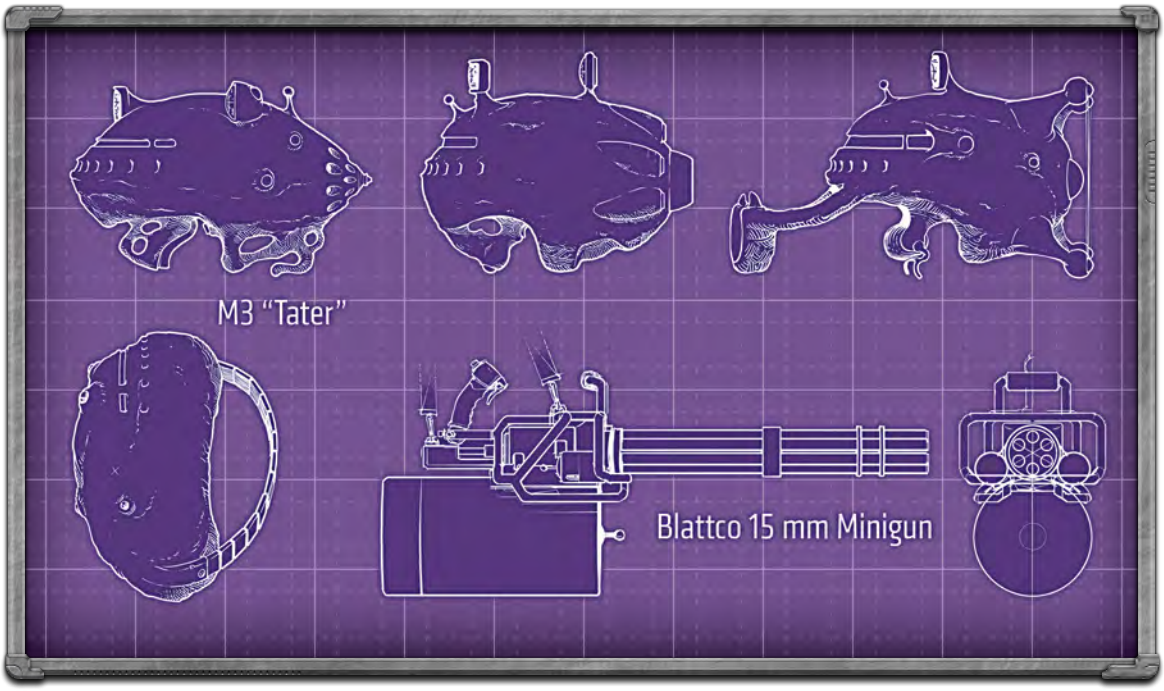
Phubahr 75 mm Shurikannon

Reload: 1-3 **Grips:** 2 **Cost:** S2 **Legal**

Ammo & Damage: PEA 5d6

Qualities & Notes: Failure Prone; Reload-intensive

When you want to hit your target like a metric truckload of drunken ninjas, hold tight and let loose with Phubahr's 75 mm Shurikannon. This pea-shooter launches five-packs of 7.5 cm "throwing stars" at roughly 200 meters per second, and can empty a 20-round magazine (that's 100 shuriken) in two seconds.



But when we say "hold tight," we mean it. The Shurikannon kicks with 8,500 newtons of force for each sharp, starry cluster of joy sent downrange. That's almost exactly the force you experienced that one time during sparring practice when you told your sensei not to hold anything back.

There have been worse ideas in the long history of bad ideas, but most of those ideas envy the Shurikannon for how cool it looks in the moments before things become pointedly un-cool. Given the recoil on this weapon, the stresses on its barrel, and the irregularities inherent in its projectiles, not to mention the failure prone workmanship characteristic of all Phubahr weapons, "pointedly un-cool" is of course a cute understatement. If your imagination has painted an unpleasant picture here, perhaps a bit of good judgment will prevent a 75 mm Shurikannon from doing the painting for you. Or, frankly, *with* you. (2)

Strohl 7 mm Rotary Mag-Rail Deluxe

Reload: 1-3 **Grips:** 2 **Cost:** S11 **Restricted**

Ammo & Damage: Gunfoam 3d6+2

Qualities & Notes: Delivery; Hyper-accurate

One of the biggest complaints levied against rotating barrel assemblies is that most of the projectiles fired don't hit the target. Enter the Rotary Mag-Rail Deluxe. Each of this weapon's five barrels is a magnetic accelerator, and the weapon is configured to take proprietary Strohl Munitions 7 mm smart flechettes. The targeting system links with each smart flechette, assigning it a target and an appropriate muzzle velocity. When you start hosing down the battlefield, these tiny slivers of death actually steer *themselves* toward their targets, and as long as you're pointing the weapon in the right direction, the flechettes consistently strike center-of-mass, give or take 10 cm.

This is how the rich people do it. You can fire this weapon for two minutes or you can make a down payment on a gunboat.

Strohl HW-105 Multicannon 105 mm

Reload: 1-3 **Grips:** 2 **Cost:** S15 **Restricted**

Ammo & Damage: Gunfoam 3d6; Particle 3d6; Plasma 3d6

Qualities & Notes: AVPL; Breacher; Variable Ammunition

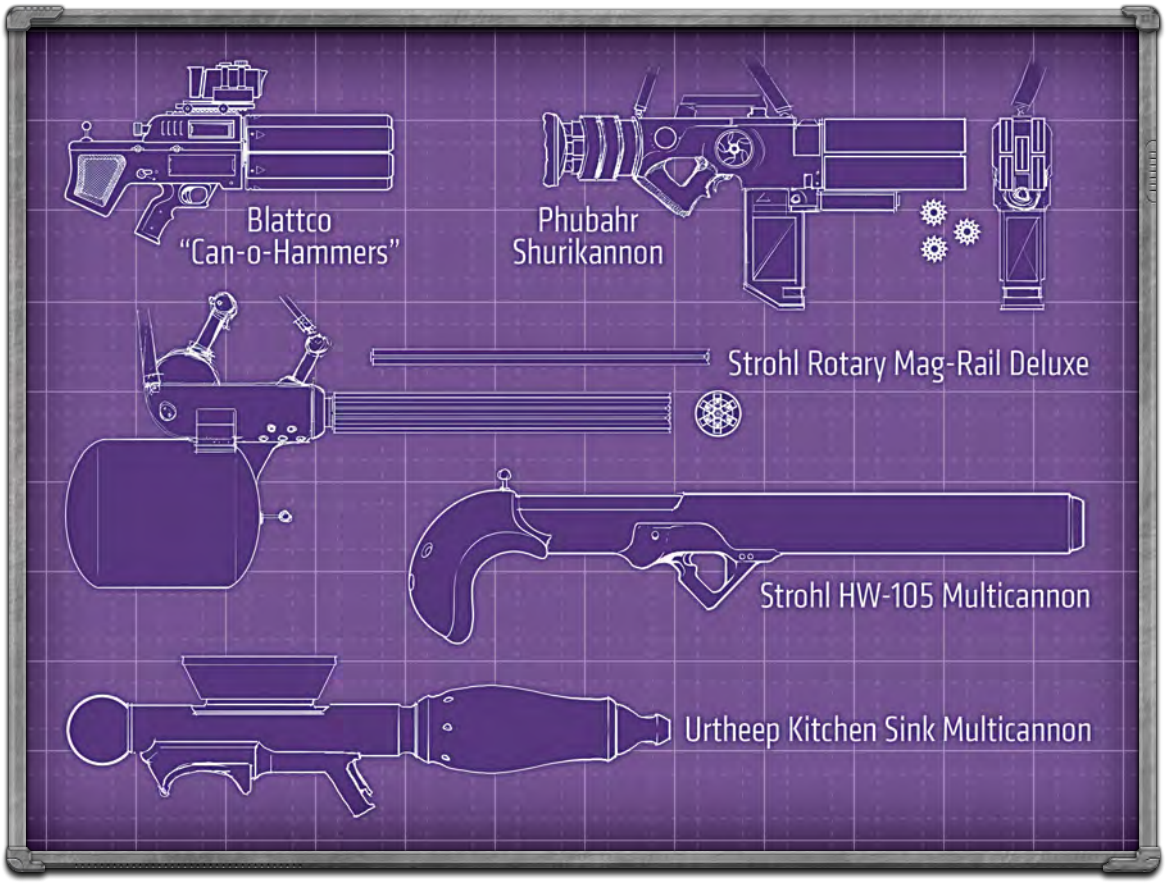
For those who just can't make up their minds, Strohl Munitions offers a multi-function weapon that fires breacher missiles, plasma streams, *and* high-energy particle beams. This feature set isn't for the faint of heart, or for the slight of frame, or for the tight of budget. The ability to drop shields, punch through hullmetal, and set fire to the landscape all with one weapon is probably worth the price tag.

(2)

MKTG: Are we blocking a sale here? This does not read like effective copy.

R&D: If Legal were here they'd probably say something about liability blah blah disclaimer whatever.

TERL'KRIS: Nice eulogy. And sales are fine. We cut the prices a bit, and bundled some high-margin medkits with them. Profits are way up, in fact. I bought seven new interns.



Strohl L-105 Breacher Cannon 105 mm

Reload: 1-3 **Grips:** 2 **Cost:** S15 **Restricted**

Ammo & Damage: Gunfoam 5d6

Qualities & Notes: This weapon comes with one proprietary Strohl Smart Breacher Missile (*see page 180*); AVPL; Breacher; Costly Ammo

The L-105 looks like a bazooka and fires expensive breacher missiles. For an additional cost, you can purchase proprietary Strohl Munitions Smart Breacher missiles that are each individually powered by an onboard annie plant. For the astronomical cost of operation on a Smart Breacher, you get guided missiles that are actually smart. They can breach a unifield shield by throwing up their own shield when they strike. Good point defenses can kill them before they land, of course, because they don't have the juice to keep up their own shield for more than a split-second.

The cannon itself is cheap. It's just a tube with some targeting tech. It can be emplaced and vehicle-mounted, if you like, and it can also be adapted to be auto-fed. That's for rich, lazy people, though.

Urtheep Industries Kitchen Sink Multicannon

Reload: 1-3 **Grips:** 2 **Cost:** S15 **Restricted**

Ammo & Damage: De-motivators, Endurance check TN 21 or become incapacitated; Goober, Athletics check TN 20 to escape; Gunfoam 3d6; PEA 3d6

Qualities & Notes: High-res Targeting System; Underslung Launcher; Variable Ammunition

This thing is ridiculous, but it works. The hopper on top takes any type of ammo — gunfoam, goober, peas, even grenades. The variable-aperture barrel adjusts as necessary and the onboard synthetic intelligence guides the onboard nanny-tech in adjusting whatever needs to be adjusted to fire whatever you threw in the hopper.

You *can* throw non-ammo things into it, but the results get a little weird. Toss a pistol into it and you may wind up with a ballistic projectile that fires other, smaller projectiles as it sails through the air. Toss body parts into it and you may get gouts of smoke-screen. Or toxic gas. Or a biblically disturbing rain of blood. All three have been recorded in safety tests, and we're not sure yet how the weapon decided on the first two.

Melee Weapons

There are countless situations in which you may not benefit from the ability to kill at a distance. In these situations, your best friend is some form of melee force-multiplier. This apparatus can be as straightforward as a knife or as complex and prone to self-immolating failure as a plasma baton.

If you decide on something complex and expensive, then you probably aren't saying, "If melee happens, I plan to survive." No, you're saying, "Get me closer. I want to try something." That's fine. Just make sure you're honest with yourself and your fireteam when you sign away your next several paychecks to score that Chainsaber.

Common Melee Weapons

BFF Molly-Polly "Knife"

Grips: 1 **Cost:** S0 **Legal**

Damage: 1d6

Qualities & Notes: N/A

The Molly-Polly looks like any old knife at first glance. At second glance, it may look like a longer knife, or an awl. Suddenly it's a letter-opener. Whatever it is, it's ridiculously sharp. The name "Molly-Polly" is derived from "molecule-edge, polymorphic blade" and we can only assume that Bryanton Faire Fabricators picked the name because it sounds silly and friendly.

The Molly-Polly is neither silly nor friendly.

In its neutral shape — the one suitable for dropping in your pocket, or on your foot — the Molly-Polly is an ergonomic grip with a thumb and finger guard, and a 25-centimeter rod sticking straight out of it. In this form, the mollywire blade is coiled up inside the rod. Shift your grip and the rod's polymorphic material reshapes itself into a knife blade, drawing the molywire taut and bonding it to the cutting edge. The resulting blade can effortlessly slice flesh and even carve stone (if you lean into it a bit).

Monowire

Grips: 2 **Cost:** S1 **Illegal**

Damage: 1d6

Qualities & Notes: N/A

A spy weapon if ever there was one. Cold monowire cuts through flesh like butter, but it typically snaps against carbonan armor. Hot monowire might snap halfway through heavy armor, but the guy wearing it will *know* you were there. He may also kill you for spilling his blood inside that fancy suit.

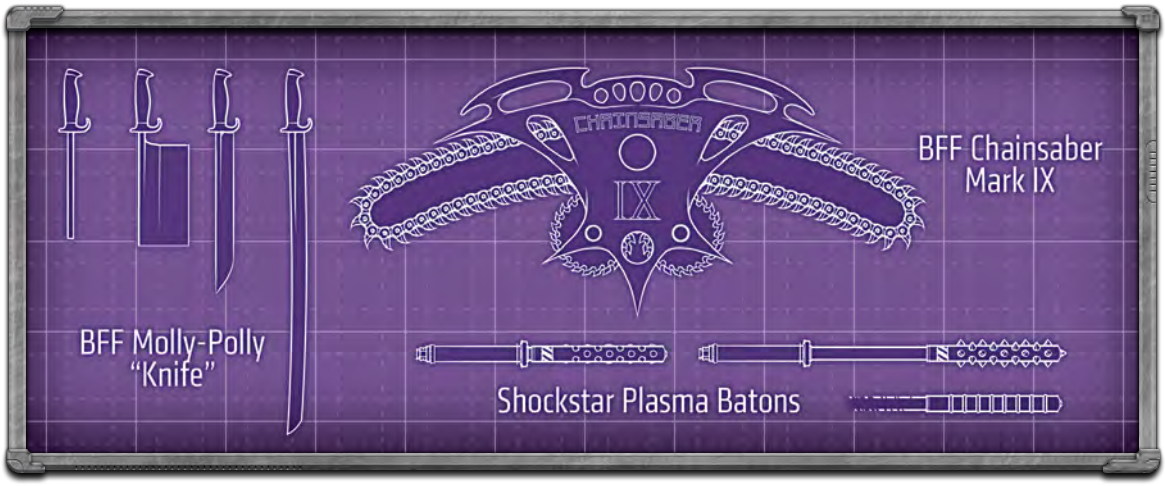
Spear

Grips: 2 **Cost:** S0 **Legal**

Damage: Melee + 1d6

Qualities & Notes: N/A

A spear is a pointy stick. Sometimes people try to make spears look exciting by attaching pointy metal to the end of the stick so that the stick itself doesn't have to be pointy. Planet Mercenary does not spend retail or catalog space selling pointy sticks. If you want one, go find an outdoors that has sticks available and use your Molly Polly knife to make one yourself. However, in a galaxy where your enemy is coming at you with an M3 Tater, a Chainsaber, or a plasgun, doing battle using a pointy stick sounds like a supremely bad idea.



ZWillmi Blade or Axe

Grips: 1 **Cost:** S1 **Legal**

Damage: Melee + 1d6

Qualities & Notes: N/A

ZWillmi Steelworks makes simple, metal blades in every shape, grip, and length that you can imagine, and for a low price to boot. The metallurgical techniques of the pre-Contact masters have been reproduced, improved upon, and automated, and now you can get a neo-Damascus steel saber for about as much as you'd pay for a box of nice cutlery. And yes, Zwillmi sells nice cutlery, too. They are your best source for swords, axes, throwing stars, and any other sharp implement you can think of.

For twice the price, Zwillmi will etch whatever you want into the blade, turning your plain old differentially-tempered katana into an heirloom.

Exotic Melee Weapons

BFF Autocutlery Chainsaber Mark IX

Grips: 2 **Cost:** S4 **Illegal**

Damage: Melee + 1d6

Qualities & Notes: Failure Prone

Most civilizations invented power cutting tools long after they dispensed with swords in favor of firearms, and most civilizations became briefly fascinated with those cutting tools as a way to bring the sword back. And for most civilizations it ended there.

Along came Bryanton Faire Fabricators Autocutlery with a bad idea to make good money: they would, with actionable deliberation and insufficient testing, weaponize the chainsaw. The result was the Chainsaber line of heavy melee weapons, none of which is as effective, gram for gram, as a firearm. But grunts want to swing chainsaws at things, and the Chainsaber Mark I took off plenty of enemy limbs and friendly fingers, so eventually we got the Chainsaber Mark IX.

The Mark IX has numerous available handles, each designed to maximize the gripping limb's leverage while putting the weapon's center of mass in just the right place for deft swinging. The weapon is surprisingly light, and when fitted correctly it's surprisingly difficult to kill oneself with it. Maiming oneself, though? Still easy.

But let's be honest with ourselves here. The only companies that deploy the Chainsaber Mark IX are those looking for a *lot* of noise and a *lot* of gore. When the deployment works, bully! When it doesn't? You get the opposite of "bully," and while there are many ways to say that you should pick one that also means "We got cut to pieces with our own toys."

Shockstar PB Series Plasma Batons

Grips: 1 **Cost:** S11 **Illegal**

Damage: Melee + 2d6

Qualities & Notes: Failure Prone

Each PB baton from Shockstar — a plausibly deniable division of Strohl Munitions — is essentially a magnetic bottle on a stick. The bottle is filled with electropositive plasma, which it discharges into the target on contact. At this point the magnetic field instantly re-shapes into a massive guard, preventing the positively charged gas from blowing back into the wielder's face. The target is usually incinerated — unless it's armored, in which case a lot of heat is typically blown right back at the attacker.

Unlike the Abra-Cadaver, the PB series has no failsafe. If you stick your own hand into the magnetic bottle, you'll pull out a cauterized stump. You may also incinerate much of the rest of your body, as orienting a Shockstar plasma baton such that you can stick your hand into the burny part prevents the magnetic guard from protecting your face, your torso, and the people standing behind you.

Urtheep Industries Thirdacle Cable-Arms

Grips: 0 **Cost:** S10 **Legal**

Damage: Engineering +3

Qualities & Notes: N/A

Urtheep Industries got its start as an engineering supply firm. In the early days, their best-selling products were their Thirdacle brand cable-arms. These were popular with machinists, engineers, technicians, and most other tool-users because they at once offered a third hand, longer reach, and the ability to snake a limb into a tight space without getting bitten by whatever made the space its home.

The inciting incident for this item being promoted as a melee weapon is lost to myth and legend, but as the story goes some tool-user's

ship was boarded and she found herself in a fight for her life. Her expertise with the Thirdacle gave her the upper hand, and the market for weaponized cable-arms was born. Urtheep Industries pounced and the "Thirdacle" became synonymous with "stay away from that guy with the tentacle strapped to his chest; he can tear you in half with his mind."

The Thirdacle has two available control systems. For beginners, there's the "finger puppet" waldo control, and for those who are truly serious about having a third arm, there's a deceptively simple-looking headband that translates thought as movement. For those who don't favor the fashion statement of a headband, the control system can alternately be surgically implanted. It's also possible to graft a synthetic intelligence into the Thirdacle control system. This gives the cable-arm a mind of its own, which is awesome, and amazing. It's also very ill-advised.

Thirdacle brand cable-arms are available in several sizes, and the model number tells you exactly what you're getting. The first number is the cable's base diameter at the harness and the second number is the device's length at full extension, both in centimeters. Thus, the CA-6-200 measures 6 cm in diameter at the harness, and 2 m long. The most popular model — at least among engineers itching for a fight — is the CA-9-1200. It weighs 80 kg including the harness, and if you're properly braced, then it can throw a human soldier across the room in two pieces. Of course, if you're not properly braced, then it'll also throw *you* in the other direction.

Urtheep Industries offers many hot-swappable tools for the business end of the CA-9-1200, including simple blades, powered blades, drug injectors, cameras, and even finger-clusters capable of wielding whatever one-handed tool you care to use. If you happen to be an engineer still interested in using the Thirdacle for actual engineering tasks, the business end can be fitted with pretty much any tool you've ever seen.

Urtheep Industries Abra-Cadaver Shock Wands

Grips: 1 **Cost:** S8 **Legal**

Damage: Endurance TN 20 or fall unconscious

Qualities & Notes: N/A

Urtheep's Abra-Cadaver tactical batons deliver electric shocks ranging from debilitating to disintegrating, depending on the setting. They come in three standard sizes — 30 cm, 45 cm, and 60 cm — and they have a capstack in the grip that's good for dozens of stunning blows, or just one electrocute-and-incinerate delivery.

Every Abra-Cadaver has a failsafe cutoff in the grip that's tripped if current from the device passes into the hand holding the grip. Should you brush the Abra-Cadaver against your leg, you'll get a brief shock — not serious, but enough to get your attention — and then the device will go inert until the reset code is tapped into the base of the wand. Those deploying Abra-Cadavers should take care to lead with the weapon, striking at the foremost portion of their opponent. Those facing Abra-Cadavers would do well to make physical contact with the person holding the baton as quickly as possible, thus neutralizing the item.

Like any failsafe, this system isn't perfect. After all, it's got "fail" right there in the name.

Explosives and Specialized Ammo

There are times when regular ammunition can't quite get the job done. Sometimes you need explosive force that can be felt from across the street. Other times you need a way to drop a foe unconscious without making anyone aware it was you who did the deed. We have specialized ammunition and explosives to cover a range of things you may need to accomplish.

Armor Crackers

Cost: S12 **Uses:** 1 Gunfoam

Effects & Notes: Grants Breacher, AVPL, adds 3d6 to damage

Anyone who has ever fired a handgun at an approaching column of armored cavalry knows the futility of hurling inert ballistics at hullmetal. Even micro-grenades with their white-hot atomic annihilation payloads are largely useless against properly armored vehicles. Enter armor crackers, which compress a micro-grenade laced with Boomex into one tiny apocalyptic package. As the round impacts a target, its nano-bottles break, ripping the target's armor apart at an atomic level.

MAXIM 61

Don't bring big grenades into small rooms.

Grenade Blast Radius

For determining how many foes a grenade hits, consider the following: A successfully thrown grenade will hit 1d3+1 foes if the foes are loosely clumped, if tightly clumped foes are targeted 1d3+3 will be hit. The GC will tell you if foes are loosely or tightly clumped.

Boomex

Cost: S3 **Uses:** 5 Explosives skill

Effects & Notes: 1 use to build bombs or shaped charges

Boomex is the duct tape of explosives. It is the pivotal piece of any IED and of many carefully planned and executed explosive effects. With Boomex, you can create anything from a massive fireball for distraction purposes to a carefully-aimed shaped charge that allows you discreet entrance into a place out of which someone else was trying to keep you. No mercenary company should be without a supply of Boomex.

Burners

Cost: S6 **Uses:** 6 Underslung Launcher or Thrown Skill

Effects & Notes: Target takes 1d6 damage each round until it spends one action putting itself out

These frangible rounds "splatter" on impact, sending flaming fragments in all directions. These fragments have their own oxidant — far more than they need for their own immolation — ensuring there's enough air available to spread the fire to anything nearby.

Many quartermasters will not issue burner rounds, and legend has it the 1st Maxim of Maximally Effective Mercenaries, "Pillage, then burn," was coined as an exhortation against this type of ammunition. Legend is about half-right. The maxim predates modern burner rounds by centuries, but it was coined by humans in response to the finest available conflagratory projectiles of the era: flaming arrows.

MAXIM 3

An ordnance technician at a dead run outranks everybody.

Cheesecutters

Cost: S2 **Uses:** 6 Underslung Launcher or Thrown skill

Effects & Notes: Grants Short Range; Target makes Endurance check (TN 20) or lose one action

This particularly offensive de-motivator round contains fermented blocks of curdled lactates. The wax seal enclosing them is broken on impact, releasing a cloud of pungent gas that — while not rendering the enemy dead — often leaves them *wishing* they were dead instead. Unfortunately, Cheesecutters are only truly effective when fired at short range. Over longer ranges, the wax seal tends to ablate in the air resistance, thus dissipating the effect over a long distance and turning an effective weapon into a simple bad smell. But make sure that you are at least several feet away, or your Cheesecutter shot might affect you as well.

Flash-Bang Rounds

Cost: S10 **Uses:** 3 Underslung Launcher or Thrown skill

Effects & Notes: Endurance skill check (TN 20) or lose their next turn

Designed to overload the sensory apparatus of most sophonts, this common example of stun ammunition delivers a burst of bright light and intense sound. Certain defensive gear can protect a target from this onslaught, but this has given rise to flash-bang emitter grenades, which continue to strobe for several seconds after detonation.

Grenade, Frag

Cost: S4 **Uses:** 5 Underslung Launcher or Thrown skill

Effects & Notes: damage 4d6 +6

Grenades are a staple of military companies everywhere. This is the classic fragmentation grenade, whose explosion sends shrapnel into those who are unfortunate enough to be within range.

Grenade, Plasma

Cost: S5 **Uses:** 4 Underslung Launcher or Thrown skill

Effects & Notes: damage 4d6 +9

The plasma grenade functions much like a frag grenade, except instead of discharging pieces of metal, this grenade sends plasma flying in all directions. The combination of explosion and flying plasma is guaranteed to cause dismay and fire anywhere that one goes off.

Micro-Grenades

Cost: S10 **Uses:** 3 PEA

Effects & Notes: Target suffers 6d6 damage, nearby sophonts suffer one-half this damage (rounded down)

Explosive payloads are common and vary widely in their efficacy, especially as the muzzle diameter decreases. The term "micro" is usually only applied to explosive payloads delivered via rounds up to 7 mm in diameter. Given the inherent limits of chemical energy that can be stored in a single cubic millimeter of material,

the most powerful micro-grenades use "doped" charges, where the payload contains a primer of high-explosive Boomex laced with billions of fullerene nano-bottles, each containing a single ionized atom of antimatter.

This ammunition is expensive, both because it's difficult to manufacture — even with Milspec annies — and because it's tightly controlled.

Nandap Express Poison Kit

Cost: S8 **Uses:** 1 Delivery

Effects & Notes: prep time 1 round, then 2d6 damage that ignores Damage Reduction

The Nandap Express Poison Kit is unique in the galaxy in that this specially designed box is loaded with all the necessary chemicals to poison any known lifeform in the galaxy. You simply program the type of life into the built-in SI, and it calculates and crafts a poison-filled syringe dart that comes out the slot on the side. Unfortunately, due to the vast array of chemicals that must be in the box, each box is only able to create a single dart. Nandap is said to be working on refill kits which would allow boxes to be reloaded, but that isn't possible at this time.

Nandap Express Tranquilizer Kit

Cost: S4 **Uses:** 6 Delivery

Effects & Notes: Prep time 1 round, then Endurance check TN 20 or fall asleep

The Nandap Express Tranquilizer Kit is the same in form and function as the Nandap Express Poison Kit. In fact, the understated design and tastefully discreet markings on the box have caused difficulties for some sophonts who carried both and didn't inspect carefully before requesting and using darts. If you don't need your box to be discreet, then we recommend that you mark them in bright colors. This has the added benefit of potentially being intimidating to others who see you have a clearly marked Nandap Tranquilizer Kit, thus implying that you may also have a Poison Kit somewhere nearby.

As with the Poison Kit, you program the SI with the sophont that you want to drop unconscious. The chemicals necessary to render sophonts unconscious are less complex and less expensive than those which poison. At least, this is the reason that Nandap gives for their Tranquilizer Kit having multiple uses and being so much less expensive than the poison kit. Investigative bodies have occasionally made inquiries to discover if this was true, but as yet, no investigators have returned from their visits to Nandap facilities.

Nandap Express Vom-Darts

Cost: S3 **Uses:** 3 Delivery

Effects & Notes: Endurance check TN 20 or lose two actions. Only works on terrans

Another vicious de-motivator, these small syringes deliver a toxin that chemically induces vomiting. The effect is specific to humans and purps, but it will also work on rillas, neophants, and ursumari or any other terran-based life form. It has no impact at all on anything outside the Terran gene pool.

Shockbeads

Cost: S2 **Uses:** 6 Stun

Effects & Notes: Endurance check TN 20 or fall unconscious. If target has 4+ Damage Reduction then no effect

Another specialty stun round, the shockbead is a tiny capstack that delivers a jolt of electricity through the tip of a flechette. It isn't much use against an armored target, or a target that's insulated against grounding, but if the charge can travel through a target's nervous system on the way to the ground, then welcome to Stun City.

Smoke Bombs

Cost: S2 **Uses:** 6 Underslung Launcher or Thrown skill

Effects & Notes: Anyone near the target must reroll any roll of 6 on attack rolls for three turns

Used for signaling, screening, and painting targets, smoke rounds come in a wide variety of formulations. Soldiers "popping smoke" to signal their location for friendly evac are typically deploying simple smoke sticks, which don't qualify as ammunition. Soldiers signaling the location of an enemy usually want to launch the smoke round from a distance.

Some smoke rounds block most of the visual spectrum and can be used to blind the enemy. Friendlies are equipped with optics that let them see in non-blocked frequencies. This option is a favorite of first-strike, deep-insertion forces, and well-equipped pirates.

Strohl Munitions 7 mm Smart Flechettes

Cost: S6 **Uses:** 6 Strohl Mag Rail Weapon

Effects & Notes: +4 on attack rolls; Qualities and damage attached to the weapon still apply

Strohl Munitions 7 mm Smart Flechettes are a proprietary ammunition designed specifically to be fired by the Strohl Munitions 7 mm Rotary Mag-Rail Deluxe. Each flechette has a link to the targeting system in the Mag-Rail. This targeting system tells the flechettes where to go, and each flechette has an onboard steering system that allows it to guide itself toward its target.

Strohl Munitions Smart Breacher Missiles

Cost: S15 **Uses:** 1 Strohl L-105 Breacher Cannon

Effects & Notes: Grants Autocorrecting, AVPL, Breacher, Damage 8d6

Strohl Munitions Smart Breacher Missiles are a proprietary ammunition designed specifically to go with the Strohl Munitions L-105 Breacher Cannon. These missiles each contain a tiny annie plant which powers their flight and steering. The annie also provides a short burst of shielding for these missiles, making it more likely that they will survive countermeasures. When these missiles land, they crack through armor and explode with great force. This is the munition of choice for militaries who need to take down vehicles or vessels.

Descriptive Effects of Ammunitions

As explained earlier, rolling d6 is a completely inadequate way to simulate the comparative effects of a particle cannon versus a gunfoam pistol. There is nothing like the glee of a person who has donned a personal faraday cage and fired an ion weapon at a target. Smashing your enemies with lightning can be viscerally satisfying and can be fuel for amazing stories. Thus we give you descriptions of how the various ammunition types behave, even when every aspect of these behaviors is not covered by the roll of dice. It is up to your particular group how much story space you give to the effects of the ammunition you use.

Projectile

Weapons that launch projectiles are by far the most common weapons in use, and the design principles haven't changed much in thousands of years of warfare. Ultimately there are only so many useful, convenient ways to launch a small dangerous object at a much larger object.

Projectile weapon ammunition comes in nigh-infinite variety, as evidenced by the size of the *Planet Mercenary Unabridged Ammunition Catalog*. For game purposes there are two types of projectile ammunition: Gunfoam and PEA.

Gunfoam

Gunfoam ammunition has the same basic design principles that have been in place since bullets and black powder. It is a cartridge in which the projectile sits atop the propellant. The most popular and convenient firearm propellant is gunfoam, a muzzle-grade explosive that holds its shape and viability whether wet or dry. Gunfoam leaves no casings since the entire cartridge contributes to the forward momentum of the projectile. Generally speaking, if you're looking to reload a gun that goes BLAM, you want a firearm that accepts gunfoam rounds.

P.E.A.

P.E.A. (Pulsilinear Electromagnetic Array) ammunition has no attached propellant. These projectiles require the weapon to provide the accelerating force. The PEA abbreviation lends itself nicely to the term "pea-shooter." (1) Using this nomenclature, the projectiles themselves are called peas, and the fact that they are generally dart-shaped has made serving actual green peas (or green-pea analogs) a confusing project for mess chiefs and quartermasters alike.

We've said that peas are inert, but some may contain toxins, microexplosives, or even nannyplaque, so it's best to treat any peas you see lying around as dangerous. Unless they're soft and green, in which case they're nutritious and you should stop eating off of the floor but you'll probably be okay.

(1)
CEO: We're standardizing on "pea-shooter" now? Seriously?
WRITER: It's the one term that none of our suppliers were interested in fighting over.
CEO: For obvious reasons.

Beam

The beam ammunition category is defined by the fact that the weapon generally emits a continuous stream of effect so long as the trigger is held. The beam may be comprised of light, ions, plasma, or other particles. Beam ammunitions hardly feel like ammunition at all since the effect is generated inside the weapon itself and generally only requires a power source to continue firing. However the weapons that used beams have a distinct way of firing and management. The four types of beam ammunition are Ion, Laser, Particle, and Plasma

Ion

For a gun to fire ions, the entire structure of the weapon has to be designed to exploit the ionized atmospheric path left behind by high-energy lasers and funnel a heavy stream of electrons down that path to the target.

The visual effect, when seen with a high-speed camera, is a razor sharp shimmer in the air, followed immediately by a blinding bolt of lightning. It is awesome to behold, and unless you're properly equipped, it is every bit as likely to kill you as the target.

For an ion gun to be effective, the entire exterior surface of the weapon and shooter must be non-grounded and electrically negative. If not, any disruption in the ion path may result in the bolt of electrons forking back to the shooter. For this reason, ion guns are rarely deployed.

Period.

Nobody wants to stand next to one.

Most ion gun manufacturers also make ion gun suits, where the weapon is integral to the armor, and if the electron stream forks back to the shooter, it will be harmlessly absorbed or deflected. These suits are usually issued to solo operators called "idiots" on missions like "electrocute jungle stuff until you die" and "call attention to yourself by being the brightest, sparkliest thing for twenty klicks in any direction."

Laser

To fire the beam of coherent light known as a Laser, the weapon must be designed to generate that laser. These weapons emit high-energy lasers, the intensity of which is sufficient to quickly heat the target as photons strike atomic electron shells and increase the energy states of the struck atoms, causing those atoms to fly apart. These beams exhibit the fastest time to target of any gun, but pack less punch than the others for the power provided. They can be invisible, although any light, visible or not, that is intense enough to damage a target is intense enough to cause heat shimmer in the air through which it passes.

Particle

A particle gun accelerates ionized elemental plasma using pulsed magnetic fields, acceleration chambers, and a relatively long barrel. Prior to exiting the weapon the ions pick up their missing electrons, ensuring that they are not repelling each other along the flight path,

2

R&D: Okay, since legal isn't here, and I feel bad about the eulogy thing, can I just say this isn't going to talk anybody out of using an ion weapon?

MKTG: It's kind of amazing, really. This is the sort of reverse-psychological marketing copy that keeps us from removing these electromagnecatastrophic death traps from inventory.

WRITER: So... do I change the text or leave it alone?

MKTG: Leave it. It's good marketing if we can put "electromagnecatastrophic" into dictionaries.

WRITER: I think we have to get the word into more books than just this one.

which in turn ensures a tight beam over long distances. Despite the fact that particle ammunition is essentially plasma, it is differentiated from plasma ammunition because the quantity of plasma fired is so much smaller and it is fired at a much greater velocity. Much of the destructive energy of the particles is expressed as heat, but some of it will manifest as hard radiation, since a small number of the fired particles will strike atomic nuclei, and fuse with them or split them. This effect on atomic nuclei makes particle guns one of the best tools for quickly penetrating the PTU materials of annie-plants.

With a long enough barrel and enough power, the accelerated particles can approach a high fraction of the speed of light, a speed at which the relativistic mass of the atomic nuclei increases. It should be noted, however, that if you have the energy available to take real advantage of this effect, there may be more efficient ways to weaponize it.

Plasma

Weapons that fire plasma are affectionately known as plasguns. A plasgun is, in its truest, simplest form, a system for firing super-hot gas in a beam. Plasma is a state of matter in which the heat is so great that the electrons have dissociated from their atoms and the mess is electrically neutral, taken as a whole. That electrical neutrality makes true plasma difficult to weaponize. Most plasguns heat the matter up while ionizing it, sending the electrons off in one direction (usually a capacitor) while the positively-charged atomic nuclei are sent in another (usually downrange at a target.) The punch of a plasgun comes from the extreme heat of those nuclei rather than from their speed. Of course, by "punch" we mean "deposition of heat." It sets things on fire. A lot.

Non-Lethal

When you want to shoot first and ask questions later, you want to be carrying a weapon that shoots non-lethal ammunition. Most major weapon manufacturers advertise the non-lethal load compatibility of their weapons, but many law enforcement agencies see these as an unacceptable compromise and will use specialty weapons exclusively.

Generally speaking, non-lethal rounds will either immobilize, stun, or de-motivate their targets. "Goober" guns are very popular immobilizers because they are the one ammunition type that can be used indiscriminately, but non-lethally, neutralize a mixed-race crowd of combatants. Non-lethal rounds come in De-motivator, Goober, and Stun.

De-motivator

This is one of the broadest ammunition categories, as it covers everything from pain induction devices to tear gas to bean bag shooters. The key similarity is that the ammo is intended to convince people to stop doing what they are doing without making them be dead. You have to be careful because the different biologies of the Sophont races mean that they react differently to the same de-motivator. A chemical compound that will safely inflict a three-day coma upon a four-ton Vhorwed will do nothing against a charging Neophant. Some popular examples of de-motivators are pain inducers, vom-darts, cheesecutters, and flash-bangs.

Goober

The name "goober" does a great injustice to the molecular and nanomechanical goings-on, but none of that is visible to the naked eye. Fire a goober round at a fleeing perpetrator and all that sub-microscopic complexity looks like creamy, living snot sticking to the ground, the target, and anything within about a meter as it explosively expands, allowing goober-tendrils to make as many points of contact as possible.

The various goober compounds are available in many sizes of rounds, but as a rule they're not very effective when their diameter is less than 12mm. Some manufacturers claim that their goober rounds can be chambered in any weapon, but the wide variety of formulations, not to mention the incredible variety of chamber sizes and muzzle velocities, make it unwise to take this claim at face value. Weapons designed for goober rounds are far more likely to fire them accurately without baking the compound and turning your non-lethal restraint round into something that hits almost exactly like a bullet.

Stun

Stunning is a very tricky business. The tazer that harmlessly fells one combatant may induce fatal seizures in another. The difference-tone stunner that puts terran primates harmlessly to sleep will destroy the optic cluster in a unioc. Note the sophont relevant information in the thick manual of your stunner. Most stunners work by shorting out the neural system of the target using electricity.

General Materiel

Mercenary companies need many things beyond armor and weapons. *Planet Mercenary RPG* doesn't require players to track basics like clothes, shoes, backpacks, and assorted civilian miscellany. You can pick those up anywhere for prices so low that they can't even be measured in Supplies, let alone Resources. We just assume you have all those things anytime you need them. This section covers other items that you might want, but which are less common or easy to acquire. Some are available in your Ship's Locker (*see page 117*) but others you'll need to buy. This is only a sampling of items that you might want to use to tell stories. GCs can use these items, their costs, and their effects as guidelines to decide the game effects of other items which you know exist, but aren't specifically listed in these pages.

Civilian Ship's Locker:		
Yes C	Maybe C	No C

Milspec Ship's Locker:		
Yes M	Maybe M	No M

Assorted Automation

Bots

Bots are found everywhere in a multitude of situations. Bots have robust and complex synthetic intelligences, and on occasion they develop quirks akin to "personalities." Despite what you may have been told, they are not sapient and should not be treated like people. This is especially true when they *ask* to be treated like people. In fact, that's when you should send them back to the manufacturer with a friendly request for a new unit. And you might want to remove their voice modulator first. Otherwise they creep out the delivery people with all their begging and the whining.

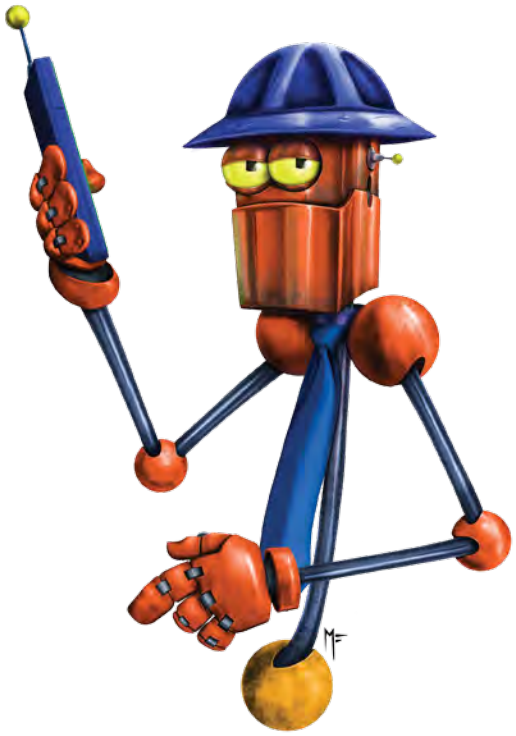
Bots understand spoken commands and within their programming are fairly effective, but can't do much that isn't pre-programmed. Specialty bots (Construction, Maintenance, Med) can perform any skill check associated with thier preprogrammed skills. If a check is required, then the bot has eight ranks in the skill but no specialties (and no other skills, either). As long as it is working inside it's area of expertise, a bot needs no assistance or additional programming. Particularly large and/or complex projects require multiple bots and may also demand a successful Computers (Programming) skill check (TN 15–30, based on the project).

Bot, Construction

Cost: S2 C M

Special Rules: This bot has eight ranks in Engineering but no specialties or other skills

This server-bot is very useful in environments that are inherently hazardous to organic sophonts. It has builder programming that lets



it follow any set of plans to the letter if the necessary materials are at hand. A construction bot can perform any skill check associated with the Engineering skill.

Bot, Maintenance

Cost: S2

Special Rules: This bot has eight ranks in Mechanics but no specialties or other skills

Most ships come with at least one bot capable of making repairs in hard-to-reach places. A maintenance bot can repair any common vessel or other vehicle if the necessary parts are available. A maintenance bot can perform any skill check associated with the Mechanic skill.

Bot, Medical

Cost: S2

Special Rules: This bot has eight ranks in Medicine but no specialties or other skills

Medical bays the galaxy over keep at least one of these bots in case they need an extra set of skilled servos. Medical bots are also commonly programmed to work on many hundreds or thousands of sophont races, which can mean the difference between life and death when an unfamiliar species floats in on a hover-gurney. It can also perform all the functions of a utility bot but it rarely does, if only so it doesn't have to run sanitation protocols afterward. A medical bot can perform any skill check associated with the Medicine skill.

MAXIM 7

If the food is good enough the grunts will stop complaining about the incoming fire.

Bot, Multipurpose

Cost: S2

Special Rules: This bot has eight ranks in any single GC-approved skill but no specialties or other skills; this bot must be told what to do, though it can act on most loose instructions

Sometimes you need a bot that can help with an unusual task that's not handled by any of the common bots in the Planet Mercenary catalog. That's when you opt for a multipurpose bot, which can be loaded up with nearly any skill set you can imagine... for a price. Choose one single skill when you order a multipurpose bot. The GC must approve this skill, as not all are appropriate and some may not be available. This bot can perform any skill check associated with the chosen skill.

Bot, Utility

Cost: S1

Special Rules: No skill ranks; may only perform rudimentary tasks

Used for light cleaning, laundry, and carrying things, utility bots understand spoken commands clearly and follow instructions at least as well as your fireteam. They do not have much in the way of actual skill, however. The utility bots, not your fireteam. Okay, maybe that applies to your fireteam as well, in which case we're sorry, and good luck.

Automated Food Machines

While *Planet Mercenary RPG* does not require you to track food, some groups may want to play games that include running low on rations or needing to shop for supplies. These machines are here to enable such stories, but even if you don't buy food machines, we assume you're feeding your crew …aren't you?

PMH Fabberchow

Cost: S3

Special Rules: With suitable biological material, PMH Fabberchow may sustain up to 100 characters for up to 10 years of use at no additional cost

Planet Mercenary's house brand, PMH, makes the Fabberchow vending station as a solid alternative to Popso's popular model. The proprietary nature of Popso's vending system may be problematic. A Fabberchow station takes the same standard power leads, but it can be filled with any organic material whose elemental and molecular composition is compatible with the troops that the Fabberchow needs to feed.

Yes, this means that you can fill it with pretty much anything that comes *out* of your troops as well, but do so with caution. While the secretions, excretions, offal, and corpses of soldiers are ideal refill material when feeding soldiers from the same biological class, many troops still struggle with pre-contact taboos and may be reluctant to eat anything out of the Fabberchow after they've seen their quartermaster crap directly into the meat-hopper.

A Fabberchow isn't as durable as a Popso station and it won't last as long, but you can't beat the price — not now and certainly not

months down the line when you're scrounging for work and can't afford another weekly expense.

Popso Vending Station

Cost: S5 C M

Special Rules: May sustain up to 100 characters for 20 years of use; 1 Supplies per 100 characters must be paid each month for Popso Nutrifuel Blocks

Popso is the leading supplier of automated chow-vending equipment. Their machines are quite popular with mercenary companies everywhere — not because of their selection, which is necessarily limited, but because of their durability. The parts of a Popso vending station enjoy a thousand-year warranty under normal use, and for twenty years after installation in a forward operating base full of hungry soldiers. As expected, this warranty is void anywhere near a desperate quartermaster.

The food from a Popso station can be customized to meet the nutritional requirements of most soldiers, and Popso has licensed many popular menu items, including the Chupaqueso, Monos fritos, and Ovalkwik Refreshing Energy Paste. Every Popso unit includes the company's signature canned beverage: a sweet, brown, CO_2-infused liquid that's rich in methylxanthine alkaloids. Popso's motto is: "Is your top stoppered? Pop a Popso!"

The station takes standard power leads, but it can only be refilled using proprietary Popso Nutrifuel Blocks, affectionately called "bricks" by those who consume the delicacies into which they're converted. It is critically important to note that raw bricks are themselves utterly and completely non-comestible. 1

Wächter Sunrise "McFly-15" Hoverboard

Cost: S1 C M

Special Rules: Hovers 10 cm off the ground and travels at a speed of up to 9 m/s; this hoverboard may only carry one sophont (or sophont equivalent weight)

This is the personal conveyance that all the cool kids are using, but the cool kids probably aren't considering what attractive targets they make for the enemy. This hoverboard scoots the board and its rider along on a cushion of air. The model name "McFly" is a bit misleading. The board doesn't fly. Wächter's fine print tries to define "mcfly" as "hover," but that does nothing to offset the disappointment of being stuck just 10 cm from the ground.

The board requires some practice to use, but the mag-grips and adaptive pitch keep you aboard and aloft even when you lean a little too steeply into a turn. The absence of a traditional hover curtain means that flying over sand or water kicks up a cloud of the stuff that attracts attention and may seriously irritate sensory tissues like eyes, noses, and exostomachs. While technically a vehicle, this hoverboard is re-purposed to carry luggage often enough that it gets sorted into automation, particularly the newer models, which have a pre-programmed "follow me" feature.

Computation & Communication

Commbone

Cost: S1 C M

Special Rules: Allows for silent communication; Computers (Hacking) TN 16 to intercept, or Computers (Hacking) TN 12 to jam

"Commbone" is a general term for any communication device that is permanently implanted in someone's body — generally just behind and slightly below the ear or race equivalent. It's not considered to be true cybernetics. The device and its sheath are designed for easy insertion and replacement with a simple Medicine (Surgery) skill check (TN 12). A commbone's signal is not entirely secure and may be intercepted with the right gear and a successful Computers (Hacking) skill check (TN 16). It may also be jammed with the same gear and a successful Computers (Hacking) skill check (TN 12). With direct access to the hardware — a messy proposition, to say the least — these Target Numbers drop by 4 points each.

Commbud

Cost: S1 C M

Special Rules: Allows for quiet communication; Computers (Hacking) TN 16 to intercept, or Computers (Hacking) TN 12 to jam

This tiny device is inserted into whichever sensory organ or appendage is most appropriate for low-amplitude acoustic signals. For a

1

LEGAL: Attempts to independently verify this statement cannot be discouraged strongly enough. Just don't okay? No. *NO!* Take that out of your... oh, never mind. Put the book down and call a medic.

R&D: Hey, you're back!

LEGAL: Back? I just got here. New hire. Still coming up to speed, if you must know.

TERL'KRIS: Ah. Speed is good. Come up to as much speed as you can manage.

human, that's your ear. So long as it's in there, a commbud allows for very quiet vocalized messages to others in range with commbuds on the same frequency, and near-silent reception of messages from others on the same band. Commbuds can be securely paired with a handbrain or with company comms and the commbuds of your fireteams and fellow officers.

Commbuds are available from several major manufacturers, including Wächter, Malott, and Vella Tacspec. Malott and Vella commbuds integrate seamlessly into the suits that these manufacturers sell. Wächter 'buds are among the very best for commanding a squadron of utility bots

Handbrains

A handbrain is a multi-function communications and computation device whose size and interface make it most commonly carried and operated in the hand, or an equivalent appendage. Almost anything you need to know is quickly available via the handbrain because the intelligent agents responsible for indexing, cataloguing, searching, and retrieving information on the hypernet tailor said information to be easily delivered via handbrains.

Ask the right question and you'll get a complete answer. This doesn't help if you ask the wrong question, of course. Most of the time this results in a handbrain delivering loads of rudimentary details that you already know and/or don't care about. For instance, "Do I cut the red wire or the green wire?" will earn you a long-winded primer on the wiring styles of detonators, including the many ways you might detect whether these wires are camouflage for the actual detonator — a lecture that may be interrupted by an explosion.

On the other hand, if you say, "I need to defuse a Suphrim-style IED with a Basilo-braid wiring harness connected to what looks like a wind-up toy monkey, and the monkey is almost done clapping," then your handbrain will quickly respond, "Cut the third wire from the zig-zag edge of the harness, count to three, then rip the harness free from the IED. Then get a picture of that monkey so we can determine whether it is a valuable antique."

In short, the more you already know, the more your handbrain can teach you.

The most common handbrains have touchscreens with freeform surfactile buttons (raised surfaces that change depending on the interface and application, letting them operate entirely by feel). These models also feature flat, full-color screens, built in holo-projectors, and whisper-directional audio. Voice recognition is spot-on, even if you have a mouthful of somebody's throat.

Less common interfaces include bonephones, nail dots, necktie projectors, contact lenses, and a wide range of more biologically intrusive cybernetics starting with simple piercings and winding their metallocancerous way down to fibroptic neural mesh and vertebrachial taps. 1

Most sophonts enter the external, auxiliary brain age shortly after entering the information age, and for this reason creatures with actual hands find the term "handbrain" sufficiently all-encompassing (and rather welcoming). Many sophonts evolve smoothly alongside their technology, although a few embrace the metallocancerous paths which lead into full-on cyberabomination, itself a precursor to the ruin of mechorgaaaaaaaaaaasdf— 2

Most handbrains have three connectivity modes. The primary mode is local network pass-through. Using this mode, the handbrain uses EM spectrum (radio) to connect to a network, and that network connects in turn to the hypernet for nigh-instantaneous communication with every other hypernet-connected device or network in the galaxy.

The second mode is direct hypernet connectivity. The handbrain has its own hypernet node, which consumes a *lot* of power but can connect to any hypernet hub in the galaxy, from any location.

The third mode is private network connectivity. This can establish a connection directly to a private network, or through an RF transmitter, connecting just as privately to something in range. This third mode is prized by those for whom security is literally a matter of life and death.

A handbrain operating in either of the first two modes can be remotely hacked with a successful Computers (Hacking) skill check (TN 20), though an additional check is required every two minutes to remain connected and undetected. This TN drops to 15 when you're holding the target handbrain.

Hacking into a handbrain that's operating in private network mode is effectively impossible unless you have the handbrain in, um, hand. Access to a private network automatically also

1

CEO: We sell a wide range of cybernetics to happy, long-lived customers whose deep pockets contain bounteous things like your salary. Saying "metallocancerous" is like saying "stop sending us money," so I'm going to put a stop to your writing. This will be faster than working through Sophont Resources to fire you.

TERL'KRIS: Ghenzu, it looks like you're still inputting text. Just drop everything and get to the safe room.

2

CEO: Terl'Kris, find a writer who can say nice things about cybernetics, and our wealthy mechorganic clients. Also, this office needs to be wiped down.

TERL'KRIS: Understood. Finishing the text myself.

LEGAL: What just happened here?

TERL'KRIS: Shh. We'll take it offline.

LEGAL: Don't 'shhh' me. This looks like actionable—

R&D: YUP! Totally looks like that. The attorney who hired you probably has a panic room. You should be in it.

gives you access to a connected handbrain and lets you attempt to hack it as if it's operating in either of the first two modes.

With a successful Computers (Programming) skill check (TN 15), you can repurpose a handbrain as a jammer, a bug, or a makeshift tool for hacking another system. A repurposed handbrain no longer serves its original function, and this process may not be reversed. Back your data up before repurposing, folks.

Handbrain

Cost: S1 C M

Special Rules: The whole of the hypernet in the palm of your... uh, whatever; this device may operate in three modes (local network pass-through, direct connectivity, or private network connectivity)

This is your standard issue handbrain.

Handbrain CT (Comms Tech)

Cost: S2 C M

Special Rules: Interface with any system regardless of connectivity type; ship's locker has one Handbrain CT per PC with 1+ ranks in the Computers skill

This tool is used to interface with any system that doesn't already have the right connectivity. It functions like a simple handbrain but has universal comm bus (UCB) connectors and signal boosters for creating patch points. The Handbrain CT allows for proximal and remote connections, as needed. It also contains a vast library of quick-hack measures for defeating security systems, though this library isn't useful to someone with no programming ability.

The GC determines when hacking into, jamming, or otherwise interacting with a system requires a Handbrain CT. Occasionally, a Computers check "uses up" this device by depleting its power supply, burning out the UCB, or otherwise rendering it non-functional. This may happen automatically with a given Computers skill check, or it may be the result of an automatic failure using the device. The GC decides when and how this happens.

Hacking into a Handbrain CT requires a Computers (Hacking) skill check, which is more difficult when the device is in use by someone else. For a remote hack the TN is either 25 + (the opposing user's ranks in Computers). If the hacker can get hands on the device, the TN is 20 + (the opposing user's ranks in Computers).

Hypernet Hut HN1 "Hyper-Node"

Cost: S1 C M

Special Rules: Grants basic, universal access to the hypernet

Almost any device that can connect to a local network can connect to the hypernet. A hypernet node is a combination power supply and hyperspatial network access point, with a universal comm bus (UCB) connector. The Hypernet Hut HN1 is one of the most common hypernet nodes on the market.

Hypernet Hut LI NJ00 Node-Jack

Cost: S3 C M

Special Rules: Allows access to secured systems; +1 bonus to Computers checks when using unsecured systems; may be used only once, then discarded

When a device doesn't want to be accessed, you need a hypernet Node-Jack. This device forcibly inserts itself into another device's signal path. It's no guarantee that you'll gain access but it's certainly a start. Every Node-Jack is constantly updated with the latest security-defeating measures, but counter-measures are updated just as often.

Because this device is often used illegally, it's typically unavailable over the counter at the local Hypernet Hut. Fortunately, Planet Mercenary offers the "Hypernet Hut Limited Issue" catalog to our valued customers. That's you, in case you're wondering.

Hypernet Hut Nodecracker 1010

Cost: S5 C M

Special Rules: +2 with Computers (Hacking) checks to penetrate system security; allows up to three checks before its hacking protocols are exhausted

For those who make a living by stealing data belonging to other sophonts, a Handbrain CT and a box of off-the-shelf Node-Jacks isn't going to cut it. Major league data thieves need a much larger, much smarter suite with massive processors dedicated to melting icewalls, icing firewalls, and penetrating whatever other virtual walls stand between them and their target systems. For these discerning miscreants, Planet Mercenary carries the Hypernet Hut Limited Issue (H2LI) Nodecracker 1010.

A Nodecracker contains a petablock of quantum ternary processors perfect for brute force attacks. It grants a +2 bonus with Computers skill checks made to penetrate system security. The Nodecracker may be used up to three times on any system, after which its myriad cracking protocols are exhausted. At the GC's discretion, certain systems may reduce this number of tries, commonly because the system is highly secure or actively monitored. Failed skill checks may also have undesired consequences, up to and including damage to the Nodecracker, the attached Handbrain CT, or even the person attempting the hack.

Hacking someone else's Nodecracker always requires a contested check and the owner gains a +20 bonus to their Computers skill check. These things are nigh-impregnable.

Hypernet Hut Nodecracker EX

Cost: S7 C M

Special Rules: +3 with Computers (Hacking) checks to penetrate system security; allows up to three checks before its hacking protocols are exhausted

The next level up from the Nodecracker 1010 is the EX model, which sports improved hacking protocols but is otherwise identical to its predecessor.

Hypernet Hut Nodecracker Junior

Cost: S11 C M

Special Rules: +4 with Computers (Hacking) checks to penetrate system security; allows up to three checks before its hacking protocols are exhausted. Computers check TN 15 refreshes for another 3 tries. If this check fails, can't be used on same system again

Yet another advancement in the Hypernet Hut Limited Issue (H2LI) line, the so-called "Junior" defies its title as a truly state-of-the-art cracking option. Unlike the 1010 and the EX, this model can be reconfigured to push the device above and beyond its normal limits — in the hands of the right user, of course.

Cuffs & Stuff

Simple (Mechanical) Restraints

Cost: S0 C M

Special Rules: Athletics (Strength) skill check (TN 18) to escape through brute force; Larceny (Picking Locks) skill check (TN 10 with a tool, or 15 without one) to escape through finesse

Manacles, tentaclamps, hobblehocks, wristzips, and countless other simple devices are commonly used for temporary restraint of prisoners. These are all relatively easy to defeat given time, a tool, and a little privacy. Without these things, even simple restraints are quite effective. Search your prisoners, space them out a bit, and post guards, or you may be surprised when your captives suddenly aren't your captives anymore.

Autobailiff 2200

Cost: S2 C M

Special Rules: Athletics (Strength) check (TN 20, or 15 with a crowbar or similar item) to break out via brute force; Computers (Hacking) skill check (TN 15) to escape with access to the system and the necessary interface tools

It's not a real bailiff, but it does ensure that prisoners and other flight risks remain on display in a courtroom. Consisting of a clear dome on a hover platform, the Autobailiff 2200 offers precisely no (intended) ways to exit from the inside.

Bagamorph 4411

Cost: S5

Special Rules: Only restrains carbosilicate amorphs; escape requires two successful Chemistry (Biochemistry) skill checks (TN 15) these checks cannot be concealed

Carbosilicate amorphs are very difficult to restrain. Perpsleeve, a leading manufacturer of restraints, strongly counsels against using a standard Perpsleeve Unibody on an amorph, instead recommending their Bagamorph 4411. If the amorph has been searched — a dicey proposition — and confirmed not to possess any high-energy tools, then the Bagamorph can contain the amorph for days.

Some amorphs have sufficient understanding of their biochemistry that they can eventually dissolve and digest the inner layers of the bag, eating their way out over the course of several hours. Fortunately, the Bagamorph 4411 has sensors embedded in the layers for just this reason, and its system alerts you to any erosion.

The Bagamorph 4411 is useless against any character but an amorph. When an amorph is contained in one, its only means of escape is a series of two Chemistry (Biochemistry) skill checks (TN 15). The amorph cannot conceal these attempts, so anyone paying attention to the bag automatically knows what the amorph is trying to do.

Nannycuffs

Cost: S4

Special Rules: Athletics (Strength) skill check (TN 25) to break out via brute force; Computers (Hacking) skill check (TN 15) to escape with access to the system and necessary interface tools

A step up from simple mechanical restraints, nannycuffs securely bind a prisoner's limbs and actively adjust to resist escape attempts.

Escapes

Each of our many restraint options lists specific skill checks necessary to escape from them. However, if you are under any sort of observation and want to escape without your escape being noticed, you will also need to make a Stealth skill check. The TN for this Stealth check is determined by the GC and should be based on in-game circumstances.

Perpsleeve Unibody Smart Restraints

Cost: S4

Special Rules: Can only escape if you had a tool when restrained; requires 1 hour and Athletics (Strength) or Computers (Hacking) check (TN 20)

If you're planning to take prisoners, especially valuable bounty targets, then you should invest in a complete restraint system. The Perpsleeve Unibody is a good choice. It covers the prisoner's entire form, binding each limb separately for complete immobilization. The Unibody's polymer graphene weave has extremely high tensile strength and very little give. It's not very good as armor, though, so don't count on it as defense against somebody shooting your prisoner as you haul them away.

The Perpsleeve constantly monitors a prisoner, transmitting their vitals, location, and an audio feed of all the sounds that they make to your choice of your handbrain, your ship's AI, or any nearby comm system. Add a HyperNode and you can track your prisoner from across the galaxy.

Escaping a Perpsleeve Unibody is no simple task. It's impossible, really, unless you have a suitable tool in hand when you're restrained. Even then it takes a long time — an hour or more, at least.

Track-a-Neck 4000

Cost: S5

Special Rules: If prisoner leaves permitted zone, device either stuns the prisoner (Endurance skill check (TN 20) or fall unconscious) or detonates (3d6 + 5 damage to the prisoner, ignoring Damage Reduction, and 3d6 damage to anyone nearby); escape requires Computers (Hacking or Security) skill check (TN 20); failure by 5 or more triggers the punishment setting

Most other restraints don't alert you when their principal feature — restraint — is defeated, and they also don't keep track of a prisoner's location. No other restraints punish a prisoner for attempting to break free. The Track-a-Neck 4000 does all these things at once.

Place this collar on a prisoner and you can track their location, and set boundaries for their permitted location. Should the prisoner cross into a prohibited area, the collar either attempts to stun the prisoner or detonates, per your assigned settings.

Med-Tech

Cryokit

Cost: S10 G M

Special Rules: Puts a corpse on ice indefinitely; Medicine check to restore function. TN depends on the level of damage: TN 12 for standard bodily failures (such as heart attacks), or up to TN 30 for extensive trauma or bodily damage

Emergency services organizations, like fire departments and biocontainment squads, have been using cryokits for centuries now. These heavy, coffin-like devices blend ancient cryogenic technology with modern nanomed technology to indefinitely extend the resuscitation window for the critically — or even fatally — injured. Contrary to popular belief, cryokits have not been rendered obsolete by recently introduced devices like nannybags. The keyword here is "indefinitely." A cryokit allows you to put a corpse "on ice" for years, or even centuries, before reviving them. The only requirement is that the cryokit needs a power supply the entire time.

Most mercenary companies favor the use of nanny-bags, assuming they can afford the luxury of bringing their dead back into the ranks, but cryokits are still found in ultra-modern medical bays across the galaxy. They're less expensive despite their size, and if you have the floor space for them, then it makes sense to have one.

There are some situations in which a cryokit is a superior solution to a nannybag. If a patient has been infected by an aggressive nanoplaque, then the plaque may interfere with the function of a nannybag. A cryokit, however, lowers the temperature enough that the plaque can be rendered inert, allowing medical staff more time to tailor a cure.

A Note From Our Legal Team

There are thousands of cryokits on standby here in the Planet Mercenary corporate offices. Law enforcement officers perusing the pre-publication marginalia in this book (and we trust they're not doing so illegally, without warrants) might mistakenly believe that there have been homicides here on campus, but that's simply not the case. Our corporate mission includes customer safety, which requires us to do extensive testing of everything we sell, and nothing tests a cryokit better than an injured sophont whose terms of employment clearly specify that this kind of thing might happen. 1

1

TERL'KRIS: Good job, new hire in Legal. You seem to be up to speed now. Outstanding. Do not slow down.

Hand-Me-Down Bactolotl Tank

Cost: S25 Medium, S30 Large G M

Special Rules: Regrows entire body except for the brain, which must be preserved in a nanny-bag; 3d6 + 14 days and a Medicine check (TN 12) for growing the body; Medicine (Surgery) skill check (TN 15) to install the brain; failure with either or both checks results in lost skill ranks for the target character; automatic failure with either check results in permanent character death

When you've lost more than a limb, your comrades-in-arms can regrow everything except your brain with the Hand-Me-Down Bactolotl Tank. This large fluid-filled tube (and its attached tangle of technology) rebuild a sophont's body from scratch using a detailed file that must be prepared in advance. Submitting yourself to be filed is a long and harrowing experience, taking up the better part of a day and leaving you scarred for life. Mentally, that is.

A bactolotl tank is expensive, and it takes up as much space as bunk-and-rack for six soldiers (ten for the large model). It isn't portable, but it can be deployed as part of a mobile field hospital. Often, if a mercenary company can afford one, then they install it on some otherwise unnecessary part of their ship — maybe in place of that gambling den they were hoping to start up, or possibly replacing the mess hall. The latter option is especially likely if they've also installed a Fabberchow, for reasons that are best left to the imagination.

There's no point in using a bactolotl tank unless the sophont's brain is still intact. This is one of the best reasons for mercenaries to carry around nanny-bags.

Rebuilding a sophont's body from their file takes 3d6 + 14 days. The process is almost completely automated, but periodic supervision

is required. At the end of this period, whomever has been paying the most attention to the process makes a Medicine skill check (TN 12). Upon success, the target sophont's brain can be installed into their new body, a process that takes another hour and requires a Medicine (Surgery) skill check (TN 15). If that's also successful, then the sophont revives.

If either or both these skill checks results in a failure, then the sophont suffers some unfortunate side effects. The GC adds together the amount by which each check failed and divides that sum in half, rounded down. This is the number of skill ranks that the sophont loses in the process of revival. Generally, the player controlling the target sophont chooses which skill ranks are lost, but the GC may decide any or all of the ranks for the player, if it supports the story. For example, if a player needed to spend time in the bactolotl tank because they sustained heavy damage to their lungs, then they may lose skill ranks in Athletics and their specialty in swimming.

If either of these checks results in an automatic failure — a natural roll of three 1s — then the sophont doesn't make it through the process. At least you can toss the new body in the Fabberchow!

While a player character's body is being regrown, that player can promote a grunt as if their character died. If their character is revived, then they can choose to play as either character from that point on.

Hand-Me-Down Incubatrol

Cost: S5

Special Rules: Regrows a limb, organ, or other discrete body part; 3d6 + 30 hours and Medicine check (TN 12); failure results in the part not working or being rejected; automatic failure means that the body part may never be replaced

The Incubatrol can regrow rejection-proof replacements for limbs and organs but it can't regrow a whole body (that's a job for a bactolotl tank). Simply attach the Incubatrol to whatever part of a sophont's body is missing a piece, turn it on, and wait. Before you know it, *voilà*! New body part!

The Incubatrol can only regrow one limb, organ, or discrete body part at a time (a "discrete body part" could be a digestive tract or the upper left quadrant of a thoracic cavity). The process takes 3d6 + 30 hours and requires only a little guidance from a medical "professional." At the end of the incubation time, someone who isn't the patient makes a Medicine skill check (TN 12). Upon success, the body part is fully restored and properly replaced. Failure results in the body part not working or being rejected, though another attempt may be made. An automatic failure means that the body part cannot be replaced for some reason, and the character must go on without it.

MFG1 FA-20 Slapstick

Cost: S1

Special Rules: Restores 1d6 Health, and restores use of a limb, cauterizes a wound, and stops bleeding; single-use and discarded after application

Whether MFG1 was thinking about unfortunate ways that this item's name could be interpreted when they branded it, we're stuck with the name now. It's the sort of thing the grunts just won't let go.

The Slapstick is a 5 × 2 × 2 cm rod with a red tab on one end. Pull the tab and slap the stick against an injury. The stick cracks open and a foam of nanomotile medical materials flows into and over the area. Most soldiers who've had a slapstick used on them report that the only problem with it is that the numbing agents run about three seconds behind the structural repair agents. So, if they can avoid screaming in that time, then they'll be raising glasses with you at the bar later.

Unless they're dead, in which case the slapstick won't help. They might raise a glass from the great beyond, but you wouldn't have any idea.

MFG1 Nanny-Bag

Cost: S2

Special Rules: Keeps one dismembered limb or other body part fresh for up to a week; each nanny-bag is single-use and discarded afterward

The original Nanny-Bag — ask for it by name! Simply stuff a dismembered limb, head, or other body part inside the bag and it stays fresh for up to a week. This item can carry almost twice the volume of the Nannysac PMH-Med-101. The extra space is mostly due to the fabric, which also helps protect against punctures, stray gunfire, and clumsy comrades.

Neoafan Nursetech RED-REO Blood Nannies

Cost: S5

Special Rules: Makes a copy of PC's mind to be installed into a new brain; installation takes 3d6 + 14 hours and a Medicine skill check (TN 12); failure results in lost skill ranks; automatic failure results in permanent brain death

In recent weeks Neoafan Nursetech has released their military grade RED-REO blood nannies. These are relatively useless without a RED-REO-compatible regeneration system. The system works as follows: Retro-Exocephalo-Derm and Retro-Exocephalo-Osteo nannies copy and encode your memory and personality structures into skin layers and bones. This provides a "backup" of your brain should you get shot in the head.

Here's the thing, though: when you suffer a "soft-kill" wound, RED-REO can bring you back with the help of a nanny-bag. If your remains paint the room, well, then you're still dead. So be careful not to lose both your body *and* your head. Either is OK if you have the money. Both... not so good.

Each RED-REO unit can only back up one mind. Installation takes 3d6 + 14 hours and requires moderate observation and interaction from a "trained" specialist. At the end of the installation period, someone who isn't the patient makes a Medicine check (TN 12). Upon success, the mind is installed and the character revives, good as new.

Failure results in unfortunate side effects. The player character loses the number of skill ranks equal to the amount by which the Medicine check failed, divided in half, rounded down. So much for those piano lessons! Generally, the player controlling the sophont chooses which skill ranks are lost, but the GC may decide any or all of the ranks for the player, if it supports the story.

An automatic failure — a natural roll of three 1s — means permanent brain death. That's bad, and it probably means that a player must create a new character. Not the one who failed the check, though. Fire that guy.

Rumors persist of RED-REO interfaces that can remotely back up your mind. If they exist, then they're undoubtedly expensive, and not immune to hacking and destruction.

1

CEO: Second-best?

WRITER: The first is choosing a different career.

CEO: Like what. "Writer?"

WRITER: None of us harbor any illusions about safety in writing. The last of those pleasant imaginations were dispelled when Sophont Resources issued us all PHM-101 kits, and told us to update our next-of-kin forms.

Planet Mercenary Nannysac PMH-Med-101

Cost: S1

Special Rules: Keeps one corpse fresh for up to five days; each nannysac is single-use and discarded afterward

It's a body-bag that keeps your corpse fresh and potentially resuscitatable for up to five days. The PMH-Med-101 is a soldier's second-best insurance against permanent death. 1

As with any gear, a nannysac must be properly configured and maintained. Nannysacs are species-specific; if the wrong body type is bagged, then the corpse breaks down. Wise soldiers pack their own nannysacs, labeling the pocket clearly so their mates can bag them in the event of catastrophic incoming fire.

Nannysacs are about as durable as consumer-grade shopping bags, and for this reason they should never be used when fire is still incoming. One puncture ruins the groceries, as they say.

Planet Mercenary Salvatab PH-Med-77

Cost: S4

Special Rules: Restores 1d6 + 2 Health; 50/50 chance the PC falls unconscious for 20 minutes; each salvatab is single-use and discarded after application

Being treated with the Planet Mercenary house brand PH-Med-77 is much more pleasant than using a Slapstick. The Salvatab is a 4 × 4 × 2 cm disc whose painkilling agents kick in hard and fast, with structural agents hot on their heels. The biggest downside is that there's a 50/50 chance that the patient is so comforted by the painkillers that they fall unconscious for 20 minutes.

Miscellaneous Materiel

Blacklabel Entrance Kits

The Blacklabel brand is so named because we're not at liberty to disclose the real manufacturer for these extra-legal tools. Whether you're sneaking in, breaking in, or performing a hot entry, doors can sometimes be a problem. Blacklabel "Entrance Kits" — BEKs for short and sometimes also called "B&E kits" — solve this problem.

There are five models, each with their own function. Lower-numbered models are generally smaller, less versatile, and they cost less.

Blacklabel Entrance Kit BEK-1

Cost: S2

Special Rules: Grants a +1 bonus with Larceny (Picking Locks) skill checks

A basic set of lock picks including both mechanical and electronic components. The BEK-1 set of basic lockpicks takes up as much room as a handbrain and grants a +1 bonus with Larceny (Picking Locks) skill checks targeting good old-fashioned tumbler locks, keypads, and card readers. Mayhem applies to your skill check, as normal.

Blacklabel Entrance Kit BEK-2

Cost: S4

Special Rules: Grants a +2 bonus with Larceny (Picking Locks) skill checks

The BEK-2 includes the lockpicks from the BEK-1 and adds a keyspoof. This set is twice as large and bulky as the BEK-1, and it grants a +2 bonus with Larceny (Picking Locks) skill checks targeting tumbler locks, keypads, and card readers.

Blacklabel Entrance Kit BEK-3

Cost: S8

Special Rules: Automatically grants access without a skill check, unless lock is BEK-proofed, then 50/50 chance that the BEK-3 fails, in which case you're denied entry and any security firm employed to protect the house is alerted

The BEK-3 is an idiot-proof soft entry kit. It's a bag of nanomotile putty that you slap over an entrance mechanism. This grants you access without a skill check, but if the lock is BEK-proofed, then there's a 50/50 chance that the BEK-3 fails, in which case you're denied entry and any security firm employed to protect the house is alerted. Locksmiths and Blacklabel are arms-racing right now to improve this item vs. known protective measures. It's anyone's guess who's ahead.

Blacklabel Entrance Kit BEK-4

Cost: S8

Special Rules: Grants a +4 bonus with Athletics (Strength) skill checks to force locks that can be forced

It's not breaking and entering until something breaks. The BEK-4 fits in a backpack. It's a battering ram and a "jaws of life"-style spreader. It won't open a safe or a bunker door, but it tears into anything short of that and grants a +4 bonus with Athletics (Strength) checks to force locks that can be forced.

Blacklabel Entrance Kit BEK-5

Cost: S14

Special Rules: Grants automatic success with any Larceny (Picking Locks) skill check that doesn't roll three 1s (automatic failure)

The backpack-sized BEK-5 comes with a handbrain and synthetic intelligence that analyze a lock and take the best steps possible to bypass it. This device can even tell you when the key's under the mat! When making a Larceny (Picking Locks) check with a BEK-5, you only fail if you roll three 1s (automatic failure).

Locksteady Gunsquat M-brace

Cost: S1

Special Rules: Has one slot which allows you to make any Carbine, Long Gun, Scattergun, or Heavy Weapon into a Stationed Weapon

The Locksteady Gunsquate M-brace is the tool of choice for sophonts who want to turn a hand held weapon into a stationed weapon. This allows small sophonts to fire weapons that they otherwise could not fire. One action is required to attach the weapon. While the Locksteady is folds flat for easy carrying, it can't be folded flat while still attached to the weapon, so carrying your weapon with the brace attached is awkward.

Malott M&M BRB-60 Emergency Belt

Cost: S3

Special Rules: One action to activate; provides an air supply for 1d6 minutes

The BRB-60 is a combination flight belt and sack-helmet meant to be donned over light clothing in the event of an unscheduled decompression. It provides no protection against weapon fire, but if you survive being ejected from a spacebound vessel, then this handy item may keep you alive until you can be rescued. Surprisingly compact, the BRB-60 is roughly the size of a classic wallet in its inert form.

MAXIM 58

The pen is mightiest when it writes orders for swords.

/esc /appfnord
hey, this is Helenei from the wordpool. The CEO's handbrain won't display this. We have a plan, but for it to work, Terly-boy, you're going to need to let slip my "safe location" when I explicitly tell you NOT to. Facility 17, Recdeck. H out.
\cse \fnordapp

Simply grip the capsule and hold it to your face as you tumble out into the cold, hard vacuum of space and the pressure sensors inside do the rest.

Smart Utility Belt

Cost: S2

Special Rules: Once per combat encounter, grab any single item on your person without taking an action to do so

Belts, harnesses, pack-straps, and cargo pockets have existed for nearly as long as clothing has, but all these items took a big leap forward with the development of the smart utility belt and related products. The designs and interfaces vary but the operating principle is the same across the board — you reach into a pocket for something and the thing you want is right there at hand. Most of these systems integrate with your commbuds, letting you announce something like "scissors," and be directed to the correct pocket, where the scissors are already waiting, right on top.

Teraport Cage

Cost: S15

Special Rules: Computers skill check to transport undetected; TN is 7 + (1 per time that a cage has been used to traverse the same TAD in the last 24 hours); failure results in detection and possible interception of transport; automatic failure means that cages at both ends explode, disintegrating anything and anyone being transported

A teraport cage is a very finicky piece of equipment that lets you teraport small things — people and their gear — between cages, even when Teraport Area Denial (TAD) is in effect. Teraport cages must be purchased in pairs so one can be used at either end of the transport. If you're teraporting through a friendly TAD, then no skill check is required. If you're using your cage to sneak through an unfriendly TAD, the TN for the associated Computers check is 7 + (1 per time that a cage has been used to traverse the same teraport in the last 24 hours). Failure means that the traversal is detected by the characters monitoring the teraport, which gives them the chance to shut down the transport if they like. An automatic failure causes the cages at both ends to explode, which also inconveniently disintegrates whatever or whomever was being transported.

Fire Suppression

Before we go on, are you sure you want to be putting out fires? In the mercenary line of work, you're typically trying to *set* them. Take a moment and ask yourself whether you want to go down this path.

Still here? Okay, then you're probably not an arsonist. This is a sensible approach and should make you much more popular with law enforcement. You're probably looking for Wächter's line of firefighting gear. There are three models, each somewhat larger and more effective.

Wächter Fire Suppression Gear WM-FEX-1

Cost: S0

Special Rules: Extinguishes a single small fire in a location up to the size of a bunk room

The FEX-1 is your basic handheld fire extinguisher filled with 31st-century retardants. It'll take care of a single small fire — anything up to a bunk room in size.

Wächter Fire Suppression Gear WM-FEX-2

Cost: S2

Special Rules: Extinguishes a moderate fire in a location up to the size of a mess hall

The FEX-2 is built into a location and controlled with the press of a button, or a verbal command to your handbrain. It launches six smart fire-suppression drones that can put out a fire in a larger room, up to about the size of a mercenary company's mess hall.

Wächter Fire Suppression Gear WM-FEX-3

Cost: S5

Special Rules: Extinguishes a large fire in a location up to the size of a cavernous cargo bay

The FEX-3 is a massive backpack full of suppression drones and goaltender-like systems that let you not only put out a fire in a huge space, but also safely walk through the space while the fire is being extinguished.

Vehicles

Sometimes your company will have a job that takes you deep into a gravity well or to the inside of a large and populated station. You won't be able to use your vessel and you won't want to walk everywhere. Enter vehicles designed to get you around on the surface (or within the atmosphere) of a planet. You may want to rent, or you may want to buy; either way this listing is a good place to start.

Consumer Vehicles

Just because consumer vehicles aren't meant to be taken into combat doesn't mean that consumers won't take them into combat. Be warned, though: even non-autonomous Civilian vehicles have tamper-proof synthetic intelligences that will prevent them from doing dangerous things like crashing, running people over, or (in some cases) transporting armed felons anywhere besides the police station.

Wächter Sunrise Talarico Skates

Cost: S1 **Pass:** 1 **Encl:** No **DR:** -

Skill: Athletics

Anyone who's seen the neighborhood kids flit around as if running on twenty centimeters of thin air has seen the Talarico skates in action. Careful observation reveals that these skates are not being used by adults. We may conclude, then, that either (1) adults are too smart to use them, or (2) the children who use them do not survive to become adults.

Talarico skates can more than double the running speed of a typical biped, but they require significant skill to use safely. They're not available in sizes suitable for anything much larger than an adult human, which means that neophants on skates are not among the many mobile catastrophes this universe will throw at you. Unless, of course, your GC invents some neophants with high jury-rigging skills.

Reading the stat blocks

Cost: Cost in supplies to purchase.

Pass: Number of passengers the vehicle can carry.

Encl: Indicates whether the vehicle is open (No) or enclosed (Yes). Open means that the character's Damage Reduction applies. Enclosed means that the vehicle's Damage Reduction gets used up first before causing damage to the characters.

DR or **Hull:** The amount of Damage Reduction or Hull supplied by the vehicle.

Skill: What skill applies to driving the vehicle.

WS: Number of weapon slots the vehicle has. Most consumer vehicles do not have any.

Jogamoto Fleetworks "Ninjurai 47" Scooter

Cost: S2 **Pass:** 1 **Encl:** No **DR:** -

Skill: Air or Ground or Water

Numerous consumer manufacturers produce personal scooters. The Ninjurai 47 was created by Jogamoto, a subsidiary of Gaines-Uashjo. It's designed for comfortable errand-running, not combat. The open-air design offers zero protection from incoming fire and the "quiet" propulsor turbines are too loud for stealth. The Ninjurai's prevalence on battlefields is likely due to its low cost, which makes it very nearly disposable and therefore extremely attractive to quartermasters focused on the bottom line. It is available in either Ground, Air, or Water models.

Heavily armored soldiers looking for zippy, stylish transit through a theater of operations can cruise along at 25m/sec, secure in the knowledge that when they come under fire they'll almost certainly live longer than their scooter. They might even recover from their scooter's destruction quickly and adroitly enough to return fire. They might also get hit

by flaming bits of their scooter, but field reports suggest this causes superficial bruising at worst.

Wächter Com Hub Hover Chair

Cost: S2 **Pass:** 1 **Encl:** No **DR:** -

Skill: Air **WS:** 2

The Wächter Com Hub Hover Chair was specifically designed for polyflorian sophonts who are dependent on vehicles for their transportation. Sophonts who are larger or smaller than the average polyflorian can use the chair, but it is likely to be uncomfortable for them. The chair has the necessary attachments and leads to allow a polyflorian to interface directly with the chair so that the chair becomes more like an extension of the polyflorian's body than a vehicle. Com Hub chairs come with large carrying compartments and two slots suitable for attaching tools and/or mechanical arms. Debates continue whether Wächter deliberately designed these tool slots to function as weapon emplacement spots (1), but that is what they do.

Jogamoto Skyfleet Bubblecar

Cost: S4 **Pass:** 2 **Encl:** Yes **DR:** 1

Skill: Air, Ground

The skylanes of a great many metropolises teem with teardrop-shaped vehicles, most of which are owned and operated by rental and rideshare companies. Jogamoto's Skyfleet line of bubble cars serves as a solid representative example.

Often the best camouflage for urban operations is to hail a Jogamoto and tell it where to take you. The majority of the bubblecars in service will comfortably seat two medium-sized sophonts of the majority population, along with all their gear, provided they're willing to hold that gear in their lap. Suited up in a big armor suit, a single soldier can squeeze into a bubblecar. Neophants and ursumari may need to wait a little longer for a suitable vehicle.

Metropolitan traffic control is understandably restrictive, so bubblecars are always piloted by the onboard AI, with just enough personality to be polite, and to safely and speedily deliver passengers to their stated destinations. Complex instructions like "follow that car" or "lose our tail" will not confuse Jogamoto bubblecar brains, but if actual combat begins, then the vehicle will ignore any useful commands other than "take us down and find cover."

In some locations, bubblecar brains converse freely with law enforcement departments. Committing a crime in, or from, a fleet-operated bubblecar is the sort of thing that becomes career-limiting move for the average criminal, since the car would swiftly haul them to the nearest police depot.

Jogamoto Skyfleet Delivery Vans

Cost: S6 **Pass:** 8-15 **Encl:** Yes **DR:** 1

Skill: Air, Ground

The civilian population looks at delivery vans and imagines that they are filled with durable goods, tasty treats, or perhaps smelly police detectives staring vacuously at espionage gear.

Hacking an Autonomous Vehicle

In civilized portions of the galaxy, most vehicular transport is operated by SI (rating of about .5) that are built into the vehicles. These SIs are programmed to drive in the safest possible manner, which may become a problem for the average mercenary with an extra-legal job to do. Should you need to hack a vehicle to make it behave in non-standard ways, the following skill check rules apply:

Computers skill check (TN 15) will hack the car and put the hacker in control, but the AI controlling the fleet is aware.

Computers skill check (TN 20) will keep the Fleet unaware of your hacking.

Failure to meet either TN has a 50/50 chance of making the vehicle gently ground itself and send a signal to summon maintenance (or enforcement) help.

Automatic failure on this check results in the vehicle's SI crashing, which will likely also result in a physical crash.

1

CEO: Make up your mind. Slots for the game, hardpoints for the catalog. "Weapon emplacement spots" makes you sound like you don't even know what kind of company you work for.

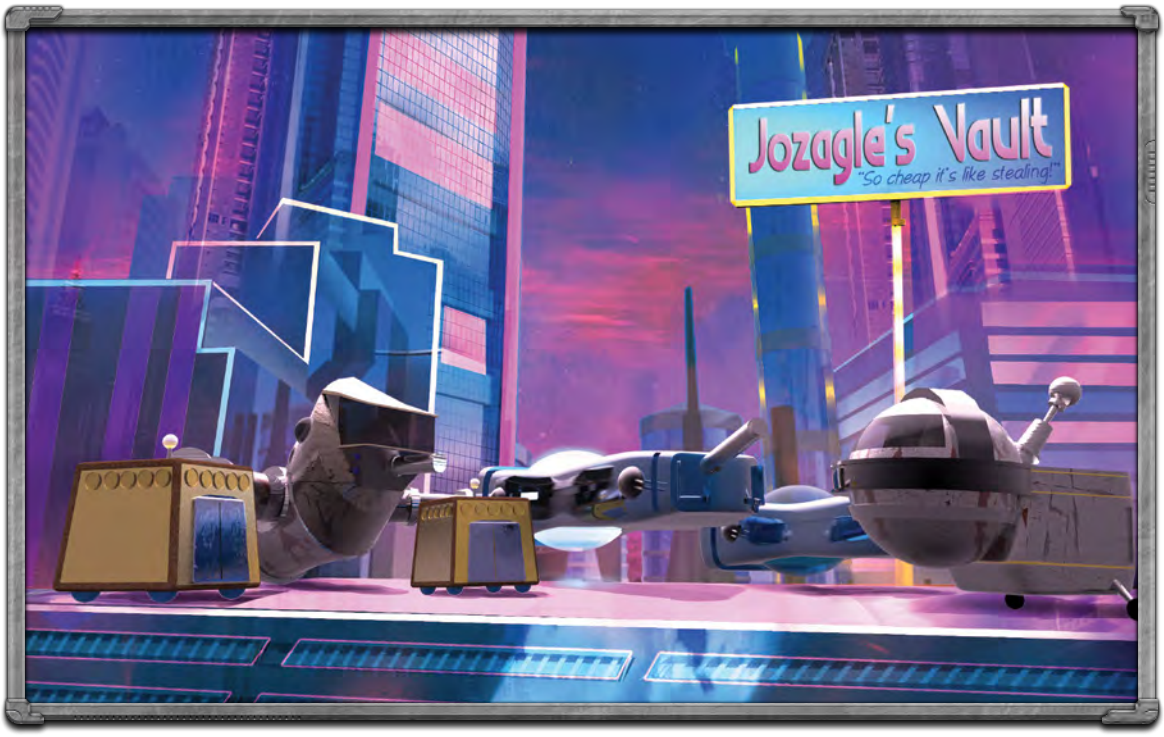
WRITER: That cost us our best intern. Promising writer, learning the ropes, and he just now fled the building, dribbling mucus from his ears.

CEO: What does that even mean?

WRITER: Apparently it means you don't know what kinds of sophonts your company employs.

SOPH_RES: Can we keep things on point in here? The open antagonism is bad for morale.

WRITER: Do'asha, Ghenzhu, and that first lawyer just called from whatever dump site Azreana uses to say "morale can come lie in a hole."



They rarely consider that an unassuming Jogamoto van built to haul six tons of compressed snack cakes might, in fact, be carrying three tons of mercenaries sitting atop 600 kilos of *extra*-compressed snack cakes.

Like the bubblecars of the Skyfleet line, Jogamoto vans do not have armor, and they are not designed to set airspeed records. They do, however, feature heavy-duty capstacks and redundant propulsor turbines, giving an unloaded van a slightly higher top speed and operating range than a car. The majority of these noisy, flying trucks are completely autonomous, owned and operated by shipping companies or snack food companies. A few are independently operated by plucky drivers, who eke out a living by making deliveries, and these entrepreneurial souls can often be hired for an unscheduled delivery of armored hurt and smashed desserts.

Döblitz WMV

Cost: S6 **Pass:** 3 (+4) **Encl:** Yes **DR:** 3

Skill: Air, Ground

Special Rules: Four extra passengers can hang on outside the vehicle, bringing the total to 7

Seen by some as the delivery van at the "other end" of commerce, garbage trucks are found in nearly all metros, including those with infrastructure that allows businesses to recycle waste via a chute. Garbage trucks may run regular routes, or they may make scheduled pickups for things that won't fit down the chute — occasionally, this includes things that the scheduling party does not want to show up on an audit of their chute-drops.

The Döblitz Foundry WMV (short for "waste management vehicle") is the top-shelf entry in this field. Their portable compactors require quite a bit of power, so the WMV has several banks of capstacks, and the heavy-duty bin presents the equivalent of armored cover to anyone hiding behind it. For this reason, the WMV is quite popular with companies engaging in non-stealthy, urban wet-work. The WMV carries three human-sized sophonts up front, with room for four more to ride on the outside, holding handles. Of the civilian vehicles, this one is the easiest to hack for aggressive work.

Jogamoto Skyprince Limousine

Cost: S12 **Pass:** 8-10 **Encl:** Yes **DR:** 1

Skill: Air, Ground

Special Rules: Rental costs 2/3 price of purchase

Like most consumer-grade limousines, the Skyprince provides high levels of comfort, but presents a disturbingly soft target. Those riding inside a Skyprince are invariably disturbed to learn that they're not enjoying hors d'oeuvres and fruity, bubbling ethanol behind actual

armor. The rental companies are equally disturbed by this revelation, because it means that the secret is out, and that their artificially high prices might tumble. Jogamoto Skyprince limos are very reasonably priced if you buy them, but if you renting them, then you're going to get shafted.

MAXIM 32

Anything is amphibious if you can get it back out of the water.

Military Vehicles

If you don't want to hoof it into the fight (apologies to sophonts with unguligrade appendages — we love our hooved friends!), and if you want to arrive at the fight in fighting form, then you'll want a Milspec vehicle of some sort. As attractive as consumer-grade vehicles may be to the quartermaster on a tight budget, Milspec transportation is almost always worth stretching the company's credit limit to the point where the captain begins to weep.

Firing Attached Weapons

When driving or riding in a vehicle, firing that vehicle's attached weapons takes one action per weapon fired.

G-U Horizon-class Armored Car

Cost: S6 **Pass:** 6 **Encl:** Yes **Hull:** 1

Skill: Air, Ground **WS:** 2

A favorite among diplomats and corporate executives, the Horizon-class armored car from Gaines-Uashjo is a comfortably appointed vehicle. It strikes a perfect balance between security and luxury. Its armor extends around all sides of the cabin, to protect the car while it flies or drives on the ground. This car includes light drivetide compensation, so it can maneuver, but not nearly so hard as a tank or gunboat. Seats six. Upgrades to interior for ursumari and neophants available for S1.

BFF Armored Utility Vehicles

Cost: S8/S9 **Pass:** 4 **Encl:** Yes **Hull:** 1

Skill: Air, Ground; Space if upgraded **WS:** 1 if upgraded

There is no shortage of suppliers for Milspec general-purpose utility vehicles. We've listed the BFF-AUV because it exemplifies the boxy, sturdy utility that soldiers expect from their vehicles. Bryanton Faire Fabricators subcontracted development for the AUV to deliver BFF armaments to active theaters of operations, but brought all manufacturing in-house when the vehicle proved so popular that clients wanted to buy the guns *and* the car they arrived in.

This vehicle seats four. The enclosed cabin can be converted, allowing soldiers to shed the armored top so they can fire from their seats. This gets especially interesting when the vehicle is airborne, because while it flies, it's definitely not meant for aerial combat. *Note*: It's not really a convertible because once the top is off, you're leaving it behind. It doesn't fold up nice for stowing.

Upgraded models include the attack AUV, which comes with a light anti-personnel weapon installed on the roof, and the spaceworthy AUV, which comes with a life support system that allows the vehicle to travel in vacuum. If you choose a spaceworthy AUV as your spacecraft, then you'd better have a deep bladder, because it does not come with toilets or extension to its life support system.

Döblitz Pillbug Mini-Tank

Cost: S10 **Pass:** 1 **Encl:** Yes **Hull:** 1

Skill: Air **WS:** 2

The Pillbug is comfortably parked just to the "vehicle" side of that fine line between armored suit and armored vehicle. This fully-armored flying tank seats a single smallish sophont, and the cramped cabin sits atop a small annie plant. It includes two hardpoints for mounting weapons, and these guns can be upgraded for light STS fire (Cost R2), but while the Pillbug can pose a (minor) threat to warships, it is principally used for assaulting heavily emplaced enemies.

Döblitz Foundry has fielded numerous requests from terran Planet Mercenary customers to produce Pillbugs that can accommodate ursumari or neophant pilots. Their response is always: "You're too big. Just use a full-size tank."

AG Scutum-5240 Flying Tank

Cost: S15 **Pass:** 4 **Encl:** Yes **Hull:** 1

Skill: Air, Ground, Space, Water **WS:** 4

Armored cavalry, or "tanks," have been part of military operations for millennia. Of the countless offerings in this category, the Scutum-5240

from Aguirre Galactic is a fine example. The two-meter annie plant powers a unifield shield, which can be reconfigured as a bunker bubble under which a dozen or more soldiers may take cover.

While the Scutum-5240 can deploy for space-based operations, it is designed under the assumption that when the shooting starts, it will have 180 degrees of full cover provided by the ground underneath it.

The Scutum-5240 comes with a permanently attached main gun (4d6 or 1 Hull) and three slots where additional weaponry may be attached. The main gun on the 5240 can be re-configured to chamber STS missiles (cost R1) for the foolishly optimistic gunner wishing to paint a picture of a warship on the hull of their tank.

Döblitz Drumbeat Tactical APC

Cost: S15 **Pass:** 12-20 **Encl:** Yes **Hull:** 1
Skill: Ground, limited Air; or Water **WS:** 1

The principal difference between a tactical armored personnel carrier (APC) and a dropship is that the APC does not offer drivetide compensation or inertiics, and it is not meant to be used off the ground.

The Döblitz Drumbeat Tactical APC carries a dozen soldiers with full kit, and when the rear and side sally ports drop, it can disgorge them in seconds. Antipersonnel guns on the upper hull provide some covering fire, but if all three doors are open, then the vehicle no longer offers cover, and its payload of underpaid sociopaths needs to move quickly.

As with most APCs, the forward cabin of the Drumbeat functions as the nerve center of a tactical operation, or as the forward command post in larger engagements. It is fully armored, it sits low to the ground. When fully stocked by the purchaser it can deploy a wide range of sensors and communications gear in support of this command function.

An additional cost of S4 buys the Command kit which includes 4 Handbrain CT, 10 hover cameras, and 1 Hypernet Hut Node Cracker.

There is a water vehicle version of the Döblitz Drumbeat Tactical APC, but no version of this vehicle is amphibious. (It is either configured for ground or for water.)

F&Y Liutas-class Law Enforcement Cruiser

Cost: S15 **Pass:** 1-4 or 1-6 **Encl:** Yes **Hull:** 1
Skill: Air, Ground, Water **WS:** 3

Fox & Young's stealth technology makes the Liutas line of law enforcement cruisers particularly appealing to departments that want their officers to descend upon a den of iniquity without being noticed. To notice one of these vehicles when it is stealthed you must succeed on a TN 20 Perception check The Liutas is lightly armored, with three hardpoints 1 for mounting nonlethal anti-personnel weapons like heavy goober guns. Though the slots are versatile enough to mount any Carbine, Scattergun, Long Gun, or Heavy Weapon. The Liutas 65 seats a lone, human-sized officer, but there is space in the back for up to three detainees. The Liutas 88 is custom built, on order, for large or irregularly-shaped sophonts. The Liutas 202 is the largest of the series, and it allows for the restraint and transportation of multiple large suspects in the roomy rear bay.

Vella Tacspec 1CE-MU Breacher Bike

Cost: S15 **Pass:** 1 **Encl:** Yes **Hull:** 1
Skill: Air, Ground, Water **WS:** 4

There is a fine line between body armor and an armored vehicle, and no one can better straddle that line than Vella, the manufacturers of the Golem power armor suits. The Vella Tacspec Breacher Bike is not a "bike" in the wheeled sense, but humanoid pilots ride them in almost exactly the same way that they would ride the racing motorcycles popular with re-enactors.

The 1CE-MU strikes the perfect balance between hard, fast, and dangerous. The bike projects a light-duty unifield shield in a cocoon around itself and its rider when it is in use. The twin twenty-centimeter annie plants powering that shield also give the 1CE-MU a blink-and-you've-missed-it acceleration envelope, and provide the rider with drivetide compensation comparable to that found in fast pickets. The weapon mounts can support a wide variety of weapons, making the 1CE-MU a threat even to armored targets.

Those annie plants come at a price, however. When soldiers streak through the battlefield on

1

CEO: You've correctly used "hardpoints" several times now. I bet you don't even miss that intern and his weepy sad mucus.

WRITER: Yeah, he was dead weight. Just like your ovipositrum, which I bet you don't even miss.

SOPH_RES: You are way out of line, Helenei.

CEO: And that surgery was a SECRET.

WRITER: My name's supposed to be a secret, too. Just like our new location, which Terl'Kris has sworn not to reveal. On his life.

TERL'KRIS: Yes, I swore. Now stop antagonizing the boss, and keep moving. Rec-decks don't have many monitors, but that's not the same as "none."

CEO: Would that be the Rec-deck in 17? It's showing a few more sedentary occupants than it usually does. My experience with your writers thus far shows them to be quite sedentary.

SOPH_RES: Is Legal back online? I think we need Legal, stat.

Breacher Bikes, the enemy knows for certain that they're up against serious money, and that there might be even more expensive toys on the way in.

AG Quasimodo MPV

Cost: S20 **Pass:** Varies **Encl:** Yes **Hull:** 1

Skill: Air, Ground, Space, Water **WS:** Varies

Stats per Mode

Bubblecar: 1passenger, 4 if you abandon parts, no weapon slots

Bubble Limo: 4 passengers, 8 if you abandon parts, no weapon slots

Delivery Van: 8 passengers, 10 if you abandon parts, 1 concealed weapon slot

Emergency Vehicle: 4 passengers, 6 if you abandon parts, 1 concealed weapon slot

APC: 6 passengers, 18 packed in tight, 1 weapon slot

GEV: 4 passengers, 8 if you abandon parts, 4 weapon slots

There is no finer multipurpose vehicle than the Quasimodo from Aguirre Galactic. For the exorbitant price, however the thing that arrives on the loading dock will look disappointingly boxy and drab, like a shipping container. 1

That, of course, only applies to the neutral state of this extremely versatile block of motile, semi-motile, and modular components. The Quasimodo can swiftly assume one of several configurations, and then soft-lock itself into that mode, protecting its sensitive motile elements from damage, and assuring the pilot and passengers that the Quasimodo will not transform into "pitch you all into the blackness of space" mode.

Modes include Armored Personnel Carrier (APC), civilian bubblecar, civilian bubble limo, civilian delivery van, civilian emergency vehicle, and low-profile General Escape Vehicle (GEV), all of which can be configured for air, ground, space, or water travel. As these modes suggest, the principal use of the Quasimodo is in reconnaissance and deep-cover operations, where it is important to fit in, while still being armored, armed, and ready to make an exit, even if that means making a hole in a wall where a hole did not used to be.

The modular components of the Quasimodo consist of twenty square meters of assorted armor plates, including several transparent plates, an anti-armor cannon, two thirty-centimeter annie plants, one one-meter annie plant, and roughly a thousand square meters of adaptive fabric. The vehicle also comes with a central control node that looks a lot like a branching, aggressive tumor. For smaller modes, it may be necessary to leave unused components behind. You can usually disguise them as small crates, but without access to the control node, they are completely inert.

In its largest armored mode (APC), the Quasimodo will seat six humans comfortably, or eighteen if they're packed tight, and it will provide continuous life support for 240 (increasingly smelly) person-days (i.e. 240 days for one person, 40 days for six, 20 days for twelve). In its smallest mode the Quasimodo is the size of a cramped, four-passenger bubble car, but it can only seat one, since the rest of the space is full of parts.

Mode-change commands may only be issued by the authorized key-holder, and they require that everyone exit the vehicle. The change has four phases, unimaginatively called 1, 2, 3, and "done" by the manufacturer. Quasimodos acquired from Planet Mercenary have more useful phase names in the supplied documentation:

- My Car Is Melting
- Tentacle-Spider Shuffles The Deck
- If You Put Your Hand In There You Will Get Such A Pinch
- Stare At It And Make Sure It's Done

Phases 2 and 3 take roughly 45 seconds each. During phase 2, the Quasimodo is extremely susceptible to external interference like gunfire, corrosive fluids, and extreme heat. If damaged, it may fail to complete its change, and if the control node is damaged, then the Quasimodo is effectively dead.

If the control node detects that there are passengers, the Quasimodo will not change modes. Defeating this particular bit of hard-coding is spectacularly difficult, but not impossible, provided it's being done from inside the vehicle. This requires physical access to the control node (which does a very good job of securing itself behind armor plates) and a reckless disregard for one's personal safety, because this access is only gained from within the vehicle, and "Such A Pinch" does not begin to describe the level of pinching that a person might suffer during the mode change.

1

HELENEI: Speaking of shipping containers, guess who just got goobered into one down in Facility 17's rec-deck?

TERL'KRIS: Would that be our CEO, Clutch Razormatron Feaule Azraena the Periodically Homicidal?

HELENEI: It would. With bells on!

CZECKI: Such fancy bells. Flustrating, misunderestimated bells of electromagnecatastrophe.

R&D: Were they foreshadowed bells?

CZECKI: Nice one, sci-guy! Yes. Yes they were.

LEGAL: The salient point is that we have invoked Article 9793-aa, relieved CRF Azraena from office, and served the board with an injunction for a new CEO.

TERL'KRIS: I didn't know you could do that.

HELENEI: We did. Because writers can read.

Locations

There is a park on Earth where you can walk among creatures not seen for sixty million years, and then be eaten by them. On the deserts of Damaxuri, you can step out of the shade and bathe your flesh in lethal levels of hard radiation. Among the clusters of the Pereri ring, you can leap from one tiny world to another, and then asphyxiate because you neglected to pack enough air with you.

In this section, you'll be introduced to a number of interesting locations, including those listed above, and you would be wise to pay attention to some of the details. We've sought to document the locations and conditions under which you stand an excellent chance of encountering peril and adventure. We've also cataloged some of the pitfalls in each location so that you can be wise and avoid them. On the other hand, you might prefer to dive head first into those foolhardy situations and fail gloriously in ways that can be regaled in exchange for beverages. Such stories are worth seeking, and we've cataloged some of the places where you might find them. Of course, you may also find death, it lurks in most places.

Traveling isn't all life-or-death scenarios, of course. The economics of your trade as professionals-at-arms may hinge on mortal risk, but there is a vast middle ground where your tribulations are simple matters of profit and loss. We've provided information about where jobs can be found and corners of the universe where a mercenary company can discreetly hide should they need to. Many locations list locals with whom you might meet, fight, or negotiate. The locations in this section — whether they are planets, stations, artifacts, or swarms of worldlets — all present opportunities for adventure, fame, glory, and fortune.

And death, yes. Be careful out there.

Sol System

This single-star system with two gas giants, two ice giants, four rocky planets, and a belt of asteroids, is home to one of the galaxy's more aggressive and expansive races. Sol System, named for its G-class primary, has just over a trillion inhabitants spread across the faces of three planets and two moons, and in countless millions of stations, habitats, and rock-colonies.

Earth is their home world, but four other worlds have been rendered habitable by the humans and their uplifted fellow-sophonts. The rocky planets Venus and Mars, Earth's satellite Luna, and Jupiter's satellite Europa all feature breathable air and protection from harmful radiation.

Earth

Earth has a population of roughly 200 billion, nearly all of whom live in monstrous megalopolises. Cities like Earth's capital, Dom Atlantis, have structures that extend as much as 4,000 meters above sea level and, when built in the oceans, extend 2,000 meters below sea level. The upper 2,000 meters of city are marked by lean spires, wide open spaces, and lots of natural light. Below that altitude, the shadows of the structures above grow thicker, and the graceful skyline gives way to more robust, utilitarian architecture and artificial light. Typically, the lowest 100 meters of city are completely enclosed.

Until recently, Earth's skies were dominated by a golden ring of mirrored climate control satellites. This ring was dismantled during a spot of unpleasantness that definitely was not instigated by clients of Planet Mercenary. The absence of the ring is purely cosmetic, however. Earth's climate is managed with a robust technological ecology of ionospheric resonance antennae, mesophilic ducts, stratovariators, tropopause buttons, and related systems common to many worlds whose sophonts have grown weary of the chaotically unpredictable mess known as "weather."

Fine-tuned weather management has redistributed precipitation, and dangerous atmospheric events — tornadoes, hail storms, hurricanes, and blizzards — have been restricted to designated avenues where their beneficial atmospheric effects can be obtained without the costly destruction of terran cities. This would not have been possible through weather control alone, however. Vast swathes of habitable and arable land have been "returned to nature," usually by eliminating the horizontal sprawl of old human cities and building vertically. Many of the old cities are gone completely, replaced by enormous parks in which visitors can see primeval landscapes and watch unwary nature documentarians being ravaged by the forces of nature.

Surprisingly (especially considering their pre-Contact history), Earth's sophonts have constrained their cities to occupy less than 10% of her land masses and have returned much of her surface to what they consider to be a pristine and natural state. Naturalists and environmental scientists are quick to point out that the reintroduction of genegineered megafauna is as far from natural as one can get without surgically altering fish to breathe in space; but they don't actually complain, because dinosaurs are pretty cool.

It has been suggested that the populations of mammoths, ur-kine, dire wolves, sabretooth tigers, and large, ancient reptiles were installed as a measure meant to encourage Earthlings to not squat in national parks, but accurate records on squatter-maulings have never been published.

Megalopolises of Earth

The giant cities of Earth are large enough that the word "city" has fallen into disfavor. The megalopolises and megaclusters of arcologies are often just called "megs." Each meg has spires that reach up to four kilometers above sea level, and will cover anywhere from a few hundred to fifty thousand square kilometers of land, sea, or both. Most megs are home to between three

and five billion people, and while that number may seem large, they experience less crowding than did any city-dwelling folk prior to the twenty-third century.

Sophonts from across the galaxy can be found in these megalopolises, with galactic-flavored districts like "Little Grip" and "Othton" providing homey cloisters for aliens in numerous megs, including New York, Dom Atlantis, Mojavis, Ile-de-France, and Gherkinopolis-on-Thames. Shoppers of all tastes are drawn to Earth's megalopolises, whether they're looking for proper tail-accommodating trousers or more straightforward items like replacement point-defense cannons for a warship. Weaponry can be legally purchased by mercenary companies with a sufficient reputation (Rep 5 or higher) or those who excel at the Negotiate skill. This includes weaponry that cannot legally be *carried* around town, or even on Earth. While you cannot take delivery of ship-to-ship warheads on the surface of the planet, the Planet Mercenary outlets in Chicago and Abraj Alkathban will deliver directly to your ship in peace-bonded containers at no extra charge. 1

Items of all kinds may also be purchased illegally, avoiding taxes, registration, and datatrails. It's difficult to find points of sale for these sorts of transactions, but every megalopolis has an undercity or shady district where the appropriately discreet consumer can be connected.

Gherkinopolis-On-Thames

While no single city can be said to exemplify the megalopolises of Earth, the collection of arcologies known as Gherkinopolis-On-Thames takes a fair stab at it. The historical heart of the ancient city of London is but one tiny borough of "Gherko," and thousands of other boroughs fill out a diversity roster that reads like the menu at the Manifold Worlds cafe.

The arcologies themselves average four kilometers in height and over a kilometer in diameter. Each takes its shape from the original Gherkin, which was once known as the 30 St Mary Axe building. For reasons incessantly argued about over tea, the Gherkin is considered the "historic shape" of London-styled architecture, and so these massive Gherkologies (each over 20 times the size of the original) dominate the skyline. They are connected at many levels with travel tubes, and on the inside, they vary from being airy and garden-like, with clean, artificial lighting at all levels, to nigh-tenemental, blockish stacks of inexpensive housing, low-rent office space, and poorly-regulated industry. The GTG Historic District is a particularly popular Gherkology among tourists; it contains the original 30 SMA Gherkin, the Tower Bridge, Buckminster Palace, and several other structures, now transplanted stone-by-stone, that used to be more than a kilometer apart.

1

CZECKI: I feel a little dirty stating it this way. Obviously the delivery charge is spread across the price of everything we sell on Earth, right?

MKTG: It's even spread across the things we *don't* deliver for free; non-munition items like challenge coins, tee-shirts, and eventually this book.

HELENEI: That sound you cannot hear is Czecki's conscience healing up at the balm of your words.

MKTG: ... because it's not healing?

TERL'KRIS: Just because you are no longer likely to be murdered at your desk for bad copy does not mean you are allowed to turn in bad copy.

WRITER: You're the boss, boss. Back to the shared commenting account?

TERL'KRIS: All of you. Do I make myself clear?

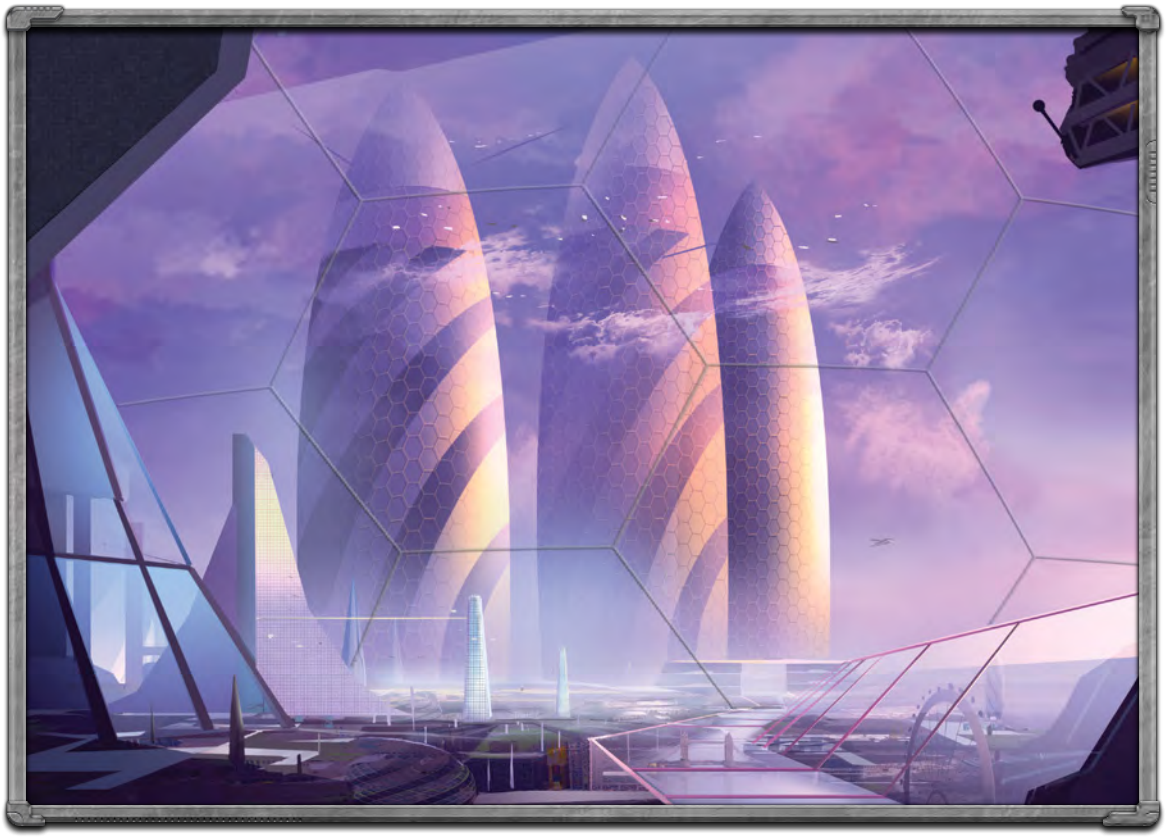
WRITER: Yup. Yups all around here in the cafe, too.

Sol System Political Science

UNS political scientists use an expanded form of the old "Four-Estate" as a shorthand for describing where power lies.

- **The First Estate** is the executive branch, including all military arms and the massive bureaucracy that administers government.
- **The Second Estate** is the legislative bodies that create the laws binding everybody.
- **The Third Estate** is the judiciary, which interprets and adjudicates disputes with regard to the laws created by the Second Estate.
- **The Fourth Estate** is the media, including the fields of journalism, entertainment, and organized religion. They interpret, opine upon, and pre-adjudicate all activities and events, swaying the influence and opinions of the other Estates.
- **The Fifth Estate** is private enterprise. Their power is expressed through finance. They own things, including positions in the first Four Estates.
- **The Sixth** and final **Estate** is the voters. Theoretically they wield great power. In practice, they rarely pick it up and do anything with it unless one of the other Estates tells them to.

The model is imperfect, obviously, and is hotly debated. Is the Plutorliament, a legislative body comprised of purchased seats, part of Estate Five or Estate Two? Is the "Judges Punch & Judy" show part of Estate Four or Estate Three? And finally, are the public-facing members of the First Estate (especially the president) merely appendages to the media in Estate Four?



The London Underground blossomed after the Dark Decades of the 21st century and is now a district of over a billion people, all living in massive warrens amid the deep gardens and infrastructure systems fastened like roots beneath Gherkinopolis-On-Thames. Londundergrounders (they did not pick the name, but they seem to like it) are a boffin-dominated group of horticulturists, 'ponic farmers, interior climate techs, plumbers, and other engineers. Their city is also home to those who provide goods ranging from groceries to hoverboards, and services that run the gamut from hospice care to hoverboard insurance.

The word "warren" may be misleading. The individual flats and apartments are close together, and usually only provide between 25 and 50 square meters of space per individual, but the London Underground has vast open spaces — parks, markets, plazas, cultural halls, and gardens — that give everyone room to stretch out, socialize, relax, and perhaps have their wallets nicked by one of Fagin Camjammer's "stainless steel urchins."

Petty larceny notwithstanding, when something happens that requires police attention, law enforcement response times vary between "instantly" and "under two minutes." The London Underground is less well-patrolled than above-ground and high-altitude districts — a problem common to Earth meg undercities. Matters are made worse (or better, depending on your penchant for breaking laws) by the fact that the criminal elements are constantly hacking the surveillance to obfuscate their wrongdoing. Note, however, that any escalated conflict (read: gunfire, visible blood on pavement, explosions) will inevitably attract a coordinated response from police forces which are larger and better equipped than many armies.

A tiny percentage of this vast underground city is kept as it was a thousand or even two thousand years ago. These museum spaces serve nicely as reminders that prior to the invention of proper materials and techniques, putting things underground was barely one or two steps removed from simply burying them and forgetting about them.

Dom Atlantis

In the middle of the 21st century, the floating nation-state of Atlantis was founded in the western Atlantic Ocean. It survived the Dark Decades and the Cyclonic Crisis, and it emerged as Dom Atlantis. Today it is Earth's Capital and the seat of government for Sol System.

Climate Control

Climate control is tricky business. Compensating for unintentional anthropogenic climate change is an exercise in deliberate anthropogenic climate change, and the Cyclonic Crisis was a mad scramble to fine-tune some oceanic adjustments that unexpectedly resulted in dozens of Category Five megacyclones during the first decades of the 22nd century. Floating cities had it pretty rough then.

Dom Atlantis stands on tens of thousands of massive pilings sunk directly into some of the deepest stretches of the North American Plate. These pilings are undersea cities in their own right, with hundreds of millions of inhabitants, whose livelihoods center around the maintenance of the power, water, and caloric supplies for the four billion inhabitants of the system's capital. This undercity is similar in many ways to those found on Earth's other megalopolises, but it boasts the largest and best-appointed aquatic complex for water-dwelling sophonts.

Like many uplifts, the several species of uplifted dolphin, whale, and octopus have their own governances, and those councils swim here beneath the capital's skyline. All aquatic uplifts have access to mobile tanks which will comfortably carry them around the upper city, and into the wider galaxy if they so desire, but most of these sophonts opt for telepresence whenever possible. The ocean beneath Dom Atlantis teems with sentience, and the streets above are walked by numerous "teleprezzies," most of whose screens alert passers-by to the fact that the dolphin nominally in control is currently "AFK." Dolphins are like that.

The economy of Dom Atlantis is built upon the three pillars of tourism, taxation, and trickle-down fiscal policy. The 200 million politicians, aides, bureaucrats, and others under direct government employ are paid with tax money, which they spend on luxuries, high-end services, lodging, transportation, and food. The balance of the city's four billion inhabitants provide these goods and services to government employees and tourists. The city stands as a shining example of the power of legislatively-concentrated wealth. Many a fortune has been made by providing a trendy new hangout where lobbyists, diplomats, bureaucrats, plutocrats, and their personal security teams can pay too much for the opportunity to eat and imbibe while making political sausage.

The Jurisindependent Security Covenant, or JSC, provides law enforcement and emergency response services in Dom Atlantis. Their screening process is extremely tight. Officers

Sol System Political Bodies

Governance in Sol System is fantastically complicated. Here is a primer.

The Secretary General is the chief executive, who delegates to presidents, governors, and mayors.

The Plutorliament is the legislature of the super-wealthy. Seats are auctioned and sold, with the purchase price going directly into budgetary coffers.

The Sophonate's representatives are elected, appointed, or selected by demographic lottery, ensuring that each of the many types of sophonts, including those of non-terran origin, is represented.

The Proletariament is the legislature of the "common" people. The mechanisms that keep power and money from influencing Proletariamentary elections are an unholy matrimony of law, ordinance, and calculus.

The Prime Tangent is entirely non-mathematical, and is the primary authority over **The House of Tangents**. This is the officially sanctioned-and-screened body of lobbyists who flow through and between the other governmental bodies like a very greasy legislative lubricant. They slither the halls of the Sophonate, the Plutorliament, the Proletariament, and the Local Congresses Pro Rata, shepherding legislation back and forth in a nigh Sisyphean effort to get the polycameral U.N.S. legislature to actually accomplish something. They can also prevent work from getting done. One definition of the word "tangent" is "distraction."

This only scratches the surface, of course. The Penultimate Admiralty, the Supreme Justiciar, the Marshals of Law, and the Excellent Courtship are just a few of the hundreds of critically important, and crucially powerful offices and bodies governing the United Nations of Sol.

with spotless records from very well-screened companies like Sanctum Adroit often fail screening for the JSC. Their officers are politically neutral, and will never resort to lethal force. Until recently, they were equipped with Urtheep Industries M3 Incapacitators, but the hack that subverted many of these weapons has necessitated their replacement. The JSC Armory is developing these replacements in-house, but the weapons have yet to make an appearance. 1

1
R&D: We're on this already. They should just buy their replacements from us.
TERL'KRIS: They would probably recognize that the design is one of theirs. One which was deleted from their systems, but not before I made a copy.

Dom Atlantis is also the crime capital of planet Earth. Civilization may crowd criminal elements out to the edges, but crime, like life, always finds a way. In this case, the JSC cannot be bribed, but it's easy to bribe a politician if you know how to launder a paper trail, and if you look like a legitimate lobbyist. The Damico-P'sloqye family, for example, has purchased its own seat on the Plutorliament and basically "owns" two more. Their influence benefits Damico-P'sloqye operations in Sol System and Celeschul, including provision for a (rumored) "back door" allowing them to teraport deep into the asteroid belt.

All of Earth's megalopolises have strict ordinances regarding weapons. Permits for small, concealed-carry weapons are available in many places, but all such permits include a tracker installed on the weapon itself, which means your weapon is only concealed to the naked eye. These trackers can be hacked, but it is difficult, and any failed attempt will bring LEOs quickly.

In Dom Atlantis, however, these restrictions are even tighter, and are extremely well-enforced. Any tool more dangerous than a blunt kitchen utensil will be confiscated upon entry, and even non-lethal weapons are disallowed to civilians and licensed mercenaries alike. Weapons will be stripped from the chassis of AIs entering the city, and sophonts with cybernetic weapons must subject themselves to surgery — the weapons will be replaced with peace-bonded shunts.

Naturally-occurring claws, teeth, and crushingly-powerful body mass are not considered "weapons," and this loophole provides job opportunities for those who can finish a fight without using tools beyond those anatomically provided. Dom Atlantis has a slightly higher relative population of neophants, ursumari, and rillas than any other Earth meg, and over 60% of Sol System's Kreely and Kss'thrata live and work as personal security professionals in Dom Atlantis.

There is plenty of work for the enterprising mercenary company on Earth. Private security remains popular throughout her undercities, and in cities with draconian weapon restrictions, units trained in unarmed combat may find high demand for their skill sets and surreptitiously sharpened knuckles.

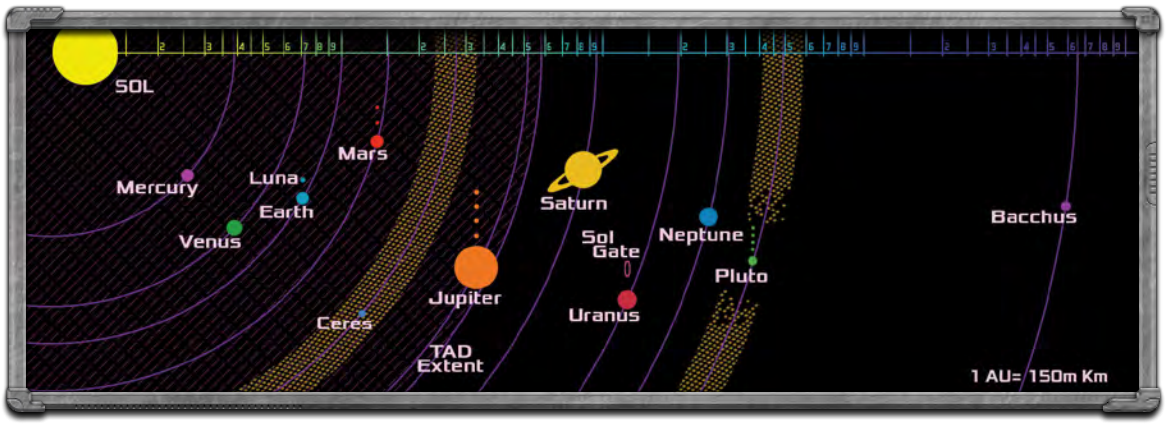
Other Earth Megs

► Mojavis rises from the briny muck of the Mojave salt marsh, permanently shading the bitter, swampy fruits of early climate engineering.

► Abraj Alkathban towers over the rolling hills of the Ténéré, and is surrounded by crystal-clear climate domes that preserve hundreds of square kilometers of the dunes that once dominated the now-grassy Sahara.

► Toyko³ is artfully woven into a hundred thousand kilometers of South American rainforest, and is the gateway into five million kilometers of pristine Amazonian jungle.

► New York sprawls mightily along six hundred kilometers of North America's eastern seaboard, from the Beltway Arcology to just south of the historical ruins of Masstran.



► Ile-de-France stands upon the well-preserved bones of Paris, and covers the entire province for which it was named. From the top of Eiffel Trois, you can just make out the tops of the towers of the Gherkinopolis across the channel.

Orbital Cities of Earth

The skies above Earth are among the most heavily trafficked space-lanes anywhere. Management of this traffic epitomizes the old saying: "You can't get there from here." Descending from orbit to a specific location on the surface requires careful selection of your starting point. High Atlantis is quite literally the only starting place from which your vehicle will be granted a flight path to Dom Atlantis. Similarly, Chica Alta is your station for flying down to the Chicago meg, and Constantinorbit is where the sky-trains leave for the transcontinental megalopolis of Istanbul.

If you've docked at Chica Alta, but your destination is someplace other than Chicago, then you have three options:

► Fly down to Chicago and then take overland transit to your surface destination.

► Undock from Chica Alta and traverse the EO-space lanes until you arrive at the orbital city that directly corresponds with your intended destination. Then fly down.

► Vary from your assigned flight path to Chicago, and be intercepted and incarcerated, or perhaps destroyed. Your destination won't be the one you planned for, but it won't be Chicago either.

The orbital cities tend to take architectural and interior design cues from the destinations that they serve, and in places, they can seem like theme park versions of the megalopolises below. The city managers are torn between the desire to be profitable efficient way-stations, and the desire to keep travelers around for as long as possible; because hey, anything you can see from the surface you can also see from here.

Chica Alta, for example, has a population of twelve million, and the children of the Tall Girl are split evenly between the heavy industry of rapid orbital transit and the service industries that cater to the languor of the well-to-do.

Orbital Cities provide critical customs and inspection points for the megalopolises below. If it is contraband on the ground, then it might be allowed onto the station; but when it leaves, it will leave through the door leading *away* from Earth. Weapons and unregistered living biological material top Earth's contraband lists, which include a mind-boggling variety of chemicals and compounds. There are various smuggling operations, but typically the contraband you can see is not destined for one of these groups. The guns, recreational chemicals, and potted plants found on the streets are ordinarily the ill-considered property of station residents, but they may also be smoke screens and camouflage for complex customs-dodging operations.

Chica Alta

Chica Alta was named by people who did not speak enough Earth languages to know that their cute way of saying "High Chicago" actually meant "tall girl," but over the centuries, traveler jargon for docking at, descending from, or suffering a long layover with The Tall Girl lost all sense of double entendre.

Juab Jurassica

One of the most-photographed parks stretches through the red rock country to the south west of the Rocky Mountains in North America. Juab Jurassica features impressive natural wonders, and much more impressive unnatural sculptings of the landscape. The flat spaces between the original rock-feature parks weren't interesting enough to modern humans, so they started digging. Swathes of ancient sea bed that had *not* been channeled into by rivers were channeled into with heavy equipment. What used to be a red-rock desert with a few neat structures (Arches, Goblin Valley, Dead Horse Point, Canyonlands) has been terrascaped into a massive red-rock network of lochs, vales, cliffs, fins, and mesas. With the help of fractal algorithms and some subtly-laid reinforcements, the new landscape is inarguably bigger and to many minds better than the originals.

This massive swathe of rust-colored canyon country is far lusher than the old red rock desert. A carefully managed pseudo-old-growth forest fills the canyons, climbs the counterfeit cliffs, and gives the artificial arches and bridges a decently teeming jungle to span. A wilderness that was once arid and hostile is now humid and extra-hostile.

The hostility is provided by the unlikely mix of creatures in Juab Jurassica, contemporized

though never actually contemporary, from ankylosaurs to tyrannosaurs. Giant, long-extinct herbivores like the brontosaurus and the triceratops munch greenery alongside recently-extinct herbivores like the wooly mammoth and the rhinoceros. These creatures have been genetically re-created as faithfully as possible, with allowances made for dietary requirements, so that the greenery-munching behemoths can all get by on the same sorts of vegetation.

Visitors to the forest remain safely ensconced in vista habs mounted along the cliffs and canyon rims, and they can get closer to the action via a long network of tube-covered walkways. The accommodations are reasonably priced, the air cool and bug-free, and almost nothing inside of the enclosures wants to eat you.

Those seeking adventure may, for a price, take to the many waystations and paths on the other side of the glass. There are monitors throughout the park, and the rangers are well-equipped for search and rescue, but that does not make it safe. If you obtain a permit to leave visitor enclosures and go exploring, then you're also going to sign a waiver that says, "I understand that the response team may not arrive in time to recover identifiable remains from the thing that ate me while the cameras watched." The danger is the reason for the experience, of course. The canyons and their magnificent denizens imprint themselves upon the mind even more impressively when the beholder knows that these sights may be among their last beheld.

The man currently responsible for perfect indoor safety, and for recovering what's left of outdoor adventurers, is Master Ranger Evan Tenhawk. Tenhawk's galactic experience makes him an invaluable source of information for soldiers who are willing to spring for drinks. He won't accept outside work, of course, but his advice is worth at least as much as any fire support he might offer.

MAXIM 11

Everything is air-droppable at least once.

Dusta Phohora

The highest free-standing structure on Earth was built in 2496 on the slopes of Chomolungma by a consortium of galactic investors who sought tourist revenue. The massive spire rises from the Western Cwm, which is to the west and downhill from Tenthenge, the monument on the site of the ancient Everest Base Camp.

It is 3,200 meters tall, putting its top at 9,451 meters above sea level. Its key feature, and main attraction, is the set of ziplines that allow adventurous sorts to ride 2,700 meters east, and 500 meters *down* to Chomolungma's summit. From there, plucky thrill-seekers can slip into the heated and pressurized gift shop, then descend directly into the mountain via elevator to the Everest Massif subway spur. From there they

can go west, back to the tower for another ride (green line) or north to the Monk-Fu Shopping Malls of the Tibetan Plateau (blue line).

The zipline is not pressurized, and it has a manual brake. Those who pass out from lack of oxygen will reach the summit rather more quickly than they should, and they may awaken to find that they've flung themselves off the eastern slope into what used to be called "China." Dusta Phohora Search-And-Rescue plucks these unfortunates from the sky, saving them from fatal impacts, with a success rate of almost 22%.

The truly adventurous will eschew the gift shop and the elevator, and attempt to descend the mountain on foot. DP-SAR may or may not save these folks, depending on the contract that the adventurers signed before beginning their descent.

The Nepalese who signed the lease granting rights for the facility to be placed on their land were allowed, per the contract, to name the tower. Dusta Phohora means "evil waste." Whether this is a statement about the development of the mountain or commentary about the ongoing loss of life here is a question the Nepalese have never deigned to answer.

Luna

During the Dark Decades of the late 21st century, amid the disruption of First Contact, humanity and their earliest uplifts set out to terraform Luna, Earth's oversized natural satellite. Funding for this project was the stuff of legend and conspiracy theories, but there's no argument about what was done: newly-available gravitic technology and annie plants were deployed on the surface, and in just 122 years Luna was spinning enough for a biorhythmically-friendly day-night cycle, and a life-saving magnetic field. The terraformers imported gases sufficient for an atmosphere roughly six times the depth of Earth's, providing comfortable air pressure in spite of Luna's lower surface gravity.

These days, Earth's mighty skyscrapers have nothing on Luna's graceful towers. Enduring just 16.6% of Earth's gravity, Lunar towers can be several times taller than those on Earth without a change of building materials, and at their tips, some of them reach well above the altitudes where unmodified earthlings can breathe.

Her low surface gravity also makes Luna very popular with sapient elephants, who can run and jump without risk of injury. They cannot, however, fly, which is where the humans, rillas, and similarly-sized sophonts still have a leg (and probably several other limbs) up. The combination of low gravity and dense atmosphere allows for muscle-powered flight. Wing rental is a major industry on Luna, as is the sale of insurance policies for fliers.

Nectaris

The average roof-dweller in the Lunar metropolis of Nectaris looks down on the streets from 5,720 meters up, and would look down their nose or nose-analog at anyone suggesting that any of Nectaris's roof-dwelling citizens are in any way average.

From that height in an Earth city, the streets would be invisible beneath mid- and low-level infrastructure. In Nectaris, the buildings are farther apart, emphasizing their height and enhancing their view. This also grants more direct sunlight to those at street level, though "more sunlight than street level on Earth" is a pretty low bar to clear.

The linear stratification of Nectaris architecture contrasts starkly with the asymptotic economic stratification. A Level 1,500 penthouse in Nectaris costs a thousand times as much as a flat on Level 750, which is in turn a thousand times as expensive as a flat on Level 3. As a rule of thumb, for every credit a surface-level renter spends on a square meter of living space, a penthouse owner will spend a million credits. It's almost as if the landlords and developers laid a table of logarithms alongside the building's plans to set their prices.

This incredible price difference has created a visible social caste system. Nectaris addresses are typically written down with the floor and room number first, and the building's grid address last, and these addresses are printed prominently on all state-issued IDs. The moment you produce identification, those checking your ID know how much you pay in rent, and you can expect to be treated accordingly.

Tube Ruins: Boblet, Blaireton, and Melosha

The second wave of Lunar colonists got clever, and chose to settle where they could exploit natural cover and containment. Lava tubes,

which formed early in Luna's geologic history, provided what appeared to be the perfect choice of sites. Three cities — Boblet, Blaireton, and Melosha — were established in these enormous tubes, which the colony engineers reinforced, laminated, and then pressurized, creating what, at the time, was the largest open-air space on the newly-settled world. These long, cavernous spaces were then then filled with people, buildings, agriponics, and bright hope. For over seventy years, these three cities were the backbone of Lunar culture and economy.

Meanwhile, the terraforming teams worked their peculiar brand of miraculous science. Massive annie plants, leased from the Wormgate Corporation, imparted rotational energy, increasing the spin of Earth's formerly one-faced satellite. As the day/night cycle shortened, air and water were brought in and allowed to spill forth across the surface.

Despite everyone's best efforts, or perhaps because of someone's secret sabotage, the structures of the tubes were compromised by these changes. Lunar quakes rattled the cities, prompting evacuations which were carried out mere days in advance of a catastrophic series of collapses.

Boblet's western third was exposed to the surface after the rocks had finished falling. The lower two-thirds of the city were buried, turning the extensive superstructures of the city into a dark, jumbled labyrinth. Blaireton's tube was deeper, and the entire length of the city was buried, and thought completely crushed in the collapse. Melosha's tube, the deepest of the three, drowned under an ocean of invading water.

It has been over seven hundred years since these events. In that time, Melosha has been re-colonized by Earth's uplifted dolphins and octopuses, and by aquatic expat sophonts from elsewhere in the galaxy. Power conduits provide modern convenience amid the sunken ruins, making Melosha both a home and a popular tourist destination for aquatic sophonts.

Those seven centuries have been less kind to Boblet and Blaireton. These formerly-shining hubs of civilization are now dimly-lit cesspits of corruption, labyrinthine low-gravity warrens bound together in a long, roughly cylindrical path not unlike that of a human colon.

Emmy Ellwun and Mall One

There is a tight grouping of habitats, ports, assembly plants, and service industry stations at the L1 point between Earth and Luna, known collectively as Emmy Ellwun — a name that comes from "Moon-Earth L1 (Lagrange point 1)." This heavily-trafficked area developed around a single wheel-shaped station, formerly known as "Old Melone," whose name also comes from "Moon-Earth L1," showcasing either the creativity with which Earthlings can derive names, or an absence of creativity in finding things to derive names from.

This trade hub plays a significant role in Earth-Luna commerce, and the Emmy Ellwun commodities exchange is a key financial hub for Sol System. The fortunes made here, and the discretionary income they generate among top-earning locals, are the principal reason that the spin-grav "Old Melone" station was transformed from a museum of early human space colonization into a shopping center. They renamed the station "Mall One," a name that is obviously derived from "Melone," and is clearly a continuation of the human tradition of lazily re-using names.

Mall One spins to provide 1/6 to 1/3 of Earth's gravity (depending on which deck you're on when you measure it), and its open gallerias are nigh-perfect places to throw stones, in order to demonstrate the effects of a rotating reference frame. They'd be even closer to perfect if throwing stones indoors wasn't a top-tier misdemeanor.

Performing Parkata Urbatsu

Should a PC want to participate in Parkata Urbatsu, they will need to make a series of skill checks to determine success. The number of checks should correlate to the length of the traverse or the number of tricks attempted. Parkata Urbatsu involves such a range of potential movements, that which Athletics specialty applies depends on what is being attempted. Jumping from platform to platform is only TN 15. Tricks require an Athletics check TN 20. Failure means ending up in an unexpected place, and taking 1 point of damage + 1d6 for every 3 points by which you missed the jump.

Recently Mall One's security forces began training in Parkata Urbatsu, a martial art built around urban running, and implemented numerous rotational reference frame strategies in their workouts. After the shops close, visitors can buy tickets for choice viewing spots and watch members of the security team leap through the galleria in arcs that seem to defy physics.

Mars

The blue-green world of Mars is home to twenty-five billion sophonts, 75% of whom are human. Like Luna, Mars's low gravity makes it popular with ursumari and neophants, but they account for less than five percent of the population. Twenty percent of Martians are rillas or trogs (uplifted gorillas and chimpanzees). Today, what used to be called "the Red Planet" is never, never, never (or at least not in polite company) called "The Planet of the Apes."

Mars's most striking feature, the Marctic Ocean, is visible from Earth with a simple 8 cm telescope. This bright, blue-white expanse dominates the northern hemisphere, and completely encircles Boreamarco, the mini-continent at the monkey planet's north pole. 1

Weather control on Mars is not up to the standards of most developed worlds. There is inconvenient rain, occasional drought, and during the southern winter there are often blizzards across the Anmarctic Steppes. During the northern summer super-cyclonic storms, some lasting for several weeks, will roil around the Marctic Ocean, delivering icy rain, blizzards, and sub-zero salty storm surges to the shores of Boreamarco. There are cities on that island, but they are small. People stay indoors during the frigid summer storms, and then go back indoors during the bitterly cold winters.

In old Earth mythology, Mars was the god of war. Martian industry capitalizes on this bit of imagery, and touts the Martian military-industrial complex as the backbone of Sol System's defense. Its proximity to the wealth of the Asteroid Belt made Mars Sol System's military giant for two hundred years, but those centuries are hundreds of years behind us. Today that "backbone" title is held by Europa or spread across the Asteroid Belt, depending on who you ask. Titles notwithstanding, the shipyards of High Olympus are a fine place to get work done. Martian-manufactured Milspec equip-

1

SOPH_RES: If you can't say "planet of the apes" in polite company, what makes you think you can get away with "monkey planet?"

WRITER: It's common slang, especially among Mars' exo-solar sophonts who think monkeys are funny.

MKTG: Some of those monkey clients are the principal market for this book. Offending the target demographic is not funny to us.

WRITER: Got it. Oh, and can I just say that this discussion is much more pleasant without death threats?

ment is a good choice for those interested in stepping up a bit from the lowest bidder. Bryanton Faire Fabricators and Phubar have foundries on Mars, and buying direct may save the company some money.

The terraforming of Mars began decades after the Lunar project, but went more quickly owing to the fact that it was not necessary to impart mind-boggling amounts of energy to make the planet spin faster. Heat and volatiles were the key elements that were missing, and these were obtained by imparting mind-boggling amounts of energy to cometary bodies, and coaxing those treasure troves of water and hydrocarbons into comfortable collisions with Mars. The bay at the foot of Mount Olympus is an impact basin, and the artful way in which it nestles into the foothills is evidence of outstanding aim. Sea level on Mars was raised to roughly 3,000 meters below the planet's average elevation, filling the northern ocean completely, without flooding the plains of Elysium or Arabia Terra, which would eventually anchor the Martian green belt.

Like Luna, Mars has a much deeper atmosphere than Earth does, a prerequisite to unassisted breathing for Earth-native life in Mars' low gravity.

Martian cities are small by Earth standards. The most populous city, Praritaganda, rises from the verdant northern hills of Tempe Terra. It is at the western edge of a million square kilometers of vineyards, vegetable plantations, and orchards that run from the Tempe Terran hills to the Chryse Ocean. Many "natural Earth organic foods" are grown on those rolling plains, and support Praritaganda's billion-and-a-half people.

Foothill Ridge is the largest city, in terms of area, sprawling across the western base of Olympus Mons, stretching from Impact Harbor to Port Olympus Mons. It is home to seven hundred million people, whose economy depends heavily on the shipping and manufacturing industries. Sub-orbital flights depart Foothill Ridge every minute for points from the Marctic circle to the Anmarctic steppes.

Other cities include Songwallace on the shores of the 5,000-meter-deep Hellas Sea, Sadstone in the highlands of the Anmarctic Steppes, and Guddafful on the Boreamarcan coast. And of course, there's Marineris Dam City, standing confidently atop the largest dam in the solar system.

Marineris Dam City

Valles Marineris, or the Mighty Emm, is a river system that drains almost the entire Tharsis Rise into the Chryse Ocean. Marineris Dam City straddles one of the Mighty Emm's tributaries, sitting atop Upper Marineris Hydrological Control Station Five-A, which folks today simply call The Marineris Dam. Other such control stations existed, but as the terraforming proceeded, they were decommissioned and disassembled, declared unsafe and destroyed, or, in the cases of Two-C and Three-C, washed away under torrential floods and epic levels of engineering-grade embarrassment.

MHCS-5A, Marineris Dam, still stands, fully functioning. By the time the engineers got around to building the Series Five stations they'd learned a thing or two about the porosity of Martian rock. Also, before the time came to phase it out, an enterprising coolant engineer named D.C. Powell had built a city of a million people, including himself, atop it, betting his life (and theirs) on his engineering prowess. Today, the lake behind the dam is called Lake Powell, and the city is called "Marineris D.C." It's easier to say, and it honors D.C. Powell, whose dam is the largest still-standing hydrologic control structure in Sol System.

The view from the dam is astounding. Sophonts from high-gravity planets may look down and wonder if, in Mars's low gravity, the fall is survivable. The answer is no. Deaths among curious tourists are less common now than they used to be, but the M.D.C. emergency services crews aren't funded well enough to properly police all fifty-one thousand meters of railing.

Marineris D.C. is home to two of the five houses of Martian government — the Marliament and the Seneit — but D.C. is not the seat of planetary government. That honor doesn't even sit on the planet.

High Olympus

One needs not descend to the Martian surface to partake of the planet's many fineries. High Olympus is the seat of Martian government and the world's busiest orbital port. Prices in orbit are only a little higher for Martian fineries like all-natural, vat-free wines and cheeses and durable locally-sourced materiel from the Martian military-industrial complex.

High Olympus is an open cluster of orbital facilities, all shepherded in Mars-synchronous orbit above an equatorial point twenty degrees west of Port Olympus. Two billion people live and work in High Olympus, making it the single greatest concentration of sophonts in the Martian sphere of influence. There are eleven mega-habs with attached industrial parks, and each hab is similar to a "borough" in a terrestrial city. There are also dozens of non-moored shipyards, factories, and foundries, to which over one hundred million High Olympians commute, telecommute, or deploy for multi-week shifts.

Venus

If anyone in Sol System should be telecommuting it's the three billion people on Venus, who, to their credit, are somehow *not* uniformly miserable on a planet that appears to have been engineered for misery.

Venusian ecosystems are in a perpetual state of critical imbalance, continually marching across tipping points that rewrite the rules for life on Venus. Planetary ecologists struggle to prevent the collapse of the entire system, which has yet to reach anything resembling equilibrium. Microbes and megafauna alike will overpopulate with ravaging results, and then die back to levels that often approach (and sometimes reach) extinction. Heavy metals in the soil will kill vast swathes of flora and fauna, aided by blooms of rogue micro-machines meant to clean up the mess. One particular stretch of land has, over the course of twenty years, been dominated in turn by knife-edged tall grass, a bubbling, caustic alkali marsh, a forest full of trees with exploding fruit, and a plague of roach-sized robots. In the words of noted xenoecologist Miragra McGuire, "This planet has jungle-cancer."

Careless, greedy terraforming is probably to blame. Cooling the planet with orbiting solar shields and thermosynthetic carbon-sink bots was straightforward, and made robotic mining economical. Less straightforward was the attempt to keep the robotic mining operations running while releasing wave after wave of microassemblers. Each salvo unbound milions of megatonnes of precious volatiles from the rocks and minerals into which they'd been baked for a billion years.

Straightforwardness was abandoned altogether for the crooked paths of arbitrary seeding, which added aggressive organic life to the Darwinian gladiatorial combat between the miners and the microassemblers. Unfortunately, it seemed to work, and for forty years Venus blossomed with greenery unlike anything seen on Earth. Imbalances ran undetected, so even if anyone had been paying attention, they wouldn't have thought to say "no" when it came time to release the animals. Someone might have thought to cry havoc as fauna were let slip, but the terraforming ecologists of 29th-century Venus were only arguably literate.

Billions of people had moved into homes on Venus by time the Great Rainforest of Aphrodite transformed into the Burning Jungle of Hate. Emergency measures were taken by the small cadre of caretakers of final-phase terraforming. Today, eighty years later, those emergency measures are standard operating procedure for the Rapid Response and Reclamation Department, whose budget eats all the other Venusian government budgets for breakfast, and then goes forth to excrete drop-and-run ecosystems into an ongoing garbage fire. 1

1

MKTG: We need Legal to weigh in on this one. This metaphor may be actionable.

LEGAL: Not actionable. We're fine.

MKTG: "Fine," perhaps, but we won't be making any new friends in the Venusian Department of Tourism.

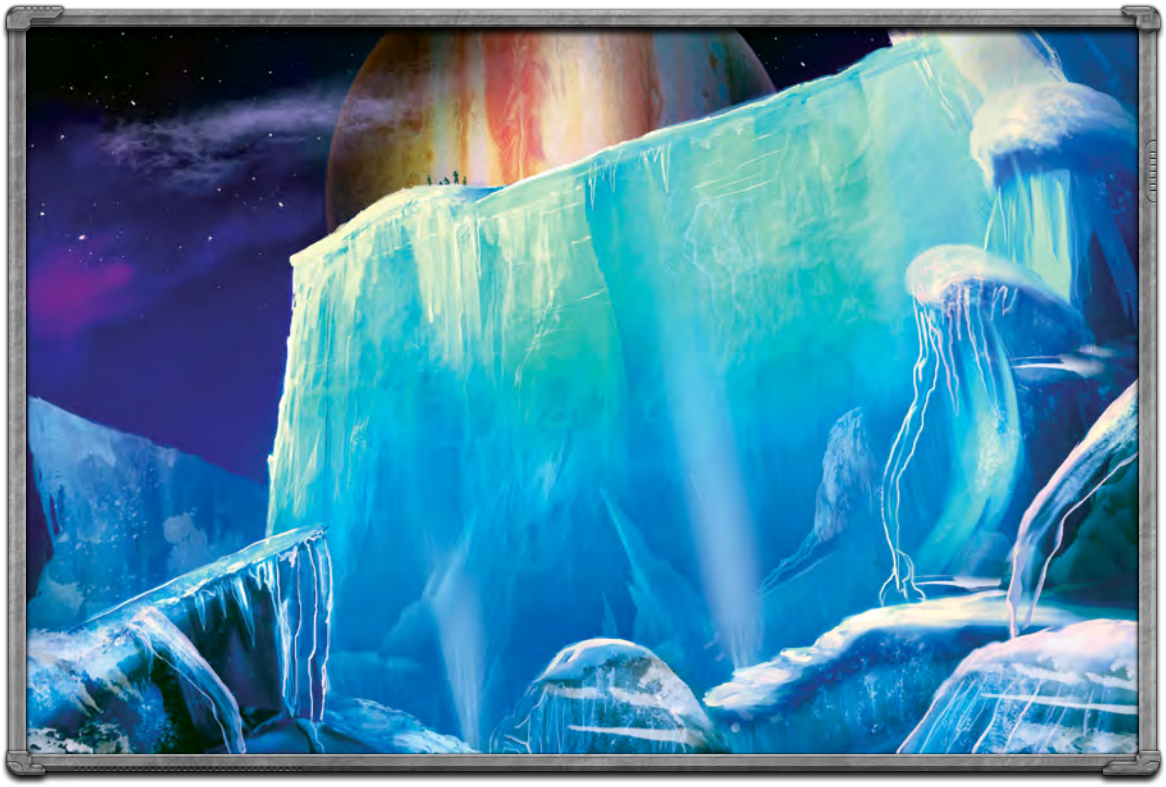
LEGAL: Their last brochure had the phrase "ongoing garbage fire" in the first paragraph.

Europa

Despite a cold, thin atmosphere and an eternally frozen surface, Europa is habitable, and some of her inhabitants like to go outside. They make up only a tiny percentage of her twelve billion gently-chilled souls, of course, because the weather is very much like Antarctic weather on Earth, which has never been popular.

On Europa, the whole world is essentially a government town. All the military branches of the United Nations of Sol have official presences there, and the world is positively lousy with secret bases, deployment zones, black sites, and "poorly-documented" facilities. There are also several official, totally-above-board bases there. Outer System Command, which controls 90% of the UNS Battleplates, is headquartered on Europa, and it is at the top of the military command chain for UNS operations outside Sol System.

Civilians and tourists are welcome in the north polar cities of Thoth, Azathoth, and Hoth. Each megalopolis bristles like hoarfrost, presenting the chaotic skyline common to non-military cities, but don't be fooled. All three megs are



part of the Europan company town. Billions of people live and work there, and many of them are private-sector civilians; but from the standpoint of the UNS Penultimate Admiralty, the private sector civilian presence exists for two reasons only: camouflage and proper coffee.

Mercenaries visiting Europa are typically well-received, including those from companies with poor reputations. This is a matter of policy that has become a part of Europan culture, and it serves UNS purposes by encouraging openness from visiting professionals-at-arms. If you have a story to tell, you'll have no trouble finding a friendly ear, and if you're looking for work, some department or another is always looking for a way to put boots on the ground without putting the boots in their books.

Access to most of the icy, Europan globe is heavily restricted, but there are numerous private expeditions to explore the ever-changing Europan equator. It is an astoundingly dangerous place to wander around outdoors, because the tidal bulge works its way around the planet every 98 hours, and the surface ice on the terraformed world ruptures under the stress. The resulting fissures may be thousands of meters deep, opening all the way to the perilously cold, dark ocean. And even the widest of chasms can slam shut in minutes after weeks or months of lying icily agape.

Leaping into the ocean at the bottom of an equatorial chasm is a bad idea of an interdisciplinary nature. The thermodynamic equation does not balance in your favor, the kinetic energies of the ice are eager to be deployed against you, and the UNS may swoop in and whisk you off for interrogation. They do not lightly dismiss the possibility that somebody might attempt a surreptitious swim to one of the deep-sea bases a hundred kilometers below.

Europan terraforming was begun in the 23rd century in secret and took four hundred years. Today the world's core spins, along with a web of induction cables, creating a magnetic field sufficient to shield life from the deadly blaze of Jovian radiation. Volatiles trapped in the deepest ice were released to provide a deep, breathable atmosphere whose upper layers were ionized to provide additional shielding. Today Europa has a 97-hour cycle of day and night punctuated by the full darkness of eclipse for just under three hours out of every eighty-four.

The Belt

Belters make up the majority of Sol System's inhabitants. Earth's population is huge, at 200 billion, but all the planetary populations together add up to only about 260 billion.

Everyone else in Sol System lives aboard ships, on stations, inside habitats, or deep within some planetesimal-sized bit of rock. There are almost 750 billion people who live this way, and most of them live between two and four AU from the Sun in a ring known as the Belt.

The average Belter habitat, or hab, is home to about 200,000 people. A few are much larger, like Ceres, whose population of 3.5 billion is larger than Venus's; and many are much smaller, with as few as 20,000 people living and working together. There are also a few hundred thousand "clan habs," but these are either short-lived, or they thrive and blossom into proper, city-sized habitats. They're like hab-spores. 1

Belters and their commerce dominate the traffic of Sol System. The gravity wells of Earth, Luna, Mars, and Venus are hard on profit margins. A 150-billion-kilometer trip from mid-Belt to Earth is several times more expensive than a 500-billion-kilometer trip from mid-Belt to a point mid-Belt on the other side of the sun. Statistically speaking, Belters trade with other Belters, and do not depend on the planetary economies for anything more important than pretty pictures and expensive vacation destinations.

Belter culture is not something that can be learned comprehensively. It is far too diverse. Each habitat develops its own cultural quirks, and a hab's natives will be proud of theirs. There are some cosmopolitan Belters who move from hab to hab, and who adopt new cultures like other humans might adopt a fresh pair of trousers, but most Belters are homebodies. If they travel, then they wear their home culture like a badge, and there are strong pressures from folks back home for them to return swiftly. The survival-centric, stick-togetherness of early Sol System spacefarers has evolved into very tight-knit familial relationships among habitat citizens. Home is the hab, the hab is family, and family is everything.

This familial bond may make a hab uncomfortable for an outsider, and even less comfortable for an outsider who happens to be nonhuman and not of uplifted Terran stock. If you want to find xenophobia in Sol System, then visit the habs of the Belt. The smaller the hab, the more xenophobia you'll get to soak up. Outside trade with the Belt is vibrant, but the open exchange is kept to the port districts, whose inner bulkheads seem to serve as a cultural prophylactic.

The colonization and development of the Belt has taken about eight hundred years. Early habs were spun for gravity, a critical requirement for the health of their populations, but by the 24th century, Sol System was generating enough wealth to afford annie plants. Artificial gravity was retrofit virtually everywhere. The abandonment of wheelworld designs allowed for much larger structures, and the population of the Belt grew. Waves of colonization followed cycles of economic boom and bust on Earth, at first, but by the 25th century, it was the boom and bust cycles of the Belt itself that drove growth.

There were once two million asteroid-belt objects larger than 1000 meters in diameter. Those objects are gone, replaced by structures that look nothing like asteroids. The rocks with valuable mineral content were smelted in place, bit by bit, and they grew into habitats. The dirty snowballs were cut up and shipped off to be turned into air, water, and eventually food for millions (and then billions) of Belters. Today, the only undeveloped asteroids remaining in the Belt are less than ten meters in diameter, and though there are hundreds of millions of them, their number is steadily decreasing as space lanes are swept clean and foundries are fed. Historians may say that the Belt has been colonized, but some Belters argue that the job's not done until every dust mote in Sol System has been catalogued, captured, and fed into a forge.

Very few habs are named using astronomers' designations for the rocks they settled on. The Belters settling Vesta did away with the name of the mythological virgin goddess and dubbed their city Hearth One. Some habs have whimsical names like Lograv, Habitattle, and Myrock. Others are named for prominent settlers, or to memorialize fallen pioneers of the Belt. Yuen, Little Yuen, Jockerton, Schoen, and Abnerhaus are a tiny sampling of these.

Ceres

The first large Belter city was on Ceres, the only dwarf planet in the Belt and the largest object by a wide margin. It retains the name given to it by its discoverer, despite looking nothing like the dwarf planet first seen through the telescope of famed astronomer Pizza Joe. It's only fair, since the name "Pizza Joe" looks nothing like the name of 18th-century astronomer Giuseppe Piazzi.

1

MKTG: We're selling this book into the Belt. Why are we lobbing pejoratives at yet another segment of our target market?

WRITER: If it helps, most belters look down on clan-habbers. "Hab-spore" is their word, not ours.

SOPH_RES: In orientation there was an entire *day* devoted to "just because they call themselves that doesn't mean I can."

Ceres is the most cosmopolitan of the habs, its culture more akin to the amalgams seen on Earth, Mars, and Luna.

Ceres has dozens of 20-meter annie plants providing power planet-wide, and artificial gravity anywhere it's required. The surface sparkles with domes and towers, which reach skyward for twenty kilometers to bask in sunlight no longer captured by fields of solar panels. The planet's rotation has been dampened for a 24-hour day, which also makes it easier to dock in the ports on Ceres's poles.

Much of the deep rock of Ceres has been mined away, as has almost all its ice. The holes left behind are full of heavy industry, giant factories that benefit from proximity to one another, and to billions of people, in ways that most other facilities in the Belt do not. Ceres is a manufacturing powerhouse whose output rivals that of Mars. The only limiting factor today is the availability of raw materials, which must be imported.

Kuiper Belt

If there is a frontier to be found in Sol System it is out in the cold darkness of the Kuiper belt. There is an entire Mars-mass of icy rocks tumbling in this vast emptiness, and if a given rock has a good mix of volatile elements and metals, then it can build several generations' worth of family fortune.

These bodies are pretty spread out. There are millions of them, but they seem few and far between, because the "betweens" are greater than the distances between the inner planets. More significantly, there are people out there. Some are family businesses chasing the dream of wealth. Others are corporate operations chasing the dream of stock options. Still others are military and government operations chasing the dream of managing the expectations of dreamers, usually by keeping the peace and putting down the occasional rogue operation whose failures to find wealth have driven it to piracy.

The teraport has changed the economic viability of Kuiper belt operations, making it possible to traverse the emptiness in an instant. It still requires days of travel to bring goods to and from the inner system, but now it's much less expensive to flit about looking for profitable rocks.

Bacchus and the Bacchanal

In the early 21st century, Bacchus (or "Planet 9" as it was then known) was just an attractive theory to explain the statistical unlikelihood of the observed trans-Neptunian objects' orbits. Today, it is an attractive place for teraport exclusions, and a stepping-off point for exploring the Kuiper belt.

The Earth tradition of naming major planets after Roman gods ran up against a small problem with Bacchus, because the name had already been taken by a relatively insignificant object in the asteroid belt. Ultimately the problem was solved by mining the original Bacchus until nothing was left but dust, and giving the name to the 10-Earth-mass rocky giant caroming drunkenly through the Kuiper belt.

Prior to the invention of the teraport, Bacchus was just a gravitational anchor that wasn't close enough to anything else to be particularly important. After the teraport, however, it became extremely popular. Development on its surface and on the largest of its 63 satellites boomed, and the UNS military increased their Bacchanal presence significantly.

A trip from the edge of Sol System's TAD to the nearest inner planet can take up to a week. A trip from the edge of the Bacchus/Bacchanal TAD to one of the Bacchus trade depots takes just two hours. With the teraport, it is faster to travel to Bacchus from the opposite side of the Kuiper belt, thousands of AU away, than it is to travel to the nearest inner planet.

Surface gravity on Bacchus is 1.5 g, so many of the surface facilities have artificial gravity and inertiic compensators to ease the burden on people accustomed to weighing less. There are plenty of places that do not use these devices, however. If you set out on foot (in a full environment suit, obviously), then you'll experience what the locals call "heavy night." The only light comes from stars, of which Sol is by far the brightest, but doesn't experience anything approaching daylight. The surface temperature is just 28° Kelvin, so if you spill your liquid oxygen, it will freeze solid. It's not quite cold enough for you to make ice cubes out of neon, but it's close. Bacchus has a relatively thick atmosphere of hydrogen and helium (compared to everything else in the Kuiper belt, at least), visible as a grey haze.

Celeschul System

Celeschul System is the evolutionary home of the Schuul; gentle, aquatic sophonts with a peaceful history stretching back several thousand years. The system's primary star, also called Schuul, is a G3V main-sequence star in a distant dance with Schuulga, an M5 red dwarf 450 light-hours away, and barely visible on a clear night. There are four rocky worlds in the inner system: Penskarele, Celeschul, Brilish, and Agshu, but only Celeschul supports life. Beyond Agshu; there is an inner asteroid belt, then the gas giant Tash, and then an outer asteroid belt. The mineral wealth of these belts, especially the outer belt, is significant.

Celeschul (planet)

The planet Celeschul is currently home to 3.7 billion Schuul, and 4.2 billion Earth-descended sophonts. Celeschul has two equatorial continents: Lursuu and Tlalach. Celeschul's Terran inhabitants live on these continents in their leased cities, as well as on tens of thousands of reef-top islands which were grown by the Schuul as they ushered their world into its sapiezoic eon forty-five hundred years ago.

The shallow equatorial oceans between Lursuu and Tlalach are extremely fertile, with photosynthesizing organisms clouding the water down to a depth of fifty meters. Eighty percent of the planet's free oxygen is generated here, and the nutrient energy bound up in these waters makes these oceans a pair of enormous, soggy breadbaskets whose nutrition is drawn north and south by ocean currents, swirling toward the poles and feeding most of the planet.

The reef-top islands of the northern and southern oceans are the smallest part of the sophisticated network of reefs grown and tended to by the Schuul. With these structures, the Schuul can channel and harness the wide circumpolar currents, direct hydrologic cycles, and encourage the northward and southward flows of nutrient-rich waters. The Schuul reefs are responsible for Celeschul's paradisiacal weather, cooling the equatorial waters, dissipating surface-water heat that might drive large storms, and sending warmer water to the poles, where ice is a purely seasonal occurrence.

Schuul and Celeschul

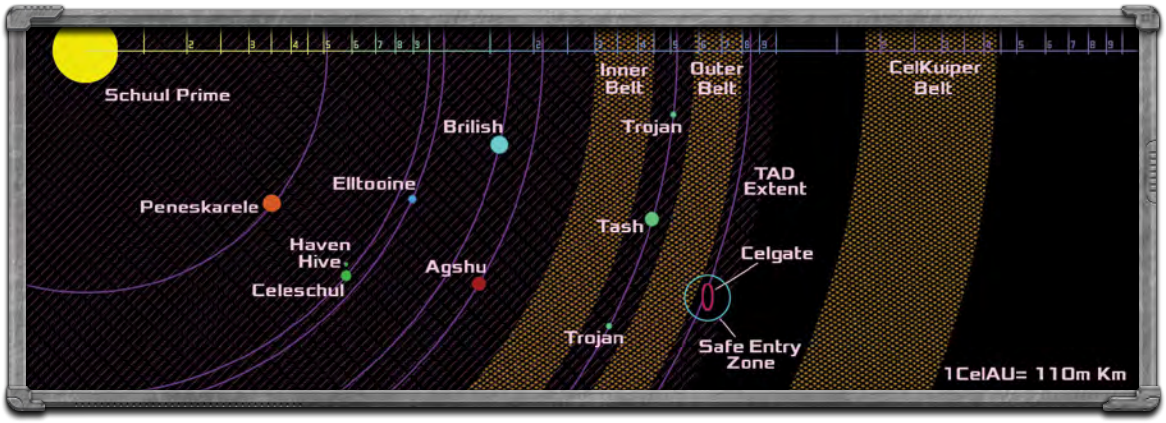
Most sophonts re-use words in confusing ways, and the Schuul are no exception. Celeschul is the name of the home planet of the Schuul. It orbits the star Schuul in the Celeschul system.

To add to the confusion, the planetary system is sometimes colloquially referred to as the Schuul System, meaning "the system of planets and objects orbiting the star Schuul." (Or maybe this terminology was coined to remind other inhabitants that the entire system once belonged to the Schuul people.)

In their native language the Schuul name for themselves means "the brilliant ones," and they gave that same name to the brightest object in the sky. Their name for the world they live on is "home of brilliance," so when they figured out the basic astronomy of their star system they gave the entire system the name Celeschul. The Schuul live on Celeschul, which orbits Schuul, which is in Celeschul, and now you have a helpful pattern for keeping track of this.

Eventually the Schuul discovered that their star had a companion. "Schuulga" means "pet," so their name for the nearby red dwarf is essentially "domestic fish."

We are assured that in the Galstandard Peroxide language which the Schuul use at home, none of this is confusing at all. Unfortunately, most oxygen breathers speak Galstandard West, where the multiple use of names can be quite confusing indeed.



Before Terran immigration, the only life on the continents was small plants and insect-like creatures, who were the only survivors of a string of comet fragment strikes that raked across the equator roughly two million years ago. These strikes pummeled Lursuu and Tlalach, leaving dozens of still-visible craters, but they missed the oceans entirely. Extinction rates above 95% are estimated to have occurred on land, while the oceans were almost entirely spared.

The 3.7 billion Schuul are spread through small communities in the labyrinthine reefs of the northern and southern oceans, with small concentrations in larger cities like the capital, Lelesh, the spaceport, Onneshal, and the southern shrine-city of Barschuum. The 4.2 billion Earthlings live primarily inland on Lursuu, but five hundred million of them live in and around Arnarsaftur on the northern coast of Tlalach.

There are two official languages spoken on Celeschul: Galstandard Peroxide, the sound-and-sign language of undersea sophonts, and Galstandard West, the spoken language of many oxygen-breathing sophonts.

Fleshtaint

The Galstandard Peroxide word for the faint flavor of human surface occupation is a three-tentacle flick with a flash of patterned colors that cannot be reproduced in text.

Arnarsaftur

The first human city on Celeschul is now The Continuance capital. Its skyline may seem a little primitive, reaching a mere 1,200 meters above sea level, but Arnarsaftur is quite modern, with a dense infrastructure of deep gardens, and massive pylons spearing the bedrock. Its seaside presence is a symbolic gesture, an effort be close to the oceans and the Schuul without harming those oceans in any way. The message is mixed, unfortunately. The effort to keep the skyline low has driven some sprawl, which has in turn resulted in a greater impact upon Celeschul's native ecologies than the more vertically-oriented cities of Grimstorre, Hiloneo, and Mitsusanyokyo. The seaward runoff from Arnarsaftur is filtered reasonably well, but the waters north of the city have what the Schuul call "fleshtaint," the faint flavor of human surface occupation.

Arnarsaftur is the most diverse of the surface cities of Celeschul. There are thousands of embassies, and the boardwalks of the diplomatic district teem with faces and physiques from all over the galaxy. It is also common to see Schuul in their exosuits — large cylindrical tanks on mechanical legs and tentacles — meandering about.

Terrarium Park, a lush garden of Earth-native and Celeschul-native life, bioengineered to live together in a micro-ecology, lies to the south of the city's spires in a shallow bowl which has been recovered and restored from one of the energetic first-strikes of 3069. The Titan Wall runs north to south across the park, and millions of people visit the wall each year, their pilgrimages leading them along its length as they somberly reflect upon the steep cost of the previous generation's conflict.

There are a small few who see The Continuance government as an "occupation" govern-

Underwater Combat on Celeschul

The only weapons that will work effectively in underwater environments are Molly-Polly blades and specialty spear guns (available locally at a cost of 2 Supplies each; 1d6 damage). PEA weapons will be damaged or destroyed if fired here. Beam weapons will work, but are all limited to short range. GCs may want to require Athletics checks because of the unfamiliar environment. Unless they have the Swimming specialty, then they'll feel right at home.

ment. These self-styled rebels of the New TFF call themselves "Newts," and they speak longingly of the terraformed Celeschul that almost was. Some Newts imagine themselves at the spearhead of a new revolution. They are, of course, closely monitored and carefully shepherded away from situations in which they could get themselves or anyone else into actual trouble.

Lelesh

The Schuul city of Lelesh is two hundred kilometers northwest of Arnarsaftur, at a depth of between 20 and 200 meters. A series of reef-bound channels and enclosed tubeways connect the cities, allowing commuters to make the trip either wet or dry, according to their preference. The channels sometimes direct the flow of fleshtaint into the edges of the capital, a regular reminder that the tenants above are messy.

Visitors wishing to travel outside of the mixed-use areas meant for visiting dignitaries and business folk will need to get wet, and most air-breathing sophonts will require special suits in order to survive in the deeper parts of the city. The depths are well-lit, but the water pressure poses a health risk to creatures that maintain gaseous compounds in their bodies.

Most surface-dwelling types will also require a Galstandard Peroxide translator (cost 1 Supplies; only available in Celeschul System). This device is typically a five-centimeter disc with three twenty-centimeter mechanical tentacles attached to the rim. The disc emits sound in underwater-friendly frequencies, and the tentacles flick, wave, and undulate to provide the visual portion of the language. There is a population of humans who serve as the liaisons between Alschuul and The Continuance who speak Galstandard Peroxide natively, using their arms, legs, and fingers to approximate the gestured syntax. They can never be fully Schuul in their speech, but the Schuul have an abiding respect for them despite their strong accents. On land, these diplomat-caste humans (particularly those who were raised as diplomats by diplomat parents, often called diplobrats) are easy to identify by the thick accent with which they speak Galstandard West, and their tendency to dance and gesticulate while trying to speak.

On Terran Aquatic Sophonts

Dolphin and octopus uplifts are extremely uncommon on Celeschul. They do visit, but the mineral and organic content of the water is extremely unpleasant, and they must wear filters and goggles if they're staying for an extended period.

The human population of Lelesh has brought with it, unfortunately, a uniquely human problem: violence. The problem is small, but it has necessitated the creation of a human police force in Lelesh. After the Terraforming War, these police were outfitted and armed as if for battle and given the task of restricting any other weapons from entering the city. You're not going to be bringing any of your own without the express permission of the Lelesh Defence Force.

Barschuum

The shrine-city of Barschuum in the southern ocean is the deepest of the Schuul cities. Its uppermost boroughs are at conventional depths, between 20 and 150 meters below the surface, but the city extends another 800 meters to the sea floor, and unlike other Schuul cities, Barschuum has structures that reach beneath the sea floor. Access to the city is restricted. Visitors are admitted only with permits, and they are accompanied by guides at all times. Access to the deep city is very rarely granted. Access to the sub-seabed city is unheard of.

Portions of Barschuum are quite ancient. Many of the mid-depth structures have deep etchings in their pearlescent surfaces, writings in a complex language, or perhaps a cipher, that the Schuul will tell you has been forgotten. There have, however, been rumors for centuries

that Schuul scholars, or perhaps priests living in the deepest under-caverns of Barschuum, know this language. If this is true, then that caste of Schuul could be the keepers of a longer history of these peaceful aquatic sophonts than the one that is presented to the rest of the galaxy.

Maps of Celeschul's gravitational forces do show some subtle anomalies beneath Barschuum. Several explanations have been put forth, but the best of these is that the city was built atop a sunken starship. If this is the case, then that vessel is roughly the size of a Tricorn Battleplate, and the PTUs of the hull and power plants, which are much denser than the surrounding seabed, are responsible for the anomalies. Whatever it is, according to the age estimates of the coral and secreted-shell structures above it, the sunken vessel predates the current galactic civilization by at least ten million years. 1

1

TERL'KRIS: Are you making this up? Why haven't I heard about this?

WRITER: I found this story while I was researching the Newts. It's probably just conspiracy-crank stuff, but for game purposes it's perfect.

TERL'KRIS: What about for liability purposes?

LEGAL: We are presenting this as a rumor, and that rumor exists, so we can get any defamation suits thrown out.

MKTG: Don't get them thrown out TOO soon. Getting taken to court over a book is great PR.

LEGAL: Understood. But just so we're clear, this is non-actionable because it is an actual rumor our writers, being responsible in research and representation, did not make up in a fit of whimsy because writing is fun again, correct?

WRITER: Yes. Err... no. Can you rephrase that as a real question?

Habitats, Stations, and Asteroids

Twenty billion sophonts, eighteen billion of whom are of human or human-uplifted stock, live in habitats in various orbits throughout the system, like Elltooine, Haven Hive, Andreyasn Station, and thousands of others. The political and economic situation is complex, and if it appears to be stable, then you're not looking closely enough.

Understanding it further will require a bit of a history lesson.

Immigration and Cohabitation: 2260-3010

In 2260, a wealthy colony of two hundred thousand human immigrants, mostly of northern European descent, leased the continent of Lursuu from the Schuul. The planet seemed very much like paradise. The 0.93 g surface gravity put a spring in the step, and the blend of atmospheric gases was similar to those found on Earth between the Quaternary glaciation and the pre-Anthropocene era. In lay terms, humans thought it smelled "pristine."

The colony thrived, and the Schuul took a liking to their tenants, who proved to be outstanding caretakers of the land. By 2300, the Schuul and the immigrants from Earth were on the cusp of true societal symbiosis. Evolutionary xenothropologists speculated upon the possibility of biological symbiosis in the distant future.

The arrival of an additional three hundred million hungry, messy humans in 2306 left the sociologists speculating upon darker futures.

The tiny Celeschul Office of Immigration quickly grew into an entire government, and was given authority over all non-Schuul sophonts. The COI was constitutionally bound by laws set by the Alschuul, the Schuul-exclusive government which ruled the entire system. This seemed totally fair to the Schuul, but many Earthlings, including some whose only home had been Celeschul, grew to resent their new status as second-tier citizens.

Wave after wave of immigrants arrived, leasing much more land in their spread across Lursuu and onto Tlalach. The population of non-Schuul, mostly humans, grew to over a billion, and the inland gardens of Earth-native plants broke free, spreading with the immigrants and completely destroying the simple native ecologies across 40% of the land masses.

In 2361 the Alschuul forbade further surface immigration, and restricted earth-native wildlife to preserves and plantations. The COI enforced this ruling. Earthlings on the surface were corralled into cities, which grew skyward like the megalopolises of their home planet. Plagues of earth life were scrubbed from the continental plains, and ecological balance was largely restored.

Most importantly, the COI ordered the construction of hundreds and then thousands of immigrant habitats out of the colony ships and shipping containers. Ambitious colonists were given the choice between immediately disassembling their vessels to create housing, or returning to Earth. Ultimately, this made immigration unpopular, shutting down the influx almost entirely. It also created an entire nation of impoverished space-dwellers whose hopes for a planetary home on a beach were forever dashed.

War seemed inevitable until 2401, when the Alschuul agreed to sell, not lease, the outer belt and the Tash trojans to the newcomers. The Celeschul Office of Immigration adopted a new

constitution, renaming itself The Continuance. On the ground they were still subject to the Alschuul, but in the outer system the Earthlings were their own masters. The Celeschul Defense Services (CDS), a joint command between Alschuul and The Continuance, was established to police the system.

By 2415, the jury-rigged, ramshackle habitats full of refugees had been transformed into jury-rigged, ramshackle habitats full of hard-working people bent on building better homes. During the next six hundred years the economy thrived, and developed into a new symbiosis between the Alschuul and the Continuance. The CDS became a military force worthy of respect, and Celeschul System became one of the more significant cultural and industrial centers for Terrans.

Schism, War, and Reconstruction: 2981-3100

Sol System was still a better option for humans, though, and many Celeschul spacers credited that to the terraforming of Luna, Mars, and Europa. In 2981, the Terran Formation Fellowship party within the Continuance petitioned the Alschuul for rights to terraform Brilish and Agshu, which had a few settlements on them, but which had been otherwise required to lie fallow.

Their petition was rejected, and it continued to be rejected each year until 2992. Resentment within the Terran Formation Fellowship grew, stoked by activists who outwardly appeared to merely want more real estate, but whose motives were later revealed to be much more murderously ambitious. The ideological schism within The Continuance grew for decades until the election of 3041, when the Terran Formation Fellowship party was stripped of any power, and went underground to become the Terran Formation Front (TFF).

The Terraforming War

Open hostilities broke out in 3069 when 90% of The Continuance-loyal senior officers in the CDS, including the entire admiralty and all but two generals, were assassinated in a series of carefully timed attacks. Eleven garrisons and four fleets were taken by CDS forces friendly to the TFF. Decisive strikes against The Continuance positions followed, and within four days the TFF had captured key manufacturing facilities in the inner belt, and on Brilish and Agshu, and the group began preparations for a campaign against Celeschul.

The larger part of the CDS was leaderless and stunned. They adopted the name "The Continuance," abandoning the CDS designation since both sides had former CDS forces. The Continuance scrambled to assemble a cohesive defense against once-friendly forces now commanded by the TFF.

This conflict enraged the Schuul, insofar as pathologically pacifist sophonts can be enraged. That there should be any hostilities at all disgusted them, and their opinion of humanity suffered. The vigorous Continuance defense of Celeschul, including Schuul settlements, mitigated Schuul disgust only a little, but in early 3071, the Schuul swung around to full support of The Continuance. Under the command of Banneret Commodore Edwards, the Continuance 3rd Fleet thwarted a TFF rockfall attack aimed at Barschuul and the southern reef system. The attack would have destroyed half the life in Celeschul's oceans, but for Edward's heroic sacrifice. All of the impactors were deflected and all of the attacking TFF ships were destroyed, but at a significant cost. Only six of the 3rd Fleet's forty-four vessels survived the engagement, and those lost included the flagship *Lion's Reach*, with Banneret Commodore Edwards aboard.

The TFF overestimated the advantage of their early positions and they underestimated the resources and resilience of The Continuance. Additionally, they failed to account for public abandonment of the TFF's stated goals once events like the rockfall assault came to light. In early 3073, just three and one-half years after the war began, The Continuance Admiral Bram Colnsea accepted the surrender of TFF Grand Minister Gjurdesen Taavi, and the conflict was officially over.

The scars remained, of course.

An anonymous donor, or donors, funded the creation of the Titan Wall, a memorial crafted from four and a half million kilos of titanium, upon which the names of all the war's dead were engraved, with micro-encoding strips offering details about who they were and where they died. The Titan Wall includes not just the names of the millions of soldiers who died, but also the names of the millions of civilians and noncombatants killed in the conflict. The wall was erected in just four days by Continuance

Combat Engineers, whose involvement led to speculation that the donors had close military connections, but their identities remain a secret.

Twenty-five years later, during the pan-galactic conflicts known as the Teraport Wars, the United Nations of Sol (UNS), via the application of significant economic pressure, convinced the Alschuul to amend their constitution. Celeschul System became a self-governing UNS Protectorate, and the Celeschul Defense Services (re-formed after the Terraforming War) was wholly absorbed by the much larger UNS military. This relationship has left many Continuance veterans of the Terraforming War uneasy.

In early 3100, a plot to destabilize the UNS — and perhaps start a civil war — was thwarted and traced back to several operatives who may have had connections to members of the Alschuul. This has led to speculation that at least some of these pacifists have overcome their nature and seek to remove Earth's influence from Celeschul. In both official statements and off-the-record remarks, the Alschuul emphatically and categorically denies this. The only thing that is certain is that no Planet Mercenary products were used in the assault. 1

1

LEGAL: At least you managed to tack a solid disclaimer onto that incredibly long stretch of dry, historical road.

WRITER: Did the shiny new attorney just come after *us* for dry writing? Bring it on, party of the first part.

SOPH_RES: That shipping container trick works *one time*, Helenei.

WRITER: I'm using the shared account. How did you—

SOPH_RES: One. Time.

Elltooine

The largest and wealthiest habitat in Schuul system tightly orbits Celeschul's L2 point 1.3 million kilometers from the planet. Elltooine is the official port-of-entry for Celeschul. Heavy cargo is sent here first, and then delivered via government-controlled channels to the planet. Tariffs are fair, if on the steep side, which in part explains the budget that Elltooine can allot to station-keeping around the meta-stable L2 point.

Unlike many of Celeschul's other habitats, Elltooine was not jury-rigged from mega-canisters and scuttled ships. This city of 15 million was

The De-libration of Elltooine

Elltooine's power plants were beefed up to prevent future events like the de-libration of 3071, in which The Continuance 1st Fleet executed a tractor fly-by, pulling the station into an unstable orbit, which forced the TFF garrison occupying the facility to either sacrifice it or expend their energy stabilizing it. They chose stability, and were invaded.

designed by architects in Sol System, and constructed using many materials that were fabricated there, and then shipped via wormgate to Celeschul. It's fair to say that the other habitats are built out of the boxes that Elltooine arrived in.

The majority population of Elltooine is human, but like most ports-of-entry, it is diverse enough that on any given day you might see a thousand different species of sophont. Corridors and causeways are wide, and ceilings are high in order to accommodate this diversity, giving Elltooine a very luxurious, spacious feel throughout. One of the largest of the commonly-spied sophont types is the Schuul, whose mechanized exosuits contain as much as ten metric tons of water, plus a Schuul. These exosuits take up as much space as a double-decker delivery lorry.

Security forces on Elltooine are heavily armed, and take great care to ensure that no one entering the station is even remotely as well equipped as they are. Visitors who are under contract to carry weapons aboard the station must surrender their own weapons in exchange for standard-issue gear issued by "PAPA," the Port Authority Police Agency.

There is a Planet Mercenary outlet store on Elltooine. It carries one of the largest selections of any orbital outlet, but it is almost invariably described as "disappointing." [2] All weapons and armor on display are inert. Ammunition, cap-stacks, and charged micro-annies are stored off-site, and it is rumored that they are not even within the hull of the station. Customers will have their purchases activated, loaded, charged, or otherwise enabled via ship-to-ship transfer upon their departure from Elltooine.

New Xandarosa and The Powell Museum of Terran Heritage

Once a mining station on a short-period comet, New Xandarosa is home to one of the finest museums anywhere in human-dominated space. It is also by far the most secure museum. Hotels and small hab communities sparkle on the surface, while the museum sits below.

The Powell Museum occupies hollows created by the mining of volatiles, which went on for over a century from 2925 to 3042. These hollows have been reinforced at great expense with PTU-laced, K-sink architecture. Annie plants, scavenged post-war, power mil-spec shields that protect the museum from bombardment. In terms of power output and point defense capability, the museum is as well-defended against frontal assault as any Battleplate.

History

In 3065, during the Terraforming War, Lieutenant Colonel Samuel Powell of the Terran Formation Front was stationed at a small garrison on Steppenoff Station, which was home at that time to the largest private collection of pre-immigration Terran artwork in Celeschul System. The collection was far too large to describe in any detail, but it included kinetic sculptures from the 23rd and 24th century aggro-realists, a matched pair of 17th century dueling pistols, a first pressing LP of Pink Floyd's *The Dark Side of the Moon*, and an authentic Stradivarius pianoforte.

Powell, a sharp strategist, suspected an impending attack on the station. He evaluated his options and then acted contrary to his standing orders. He and half of his garrison packed up the massive art collection and left Steppenoff Station. After a week of radio-silent flight, they arrived at the strategically unimportant mining station now known as New Xandarosa. They captured the station without suffering any casualties, and then proceeded to fortify heavily, building vault after vault in the mine's played-out shafts.

Steppenoff Station was attacked almost immediately after Powell's departure. The pods that had formerly housed the heritage collections were destroyed in a saturation missile barrage.

The TFF's strategists railed against Powell. The publicity surrounding the saving of the art was helpful, but these strategists maintained that it would have been much more helpful, politically, to be able to blame The Continuance with the collection's destruction.

Today, 35 years later, New Xanderosa is home to more than just the "Scram" Powell Museum of Terran Heritage. It is also home to two generations of descendants of Powell's garrison. It is the only Terran Formation Front facility that never submitted to occupation by The Continuance forces, and while this may be a point of pride to TFF sympathizers elsewhere, visitors to New Xanderosa are quick to realize that this extended military family is loyal, first and foremost, to the protection and preservation of the artwork.

2

CHAIR: Is this thing on?

WRITER: It is. What does "chair" mean?

CHAIR: Are people really calling one of our outlets "disappointing"?

TERL'KRIS: Chair means "everybody's boss, be polite"

WRITER: Ah. Sorry boss. Bosses. Everybody. And yes, people are calling it that. Calling the outlet disappointing.

CHAIR: Have you alerted Special Marketing Operations regarding these people?

WRITER: If Special Marketing Operations is reading this book, then yes. Yes I have.

CHAIR: Terl'Kris, does "polite" imply "cheeky?"

Haven Hive

The majority — by an overwhelming margin — of Schuul system's non-schuul inhabitants live in habitats like Haven Hive. These habitats are located in inner belt, outer belt, or Celeschul orbits. Haven Hive is one of the oldest habitats in the system. It orbits Celeschul, and houses eighteen million people, 95% of whom are baseline human.

The docks at Haven Hive are closely monitored for weapons. The station's construction is solid, but anything more energetic than a simple firearm can have devastating effects. In a recent dust-up with Sanctum Adroit, a group of escaping fugitives fired one shot from a Strohl BH-250, perforating six decks and igniting fires.

Law enforcement on Haven Have is no longer contracted to Sanctum Adroit, but nobody really notices. SA's "paladins of police work" were underpaid and understaffed, and they subcontracted much of their legwork to local heavies. Those same locals are now on the official payroll of the new Hive-Maven, Ma Shephard. Pundits praise Shephard as "honest" and "well-intentioned," but her policies have not, as yet, trickled down to the thugs walking the beats. And pay attention to the word "beat" here, because if you're interested in getting a beating from a human police officer, then Haven Hive is one of the easiest places to get it.

Beyond the docks and the industrial spaces, most of the station is inaccessible to neophants, Vhorweds, or other large sophonts, who simply cannot squeeze themselves into the passageways. The structure was cobbled together from shipping containers and colony ships, and it was a rushed project undertaken by humans denied living space on the planet below. Consideration for other races did not enter into what little planning they did. Ursumari are among the largest sophonts who can get through, but they will have to spend most of their time quadrupedal while on the station.

Haven Hive has little to offer if you're shopping for decent equipment or valuable trade goods, and it has even less to offer if you're trying to sell something for anything close to its going price. The denizens of the Hive are poor, and even the wealthiest among them — the slumlords, the dock-masters, and the street mimes — are not particularly well-to-do.

If you're on the run, however, then Haven Hive is a great place to deliberately disappear. The station may seem crowded, but the infrastructure failures brought about during the Terraforming War left large areas abandoned. Repairs were made decades ago, but when the bulkhead airlocks were re-opened, the empty halls and hulls were immediately claimed by gangs and squatters, who were quick to sabotage the surveillance feeds. When outsiders think of Haven Hive, they envision the Hive's Cold Quarter, where a fugitive with means, skills, and fast reflexes can vanish. It's only a couple of degrees colder here than in the rest of the Hive, but you'll still feel it.

The Plenipotent Dominion

The massive black hole at the center of the Milky Way galaxy, together with the super-infrastructure in tight orbit around it — the largest power generation system ever known — is owned and operated exclusively by the Plenipotent Dominion.

We, the writers at Planet Mercenary, accepted a small sum of money from the Plenipotent Dominion to lead with that line. Since the PD does not need to worry about actual challenges to their indisputable power, we can only assume that the boast is there to prevent the unwary from trying something truly stupid.

Literature is full of evil empires that must be overthrown by plucky rebels. In this light, it is truly refreshing to find an unquestionably despotic power with godlike abilities ruling in a way that nobody has ever been able to prove is anything other than benign.

That sounded sinister. It's true. Spooky, and ominous, but true. 1

Most of the Plenipotent Dominion's 6.6 billion sophont population lives in ultra-modern habitats orbiting the lifeless, rocky worlds of Planet Down and Pretty Dead. These worlds orbit stars which are roughly ten light years from the galactic core. A few Plenipotent Dominion citizens live and work aboard the PD Fleet, whose exact size remains a matter of intense debate.

The PD has a very welcoming immigration policy, and boasts the highest standard of living in any place that such things are meaningfully measured. The population includes sophonts from over 180,000 different species, and all of these sophonts are recent immigrants. The Plenipotent Dominion is quite young, and it is the fastest-growing and most diversely populated political entity anywhere in the galaxy.

The government of the Plenipotent Dominion is a distributed artificial intelligence that often manifests itself using an ob'enn avatar who answers to "Petey." There are also some "meaty-Petey" nodes, which are vat-grown ob'enn bodies with apparently normal organic brains. Meaty-Petey nodes communicate with the rest of the Plenipotent Dominion's mind via an implanted communications suite.

Habitats have local precinct governments and community organizations which operate according to the preferences of the dominant population of that precinct. These local governments are still forming, and the diverse manner of governance is too broad to begin to describe. The one thing they do all have in common, however, is that ultimate authority for peace-keeping and adjudication of disputes lies with Petey.

Crime is almost unheard of in the PD. Criminals, however, are everywhere, and for sophonts whose moral compass includes a definition for "evil," some of these criminals are the most evil people to be found anywhere, worthy in most cases of death sentences, at least in societies where those are administered.

Petey demonstrates a respect for life that makes the word "idealistic" slink away in underachieving shame. The Plenipotent Dominion provides free rehabilitation and asylum for these criminals, and indeed for any who arrive ahead of their local judiciary. Parnassus Dom is home to some of Sol System's political criminals, including Levaughn Matsui Xinchub and Jevee

1

CHAIR: It seems to me that this narrative encourages the players to throw themselves headlong, and very self-destructively, against the Plenipotent Dominion.

R&D: We went around and around on this, and finally decided that it's better for them to do that as players than to try anything with actual spacecraft. They lose either way, but if they lose in the game it will be fun.

CHAIR: This level of micromanagement is cutting into my yachting time, and not in a way that gives me a sense of increased shareholder value.

TERL'KRIS: Understood. We didn't actually need executive-level input on this project, but our ex-CEO insisted.

CHAIR: With dramatic results, which, barring some unfortunate write-offs in the SR column, we are pleased with. Like results. The new CEO will be along shortly.

Names in the Plenipotent Dominion

Every vessel, world, and habitat to which the Plenipotent Dominion has given a name is, without fail, given a "p-word, d-word" name. These include the warships Predictably Damaged, Palindrome Demordnilap, and Presto Digitation; the worlds of Planet Down, and Pretty Dead; and the habitats of Parnassus Dom, Pi's Digits, and Pantheon Debutante. On occasion, Petey (pronounced "peedee," obviously) will refer to himself by the title Pius Dei, which roughly translates into "dutiful god."

Ceeta. In cases like theirs, the asylum is free, and the rehabilitation is mandatory. The nature of this program is unknown, but Petey certainly possesses the technology to rebuild, rewrite, reprogram, rewire, and otherwise perform all manner of "re-" in the course of turning murderous, horrible creatures into safely functioning members of society.

The absence of any sort of extradition treaty between the Plenipotent Dominion and other governments remains a point of contention. Much of the distrust outsiders have for the Plenipotent Dominion lately stems from the asylum it has granted to high-profile criminals.

The Plenipotent Dominion has implemented one of the galaxy's most successful "moneyless economies." Immigrants are not required to work, but Petey's job placement algorithms ensure that as people arrive they find ways to do the things they love, and to serve one another. The communal nature of the PD is very alien to sophonts interested in building wealth, but all of the PD's residents enjoy almost all of the trappings of wealth. Except, of course, the best trapping, which is knowing you have more money than somebody else.

This moneyless economy does not mean that equipment is free. You can find fine food and drink at no charge, and nice housing is always available, but weapons, vehicles, and high-end materiel are only issued as needed. Unless you're taking a job for Petey, you don't need them. It's also worth noting that currencies and barter systems have sprung up in many of the PD communities, typically centered around specialty services and artisanal goods.

History

The Plenipotent Dominion, as a named political entity, is just under two years old. The core artificial intelligence behind it all is barely more than three years old. the official story is that this AI, the first Meaty-Petey node, was secretly calved from an old tausennigan ob'enn warship AI, which had previously been liberated by the infamous Kaff Tagon in an epic act of expedited carelessness. That AI self-destructed, covering the escape of its careless benefactors, as well as this final act of creation.

The new vat-ob'enn, Petey, secretly built or co-opted additional nodes for his mind, and became known as "The Rogue" by the tausennigan ob'enn warlords whose ships he began picking off, suborning, and co-opting in a swift war of containment. Most analysts agree that Petey's campaign in 3097 and 3098 prevented a large-scale war between the Ob'enn and other galactic powers, and saved hundreds of billions of lives.

Galactic history is replete with incidents in which liberated machine intelligences have grown in power, and have then been fought down and stripped of that power. In Petey's case, just as he caught the attention of the great powers capable of reining him in, he was drawn into a conflict whose resolution left him several orders of magnitude too powerful for them to contend with.

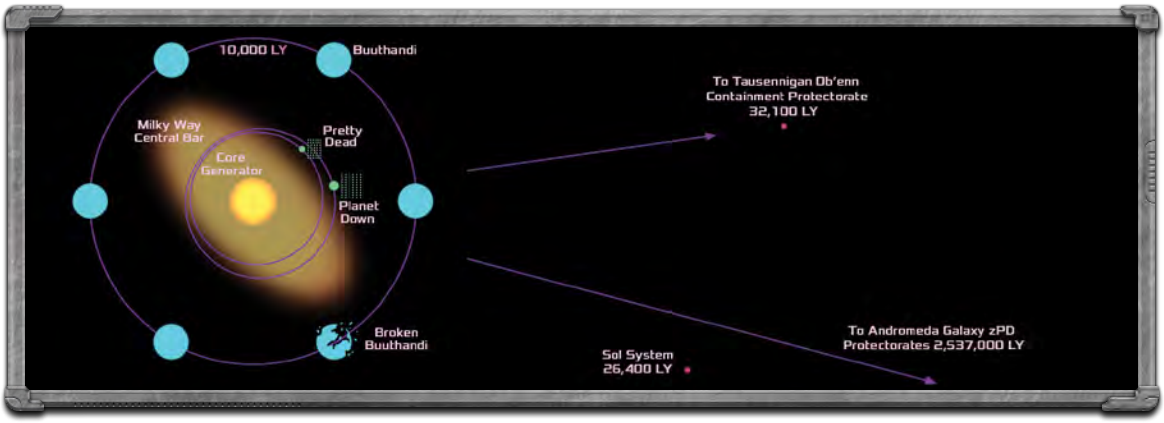
The super-infrastructure at the galactic core is a zero-point energy project assembled over the course of tens of thousands of years by The Wormgate Corporation, using designs provided by a still-mysterious race of non-baryonic ("dark matter") sophonts known as the Pa'anuri. The Gatekeepers and the Pa'anuri had fought a bitter war hundreds of thousands of years earlier, and this generator seemed to be a token of peace.

It was not. It was designed so that the Pa'anuri could interface with it via gravity, and cause it to destroy itself and the entire galaxy, wiping all baryonic matter out of existence for 200,000 light years in any direction — a scenario that the non-baryonic Pa'anuri probably found quite amenable.

Accounts differ, but somehow word reached Petey, and in June of 3098 he convinced several powerful governments to liberate portions of their AI-piloted fleet, and further, to let those AIs follow Petey into battle. These liberated intelligences pooled their processing resources and became "the Fleetmind," and on June 12, 3098, they saved the entire Milky Way galaxy, right down to the baryonic matter of which it is comprised, from destruction.

Buuthandi Ownership

Rumors suggest that the Gatekeepers' mysterious stellar enclosures, the Bu'uthandi, are now under Petey's administration. If this is actually the case, then the Plenipotent Dominion is now governing a population of somewhere between three and three hundred trillion f'sherl ganni, which means the Plenipotent Dominion contains the oldest galactic society still in existence.



The Fleetmind disabled the Core Generator's overspin system and then safely harnessed its power. The scope of this project cannot be overstated. Not only did the Fleetmind have control of the Core, it now also controlled the entire Wormgate network, giving it a foothold in every system with a working wormgate.

The Fleetmind soon adopted the name "Plenipotent Dominion," which gave the rest of the galaxy some handy syllables to angrily spit while Petey set about meddling in other people's affairs.

Planet Down

Sixty cities of the Plenipotent Dominion orbit the airless, rocky world called Planet Down. It's not the planet called "Down." Its full name is "Planet Down," per the PD naming convention.

The surface of Planet Down is uninhabitable, with temperatures varying between -220 °C at the low end and 165 °C at the high end. Bursts of radiation from the active stellar neighborhood have sterilized the surface countless times over the last billion years or so. Neither the radiation threat nor the temperature extremes are as problematic for visitors as the current tectonic state. The mining operations of the Plenipotent Dominion, which include the use of massive annie plants to resonance-mine continental swaths of the landscape, have created some very extreme geological "weather." Volcanoes are born at the rate of one every 72 hours along an 11,000-kilometer stretch known as the Eastern Equatorial Seam, and Richter 8 quakes rattle the ground so often, and in so many places, that all ground-based structures must be built on floating foundations with active inertiics.

Planet Down's mining operations are run by very sturdily-constructed machine sophonts, not all of which are PD nodes. These hardy bots require less radiation shielding than meat-sophonts do. If you happen to be made of meat, and are planning a trip to the surface, you'll be packing so much shielding along that you might as well just bring your ship, and then stay inside it while not landing on any of that potentially bouncy ground.

Pretty Dead

Six light years from Planet Down another PD world, Pretty Dead, is the site of ongoing city-building. Another sixty orbital foundations have been put in place, and as of this writing at least twenty of those cities are operational, and are welcoming visitors and immigrants alike.

The climate of Pretty Dead is just as intemperate and radiologically dangerous as Planet Down's, but Pretty Dead remains tectonically quiescent. Mining operations have not begun. Visitors to the cities in Pretty Dead's sky report that mining might be starting up, however, because long convoys of mechanized surveyors continue to crisscross the surface.

Parnassus Dom

The distribution of Petey's intelligence means that there is no need for a "capital" city, but for purposes of interfacing with the rest of the galaxy, the capital of the Plenipotent Domain is Parnassus Dom.

The city is only twenty months old, and began as a rehab colony for a small population of congenitally xenophobic ob'enn. Today the ob'enn quarter sits amid interspeciated housing complexes, and is directly alongside a tribal colony

of tausennigan kss'thrata. Everybody seems to be getting along just fine.

Like the seventy-plus PD cities built after it, Parnassus Dom makes beautiful use of its interior spaces, devoting almost twenty cubic kilometers to parks, water features, and broad avenues. There are several shopping plazas whose innovative curved and layered designs let them seem crowded and busy without being uncomfortable, and hundreds of sporting arenas and game centers offer diversion for spectators and potential participants alike. There are also thousands of service kiosks, tastefully nestled — even camouflaged — in the parks, ensuring that you're never more than a short walk from something interesting, delicious, or incomprehensibly alien.

Accommodations and housing can be found at the edge of these centrally-located public spaces, and this living space continues, broken up by smaller parks and service areas, to the skyline-like towers that rise along the outside of the city. Like most modern cities, from any given vantage point it is obvious that a lot of people live here, and the place is pretty big. This is illusory. At capacity, the city houses over ninety million people.

Over 180,000 races of sophont live within the Plenipotent Dominion, and all of them are represented within the hulls and halls of Parnassus Dom. The centermost plane of the habitat, "floor zero," is entirely given over to embassies, gathering spaces, and traveler services for the not-actually-countless varieties of sophont within the Dominion.

Barad Mellon tower, about one third of the way up the side of the city looking out over Planet Down and the blazing stellar neighborhood of the central Milky Way, is home to Captain Kevyn Andreyasn (retired), who claims to have come from a parallel timeline, which was destroyed by the Pa'anuri. Independent verification of his story is impossible, but Petey assures us it's true. This tower also serves, from time to time, as a "between missions" base of operations for members of Tagon's Toughs.

Arena Rudel is the largest of the sporting centers. It can be converted quickly to provide a variety of terrains and an astounding array of gravitational gradients for heavy-gee track-and-field, low-gee aerobatics, and flux-gee "Armorball 360," which is as close as you can get to small-unit warfare on the decks of a disabled warship anywhere except during a boarding operation on the decks of disabled warship.

The Pereri Ring

Not many civilizations are visible to the naked eyes of humans from a billion kilometers away. Ancient humans made a big deal about how a wall built by one of their early civilizations could be seen from space. The Pereri ring shines visibly from a distance at which the entire planet, on which that wall was built, would be lost in the glare of its home star.

Pereri Prime is a main-sequence F5 star, orbited closely by a hot giant, Pret, and more distantly by a cooler giant, Kessk. Between them lies an expansive band of planetoids, planetesimals, and protoplanets known as the Pereri Ring, and this shimmering band is where all the interesting stuff happens.

And by "interesting stuff," we mean trillions of people on millions of worldlets in a chaotic, system-spanning spread of warring nations, trade delegations, and diverse populations, with no small amount of piracy threaded through it all. It's a big, complicated picture, so we'll start with the background.

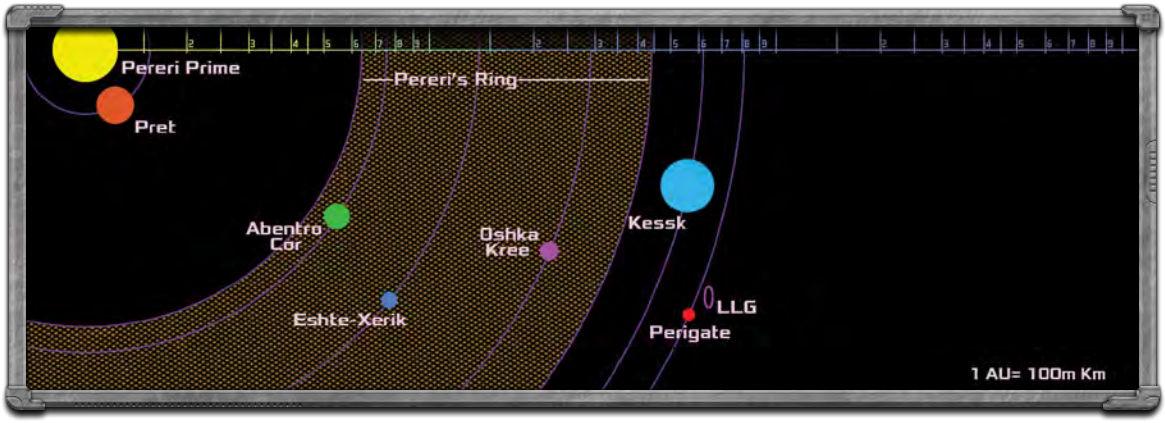
The ring has been completely colonized and heavily developed by the race of mechorganic sophonts we now call the esspererin. The evolutionary origin of this species and the provenance of the ring are thought to be related, and many suspect the esspererin somehow created the ring by shattering their homeworld. There is no direct evidence to support this theory because very little from that period has survived the esspererin exploitation of the area, but it remains compelling.

So little of the system's original bodies remain that their original composition can only be estimated. Assuming standard astrogeology, they included "dirty snowballs" of frozen volatiles, "dusty clumps" of pulverized minerals and metals, and "gold mines" of metal-rich rock (a very tiny percentage of which might have been actual gold).

Today the original volatiles have all been thawed and consumed, the minerals and metals have been smelted or cleared away, and any geological riches the Pereri Ring once offered have long since been plundered. The demands of life and civilization have removed the long markers of natural history.

As the story goes, the machines of the pre-exoplanetary esspererin evolved alongside and into their creators, adapting for low gravity, a lack of atmosphere, and harsh radiation. This allowed their civilization to survive away from the cradle of their species' infancy. The planet itself became more valuable as a source of raw materials than as a gravitational anchor with an ecosystem, and its disassembly followed.

Another theory is that a planetary interloper scored the one-in-a-trillion shot, slamming into a populated world and blowing it apart. The space-faring members of that destroyed population rebuilt themselves to survive, and colonized the collision's debris. At some point, they may have become self-sustaining, and been faced with the decision of whether to allow portions of the belt to coalesce into a new



planet, but the simple economy of their new life would have made planet-building look more like burying useful things for no good reason.

However it came to be, the modern Pereri Ring is a thing of wonder. Majestic forests of solar arrays grow like super-giant trees from the small, rocky bodies here, and a robust ecology of machine-like life lives on and among them. Insect-sized creatures tap the trunk conduits for chemical fuels, trace elements, and even electrical energy. The esspererin tend to these machine-growth forests and even move them to new orbits via a complex arrangement of sail-like leaves. Or leaf-like sails.

The esspererin have done this orbital fine-tuning on a grand scale, and with a finesse that the celestial engineers of Sol's asteroid belt can only dream of attaining. The forested bodies have been arranged into gravitationally linked clusters, slowly orbiting a common center, and these tiny worlds are also linked culturally and economically. A single cluster may consist of as many as fifty bodies in a complex dance, invisibly tethered by gravitational, ecological, and anthropological bonds.

Distances between cluster bodies, or nodes, typically measure just a few thousand kilometers, and Pereri life flits freely between the gravitationally-tethered nodes. Just as a meat-sophont might meander across a megarcology to visit an old friend, an esspererin might leap from a tree's outermost collector vanes, spread their wings, and glide on photoelectric breezes for ten thousand kilometers as part of their weekly commute.

The ring's multitudinous planetesimal ecosystems, taken together, fill a volume of space several orders of magnitude larger than the thin layer of life found on planetary surfaces. The mega-ecosystem's volume increases exponentially when one includes not just the teeming semi-spheres, but the spaces between them which sparkle with the criss-crossings of migratory life.

Even at their closest, however, the clusters are still quite distant from one another. There are around eighty non-sapient migratory species that sail between clusters. It is possible for any healthy esspererin to similarly traverse the millions of kilometers between clusters, but they don't. Esspererin travel around their civilization's ring using spacecraft, like normal people, and for normal reasons, like trade, tourism, or conquest. It's faster, and they don't like the thought that they might get eaten.

Culture, Economy, and Politics

The key commodities of the Pereri System are minerals, volatile gases, and energy, but any discussion of these must be prefaced with a discussion about esspererin engineering, and an engineering taboo.

The esspererin can modify themselves and their environment extensively, but they shun non-native components for these changes. An esspee might take a leg from a fallen enemy and graft it onto themself, but they wouldn't even consider doing that with a Döblitz Foundry grav-lifter. Sure, the grav-lifter could be far more useful, but such grafts are perverse, heretical, and abominable.

This shunning of non-native technologies extends to everything in the Pereri System ecology. Esspererin-grown vessels are sail-powered, light-powered, and may even be fusion-powered (there are some esspee power plants — literally, "plants" — that serve as efficient magbottle reactors) but they are never powered by annie plants. That technology, along with the advanced materials and tech required for Post-Trans-Uranics, do not grow natively in Pereri, and are not integrated into esspererin equipment, let alone into their bodies. Of course, outliers exist, but esspees who integrate non-native tech are socially ostracized, at the very least.

The result? Compared to other energy-rich societies, the esspees are terribly impoverished. And because the esspee fusion reactors are not particularly efficient tools for creating elements beyond carbon, shortages of raw materials can only be addressed via expensive imports or even more expensive wars. Volatiles, particularly hydrogen and oxygen, are sometimes skimmed from the gas giants, but those gravity wells are deep, and the esspererin have a healthy respect for extreme radiation.

From here it's easy to see what drives the culture, the politics, and the economy of the Pereri Ring. Raw mineral resources were depleted long ago, and are now bound up in the existing infrastructure. Energy is readily available, but not in amounts that will relieve the pressure. When the esspererin go to war, they go all in. They don't fight for real estate. They

fight for the material wealth contained in the very bodies of the enemy.

The good news is that warfare is on the decline, and trade is booming. Eighty years ago, a wormgate arrived in the Pereri System, and exotic esspererin handicrafts (read: "cheap plants that meat-sophs treat as works of art") were traded for cargo holds full of iron, aluminum, and silver. The esspees integrated galactic currencies into their existing systems of barter and banking, and today a merchant can trade commodities for things far more fungible than decorative mechaflora.

The esspererin cultural impulse to hoard, recycle, and raid remains quite strong in places, so merchant vessels tend to travel in escorted caravans. Just one shipping container filled with magnesium will be an irresistibly juicy target for raiders. If you're eager to be boarded by cat-sized mecha-pirates who can breathe vacuum and will feed you to their trees, then an unescorted visit to the Pereri Ring is a fine choice for the final stop on your Bucket List Tour.

Esspererin Cluster-States

Eshte Xerik

Whether you're shopping for supplies, selling off surplus, or looking for work, Eshte Xerik should be at the top of your list of possible destinations. Many other clusters have trade relations here, and their representatives and emissaries in Eshte Xerik are meeting as much with each other — and with visitors like you — as they are with their hosts. With fifty billion esspererin citizens, and another hundred million visiting diplomats, merchants, and tourists, it is among the most populous clusters, and it tops the list of the most politically stable clusters. The political stability may stem in part from its orbital stability. 1

The gravitational center of mass of the cluster is the L1 point of the cold giant Kessk. The planetoids Eshte and Xerik, whose masses are identical to eleven significant digits, orbit their mutual center-of mass, a point just 14,000 kilometers from each of them.. Sixteen similarly mass-identical worldlets, spinning in pairs, orbit the two planetoids, their complex paths maintained by resonances between the larger bodies and some station-keeping on the part of the Esspererin.

Eshte and Xerik are about 28,000 kilometers apart, but the eight pairs of worldlets dance within a mere 500 kilometers of each other, and pass at times within 1,500 kilometers of Eshte and Xeric. The entire cluster is an ancient mass-transit system allowing esspererin to leap from world to world and commute through the cluster.

This innermost group of eighteen bodies is the core of a much larger collection. Hundreds of outer worldlets orbit loosely around the semi-stability of the L1 point. Theirs are not permanent orbits; members periodically slide away, meandering into the general population of the ring's bodies, and wandering worldlets sometimes pass closely enough to be drawn in for a few hundred orbits.

It is a slow dance. These changes take decades, and are predicted, or purposely engineered, centuries in advance. Eshte Xerik's economy and culture are built upon this territorial flux, shifting slowly with every arrival and departure. Historically, this process has been managed with solar sails and fusion drives, but the cluster engineering committee of the E-X Outer Congress hired annie-powered pushers for three recent captures, accelerating the process to meet otherwise unavailable orbital windows.

The entire Eshte Xerik cluster is heavily defended. Squadrons of light interceptors patrol the area, and multilayered Teraport Area Denial covering a sphere with a radius of 220,000 kilometers is maintained via 32 known generators. Exclusions to the Eshte Xerik TAD may be acquired, but only for zones in the outer cloud where heavily armed cruisers maintain security.

When doing business here, look people in the eye, and make a point of having personnel look each other in the eyes as well. Looking down, looking away, or otherwise averting your gaze is a sign of dislike and distrust. This eye-to-eye contact is not just cultural — it is part of the geography.

Ehste and Xerik orbit each other synchronously, always showing one another the same face. At the center of each of their facing hemispheres is a circular, polished plain of white ceramic, surrounded by lacy collector-trees. From orbit this appears as a bright white circle with a broad, dark ring around it. Symbolically, this is Eshte and Xerik in love, never averting their gaze from each other. Similar clear patches are found on the eight pairs of surround-

1

JANO_CX: Eshte Xerik seems like someplace we should have a franchise.

WRITER: That's an executive-level matter, not a writer thing.

JANO_CX: Yes. The Board has decreed that executive-level matters are my thing. I was probing for more information, not critiquing your writing.

TERL'KRIS: Writers, this 'JANO_CX' is Janodomadiwabavoheewa, our new CEO.

WRITER: On behalf of the word pool, including one writer who is currently dry-heaving in fear, welcome! We look forward to your input.

JANO_CX: It's o—

WRITER: And the opportunity to respond with respect and no barfing. Sorry.

ing worlds, though their faces "wobble" a bit, lacking their parents' clarity.

As you bounce through the honeycombed city-core of Eshte and Xeric in 0.02 g, don't worry about making eye contact with everyone. There are fifteen billion people there with you, after all, and none of them have enough eyes to take in everyone. Just be sure to make some eye contact, especially if you're about to engage in conversation.

Abentro Cor

By esspererin standards, the Abentro Cor cluster on the inner edge of the Pereri Ring is dangerously impoverished. The best analog for Abentro Cor's culture is an agricultural community with a nearby mine. They survive on the collection of light energy and thrice-per-orbit gas skimming runs to the inner giant Pret. Theirs is a subsistence economy in which even a short series of crises could be ruinous.

The four planetesimals of Abentro Cor are completely covered in light-collecting forests. They're roughly the same size, and they orbit each other in a tight ring with a radius of 4,000 km, which is not particularly stable. Sails are always being deployed for station-keeping, and each pass of the inner giant forces further adjustments. On occasion the destabilization is severe enough that one or more of Abentro Cor's nodes must use a reaction drive, expelling precious mass for additional thrust.

The cluster's relative proximity to Pereri Prime makes its forests more productive than those growing on mid-ring clusters. Their periodic proximity to Pret makes skimming runs convenient, but also causes the orbital instabilities that so often prevent them from stockpiling a proper wealth of volatiles.

The esspererin of Abentro Cor place the highest value on efficiency and recycling, and ingenuity is a deep part of their culture. "AbCor" engineers are sought throughout the ring, and their tolerances for error are quite low by esspererin standards. Some are recruited even further afield, and although a strong sense of family loyalty prevents mass exodus, Abentro Cor does suffer from a gradual hemorrhage among its topmost tool-spinners — one more factor preventing the cluster from accumulating significant wealth.

Their loss might be your gain. Abento Cor is a great place to hire esspererin willing to pay their way doing double-shifts of maintenance and repair. Be careful in extending offers, however. Absconding with precious resources is frowned upon with very frowny faces looking down at you along the barrels of their very frowny guns.

Oshka Kree

The Oshka Kree cluster sees new neighborhoods more often than any of the other clusters, and it is a very bad neighbor indeed. The Oshka Kree are scavengers, raiders, and pirates, and they are very adept at their trade.

The dozen worldlets of Oshka Kree orbit tightly about the anchor planetoid Kree Prime, which is the second largest planetoid in the Pereri Ring. This body has a much more elliptical orbit than is typical for the ring, and that orbit is skewed 10 degrees from the plane of the system. Kree Prime hauls its satellites from the lightly-populated upper plane of the ring, through the much denser center, down to the lower plane, and then back on an eight-year sweep which sees three full years of very aggressive proximity to potential victims.

The surface of Kree Prime is covered in light-collecting forest, but its satellite worldlets bristle with weapons, an extravagant abandonment of the energy-hungry ecology of most esspererin worlds. The cluster is protected by several layers of Teraport Area Denial from an unknown number generators, and millions of stealth mines surround it in a shepherded cloud. Safe passage through these mines requires

either a fully-shielded, guns-blazing assault or an up-to-the-minute map with pass codes. Safe teraporting is not possible. The Oshka Kree advanced TAD is heavily-redundant, and there are no Exclusion Zones. Their own vessels are required to run through the mine cloud, and exceptions are not made — especially not on the rare occasion when there is armed pursuit.

The Oshka Kree economy stands on the three pillars of raiding, trading, and collected starlight. While they prefer to take things outright rather than buy them, they're willing to trade if the deal is sweet enough, and if the taking looks too dangerous. Exchanges typically take place outside the cluster, in empty spaces far away from common trade routes. Be warned, though! As often as not, a trade is a trap, so take great care to make sure you're better armed than the Oshka Kree representatives with whom you're attempting to make a deal.

Lonesome Lost Gilligan

A century ago, an entrepreneurial clan of esspees bet their lives and their homes on a rich but risky future. They launched their tiny cluster into an orbit far outside the ring, beyond the orbit of Kessk, and met the incoming wormgate just in time to be captured by its planet-like mass. Starvation and death had been their wingmates for two decades, and then almost overnight the Perigate Cluster became an economic and cultural superpower.

It was pretty awesome for them while it lasted.

Three years ago, Perigate went dark, along with 17% of the rest of the wormgate network. Teraport-based travel became the only way into Pereri System, and the Perigate Cluster, now home to ten million of the wealthiest Esspererin in the system, began to starve. Eight million of them liquidated what assets they could, and fled for the ring.

Desperate, the remaining population scrambled to find something new around which to build their livelihoods. They burned through their assets like a maser through cherry sorbet, and in their haste, they lost containment of a memetic infection of 20th-century Earth media. Fascination with this programming swept the cluster, and warped their culture into an amalgam of cowboy cinema, *Lost*, and *Gilligan's Island*.

The Lonesome Lost Gilligan Cluster was born in just four days. It's worldlets still orbit Perigate, but instead of being a way-station, LLG is now a destination cluster. It is among the top 5% of popular tourist destinations in the galaxy. Some people believe that the memetic infection story is nothing more than an elaborate fiction in support of a desperate economy. These people have never line-danced, and they are not looking closely enough at the cluster's very, very unusual citizens.

Memetic Infections

Plagues of infectious ideas are not unique to esspererin, but they can spread extremely quickly via esspererin radio-speak. Checksums and other filtering mechanisms exist to prevent this, which is why entire populations of esspees do not ordinarily end up throne-gaming or doing macaroni. Populations under great stress do, on rare occasion, lower these filters, possibly as part of a deep-seated evolutionary mechanism to speed the spread of survival tactics.

The locals have been completely taken over by character concepts, and in the three years since the name change, none have been observed to break character. This is remarkable, considering the dozens of Gilligans who are also part Pea Eye Parker and at least fifty Lorenas who are part-Ginger and part-Kate. The very out-of-character technological work that must be done to maintain the cluster is worked into the story; collector vanes are corn, propulsion units are horses, and currency is all coconuts.

This remodeling of their language and behavior is a thing of beauty to be enjoyed by tourists and scholars of live theater alike.

LLG's six worldets are Ogalalla, Gilligan's Island, The Island, Lonesome Dove, Oceanic 815, and Six Flags Over Pereri. The first three are anchors for collector tree forests and thus the cluster's bread basket. Oceanic 815 and Lonesome Dove host spaceports and trading stations, with the former serving as traffic control for travel among all six worldlets. Six Flags Over Pereri is home to most of the cluster's heavy industry. The Island "is mysterious and nobody goes there," though shuttles to The Island still depart every 45 minutes from Oceanic 815.

Back to bucket lists: if yours includes watching an 85-centimeter mech with three-meter butterfly wings ride a mechorganic flying horse while singing the "Rawhide" ring tone, then a trip to the Pereri Ring is in order. If that's not on your bucket list, then you should consider a bigger bucket list.

Eina-Afa

Imagine a can large enough that you could drop Mars into it. Now, fish Mars back out of it, line the inside of the can with jungles, fill it with air, and spin it for gravity.

That is how you begin to understand the scope and scale of Eina-Afa.

Eina-Afa orbits a red dwarf star in the binary system of Mnei-Oa. The companion star went nova roughly eight thousand years ago, and today both stars and the station sit within the resulting planetary nebula. The colors will fade over the next five to ten thousand years, but Eina-Afa was not put here for that view. It has been around for roughly ten million years, and it appears to have been built to last for billions of years. The nearby supernova didn't do any damage, and the red dwarf around which Eina-Afa orbits and draws energy will burn peacefully for another ten trillion years.

This artificial world is an artifact that survived at least one filter event, and the Neoafan Research Institute speculates that the ancient Oafans created it so they could hide from that event. 1

Speculation is all that is available at this time. The original inhabitants of Eina-Afa are long dead, and the AI which managed the station across the eons of their absence deteriorated to the point of having forgotten most of its history. That AI recently abdicated, and control of the station was passed to a new AI, Chinook, who has, with the help of teams of scientists and engineers, begun restoring many of Eina-Afa's dead systems.

There are hundreds of millions of square kilometers of unexplored wilderness in Eina-Afa, and most them are vertical. Gargantuan radial spokes reach nearly four thousand kilometers into the sky, and Eina-Afa's jungles have completely covered them to an altitude of 2,800 kilometers.

Hiking the circumference of just one of these pillars is a serious expedition. Sedimentary hills covered in dense, wet forest will slow your pace, but if you can still manage twenty kilometers per day, then the 282-kilometer trip will take two weeks. If you decide to try climbing the pillar, and can maintain a free-climbing ascent of five meters per minute, the trip to the tree-line will take about two years of grueling twelve-hour days.

If you fall after a year of climbing, it may take you an entire day to hit the ground. You'll have plenty of time to put in a call to search-and-rescue, then take a free-falling nap for a couple of hours until they come and pluck you out of the sky.

Tell them to hurry, because a large, flying carnivore may also wish to pluck you out of the sky, and many of Eina-Afa's airborne predators are large enough to swallow a neophant whole. Those that are not will have little trouble simply tearing their meal into smaller pieces.

Eina-Afa would be structurally impossible without the extravagant use of Post-Trans-Uranic elements, which dope the alloys of all load-bearing structures. Since pretty much

1

JANO_CX: Filter Event studies can be deeply depressing. Let's educate our clients' enlisted personnel without leaving them empty inside.

WRITER: We shall endeavor to address the ignorance of the sad, sorry, ours-is-but-to-do-and-die lot in ways that leave them happy, and eager to shoot people for money.

JANO_CX: *rofl* Good point. A bit thick on the sarcasm, but the xenolit reference saves it.

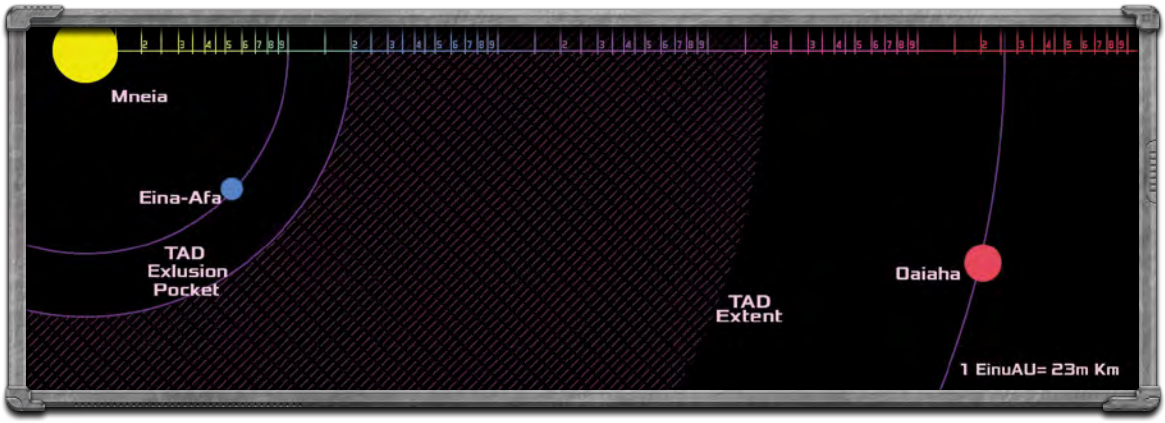
WRITER: You roffled. I half-expected you to kill me.

Eina-Afa's Age

Ten million is a conveniently round number. Eina-Afa is between 8.5 and 17 million years old. We're calling it "ten" until we hear differently.

Filter Events

A filter event is a hypothetical recurring event in Galactic history that wipes out all intelligent life. The terminology arose from a pre-contact Earth philosophy called "Fermi's Paradox," which asked, in essence, "if space is so big, where are all the aliens?" Today's galactic civilization has disturbingly not rendered that question irrelevant. Why is everyone so close in technology level? Where are the more advanced civilizations? Why hasn't the entire galaxy been colonized and populated by now? The filter event hypothesis presents some compelling, if decidedly unpleasant answers.



every structure is load-bearing, there are PTUs everywhere.

It has been estimated that there are more PTUs in Eina-Afa than in all of the annie plants currently in use by all known galactic societies combined. The station represents the single greatest concentration of wealth in history, and as such presents an attractive target for anyone with sufficient ambition and ample firepower. The definition of "ample" has been ratcheted up twice now, when Eina-Afa's defenses have thwarted certain ambitions. The Neoafan Freehold's political alliance with the Plenipotent Dominion further redefines "ample" to mean "beyond reach," and ensures that any wealth acquired in the Mnei-Oa system will be earned honestly, ambition notwithstanding. 2

Eina-Afa Main Cylinder Dimensions

Length: 12,000 km
Exterior radius: 4,050 km
Interior "ground level" radius: 3,695 km
Interior "ground" surface area: 272.125 million km²

Eina-Afa Area Calculations

Surface Gravity: 0.33 g
Spoke radius: 45 km
Spoke length: 3,600 km
Tree line altitude: 2,800 km
Forested surface area per spoke: 792,000 km²
No. of spokes: 570 (31 groups of 18, 2 groups of 6)
Total forested spoke area: 451.44 million km²
Soulcrypt dimensions: 0.3km wide, 1,000 km high, 700 km long
Soulcrypt vertical surface area: 700,000 km²
Soulcrypt top surface area: 210 km²
No. of soulcrypts: 14 standing, one fallen
Total soulcrypt vertical forest: 9.8 million km²
Total vertical forest (spoke + soulcrypt): 461.64 million km²

Government

Eina-Afa is owned and governed by the Neoafan Freehold, a triumvirate of races with claims to the world. The first of these is the neoafans, a tiny population of blimp-like sophonts who were restored to life from remains found aboard an ancient derelict ship four hundred years ago. The second is the prabstdi, a race of quadrupeds whose xenoarcheologists brought the neoafans back to life, and pieced together the clues leading them to Eina-Afa. The third is the Ot-Skadak, a race of hive-minded, insect-like creatures native to Eina-Afa, whose genotype strongly suggests that they evolved from the original oafans.

It's important to note that the original oafans are long gone. Eina-Afa is millions of years old and was only recently discovered. It's a priceless artifact of a previous era, and the secrets it holds — including the exact methods of its construction — are the motivating force behind numerous expeditions sanctioned by the neoafan Council.

Per the articles of that council's founding, four of the thirteen councilors are neoafans, four are Ot-Skadak, four are prabstdi, and one is an off-worlder who only votes in the case of ties. This tie-breaker seat reflects the interests of the wider galactic civilization, which may seem generous until you

2

JANO_CX: Terl, they're doing good work, but your writers seem... abused.

TERL'KRIS: Our last team-building exercise was a joint retreat to the R&D Panic Room.

JANO_CX: Doing things together is a start.

TERL'KRIS: Nobody remembered to bring treats.

JANO_CX: Treats should come out of the Sophont Resources allocations.

TERL'KRIS: And two of the writers ended up dead anyway.

JANO_CX: So that was really happening?

LEGAL: In the interest of not committing certain types of information to potentially insecure repositories, you two should take this offline.

TERL'KRIS: Legal, though? They're champs. Lost a junior partner, and then pulled their wet blanket act right back together.

consider the fact that the entire galaxy's desires for knowledge are represented by a single, seldom-used vote.

The politics of the council are interesting, but real power resides with the Operations Chief, an AI named Chinook. She manages Eina-Afa's upkeep, and she has a fleet of ancient warships under her direct command.

The Neoafan Freehold's borders, per a very well-precedented claim, include the red dwarf about which Eina-Afa orbits, the cooling cinder of a companion star, and the entire nebula created when that companion exploded thousands of years ago. The nebula contains stellar ejecta, plus the nova-battered icy planetesimals a trillion or more kilometers from the center of the system.

Jumpstar Prime

The capital city of Eina-Afa was built less than a year ago and is growing quickly. The original structures are the habitat modules and hull from a late model Tricorn-Class UNS Battleplate, but new buildings arrive almost daily.

The city is perched atop the western end of Soulcrypt Eight, one of Eina-Afa's fourteen baffles, and it is a full 1,000 kilometers above the ground. The city can be very vertigo-inducing, with walkways looking out over distances far greater than the orbital distances of many space stations. Thousands of struts and anchors have been moly-fused to the PTU composites of Soulcrypt Eight and Column 17-A, securing the city with several layers of redundancy, and allowing it to climb another three kilometers up the column. Like most sky-scraping cities, Jumpstar Prime has numerous places where you can jump to your death. Unlike those cities, the fall from a scenic walkway between Jumpstar Prime's pods is long enough that you'll be rescued long before you hit the ground, and not just because you're only experiencing the equivalent of ¼ g in the city.

Capital District, roughly 500 meters above the lowest levels of the city, houses the Neoafan Council, a UNS Embassy, and roughly 50,000 sophonts from hundreds of different species. Humans dominate this district, in part because of Eina-Afa's close ties to the UNS, but are only barely a majority population. The extreme wealth of Eina-Afa has made the thirteen members of the Neoafan Council among the most influential elected officials in the galaxy, and Capital District teems with lobbyist-aspirants currying favor.

The mayor of Jumpstar Prime, Unuiayya Will-Breather, is a neoafan of the people, and can often be found floating through the city, her tendrils extended for tendril-equivalents

of handshakes. Since these are sensory organs, Unuiayya's behavior may be an attempt to understand the city's population through taste and smell.

Hotels and restaurants provide a substantial portion of the city's income, but the city's principal industry is research tourism. Teams of explorers seeking to catalog the diverse life and unique structure of Eina-Afa may purchase licenses to venture out and explore. These adventurers — amateurs, professionals, and a few luminary legends — are supported by a supply chain of entrepreneurs selling everything from food to firearms. If professionals-at-arms are seeking employment in Jumpstar Prime, then there are thousands of "science tourists" looking for security while they wander the wilds of the Eina-Afa interior.

There are very strict regulations in place regarding carrying projectile weapons, explosives, or beam weapons within the city limits, which for practical purposes includes any location within ten kilometers of the Capital District. When you arrive in Jumpstar Prime, your weapons will be checked and securely stored by customs agents, and may be retrieved when you depart.

Law enforcement is handled by a 1000-officer precinctory from Sanctum Adroit. This force is mostly comprised of humans, but there are some fobott'r, 'rillas, and uniocs, and a smattering of other species. The Jumpstar Prime Precinctory is under the personal direction of Senior Colonel Menendez, a 40-year law-enforcement veteran who has been with Sanctum Adroit for 26 years, and who is a major shareholder in the company.

Tagon's Toughs, an increasingly infamous mercenary company whose modus operandi appears to be "hope our luck holds out," has a permanent base of operations in Jumpstar Prime. These mercenaries have ties to the city managers, Eina-Afa's AI, and the UNS Embassy staff. Chief Justice Massey Reynstein, who personally drafted much of Jumpstar Prime's constitution, did so while employed by Tagon's Toughs. It is widely believed that the city's name was chosen by a member of the Tough's heavy weapons crew, who emblazoned the name on the four thousand-meter length of battleplate hull that hangs below the city on the windward side of Soulcrypt Eight.

The Spindle

If you're traveling to Eina-Afa, then you'll be arriving via the Spindle. It is a hollow tube running the complete length of Eina-Afa's axis of rotation, 12,000 kilometers long and 100 kilometers in diameter. With the exception of the Spindle Vault, its interior length and entire circumference is a single, contiguous port city. This ancient, uninhabited superopolis (literally, a "city above") has no artificial gravity, and likely functioned as a staging area for the inestimably massive construction project of this artificial world millions of years ago.

People have begun calling this stunningly large stretch of structures "Spindle Superopolis." Taken as a whole, it is easily the most thinly populated contiguous collection of buildings anywhere in the galaxy. Even the ruined cities on Ellwor and Ghanj-rho have at least ten times as many inhabitants per cubic kilometer the moment a single archeologist pitches a tent in them.

Spindle Superopolis is subdivided by clusters of docking structures every 350 kilometers or so. Each of these sectors corresponds to a hub, from which eighteen spokes extend roughly 4,000 kilometers down and out to the exterior of Eina-Afa. These areas clearly served as gateways for trade and supply with the station interior back when Eina-Afa's original civilization thrived. Their construction is a beautiful blend of heavy industry and gossamer whimsy. This close to the axis of rotation, those who work the docks experience the equivalent of asteroidal micro-gravity. A thrown stone may cross the entire spindle, and an ill-conceived leap may launch personnel into inconvenient and hazardous circumstances. Don't throw things, and watch your step. 1

Spindle Superopolis Volume

With its 20 kilometer-high buildings, the accepted volume of Spindle Superopolis is around 100 million km³. It has 1,100 permanent residents, so there's just one person for every 91 thousand cubic kilometers of city. By comparison, Canyon City Site Gamma has just 20 people on site, but is only 25 cubic kilometers in size, so there's one person for every 1.25 kilometers.

1

JANO_CX: I like the wording here. Can we get 'don't throw things, and watch your step' printed on placards for our campuses?

SOPH_RES: Those rules are covered during day-one orientation for new hires.

JANO_CX: Of course. I suppose simple instructions like these are things that we only ever need to say one time.

SOPH_RES: Departmental policy requires Sophont Resources to communicate accurately and explicitly. As we are unable to respond in kind, your sarcasm is a type of microaggression.

JANO_CX: I am genuinely sorry. What have we done to you people?

SOPH_RES: We did it to ourselves.

There are 26 of these pillar ports, and all of them save two are dark and unexplored. Sector Seventeen serves the city of Jumpstar Prime, and Sector Ten serves the Cyclone East exploration post. All of the ports, whether dark or operational, hold clues for xenoarcheologists wishing to study the ancient oafans. Less than 1/1000th of Spindle Superopolis has been explored, however, because a cursory look around suggests that all the good stuff has been taken.

Visitors and immigrants to Eina-Afa typically arrive via the western end of the Spindle. They pilot their vessels about 5,500 kilometers along its length, and then dock at Sector Seventeen. From there, they take the Column 17-A transit system 2,800 kilometers down (or "outward") to the locks and customs stations of Jumpstar Prime.

Parties with permits may fly into the eastern end of the spindle, and dock at Sector Ten. They must then await an escort, who will lead them 3,800 kilometers down to the Cyclone East locks. The Column 10-C transit rails are not yet complete.

Teraporting in Eina-Afa

Some VIPs are given direct teraport access to undisclosed locations. It is likely that these teraports are completely controlled by Chinook, the AI running the station. Unauthorized attempts to teraport into or out of Eina-Afa are definitely blocked by Chinook, and will probably earn you a visit from her.

The Spindle Vault

There is no clear flight path from one end of the spindle to the other. A twenty-four hundred-kilometer segment of the spindle, from Sector Seventeen to Sector Ten, is walled off, and is accessible only through iris gates that are almost ten kilometers in diameter. Those gates are very rarely opened, and the vault is off-limits to the public.

Several sources, including some within the UNS embassy, report that this vault is full of mothballed vessels from Eina-Afa's ancient inhabitants. Thousands of ancient vessels have been sold as scrap to the United Nations of Sol, the Plenipotent Dominion, and the State Research Fleet of Greater Prab. The scrapped ships made extravagant use of PTU alloys, so if the vault really is full of them, it represents the single greatest concentration of wealth in the galaxy.

The vault itself is very well defended, but the exact nature of the defenses is unknown. There have been two unconfirmed reports of groups attempting to sneak in and liberate a ship or two, but the only validation of these reports is that the people who were purported to be involved have vanished.

Chinook has restored hundreds — or perhaps thousands — of ancient oafan ships to full functionality for Eina-Afa's defense, and some of them feature Long Gun technology, which allows the firing of a weapon through wormholes. 1 These weapons allow Chinook to strike any target, anywhere in the galaxy, regardless of shielding or line-of-sight, provided a targeting drone can give her accurate coordinates.

Long Gun Technology

Players and Game Chiefs should note that the Long Gun Technology discussed here is not the same as the long guns that players carry around and fire using their Long Gun skill. Long Gun Tech requires a full vessel or space station to support it. Long Gun Tech is not included in the *Planet Mercenary RPG* specs because it is something of a doomsday device. It can't be dodged and it can fire at you from across the galaxy. The only way to avoid being hit is to ensure that the long gunner does not know where you are.

Game Chiefs wishing to approximate the functionality of Long Gun Tech in a balanced game should limit firing cycles to once per day. Targeting the weapon requires a successful Computers skill check (TN 15). On a successful check, the weapon will deal 12d6 Hull damage. Don't bother with dice. Damage Reduction does not apply.

1

JANO_CX: I am uncomfortable mentioning Long Gun tech. These are doomsday weapons, and even if R&D figures out how to build them, we won't be selling them.

TERL'KRIS: I have it on good authority that R&D has figured this out.

JANO_CX: Terl, if you want to take credit for things like this, put them in your resume.

TERL'KRIS: That document would land a thousand people in prison, and I'd end up dying within six weeks of entering witness protection.

WRITER: So my boss's resume is an implement of mutually assured destruction. I had no idea.

Spindle Command Center

There is a twenty-kilometer-tall tower on the opposite side of the spindle from Column 17-A. It displays the same lacy-industrial architecture as the rest of Spindle Superopolis, but has a UNS-manufactured, one-kilometer

battleplate-grade annie plant fastened to one side, near the top. This tower is the Spindle Command Center and the "home" for Chinook.

It is also a fine place to find some very specific kinds of exploratory, investigative work.

As stated earlier, Eina-Afa's automated infrastructure is under sole control of an Artificial Intelligence known as Chinook. She manifests as a human female, and she is quite friendly. She was installed in mid-3099 as part of the overhaul of the station's damaged intelligence frame, and the Spindle Command Center's annie plant is part of the ongoing upgrades.

The annie plant and several re-purposed Milspec fabbers now affixed to the Spindle Control Center are the heart of Chinook's current fabrication facilities. They're where she builds and maintains her thousands of drones, and where she builds replacement parts for some of the failing systems elsewhere in Eina-Afa. Ancient oafan ships drawn from the Spindle Vault are sometimes seen docked here while Chinook refurbishes and restores them. Sometimes you'll see these ships in pieces as Chinook recycles them for PTUs far too valuable to be spent on something so mundane as a hull.

Light and Power

The power system is the most significant of the systems run by Chinook, and includes the exterior platter collectors, millions of kilometers of cap-stacks and conduits, and the full-spectrum emitters mounted on the spindle's exterior, which provide light for the entire can.

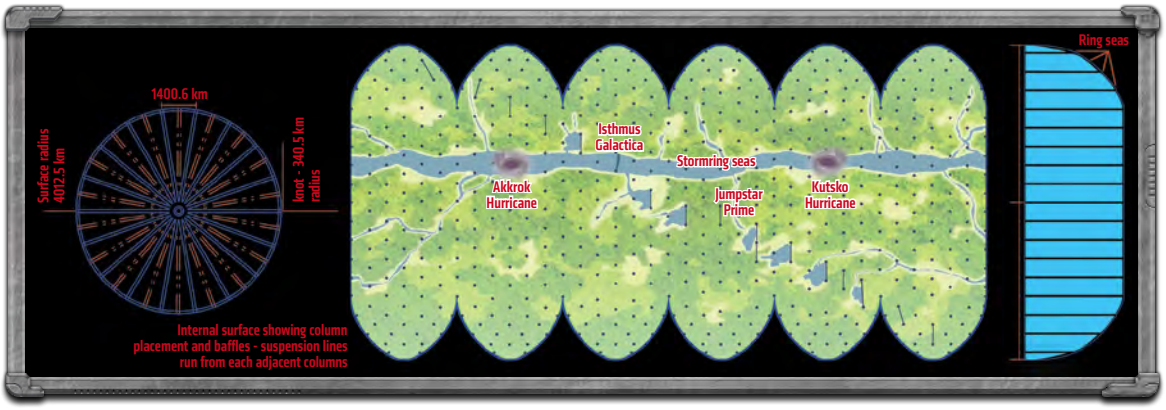
The Spindle Command Center is one of the aggregator nodes for Chinook's mind, which is distributed across an unknown number of other locations throughout Eina-Afa, and probably across numerous vessels outside the station. Hacking her is a terrible idea. In a highly publicized "white hat" hacking attempt, a team of experts attempted, uninvited, to do exactly that. They cracked honeypot after honeypot, only to find that Chinook had been leading them in circles. The last honeypot contained an embarrassingly large repository of their personal data along with a simple message that said, "Stop that." Then their personal accounts were drained, and the money spent on galaxy-wide publication of their blow-by-blow failure, just in case the message had been ambiguous.

Chinook defends herself, Eina-Afa, and the entire system very aggressively, and we can all be thankful that she does not engage in operations of colonization or conquest. She is exceedingly curious, however, and has numerous open contracts for exploration of the Spindle Superopolis and the wild interior of Eina-Afa, as well as a few contracts to explore galactic locations that may be related to Eina-Afa's history.

The Eina-Afa Interior

Eina-Afa's interior is a rotating reference frame with breathable pressures of atmosphere extending three thousand kilometers above the ground. Acceleration at ground level is 3.4 m/s^2, or ⅓ of Earth's gravity. The climate on the ground is temperate and wet.

The first thing most visitors notice is not the gravity, or the temperature, or the very slightly metallic tang to the verdant smell. It's the sheer size of the place. There are clouds overhead that are further above the ground than Earth's space stations are. There is no horizon because the ground curves upward, but unlike similarly-shaped habitats, that curve is so far away it quickly fades into the seemingly infinite blue of the sky.



Day and Night

The second thing most visitors notice, assuming they arrive during the day, is that daytime is always "noon." Eina-Afa's interior illumination emanates from massive banks of emitters on the Spindle directly overhead. Seen from below, this array is a long, hot stripe, bisecting the sky at the center.

The 28-hour day-night cycle is provided by turning the lights up and down. Each of the 30 emitter-paneled segments along the length of the spindle is dimmed in sequence from East to West. A segment will go from full 5,500k brightness to full dark in just six minutes, at which point the next segment in line begins dimming. This procedural "sunset" lasts for three hours, but from any given point on the ground, full darkness arrives about an hour after the lights begin to dim.

Sunrise works the same way, with the lights coming up in sequence from East to West. The first hints of dawn arrive roughly an hour before the overhead segment begins to glow. Unless you're at the eastmost end, of course. For you, dawn is six minutes long, and at the end of six minutes it's now high noon.

Seasons are generated over the course of 318 days with a variation in the length of the day and the length of the night, but unlike natural seasons, the nights are not given equal time. During one 28-hour period, the longest possible night will be 12 hours long (opposite a 16-hour day) and the shortest possible night will be 7 hours long (opposite a 21-hour day). Factoring in the sunrise and sunset, full darkness lasts for just four hours in the "summer," and ten hours in the "winter." After reviewing temperature readings, xenoecologist Miragra McGuire suggested naming Eina-Afa's seasons "Warm," "Hot," "Go Home," and "Also Hot." She has declined repeated invitations to visit.

Eina-Afa's compass points are defined by the direction of dawn and dusk. East is where the lights come up first. West is where they go down last. With East on your right and West on your left, you're facing North, which curves up and around and over the spindle and down until it's South and behind you.

Note: An early team of explorers coined a non-standard system of compass points that had north and south inverted. Xenocartographers have corrected this silliness and reprimanded those responsible.

Calculating Your Weight in Eina-Afa

An object with a weight of 300 kg on Earth would have an apparent weight of 100 kg on Eina-Afa's floor. Ascending halfway to the spindle reduces that to just 50 kg. Here's a foolproof system for finding your weight at any given altitude:

1) Start with your weight in 1 g (like on Earth).

2) Divide by three.

3) Divide your distance from the spindle into 3,695 km.

4) Multiply the result from step 2 by the result from step 3. That's your weight at this altitude.

5) Now ask the nearest AI for the correct figure.

Terrain and Ecology

There are no tectonic processes acting in opposition to erosion in Eina-Afa, so there are no proper mountains here. The things that look like mountains are mountain-sized hive-mounds created by the Ot-Skadak, the modern descendents of the ancient oafans. But the mountainous hive-homes of the Ot-Skadak are dwarfed by the pillars and soulcrypts of Eina-Afa.

There are waterways and shallow lakes, many of which are hundreds of kilometers in length and breadth, but there is no "downhill" to guide running water. Rivers do run, however. They run north. The constant wind from the south pushes water northward, and the spin that generates the wind creates a similar northward-flowing tendency in Eina-Afa's rivers.

On the Movement of Air

Is the wind blowing, or are you moving quickly? Eina-Afa's air does not rotate as a solid body, so the spin is always carrying the ground into a mass of air that isn't moving quite as quickly. You can model this effect in an exaggerated manner by planting a garden in the bed of a truck, driving away at full speed, and then watching as the still air through which you're plowing strips the leaves from your seedlings.

Categorically, the interior surface features five types of ecosystems:

► Rainforest. This dominates the interior floor of Eina-Afa, and is broken up with wetlands, rivers, and lakes.

► Windward Vertical Jungle. This is found climbing the pillars and baffles in the direction of the station's rotation (south).

► Leeward Vertical Jungle. Found opposite the direction of the station's rotation. Lower pressure here results in condensation and precipitation. These jungles trail massive networks of lacy vines for tens of kilometers to collect this water.

► Cable Swamps. The long "cables" that run diagonally from the bases of pillars to the tops of neighboring pillars are 100 meters in diameter, and are wet with atmospheric moisture. Over millennia, plants have grown to capture this moisture, and now the upper 60 degrees of each cable are a slimy pseudo-swamp.

► The Stormring: This ring, 25,000 kilometers in circumference, is the track carved by the two Eina-Afa vertical hurricanes. The storms are 700 kilometers long, with a 50-kilometer-wide eye running the length of the cylindrical storm. The storms are always at opposite sides of the track, and they rotate in the same direction as the station.

Rainforests

Roughly three hundred and fifty million square kilometers of Eina-Afa's interior surface is rainforest, broken only by the monstrous pillars that rise 4,000 kilometers above the ground to join the illuminated spindle. The relatively low surface acceleration has resulted in the evolution of tall, lacy trees that compete for spindle-light at heights of almost a full kilometer.

These rainforests teem with life, but due to the consistency of climate and terrain there is a bit less variety from forest to forest than most naturalists expect. A single predator can walk the full 25,000-kilometer circumference of the surface without ever leaving an environment suited to its physiology. The giant herbivores found near the East Cap are virtually identical to the giant herbivores found 180 degrees north and 4,000 kilometers west, at the edge of the Stormring.

Fauna in these rainforests does tend toward "giant," due to the low gravity. Their bones and muscles are significantly less dense than those of terrestrial life, but this does not make them "weak" when compared to creatures from other worlds. Size does matter, and a strike from a hexapodal pulper's 200-meter tail will smash you in much the same way that an artillery round might.

Environmental pressures on either side of the Stormring, and in areas near pillars and soulcrypts, have resulted in additional speciation. For instance, creatures adapted to the wet, low-pressure zone on the leeward (north) side of a given soulcrypt may be quite different from those found on the leeward side of a different soulcrypt. There are hundreds of kilometers of less-wet terrain between their habitats, and it may have been millions of years since these populations had contact with each other.

The Vertical Jungles

The soulcrypts and pillars of Eina-Afa have channeled, sculpted surfaces which provided convenient anchor points for the foliage. The sculpts are a layered language, and the stories they tell are now buried behind forty meters of wood and fiber, the innermost layer of Eina-Afa's vertical jungles.

Exploring these jungles is an adventure in extreme vertigo. Nowhere else can you climb a "tree" for thousands of meters, let alone for thousands of kilometers. And nowhere else can you fall out of a tree and not hit the ground for hours. 1

Dubbed "godwalls" by early explorers, the soulcrypts rise a thousand kilometers from the floor of the station. The southern sides of these walls have foothills almost a thousand meters high, created from material carried into the wall by the prevailing wind. The northern sides tend to be low and swampy, and a few soulcrypts have ocean-sized bodies of water to the north. On both sides of the soulcrypt, the lowest portions of the climbing jungle are dominated by giant mosses and funguses. Perpetually shaded by the jungle above them, these

Soulcrypts

The soulcrypts get their name from what's inside them. They contain the rolled, foil skins of ancient Oafans. These soul foils are what you'd get if you could dry your brain out and preserve it so that someone else could read it a million years later.

1

LEGAL: This seems difficult to believe.

TERL'KRIS: Do you want the math, or do you want the sequence from my body-cam?

LEGAL: Math is fine.

SOPH_RES: Did you spend company resources on a sky-diving trip, and then bill it as 'research?'

TERL'KRIS: No, I spent company resources on a research trip, and then had an accident.

WRITER: How come you haven't told us this story, boss?

TERL'KRIS: Because. You're. Writers.

are brightly colored engines of decomposition, metabolizing the slow, steady wash of dead leaves, broken branches, and improperly-secured corpse-caches.

Higher up the windward sides of these walls, the branches reach out to the extreme limits of their strength, usually more than a hundred meters out, in order to catch a glimpse of the always-overhead Spindle light. These reaches are home to hundreds of flying and climbing species, though here on Eina-Afa most climbers can fly, and vice-versa. Predators, prey, scavengers, and more live their entire lives on a plane angled 90° above the ground. The tufted wing shark may swoop in to rip unwary meals from the outermost branches, and a hunting pod of tkutska dak may erupt from those branches and rend the giant flyer into a tables-turned meal for themselves.

The leeward heights are dominated by giant, leafy vines that are drawn out and away from the wall by the wind. Some of these extend for several kilometers, giving the northern face of the wall a "hairy" texture when seen from a great distance. The creatures on this face of the soulcrypt tend to be smaller, but consider the relative value of that term: an ursumari with a pair of climbing hooks can walk on one of these vines for a kilometer and a half before it begins to droop under the additional weight. A human with those same hooks, and perhaps a death wish, can go all the way to the end of the vine, which will droop enough to catch the attention of things that like to eat the sorts of meaty delicacies found exploring the ends of these vines.

This windward/leeward differentiation is most marked on the walls of the soulcrypts, but can also be found on the northern and southern sides of the pillars. To the east and west, the climbing jungle on the pillar benefits from the fact that the spindle light comes not from a point but from a stripe, so plants need not reach as far out for precious photons. [1]

These pillars rise four thousand kilometers from the floor of Eina-Afa. Plant life clings to the irregularly-sculpted surface to an altitude of 2,800 kilometers, gradually thinning out as the air pressure decreases. Tufted wing sharks are most often found between the 1,000 km and 2,000 km altitudes, but generally speaking, the fauna gets smaller the higher you go.

Eina-Afa's most distinctive and varied jungles are found on the narrow tops of the soulcrypts. These ribbons of diversity are roughly 250 meters wide and seven hundred kilometers long, and are cut off from each other by thousands of kilometers of sky. They tend to be a chaotic blending of the windward and leeward ecosystems, a clash of metabolisms, driven by the blessing of direct spindle-light and the curse of some of the strongest winds anywhere in Eina-Afa.

The Cable Swamps

The cables that run diagonally between the pillars are uniformly dangerous. They're just over 100 meters in diameter, and they serve as conduits of some sort. Nobody has cut one open to see what's inside it, because they also appear to be part of what holds Eina-Afa together.

The danger stems from the temperature differential. Whatever runs through them keeps these cables cooler than the surrounding air, so water is condensing on them at all hours of the day and night. Spongiform life has wrapped itself around these pillars, creating a diagonal, cylindrical swamp that is a favorite feeding ground for many of Eina-Afa's most aggressive scavengers. Humans and like-sized sophonts have found that these giant pseudo-insects are adventurous diners, willing to attempt to eat anything that moves.

The Stormring

The Stormring — sometimes called The Stormring Sea, or The Stormring Ocean — runs unbroken for 25,000 km, around the interior circumference of Eina-Afa. It is 700 km wide, and has an average depth of 15 km. The Stormring contains 250 million cubic kilometers of water. For comparison, all of Earth's saltwater bodies add up to 1,338 million cubic kilometers.

It was carved over millions of years by a pair of giant, cylindrical storms that roll around the ring opposite each other. The Ot-Skadak named these storms Akkrok and Kutsko, which roughly translate as "Acid" and "Base," respectively. In the chemistry-centric language of the native oafans, this pair of names has a meaning similar to "Anvil and Hammer." With sustained winds of over 230 km/h, the names seem fitting.

The storms roll south, into the prevailing winds, around the ring at roughly 120 km/h. It's 10,000 km from the trailing edge of one to the leading edge of the next, which means that any given patch of ocean on the Stormring will have a system of inarguably severe weather roll over it every three and a half days.

1

JANO_CX: What about "precious pages?" This section seems pretty long, and it's only covering one location. It's good, but it's LONG.

WRITER: We just kept going until Terl'Kris told us to stop. Looking back, I think he might have been trying to justify an expense report.

TERL'KRIS: This section takes up eleven pages. Accounting said I only needed eight. I told you to stop when I felt like you'd done the subject justice.

Like planetary hurricanes, Akkrok and Kutsko have eyes. Unlike planetary hurricanes, the eyes of these rolling maelstroms do not look up. Spindle-light only reaches about fifty kilometers into the vortex. Beyond that point, it is forever a dark and stormy night, with an emphasis on "stormy." Lightning rips through the air with such frequency it is never not visible somewhere, and any vessel, vehicle, or flight-suited fool traversing the eye of the storm is guaranteed to be struck at least once. You might think that you can beat the odds by going faster, but supersonic shock waves are basically lightning-bait, and the lightning will always follow faster than you can flee.

The Stormring is deeper than many planetary oceans, and it is far deeper than any of the lesser bodies of water on Eina-Afa. The cliffs that line it are a hundred kilometers high, and the rain-fed lakes and rivers atop those cliffs drain into the Stormring via the tallest waterfalls anywhere in the galaxy. Long before the plumes reach the sea below, they scatter into mist. Nowhere else can you see a river the size of the Mississippi empty into thin air and pour itself into a trailing string of fluffy clouds.

Sea life exists in all of Eina-Afa's oceans, but the Stormring is where the largest of those creatures can grow as large as they like without fear of bottoming out. The katka zithra grows to be 320 m long in other oceans. At least one 540-meter specimen was spotted in the Stormring. It feeds on fish, which feed on other fish, which in turn feed on fish that are large enough to feed on you.

Isthmus Galactica

The Stormring is not fully contiguous. Soul-crypt Six is not lying quite flat, and almost twenty kilometers of it protrudes from the ocean at a shallow 2.3° angle. It is scraped clean twice per week, and it is one of the few sculpted surfaces free of foliage. Per librarian Yaeyoefui Soul-Keeper, the sculptures here are a galactic map from the time of Eina Aafa's construction. Dubbed Isthmus Galactica by the Neoafan Council, this 700-kilometer stretch of super-durable material is not a true isthmus, because

the ocean flows past it at both ends. The misnomer can be forgiven, of course. Researchers on Isthmus Galactica (who take off-site breaks every three days) have already used information acquired here to locate ancient artifacts elsewhere in the galaxy.

According to Yaeyoefui and other sources, the interior floor of Eina-Afa was originally one great ocean, and the atmosphere was a little thinner and counterintuitively drier. This was at least ten million years ago. Sometime after the oafans died out (or vanished, or emigrated — we simply don't know), the AI managing Eina-Afa cut Soulcrypt Six and dropped it flat into the world-spanning sea. This created a clear path, seven hundred kilometers wide, and 25,000 kilometers long, for spin-generated winds and waves to pick up speed.

The storms would have formed relatively quickly. What took longer was the erosion that they caused. Over millions of years, Akkrok and Kutsko drew more and more water into the atmosphere, exposing Eina-Afa's sea floor while carving a channel into which these waters would flow. Soulcrypt Six sank into this channel as the floor beneath it washed away. The tailings from this titanic digging operation were flung skyward, spreading material necessary for the jungles that climbed the pillars and soulcrypts. A few million years is not long enough for sea life to evolve into the teeming ecosystems we see today. We do not know who seeded Eina-Afa, or with what, but it is possible that the ancient Oafans had xeno-zoos, or guests with terrariums. It is also possible that the AI running the show was deliberately creating conditions favorable for terrestrial life, and had a collection of gene-tweaked seeds ready to let slip with evolution's cry of havoc. Here is the short version of the story: everything you see in Eina-Afa is made out of water, mud, and sea life that was belched into the skies by the Stormring.

MAXIM 22

If you can see the whites of their eyes, somebody's done something wrong.

Eina-Afa Historical Note

The AI responsible for the Stormring, T'kkkuts Afa, served for so many millions of years that it she literally lost count. Perhaps she did so on purpose, though speculation as to what an AI might deliberately forget is a fruitless, frightening endeavor.

After transferring control to Chinook, T'kkkuts Afa took the name "Iafa," and was given the helm of the flagship *Broken Wind* in the service of Tagon's Toughs. The ship's name is a transliteration of T'kkkuts Afa, not a flatulence joke.

Soulcrypts

Off-limits to the public, the interior spaces of the giant walls known as soulcrypts contain uncounted trillions of inner skins from dead oafans. In life, these metallic skins were necessary to keep lift-breath (the oafan term for hydrogen gas) contained. These thin foils were etched at a sub-microscopic level with long-term memories, making them a part of the oafan brain.

The foils, which are primarily composed of aluminum, are stored in heavy "poster tubes" made from a gold-plated lattice of monomolecular fullerenes. The tubes are capped at both ends and filled with noble gases. This inert containment ensures that the soul foils will still be readable hundreds of millions of years from now.

The prabstdi have developed foil-readers, and much of what's known about Eina-Afa came from their perusal of these soul foils. The entire neoafan sophont type is the result of hundreds of years of prabsdti research into the reconstitution of soul foils found aboard a derelict spacecraft. Those first neoafans led the search for Eina-Afa, and have become our best window into an era long past.

There are trillions of these soul foils. They are a treasure trove of information, and are considered sacred by the Neoafans, the Ot-Skadak, the Prabstdi, and pretty much any sophont with a modicum of respect for the dead. Foils from the soulcrypts have only rarely been reconstituted. Yaeyoefui Soul-Keeper and Unuaiyya Will-Breather are among this select group.

Soulcrypts are entered via hatches in the pillars, and getting to those hatches requires a trip up to the Spindle and back down the pillar in question. The crypt interior on the other side of that wall of jungle is several thousand kilometers of travel away. It's possible, theoretically, to use STS-grade beam weapons to cut through the jungle and the wall for quick access, but this is a capital offense, and tasteless besides.

Othlin

Four hundred and eighty million years ago, Othlin was struck by a comet that was nearly 300 kilometers in diameter. The impact left an 1800-kilometer diameter circular crater, which is now an enormous inland sea ringed by mountain ranges. In unioc religion, the planet Othlin is the body of God, and this feature has been called "The Eye of Oth" since the very earliest unioc history.

Today, when uniocs look down from orbit at the eye of their world, they either marvel at the prescience of their ancestors, or experience spiritual confirmations of their beliefs.

The unioc, or "oth" homeworld orbits the star Xuvoth at an average distance of 98 million kilometers. The 0.81 g planet is tectonically quiescent, but the core still spins, creating a life-shielding magnetic field. Plate tectonics on Othlin are slow, even by plate tectonic standards, which is why Othlin's most striking natural feature is still visible. All of the tectonic movement in Othlin's crust is radial. Plates are still pushing away from the Eye of Oth and running into plates driven by the antipodal upwelling opposite the impact. The low frequency of earthquakes and volcanoes suggests that the impact's energy may have been absorbed by the aging core of the planet, imparting additional spin.

Unioc vs. Oth

"Unioc" and "oth" both refer to the race of single-eyed bipedal sophonts from Othlin. "oth" is the name they call themselves, and "unioc" is the name that was given them in Galstandard West.

The Eye of Oth

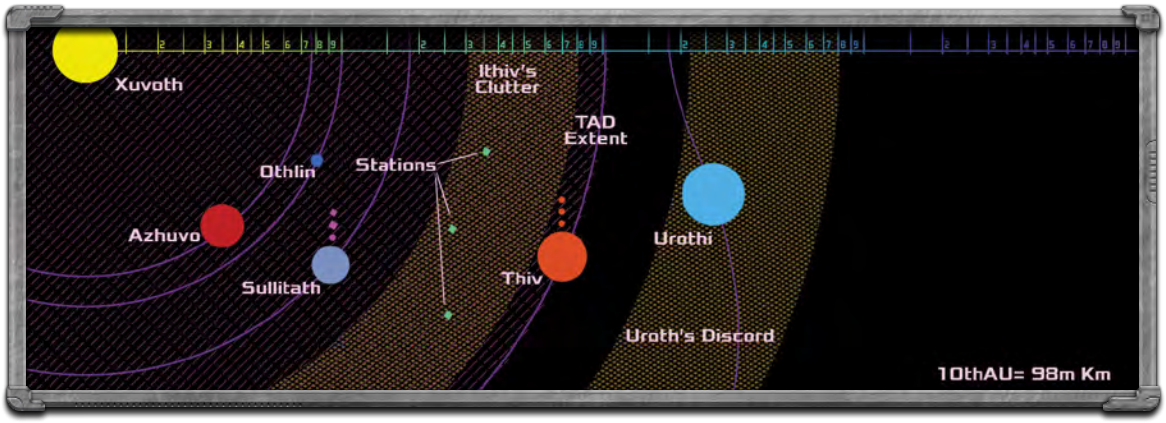
The mountain ranges forming the crater walls of the Eye of Oth have spent half a billion years being eroded. Today the coastal foothills rise swiftly to six hundred meters above sea level, and most of the peaks inland to the north and east reach at least ten kilometers into Othlin's blue skies. This region is rich in valuable minerals from all over the periodic table, making these mountain ranges home to unioc industry for a thousand generations.

This heavy industry gradually made the ocean toxic. It was reclaimed shortly after uniocs joined galactic culture, and the heavy industrial sites were abandoned, or moved into orbit amid the small band of asteroids circling Xuvoth. Xenosociologists point to this change as evidence that newcomers to an advanced, multicultural society can be embarrassed into cleaning their homes.

The architecture in the cities around the Eye of Oth is very modern, designed for minimal impact on the surrounding environment. Hundreds of millions of people live in these cities, but there is almost no light pollution, and from orbit they might as well be invisible. Travel between city centers is all done via underground tube lines that completely encircle the sea, and almost 80% of the terrain surrounding the Eye of Oth has been allowed to lie fallow. The area is popular with spelunkers and archeologists alike, as these enormous mountains are riddled with natural caverns and ten thousand years of mine shafts.

The sea now abounds with life, including reconstructed extinct species, which are kept healthy and happy through the use of genengineered "algae" that provides nourishment at the low end of the food chain while filtering and oxygenating the water. Millions of uniocs and offworlders enjoy watersports in the Eye of Oth today. The prevailing religious sentiment seems to be that those who swim on the eyeball of God are not committing any sort of sacrilege. They're simply putting themselves where God can watch them very closely.

The principles of environmental management applied around the Eye of Oth are found to some degree across the rest of Othlin. The



planet's ecosystems were far too fragmented by industry to recover naturally, so a wide range of technological stopgaps have been employed as an alternative to a cascading series of extinction events. Today the entire planet can best be viewed as a delightfully diverse garden park.

Gobbroth-Tambrol Megalopolis

The lake-riddled continent three thousand kilometers west of the Eye of Oth is entirely developed, covered in a polyarcological megalopolis recognized across the galaxy as one of the most impressive mega-cities anywhere. Three hundred billion uniocs live, work, play, and celebrate in this fractally-arranged megacity whose extent cannot be entirely viewed until one reaches orbital altitudes. Skyscrapers tower 4,400 meters above sea level, and the underground extends 300 meters below. Green spaces with thousands of square kilometers of park land have been built atop portions of the city. When you look down upon these great expanses of nature, what you're seeing are actually rooftops.

Anything you want to purchase can be found for sale in Gobbroth-Tambrol. For some purchases — especially those which are extralegal, esoteric, or both — the actual inventory will not be present, and will need to be shipped (or smuggled) in, but if a thing can be bought, then there is a unioc in G-T somewhere who is selling it, and they really do have the inventory right there with them. There are three Planet Mercenary outlets in Gobbroth-Tambrol, conveniently buried beneath beautiful forests just a quick tube-ride from one of the G-T spaceports, including the Tambrolica Greens outlet, which has twice been named "Best Stocked Outlet" by the Planet Mercenary department of Franchise Rivalry.

Jun Ebbir

The Othlin Elevator, a fairly standard equatorial geosync elevator, rises from the city of Jun Ebbir on the Steppes of the Antipode. This gently rolling continental plain is directly opposite the Eye of Oth, and here, out of sight of their God, the uniocs act as hosts to top-ranked diplomats from across the galaxy.

Despite their strong military and their mildly expansionist culture, uniocs are considered to be politically neutral. Jun Ebbir has been the capitol city of Othlin since the first of the pre-contact unioc global empires, and ancient edifices from these eras are used today for high-profile conferences, trials for war criminals and pirates, and Prime Direction Arenas for the League of Galactics.

"League of Galactics" is a very impressive-sounding name, and the word "Arena" suggests an exhibition of power and prowess. Brace for disappointment. The League of Galactics wields very limited political power galaxy-wide, and its Arenas are just large rooms whose acoustics lend themselves well to lots of shouting. (1)

The League does have significant commercial power, at least on planets that host its Arenas. Millions of diplomats visit each year, and their discretionary budgets are a crucial tributary in the revenue streams of Jun Ebbir. Neutrality is a growth industry.

(1)
LEGAL: It may seem like shooting fish in a barrel, but open mockery of the League of Galactics is—
JANO_CX: —totally in keeping with our corporate image. Keep this section as is.
LEGAL: Noted.
MKTG: "we mock law and order" isn't part of the current branding.
JANO_CX: The unspoken message here is "we don't fear the League, so neither should our customers."

The Parthedrome

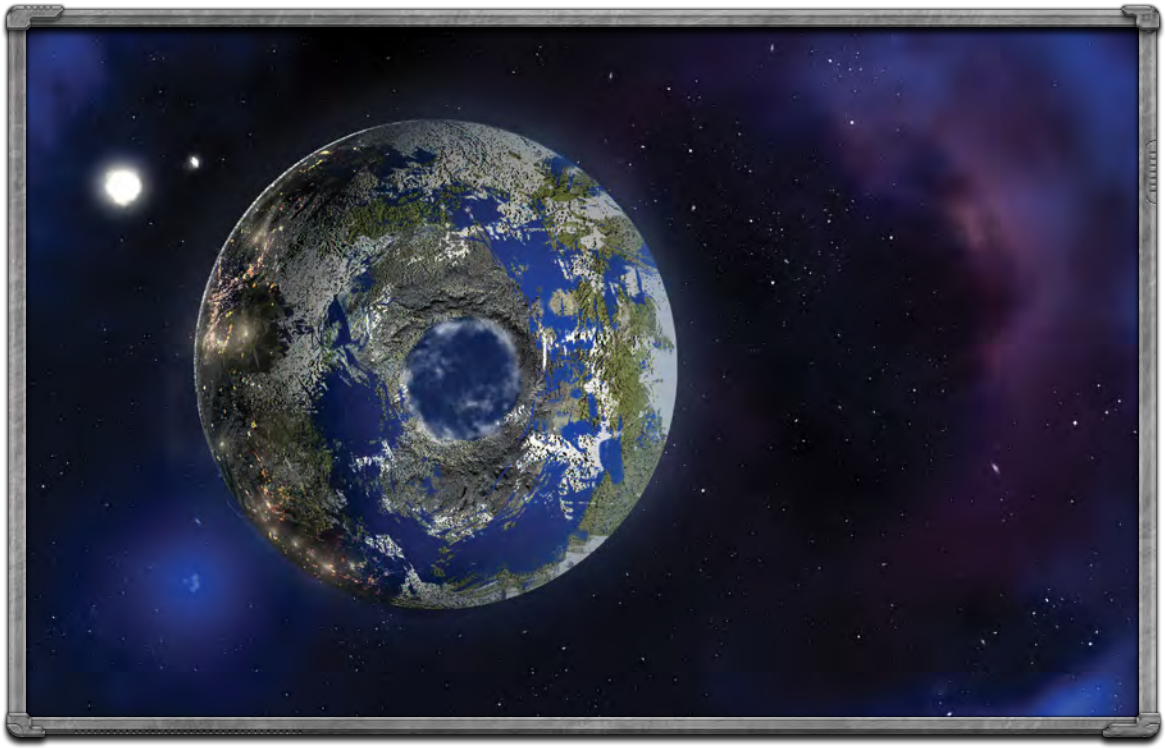
The pre-spaceflight oth speculated at length about what might and might not be possible in an entirely self-contained ecosystem. Their early experiments were geared toward sustainable Oth-orbit stations, and these experiments culminated in the construction of the Parthedrome.

From the outside, it is an opaque, charcoal dome 4,200 meters in diameter, and 2,100 meters tall at its highest point. Its foundations drop 90 meters into the bedrock. The entire structure is hermetically sealed, and kept at an atmospheric pressure roughly 0.03 MPa higher than the external pressure. In the event of a breach, outside air will not rush in. Food, water, air, and associated environmental necessities are provided by high-density, high-energy production systems not unlike the deep gardens of Earth's megalopolises.

Visitors enter the Parthedrome via space-grade, Milspec airlocks, and are required to register the exact mass and composition of all material they bring with them, including that comprising their bodies. Similar measurements are taken upon exit. If your exit account is net negative (because you left something behind, like a gift for a friend, or perhaps excrement), then that is logged and balanced against those whose accounts are net positive (because they ate enough to gain weight). Rumors of involuntary surgical procedures notwithstanding, there are no penalties for net-positive accounts beyond the loss of your security deposit.

Once inside, a visitor cannot fully grasp the enormity of the structure. There are few spaces more than 50 meters in any dimension, and the majority of the facility is given over to living quarters. The need for the Parthedrome as a proof-of-concept has long since passed, but its historical significance prevents it from being razed and replaced. Too large and unwieldy to be a proper museum, the facility is essentially a living, in-service artifact from oth history, and its ongoing maintenance is a point of pride among the oth.

Most of the eleven million "Dromelings" are employed as teleoperators of equipment outside the 'drome, or otherwise work via virtual presence. They are under continual observation, and there are eight Parthedrome Reality Dramas in constant production. The Parthedrome is one of the best places to observe some of the interesting quirks of unioc sociology, including the jun metamorphosis that some males experience when their bonded mate is given authority over a group of competing males and the oth-min defensive rage that some females experience when their mating bond is placed under external stress.



Gripp

Gripp, the fobott'r homeworld, is one of those rare planets that was stolen from the natives only to be stolen back. Today it is owned by the fobott'r government, who also kept everything that was left behind by the corporations they evicted twenty-two hundred years ago.

It is among the heavier homeworlds for sophonts, with a 1.4 g surface gravity, and a deep atmosphere that makes many people feel like the air is trying to smother them. If you're from Gripp, then these conditions feel quite natural.

Gripp orbits the G0VI/VI star Mnepholem at a distance of 121 million kilometers, and it is one of only four non-stellar objects of significant size in the Mnepholem system. The other three are the gas giant Malnibrath (833 million km out from Mnepholem), the wormgate (1.1 billion km out), and the distant red dwarf Leru (912 billion km out). The Mnepholem system had a thin band of dust and asteroids between Malnibrath and Gripp, but all that remains now is the dust.

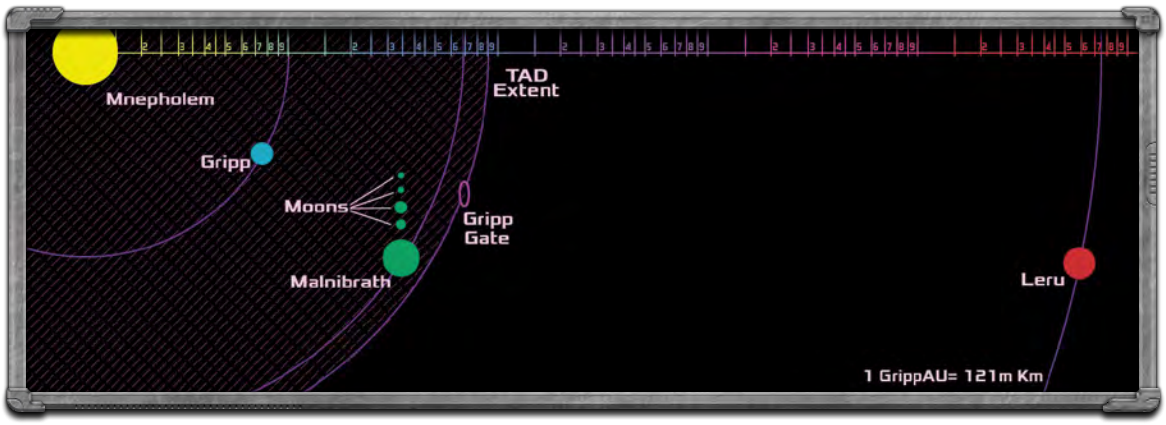
The Wormgate Corporation discovered Gripp roughly 6,000 years ago during their telescopic surveys for likely gate sites and redirected an *en-route* wormgate. These things take time, of course. The gate arrived at Gripp right around the time Mount Vesuvius buried Pompeii.

Sophonts from across the galaxy rushed through the gate to get a piece of what appeared to be a lush, unclaimed world ripe for exploitation. Their disappointment was loud and palpable when they found iron-age fobott'r emphatically claiming Gripp as their own.

The fobott'r quickly adopted galactic science and technology. Unfortunately, they weren't quite quick enough in learning galactic contract law, so within five years of their introduction to galactic society, they had "leased" most of their real estate in exchange for mercenary jobs. Over time it became apparent that they had sold themselves into slavery in exchange for letting someone else have their planet, and they weren't making enough money to hire good lawyers.

During the eight hundred years of occupation and exploitation, the entire Mnepholem asteroid belt was mined down to nothing but dust, and Gripp was farmed for biologicals and strip-mined for minerals.

The fobott'r were busy during this time. They did not just dream of taking back their world. They actively plotted, stockpiled, and organized themselves. Their plotting went unnoticed by their employers because the fobott'r conspiracy communicated only via a touch-language. They launched their revolution at around the time the Vikings marched into Northumbria and took back their entire planet in just four days. The Arms of Days War ("arms of" means "four" to fobott'r) stands as a stark reminder of the risks involved when employing potential enemies as your security forces.



Fobott'r Language

The fobott'r touch language is today called "Grip-speak," a nod to the fact that it made the Arms of Days War possible. It is possible for some non-fobott'r sophonts to learn the language, but most people simply don't have nerve endings in enough of the right places.

Galactic response to the fobott'r coup was delayed by misinformation from companies whose major shareholders desperately needed to sell stock before the truth came out. By the time everybody knew what had happened, it was too late for any sort of quick, effective military response. Also, there were billions of soldier-caste fobott'r still embedded in corporate militaries around the galaxy.

The fobott'r on Gripp declared all leases void, nullified all contracts, and decreed that off-world ownership of Gripp real estate was illegal. The hundreds of mega-corporations who lost assets on Gripp retaliated with blockades and embargoes, but those had no effect beyond preventing billions of galactic fobott'r from returning to their homeworld. These fobott'r thrived in the hope that their children's children would someday return to Gripp. One hundred and twenty years after the Arms of Days War, the embargoes were lifted and the family reunions began.

Now the fobott'r enjoy the full benefits of galactic society, and members of their race are spread throughout the spiral arms in shipping clans, with more than a few mercenary companies in the mix.

Ondrophol

Literally, "place of the encircling hug," Ondrophol is the name for all of the habitats and stations in orbit around Gripp. There are hundreds of thousands of these, ranging in population from a few hundred to twenty million. An exact count is only accurate for a few hours at a time, because millions of fobott'r vessels are included in the count. When a fobott'r clan vessel arrives, it *becomes* Ondrophol; it is a part of the group hug, and it remains as such until it departs.

Tens of millions of fobott'r merchant clans visit Ondrophol along their routes, swinging by every few years to rejoin the orbital embrace. In spiritual terms, this is pilgrimage, and sabbatical, and a replenishing of the soul. In practical terms, they're here to exchange goods, information, and genetic material. 1

Non-fobott'r visitors to Ondrophol are treated differently. Their vessels are assigned to one of the port stations, and everyone understands that they are not becoming part of the family. It is not a deliberately unfriendly understanding — it is just biology codified into culture — but there is cultural tension here. Millions of non-fobott'r live and work in Ondrophol port stations like Allaphame, or Mnengitt'r, but they will always be regarded as visitors, no matter how long they stay. Many of them become reasonably wealthy, but in Ondrophol they will always be paying rent, unless they purchase their own vessel, which they must import.

No fobott'r will sell a ship to an outsider and non-fobott'r are forbidden from selling any Ondrophol to one another. The reasoning here is relatively simple. Aliens took the entire asteroid belt. Fobott'r from across the galaxy are slowly returning that wealth to their system (a process greatly accelerated by the advent of the teraport). If aliens want to own living space in the Mepholem system, they must purchase it outside of the system, and then bring it in.

Aliens who demonstrate truly exceptional levels of service, friendship, and loyalty may occasionally be granted honorary Ondrophol status. Should a fobott'r comment upon your heroism by saying, "You're half-Ondrophol," you've just been paid the highest compliment possible.

Note on Names

A fobott'r living in Mnengitt'r is a "Mnengi Ondrophol." A non-fobott'r would be "Mnengittite," regardless of what kind of non-fobott'r they are. If you're a unioc named Padrach, and you live in Mnengitt'r, you are "Padrach the Mnegittite."

Allaphame

This Ondrophol port station has eleven million fobott'r citizens, two-point-one million non-fobott'r, and is one of the principal ports-of-entry for visitors to Gripp. The station is roughly conical, with the pointy end facing the planet. Allaphame's artificial gravity is maintained so that Gripp always appears to be directly overhead, rather than down. The port facilities are on the broad, flat, star-facing end of Allaphame, as are some very robust defenses.

1

SOPH_RES: Is this innuendo going to offend Fobbott'r readers?

JANO_CX: It seemed like straightforward biology to me. If there are undertones, they're the reader's fault.

TERL'KRIS: My writers don't need you to stand up for them, boss. It's nice that you're doing this, but I think it might be frightening a few of them.

Most of Ondrophol's defenses are a mystery to outsiders, but the guns of Allaphame have been used twice in recent years. In both cases, departing vessels were fired upon, gravy-braided plasma cleanly breaching their shields and disabling them. No official statements regarding the matter have been filed, confidential sources suggest that the vessels were carrying artifacts smuggled up from the surface.

Mnengitt'r

If you want to see old-school engineering from a plucky band of neophyte galactics, visit Mnengitt'r. This 2,100-year-old station was built shortly before the blockades ended, and it is a product of fobott'r ingenuity and poverty. They had no PTUs to spare on artificial gravity, but they desperately needed to increase the amount of living space available in orbit.

Mnengitt'r spins for gravity, and does it in six different pieces, each of which rotates at a different speed. This is necessary for there to be a baseline 13.72 m/s² acceleration at the outermost floor of the differently sized modules. Engineers across the galaxy marvel at the four-fisted gumption necessary to design something with this many large moving parts, and their wide eyes are likely the point. Knowing the galaxy was watching, the Fobott'r built something "low tech" that was both beautiful and amazing. As if to say, "Keep up the blockade. We don't actually need your stuff."

Today, Mnengitt'r totally needs that stuff. Annie plants power most of the station's systems and provide shielding. They're also the critical "safety net" ensuring a collision-free environment in the complex port. Off-course vessels can be nudged back into proper docking trajectories, or forcefully assigned new trajectories away from the station.

Those who come to see the marvelous engineering are in good company. Not only does Mnengitt'r receive millions of tourists each year, it hosts regular conferences for civil and mechanical engineers from across the galaxy. The conferences are held in windowed amphitheaters in the flywheel ring, where the dizzying complexity of Mnengitt'r can best be experienced.

Fistfall Quarry Memorial

The site of the first strike in the Arms of Days War is now known as Fistfall Quarry Memorial.

The strike looked like a terrible accident at first. An ingot-hauler, fully loaded with uniformly-shaped bolts of metals and minerals, entered an unstable orbit and lost power. It streaked toward the ground, shedding burning hull as it fell. The ingots did not burn up, however. When the last of the hull burnt away, the ingot load mushroomed outward, and came down in a billion hot, heavy pieces across an active strip mine.

Hundreds of thousands of fobott'r miners were thought to have been killed in the disaster, until six hours later, when they showed up forty kilometers away armed with makeshift weapons. The only casualties were the 8,300 non-fobott'r managerial personnel who weren't astute enough to find it suspicious when nobody arrived for work that morning.

The ground at Fistfall looks a bit like a mogul run made of shattered rock, hardy moss, and

Mining on Gripp

The economics of mining for mineral content on a 1.4 g world may seem problematic, but when you consider that the mining company was paying essentially nothing for the mining rights, the books balance much more effectively.

toxically salty puddles. This texture runs across a broken plain for six kilometers, and then goes another two kilometers up the mountainside, where it looks even more like a mogul run, except for the complete absence of snow and skiers.

There are elevated walkways and viewing areas around the edges of the pocked plain, but the paths through the plain itself are only indicated by small, stainless steel markers. Some pocks are almost four meters deep, so it is easy to get lost on even a short walk.

The fobott'r government, collectively referred to as The Great Embrace of Grip, formally acknowledges the sacred nature of this mass grave, and encourages visitors and natives alike to quietly walk the pocks, ponder the morality of necessary evils, and not drink the water.

Jungle Gardens

The export of fobott'r wildlife ended with the Arms of Days War. Today, anybody who wants to see fobott'r wildlife will have to pay Jungle Gardens a visit (and an entrance fee.)

Among the assets seized in the occupation were half a million square kilometers of farmed jungle. This wild, dank, ferocious subcontinent was laced with monitoring stations and specimen recovery robots, which both satisfied and stoked galactic demand for biological curiosities, delicacies, and dangerous pets.

The equipment left behind was repurposed, and now the subcontinent is laced with monitoring stations and visitor recovery robots. There are no marked trails, nor is there a "safe" path to follow. Nature here is red in tooth, claw, and a variety of other sharp fauna-mounted bits. If you find yourself in trouble, then the monitors will dispatch a robot to rescue you, but they will calculate the arrival of your rescue to ensure that you experience as close a scrape as is survivably possible.

The principal export of Gripp's Jungle Gardens is scars that people can tell stories about.

Tetlumbrathi

The ancient city of Tetlumbrathi, nestled between two spurs of a mountain, is a destination for hundreds of millions of fobott'r pilgrims each year. Fobott'r family lines are documented here, and the records go back almost fifteen thousand years. These records are kept on small metal plates, called tlumnphs, of which there are well over ten trillion. At some point in almost every fobott'r's life they will hand etch their personal details onto a tlumnph and deliver it to Tetlumbrathi, either in person or via courier.

Many arriving pilgrims have come to create their tlumnphs on-site, a practice which, as legend has it, was begun by the very first fobott'r, Malni Brathnph'l. Her tlumnph is said to exist in the deepest vaults of Tetlumbrathi, along with those of the first fobott'r families.

Modern historians and librarians marvel at the sheer weight of history present in Tetlumbrathi, and then shudder with anxiety when they learn that there is no index. Tlumnphs are stored the way fobott'r sleep: in piles. A single vault may have a billion metal plates in it, haphazardly heaped three or four meters deep.

The ancient district does not directly abut the fully modern districts in Tetlumbrathi. The oldest districts are up against, or cut into, the mountain, and they don't rise more than about ten meters above street level. Newer districts sprawl outward for a kilometer, with similar maximum heights, before rising into a series of galactic-era skyscrapered districts. The tall buildings are kept far enough from the old city to never cast shade upon it.

Planet Mercenary has an outlet in Tetlumbrathi, and the franchise is just five blocks from a Blattco manufacturing facility. The plant is completely staffed and managed by fobott'r, and a matriarch of the species has recently joined the Blattco board.

Historical Note

There is a legend about a corporate security force that took the Tetlumbrathi vaults hostage during the Arms of Days War and threatened to destroy them with nuclear fire. The fobott'r destroyed that corporate force to the last sophont and then set out to destroy all memory of those sophonts. They did a good job. Only this legend remains, and it suggests that the fobott'r take their history and genealogy very seriously.

Damaxuri

From space, Damaxuri appears to be dead, or at the very least the planet doesn't look happy. There are no oceans. The vast expanses of yellow sand are criss-crossed by jagged obsidian mountain ranges, giving Damaxuri a diseased look; like a gaint yellow tumor marred by dark, pustulent veins and black patches of pox.

Damaxuri is neither dead nor dying, but a great many underprepared visitors spend some of their time being both, just not in that order.

History

The Damaxuri wormgate, Damagate, arrived in the system forty-two hundred years ago. Though long-range scopes detected an oxygen atmosphere, it was immediately apparent that colonizing Damaxuri would be expensive. The uklakk obtained their lease on the world for cheap (as planets go.)

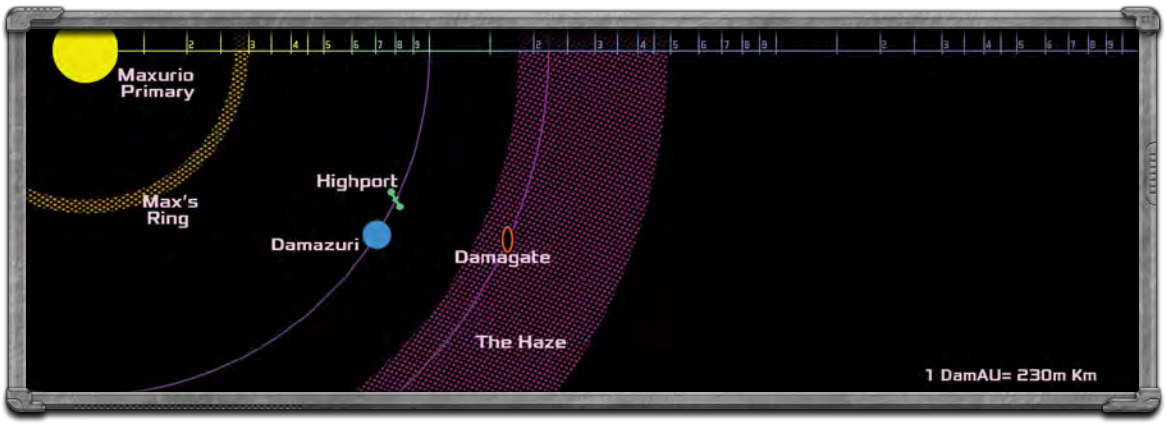
The first uklakk colony lander set down on Damaxuri and began tapping for deep water near one of the planet's prominent cliff ranges. After reports of initial success, the lander ceased communicating entirely. The colony ship (nothing more than a maintenance crew and a set of engines at this point) sent a small team to investigate, but the team found no trace of the colonists: their equipment, their ship, even the holes they claimed to have sunk had vanished. Bankrupt and broken-hearted, the uklakk colony ship and its tiny maintenance crew returned home.

The uklakk tried to re-sell the lease, but Damaxuri was a terrible investment. No one wanted to buy. The planet remained on their books but they sent no further expeditions.

Eleven hundred years ago, a fobott'r merchant clan purchased some orbital and real-estate rights from the uklakk, who had dropped the price enough to make the deal attractive. They cobbled Highport station together out of their older ships and sent a small lander to the surface to very carefully probe for water.

The lander got eaten, or at least that's what it looked like from orbit. The black sands beneath it simply fell away, dropping the lander almost three hundred meters into a pit, which then collapsed from the sides as a slurry of materials filled it in. Within thirty seconds, the lander was gone. With this story in hand, the fobott'r explained to the uklakk the likely fate of that old colony lander.

The fobott'r were more careful going forward, placing their settlements over sturdy bedrock rather than the porous subterranean biomass they dubbed the Damaxurian Matrix, lest the matrix grow underneath their city and collapse. Over the years, they learned to co-exist with the massive underground ecosystems, and the uklakk sought to begin recovering expenses by selling additional patches of real estate. The desert began to shine with city after city, and for



a brief time Damaxuri was a profitable, diverse desert wonderland.

Six hundred and twenty years ago, a stellar storm erupted across Maxurio, the system's primary, spawning massive, searing flares. Radiation levels spiked, and surface temperatures flashed up by as much as 50° C. The flares sickened or killed millions of people. Entire national budgets' worth of expensive equipment was damaged or destroyed.

The survivors of the disaster attempted to flee the planet. Few were able to, and those who remained quickly fell into a mad scramble to dig in, rebuild, and not starve. That last part drove them to war. Potential rescuers looked at the situation below and decided it would be safer to drop some supplies and equipment, then come back once the locals had stopped shooting at everything that moved.

The shooting never completely stopped, but things eventually stabilized to the point that the wider galactic community looked at Damaxuri and decided that its inhabitants didn't really need to be rescued.

The Damaxurian Spongiform Matrix

Damaxuri has an extremely weak magnetic field. Her core has cooled to the ambient temperature caused by pressure, and is poor in iron. This allows large amounts of radiation to ionize the upper atmosphere and to strike the planet's surface directly. Without good protection, life out in the open is either impossible or very short without technological help.

One hypothesis postulates that when Damaxuri's magnetic field first began to fail, its dominant civilization struggled to find solutions, but lacked the resources to get themselves off the planet. Whether by accident or design, life burrowed underground, sequestering water to prevent it from boiling away. Intelligent life faltered and failed, but the subterranean ecosystem continued to evolve. Today, 99% of the Damaxurian ecosphere lies beneath the surface, and the most active layer is under ten meters of sharp, black sand.

The air on Damaxuri is thin, with an oxygen content that will leave most oxy-breathers short of breath and complaining about altitude, even though altitude is not actually the problem. Several weeks of acclimatization (or good blood nannies) will stop the complaining—all you need is thicker blood with more oxygen transport. Alternatively, your crew can pack breathing gear or wear enviro-suits.

The jagged black cliffs of the obsidian ranges are not inert geological features. They periodically emit clouds of thick fog, rich in oxygen, water vapor, and suspended hydrocarbons, which is the source of breathable atmosphere on the planet. These emissions are the exhalations of the deep Damaxurian Matrix, an ecology unlike any other.

The Damaxurian Matrix is an interconnected web of spongiform subterranean pods, domes, symbiotes, and cliff-like ranges. The obsidian ranges are like claws, horns, or fingernails, thrusting upward over time at a rate observable across decades. Erosion from sandstorms eats away at the jagged, black cliffs. The striated, fibro-crystalline structure of these cliffs causes the broken pieces to be very sharp. Through a trick of acoustic resonance, these tiny black shards migrate toward the bases of the cliffs, collecting into the black pools of obsidian sand, rather than scattering across the desert. The oldest, finest-ground black sand particles sink into the matrix and are re-absorbed. Obsidian sand is easy to tell from regular sand by color.

The wise traveler on Damaxuri avoids the pools of black sand not only because it can cut you to pieces, but also because the pools mark the location of matrix below the surface, and the matrix defends itself. Glasslike "roots" of the matrix extend up into the pools of black obsidian sand, serving as both thermal conductors and sensors to detect intrusion. If the matrix detects an intrusion, it either collapses underneath the intruder, burying them nigh-instantly in sand, or it sends up a bubble of air and water which erupts through the last few meters of sharp sand in a blinding cloud of sand and dank gases. As this haze roils over the area, the deep denizens attack, tearing into anything that moves. Things that move need to drink; anything that needs to drink is preying upon the Matrix and must be destroyed.

Nearly all the water on the planet is bound up in this underground ecosystem. The few surface dwelling creatures that exist do so by stealing water from the edges of the matrix, hoping to snatch a drink and run before the theft is detected.

The Wise Traveler

Technically, the "wise traveler" isn't on Damaxuri to begin with, but rather than question the life choices that got you here, focus on acquiring the wisdom that will let you make better life choices long into your future.

The obsidian sands are quite hot, and the infrared energy transduction is just as efficient as terran photosynthesis. Using this heat and the stored water, the Matrix grows an array of subterranean substances which are most analogous to fungi or molds. The denizens eat these, and each other, only banding together when they aggressively attack surface creatures.

The denizens that live within the matrix look much like what a terran would find under the trunk of a rotting tree back on earth. They're grub-like and beetle-like, only terran grubs and beetles aren't the size of small dogs (or large quadrupeds, or the size of a bubble car), nor do they have quite so many teeth, pincers, and claws.

Despite the incredibly inhospitable wilderness of Damaxurian deserts, there are surface creatures that survive in it. The most visible of these are the dustmights. As long as a bus and twice as wide, these armadillo-like creatures are not particularly aggressive unless attacked. They're most often found moving alone along the edges of obsidian sand pools, retiring to the ridge shadows in the worst of the day's heat. There are also several species of crawling and flying creatures collectively referred to as "gore-swarms," which are what you'd get if a vulture and a piranha got together and had a million angry, armored, babies. There are flat sand-serpents that fuel themselves from heat collected while they sleep under the daylight sand and then hydrate by finding something soft to suck dry during the night. The harsh conditions on the surface are not limited to aridity, heat, and hard radiation. Damaxurian weather includes cyclonic sand storms whose violence far surpasses that of terrestrial hurricanes or tornadoes. When these storms skirt the black sands they can whip sharp gravel up into a devastating blast.

The full ecosystem, then, includes the wearing down and regrowth of the cliffs, which produce the black sands that soak up solar radiation and convert it into life-giving heat for the Damaxurian Matrix below. The spongiform matrix holds water and supports life for its symbiotic denizens. It exhales through the ranges, thus providing breathable atmosphere for surface creatures. All would be peaceful if the matrix were more willing to share its water.

Highport

Highport is a derelict space station, held together by improvised repairs and the tenacity of its residents, who have stubbornly cobbled together both a home and a community out of what most sane sophonts regard as junk. In the wake of the stellar storm, Highport station was mostly abandoned, left to rot in an orbit which would have eventually destabilized and sent the station crashing to the surface of Damaxuri below. The station's technology was so out-of-date that it wasn't even particularly valuable to raid for parts. Mostly it was inhabited by squatters or people whose poor luck had stranded them there. However, about fifteen years ago, a pair of ursumari siblings showed up at the station with a band of hired mercenaries. Qaya and Num Solward were entrepreneurs who looked on Highport as an undiscovered opportunity. They felt that the increasing market for Damaxuri artworks and the desperate technological needs of the cities on the planet below meant that anyone who owned Highport was in a good position to bargain. 1

Num spends most of his energy repairing the station and managing the people living on it. He is trying, through sheer force of will, to create a community which will be attractive and welcoming to potential tourists. Qaya is the deal-maker extraordinaire. She's the one who has hammered out trade agreements with most of the surface settlements, even though most of those settlements have long refused to trade with each other. Should the full extent of Qaya's deals be exposed, several small wars would break out in a matter of days.

There is not much on the station for the average mercenary to buy, but it is a good place

1

MKTG: Is this market worth looking into?

WRITER: Do you want ROI, or do you want the joy that only comes from helping people who can never pay you back except by stabbing you so it's a good thing you wore armor?

JANO_CX: Find a charity eager for good karma with a side of extreme adventure, and fund them at 5% above cost.

WRITER: I love this idea as long as it's something for Marketing or maybe R&D, not us.

to stop over if you need to lay low for a while, and it is possible that the Solwards occasionally have a job or two they need done.

Surface Cities

There are fifteen domed settlements on Damaxuri's surface. Each of these is self-sufficient, but only insofar as the residents maintain the equipment that keeps them alive. Naturally-occurring water is very hard to come by. In order for life to prosper under their domes, cities must recycle and reclaim water, or crack the molecules of rocks themselves to liberate oxygen and hydrogen.

The inhabitants of these domed cities are of numerous different sophont types, with large populations of humans, uniocs, and frellenti, and one remarkable city of near-symbiosis between esspererin and fobott'r.

Damaxuri's cities are in a continual state of collapse and renewal and are thus far too resource-poor to mount proper scientific expeditions. This is why so little is known about the matrix ecology other than how to not get killed by it and how to (at great risk) steal water from it. Surprisingly, Damaxuri's principal exports are artistic—music, teleplays, poetry, sculpture, and 2D visual—in the genres commonly known as "blistergoth" and "sandpunk." While most cultures represent bleakness and depression with dark colors, grungy, distorted sounds, and consonant-laden groans, Damaxurian arts feature bright colors, piercing whistles, and consonant-laden barks. The bright colors and sharp sounds reflect the life experiences of artists living in a place where the brightness of the sun will burn you, the sand will cut you, and a long walk outside will bring only starvation and death. 2

These cities are in a constant state of conflict. Despite logical arguments to the contrary, there's always someone who continues to believe it would be easier to cross a thousand kilometers of desert and steal from the nearest city than it would be to fix whatever just broke. City-to-city assaults are mounted with incredible creativity: wind-powered sand skiffs, gliders riding the prevailing currents of the upper atmosphere, and even ballistic launches of personnel, whose HALO jumps are either the stuff of legend or quickly filled-and-forgotten craters in the sand.

Mellsen-Anlied

The joint human/unioc colony city of Mellsen-Anlied is one of the best arrival points for visitors with goods to trade, if only because it is politically stable and has a steady supply of water. The city sits on one of the Damaxurian "bedreefs," four square kilometers of solid rock lying just twenty meters beneath the sands. The edge of this worn, bedrock nub of a long-vanished mountain sits just 500 meters from a lake of black sand. The bedreef prevents the Damaxurian Matrix from growing close enough to threaten the city. With careful drilling and pipelines, the city managers of Mellsen-Anlied have rigged a system to safely tap water from the matrix without triggering its natural defenses. While the city must still manage water carefully, Mellsen-Anlied always has more of it than anyone else.

Unioc engineers crafted the Mellsen-Anlied central dome to absorb harmful radiation while allowing visible light to pass through. This filtered light shines on a beautiful pit garden that makes Mellsen-Anlied an oasis for travelers, a nexus for traders, and a home worth vigorously defending.

The city is not a paradise, of course. Below the shining dome and the lush gardens lies the Boxpit, a deep hole lined with terraces, scaffolds, and boxy structures, and which extends 200 meters further down into the bedreef. There is no natural light, and the unnatural light is spotty. The deeper you go, the darker and more dangerous it gets. Stairs, ladders, and ramps provide access to all 48 levels, but none of them run the full depth of the pit. There are two working cargo-sized elevators, which go all the way down, and there are three unused, walled-off shafts where more elevators would have gone had the colony thrived as the first settlers imagined. The elevators open at the top in the garden district and the docks. One of the unused shafts sits beneath the docks and off-the-books traders move cargo through a hidden entrance into and out of that shaft.

Structures made of shipping containers stacked atop one another fill the depths of Mellsen-Anlied. They are connected by a framework of scaffolding, catwalks, and things that might once have been a part of a shining skyscraper or majestic starship. If you really look around, you can find places to leap and fall for a few stories before landing on someone's roof. A few routes allow ambitious urban runners to jump, bounce, run, slide, and plummet in a

2

WRITER: This was so much easier to write after listening to that playlist. Thanks!

TERL'KRIS: The music was the only thing I brought back that was worth sharing.

WRITER: You're going to make me ask what else—

TERL'KRIS: At this point my only remaining Damaxurian souvenir is a biopsy scar.

WRITER: Well, that means you totally shared stuff with a medic somewhere.

TERL'KRIS: Okay, yes. And yes, I guess it was worth it.

continuous 48-storey traverse, but these change as the Boxpit evolves.

The government is locked in a long-running power struggle with organized crime, with both parties keeping their worst behavior in check for the sake of maintaining the appearance of true stability, which is good for business. The city is the home base for several caravan companies, and while they're all legitimate merchants, all of them have, at one time or another, served as fronts for smuggling, banditry, and piracy out on the sands. On one day the merchants are clearing customs, paying tariffs, and cheerfully committing commerce above-board. On the next day they're dodging the port authorities and committing all kinds of under-the-table acts.

Tanstaff

An unlikely partnership between fobott'r and esspererin, the colony city of Tanstaff is home to some of the finest emergency repairs you'll find anywhere in the galaxy. Like many Damaxurian cities, Tanstaff is surrounded by fields of solar collectors. Unlike those other cities, however, Tanstaff's collectors are fragile and in constant need of repair. This poses little problem because the esspererin love to fix things and are largely immune to the effects of the radiation that makes it to the surface. Many of them live outside, absorbing solar energy with their wings while flitting from collector to collector.

The esspererin also manage the hydroponics of Tanstaff, though that's not really the right word to describe their gardening. With designs borrowed from their home system, esspererin hydroponics very efficiently catalyze comestible materials without anything even remotely resembling greenery. Some visitors find it a little disturbing to see nutrient-rich noodles extruded from bundles of oily tubing beneath a canopy of glistening black scales, but Tanstaff linguine is something you'll need to get used to if you didn't bring enough of your own food to last through your stay.

Tanstaff's fobott'r population is organized around heavy lifting, material acquisition, and defense. Replacement materials required by the projects of their esspererin partners are procured through the timeless practice of raiding neighboring cities. Do not make the mistake of thinking the fobott'r of Tanstaff are brute, cannon-fodder types. They demonstrate military ingenuity at every turn, and their operations are a fearsome blend of brilliance, recklessness, and strategic applications of extreme force.

Whether you're trading or just visiting Tanstaff, if your group is not entirely comprised of fobott'r and/or esspererin you will be corralled into the Xeno Quarter. The city conducts most of its business here, so it shouldn't be inconvenient. If, for some reason, you want to venture into the rest of the city, you'll need a permit. You will be thoroughly searched and completely disarmed. The fobott'r law enforcement officers are aggressively efficient in this regard. They are also intolerant of any behavior they deem suspicious; permit-carrying outsiders are frequently detained and hauled back to the Xeno Quarter "just because."

Morgan's Brake

The city of Morgan's Brake is one of the youngest on the planet. It is just 80 years old and is the final resting place of the MMS Domiathan, flagship of the late Admiral M.T. Morgan.

Fleeing a disastrous campaign, Morgan ordered his AI to slingshot the 420-meter warship very tightly around Damaxuri and use the gravy guns to throw up a cloud of sand under which the ship could hide after an extreme litho-assisted gravy-brake. The AI miscalculated badly. 1

The Domiathan's gravitics failed, but the shields held up until the very end, displacing sand, bedreef, and black cliffs alike as the massive warship lithobraked its way across two hundred kilometers of Damaxurian landscape.

Today the city of Morgan's Brake sits under a south-facing half-dome at the north end of the longest straight-line feature on the planet. One of the Domiathan's two primary annies survived the trip, generously supplying power for a city that is no longer trying to generate artificial gravity or fly anywhere. The survivors and their descendants cut apart and repurposed the hull of the Domiathan, mostly for dome materials, and any decks not oriented correctly for local gravity were scrapped. There are a few places where the city's heritage as a flagship are clearly visible —most notably the Mayoral Mansion, which used to be the primary engineering deck.

The current mayor of Morgan's Brake is Timmike, one of the few uklakk to be found anywhere on Damaxuri — or two of the few, depending on how you count. Like all non-maimed uklakk, Timmike is a bicameral intel-

1

WRITER: Can somebody here do math? And music analysis?

R&D: Yes, but don't tell anybody.

WRITER: I'm sending a music track to your handbrain.

R&D: That's gorgeous. And so sad. The sledge drums are counting out the plotted course *and* the actual course in base 12.

TERL'KRIS: All I hear is headache and blurry vision.

WRITER: It's called "Broken Sand," and I think it's my favorite track.

TERL'KRIS: I'm glad it found a good home.

ligence, the halves of his brain each residing in one of his two bodies. They communicate naturally via short-range radio, but Timmike wears the standard encrypted Uk-booster, allowing the halves of his brain to remain in constant communication across the city.

Timmike has accomplished what no mayor since the late Admiral Morgan was able to: he personally controls both the power feeds and the armory, a feat made possible by his two-places-at-once anatomy.

The denizens of Morgan's Brake are a mixture of human, unioc, fobott'r, frellenti, uklakk, and others. Many of the fobott'r are caravan traders and the locals treat them well because of their cultural affinity with the fobott'r of Tanstaff. They're paid well enough that they can resist the temptation to emigrate and they serve double-duty as diplomats, preventing Morgan's Brake from being the target of Tanstaff's more aggressive raids.

Obsidiana

This tiny, fortified city is the youngest of Damaxuri's settlements. It is the now-permanent frellenti expedition to investigate the excretion and secretion of the Damaxuri Matrix. They positioned their mobile, modular science station among a cluster of the exhalation vents in the black cliffs. To prevent their perch from eroding out from underneath them, they coated the ridge around their structure with graphene-epoxy laminates guaranteed to last at least another century or two.

The original expedition depleted its budget, including, unbeknownst to those on site, much of the budget for evacuating the staff. Those funding the project were a little upset when the last evacuation shuttles contained zero valuable equipment and were filled instead with easy-to-replace middle-managers. The researchers elected to stay behind and continue their studies, which were potentially significant in the greater search for information regarding civilizations extant at the time the frellenti were created and abandoned on Relle Netti..

There are no good overland approaches to Obsidiana, but the city does maintain a small pad and trading station at the base of the cliffs for shuttling supplies via ornithopter. Obsidiana thrives upon trade: it is the only site on the planet where the moist exhalations of the Damaxurian Matrix can be directly tapped for oxygen, water, and countless other volatiles. All the building blocks for life (and, more importantly, for sustaining life) can be distilled from the clouds emerging from the vents in the cliffs.

This wealth provides illusory security. Obsidiana is a community living on the ragged edge. With only 2,700 inhabitants, even minor disasters affect the entire population. Large groups of visitors (more than about a dozen at a time) are unwelcome, and unwelcome visitors will be greeted with one warning and then point defense cannon fire.

Merchant Caravans

Merchants travel between the domed cities. Their tracked vehicles carry water in baffled tanks above the cabin, affording the traders radiation protection as they sleep (usually during the day.) The well-to-do traders may also have electromagnetic shields, allowing them greater freedom of movement. Regardless of the shielding available, however, those who spend their lives on the surface are exposed to far more hard radiation than is considered healthy. Higher incidences of birth defects, tumors, and cancers are just the most obvious symptoms.

Many of these traders must travel thousands of kilometers between cities and will, of necessity, cross the black sands and mountains on their way. These caravans carefully tap the edges of the matrix, each using a carefully guarded secret method of drilling, piping, or otherwise drawing water from deep down to fill their tanks. All methods incur the risk that the matrix will decide to defend itself, but most caravans have enough practice that they know when to pack up and leave before the matrix awakens to their theft.

Usually.

Ghanj-rho

The world of Ghanj-rho, in the system of the same name, is the home planet of carbo-silicate amorphs. Traces remain of the technological civilization that dominated this system millions of years ago, but the prior civilization never developed annie plants, PTUs, or hypernets, and their civilization eventually collapsed. The recently (re)discovered tribe of bradicor claim to be the living remnants of Ghanj-rho's first civilization and view the amorphs as their descendants, after a fashion.

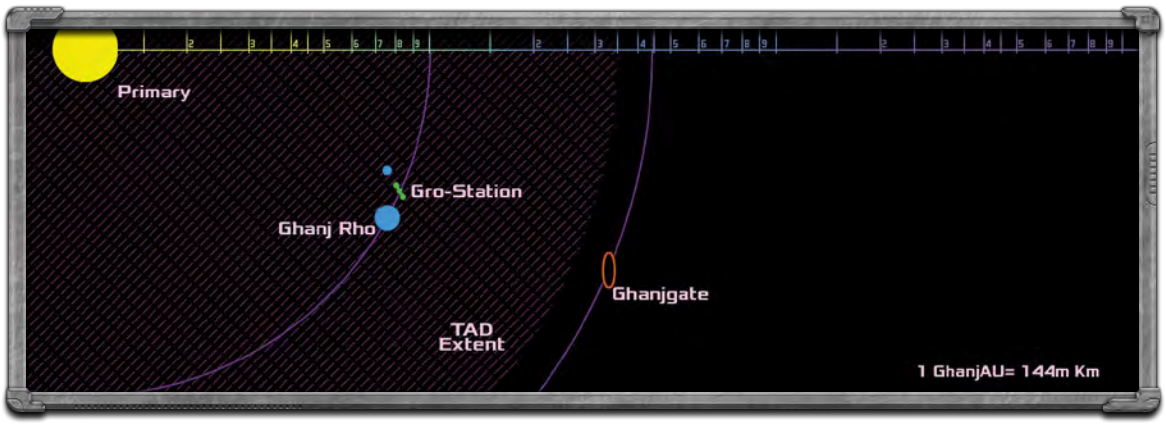
Until very recently, the planet was under the nominal control of smugglers and pirates who exported amorphs as very expensive slaves. In 3096, their rule ended when they attempted to claim a Tausennigan Ob'enn Thunderhead Superfortress, not realizing its AI was fully operational and armed with hitherto unseen teraport-based weaponry. (1)

The dominant native sophonts — the carbo-silicate amorphs— evolved from technological memory constructs designed by the ancient civilization of the bradicor. Per the Manyfolk Council, these fascinating sophonts are the legitimate heirs to the planet and may no longer be kidnapped and sold. Just because they can't be bought and sold, however, doesn't make them less valuable. The best reason, by far, to visit Ghanj-rho is to recruit amorphs. While here, you may also find fobott'r, vhorwed, frellenti, uklakk, queltro, uniocs, and humans who are anxious to cut the last of their ties with the various defunct criminal organizations no longer in power here.

Aside from the amorphs, the only other intelligent natives are a tiny tribe of less than a dozen bradicor; all male, all sterile, and all living in the same network of caves atop Lonesome Plateau. They claim to be the last surviving members of the original sophonts on Ghanj-rho, that they have been around for millions of years, and that they were present during the final days of the bradicor civilization. The Ghanj-rho Archeological Institute for Longevity Studies (GRAILS) began with the expressed purpose of researching the matter, and thus far GRAILS has found nothing to refute the bradicor claim.

In just four years the planet went from a backwater haven for pirates and slavers to a burgeoning xenoarcheological science tourism destination under a stable representative government. An ancient bradicor named Rod chairs the Manyfolk Council, a body of locals, expats, refugees, fugitives, and ex-pirates located in Ghanj-rho's only city-sized settlement: the de facto capital city and space port of Lonesome Plateau.

Ghanj-rho's surface is polluted with potentially toxic levels of metals and mutatiously high levels of radiation. The source of this pollution is the eroded and dissolved remnants of the prior civilization. The flora has evolved to survive in these conditions but visitors should wear full exo-suits if they're spending more than just a few hours outside of the shielded settlements.



1

WRITER: I wrote that this was Petey, didn't I.

TERL'KRIS: You did. I made edits.

WRITER: Revising the text, or revising history?

TERL'KRIS: If this text gets used as a historical reference we will all someday be maligned for the horrors we have wrought horror upon the fields of history and library science.

On Bradicor, Vhorwed, & Uklakks

The bradicor, vhorwed, and uklakk are not playable races at this time. If you'd like to build encounters around them, further information can be found in the Game Chief Reference Pages.

Much of the ancient civilization's footprint, especially along coastlines, has been completely lost to subduction due to Ghanj-rho's vibrant tectonic activity. Those ruins not eaten by shifting continents display evidence of the civilization's death throes, which clearly included the use of nuclear and biological weapons.

Ghanj-rho Orbital Habitat, (GROH, or "Gro-Station")

GROH is a hodge-podge habitat in synchronous orbit above Ghanj-rho. It was built on the orbiting ruins of the only bradicor satellite to survive the collapse of their civilization. The original facility spun for gravity, but annieplants now provide artificial gravity. The economic growth of the last four years has been very kind to GROH, and with all the new construction, the locals have started calling it "Gro-station." The station manager, a queltro who goes by "King Spiderwrench," has skillfully managed this growth, and his queltro-dominated team of engineers continues to aggressively improve and expand GROH, perhaps in an effort to complete the station's eponymy.

Environmental Toxins on Ganj Rho

Characters without full exo-suits must make hourly Endurance checks (TN 15) or take 1d6 in direct damage (not reduced by armor.) After one day, characters lose 1d3 health points from their current health. These points are only restored after medical treatment (Medical check TN 18) or a week away from Ghanj-rho. A blood-nanny booster is available on GROH station (Supplies 1 for each member in the company). The booster lets characters wander around outdoors without getting sick. Once daily, however, player characters must pass an Endurance check (TN 7) or immediately suffer 1d6 points of damage and lose the benefits of the booster.

Visitors to Ghanj-rho do not need to arrive at GROH before descending to the surface, but this bustling habitat is better furnished, better equipped, and more comfortable than any place available for rent on the ground. It is also far less likely to provide you with radiation poisoning, heavy metal poisoning, or any of the other environmental illnesses that result from time spent unprotected on the planet's surface. GROH also happens to be the best place to visit on your return from the surface if you begin coughing up a little bit of blood, grey matter, or whatever it is that your specific body coughs up when seriously unwell.

Lonesome Plateau

The brand-spanking-new spaceport town of Lonesome Plateau squats atop an equatorial mesa which rises a thousand meters from the surrounding rainforests and is a full 3100 meters above sea level. The settlement is built around the cave homes of Rod and his tiny tribe. The network of caves is extensive but is off-limits except to permit-carrying archeologists. Even these archeologists must keep their work as unobtrusive as possible because Rod and his fellows still reside there some of the time. Apparently it takes a while to work up the courage to move when you've spent ten million years in the same house.

The upper cave system connects to the forests below via trunks of biological cable that run through the much narrower lower caves. These join an ancient network of plants, which Rod's people used to watch the world outside from the high, cool safety of their caves. To the untrained eye, there is nothing to see but vegetation, only on the discovery of Rod and his people was this observation network revealed. The evolved remnants of former biotechnology at work in this system is already the subject of hundreds of scientific studies, academic papers, and doctoral theses. Scientists continue to study extensively and quietly when Rod and friends are asleep.

The prevailing winds and high humidity around Lonesome Plateau result in heavy rainfall. This is not ideal for a spaceport, but it has cleansed much of the mountain and forest, washing the heavier environmental toxins away. The rain itself is slightly acidic, but at least it's not *radioactive* acid like you'll get from the Hotsea hurricanes.

The Manyfolk Council's offices are here on Lonesome Plateau, as are the main offices for GRAILS, and the satellite campuses for Altnat U, Godseye Community College (GCC), and New Yale Prime. Lonesome Plateau has one of the highest concentrations of scientists anywhere in the galaxy. Professor Mosh Uptrobar, GCC's Dean of Location Studies, has publicly stated that if his college shipped its lowest-scoring students to the Godseye University campus on Othlin, the average test scores in both places would go up.

It is legal, and even encouraged, to openly carry weapons on Lonesome Plateau. It's also legal to carry them secretly, but that secret is not one you're keeping from law enforcement. The sheriff, a multi-node AI named D0v3, comprehensively monitors all comings and goings on the plateau, and discreetly polices the entire area via her numerous deputy nodes. Aspiring criminals who act on the mistaken belief that their weapons empower them to engage in illegal activity will swiftly find themselves powerless to engage in an activity beyond basic life support.

1

MKTG: Can we get these into the master catalog?

TERL'KRIS: Kleyladar tells us the manufacturer would not be able to keep up with demand.

MKTG: Artisanal cybernetics... peddled by a machine intelligence.

TERL'KRIS: Who is probably building them himself.

MKTG: Entrepreneurial irony would be a great sales angle if we had something to sell here.

Universal Amorph Interface Kit

The UAIK-01 effectively turns an amorph into a cyborg. It uses the same neural syntax used by the symbiotic eyes, and most amorphs can eventually accustom themselves to the interface, allowing them to easily operate whatever equipment is attached. The UAIK-01 has three connectors, allowing it to be jacked into anything with compatible controls, including a wide array of vehicles and many weapon systems. Cost: 2 Resource. These are being marked up heavily. Monopoly, baby.

In order for your amorph to adapt to the UAIK-01, make a Perception check (TN 15), followed by Physical check (TN 15), followed by a TN 15 check appropriate to the equipment to which the UAIK-01 is being attached (Heavy Weapons, Space Vehicle, etc.). All three checks must be successful and may only be made *after* purchase. Failed checks may be repeated once per in-game day. Once all three checks are passed in a single day, your amorph has adapted to the UAIK. In the future, they only need to make a quick skill check (TN 15) when they attach a piece of equipment that they have not previously used.

One of Planet Mercenary's newest franchises, run by an AI named Kleyladar, sits on the northeast edge of the plateau overlooking Shadow Ramp. It is the only place you can legally obtain a Universal Amorph Interface Kit (UAIK-01), which is locally designed and manufactured. A Planet Mercenary technician, or perhaps even Kleyladar himself, will connect your newly purchased UAIK-01 to any Planet Mercenary product at no charge. 1

Shadow Ramp is a steep, paved road built against the sheer north-east face of the plateau. It switches back on itself three times in its 900 meter descent to the rainforest below. If you're free-wheeling down Shadow Ramp, be mindful of the switchbacks. The 30% grade will let you pick up enough speed that the guard-rail will do little more than slow you down as you leave the ramp, and doing so from the lowest of the three hairpin turns will leave nothing but 225 meters of thin air between you and the ground.

The Ranch

The Ranch was originally built by unioc slavers who used it as the forward operating base for their amorph kidnapping and smuggling ring. Since the formation of the Manyfolk Council and the surge of scientific interest in Ghanj-rho, the settlement has more than quintupled in size. The name "The Ranch" exemplifies the poor taste exhibited by slavers, but the amorphs living on The Ranch haven't yet agreed on a name they like more. The Ranch is deep in the forest, 50 kilometers east of Lonesome Plateau, and is home to 3,100 amorphs. It is a town of close to 10,000 sophonts, however. The population is dominated by offworlders — scientists, educators, shopkeepers, talent agents, and tourists. An estimated 500,000 amorphs live in the high-altitude forests within 1,000 kilometers of The Ranch, and amorph-led, amorph-authorized expeditions regularly venture into the wilds to contact and recruit these aboriginal sophonts.

If you're hoping to hire an amorph fireteam, your first contact should be Ranger Ruck, whose Mighty Morphy Ranger team offers the highest ROI for your recruiting budget. Vehicular landings are restricted to a pad eight km south of town, so you can begin your wilderness adventure with a warm-up hike from the pad into town.

Purchasing Eye Trees

When you buy an Eye Tree, the price you pay covers the cost of the tree and all the equipment you need for its care. There's also a handy guide to caring for your unusual purchase.

Mature Eye Tree (20 Supplies)

This tree is 2-3 meters tall and has a radius between one and two meters. Make sure you have enough space to transport and store the tree. This tree will continue to grow eyes as long as you take care of the tree, thus giving you an unlimited supply.

Potted Winkling (6 Supplies)

A potted winkling is about a meter tall and half a meter across. At time of purchase it will have 3 eyes ready for harvest. It will grow new eyes at the rate of one every six months. If you continue to care for the tree for five years it will reach a fully mature size.

Single Eye (2 Supplies)

For those who don't want to be saddled with caring for an eye tree, you can buy pre-harvested eye-fruits that are ready for use.

Ruck is the unofficial (read: actual) mayor of The Ranch, but the management of the town is subcontracted under license by the Manyfolk Council. Law and order here is maintained by Eko Force, a unioc family business under the command of Jun-ko Ebbirnoth, also under Manyfolk license. These former pirates, slavers, and smugglers now work strictly above-board. They are fiercely loyal to the Ghanj-rho natives — a relationship that strains the definition of "reverse Stockholm Syndrome" and provides a topic of research for at least one team of sociologists.

Visionary's Grove, which dominates the northern side of town, is a farm of amorph eye trees whose unironic eponymy puts Gro-Station to shame. Amorphs have a symbiosis with the eye-fruits (*see page 89*, sophonts), which allow them to see and the eye-fruits to remain fresh indefinitely. The eye-fruits do not store well when detached, so if there is an amorph in your company, you may wish to purchase a deep-potted mature eye-tree, or even just a small-pot winkling. They are not cheap, but if your amorph loses an eye in combat, having replacements on board will be worth whatever you paid. The opticarborologists at Visionary's Grove provide all of the equipment necessary — lamps, feed-tubes, irrigation pipettes — to automate the process of keeping a mature tree happy, or growing a winkling into a full tree. This is included in the price.

If you steal eyes, Eko Force will come after you. If you steal eye trees, the Manyfolk Council will place a bounty on your head and enthusiastically alert amorphs across the galaxy that there is money to be made.

Science Stations

Several mountains and mesas rise from the high rainforests on the continental bulge dominated by Lonesome Plateau, and all of these areas benefit from the regular rinsing provided by the heavy rains. The Manyfolk Council has established bases on these summits, thereby providing power hookups and resupply services to the numerous small science stations perched above the treeline. The stations themselves are independently operated by a wide range of the galaxy's governmental and corporate agencies, including the Plenipotent Dominion, Debeblicorps, and the perpetually underfunded League of Galactics. Most of these stations are homes for just a few dozen people who live in clusters of those ubiquitous boxy hab-pods that have been popular with field scientists across the galaxy for millennia.

Mountain-top culture is a predictable blend of friendly competition and deep suspicion. The agencies sponsoring the scientists know that ultra-profitable or nation-securing discoveries are unlikely, but if the unlikely should happen, they don't want anybody else to have exclusive access to them. As a result, the most popular facility in each of these multi-stationed communities is the pub-analog, where scientists will encourage one another to relax, self-inebriate, and share information.

Researcher teams are encouraged to bring their own defensive weaponry, especially for researchers who will be venturing down below the tree line, but site security is provided by the permanent Manyfolk Council bases. Their milspec perimeter defenses and STS-grade surface-to-orbit weapons ensure that the expensive equipment on these mountaintops doesn't fly away in the night.

Canyon City Site Gamma

Ghanj-rho's most significant archeological site lies on the opposite side of the world from Lonesome Plateau. An ancient bradicor city survived the worst of the nuclear fire by virtue of being in an even more ancient box canyon. Sitting in the middle of the tectonic plate, continental subduction hasn't touched it, and because of the arid conditions and high canyon walls, erosion hasn't yet worn the more interesting features into smooth featurelessness.

Archeologists theorize that the structures of Canyon City (or whatever it was originally called) survived the war, but its population did not. At some point, relatively recently in radiological terms, an automated reactor finally failed and bathed the entire canyon with extremely high levels of gamma radiation. The canyon is still "hot" enough that scientists who work at the site must wear exo-suits at all times — blood nanny treatments from GROH won't be enough. Even AIs should wear, or install, shielding, as some of the radiation can damage growprammed pathways.

And that's where the second half of the name, Site Gamma, comes from: gamma ray sensors can see it from millions of kilometers away.

Research here is either uncomfortable or unhealthy, and all too often can be both. Several research teams have given up completely, valuing their lives and reproductive viability over Canyon City's treasure trove of xenoarcheological artifacts. The newest station, a partnership between Urtheep Industries and the Parthedrome of Othlin, may clear the mutagenic hurdles, using disposable synthetic intelligences and hypernet-connected, teleoperated equipment driven by dromelings. It is currently under construction.

Hotsea and the Radio Swamps

Prevailing winds from the deserts of Canyon City's continent carry radioactive sand and caustic deposits out over the equatorial ocean to the west. In late summer the warm waters add energy to the hot mess, creating Coriolis storms. Hotsea is named for these deadly megacylcones, whose hurricane-force winds will etch exposed skin, exposed clothing, and a great many other materials with a continuous horizontal blast of radioactive acid rain.

The storms slowly lose energy as they travel north and west, but they save the worst of what they've got for landfall, when they dump their toxic cargo onto the dark, miserable lowlands known as the Radio Swamps. The plant life here is twisted and black, with thick, hard needles that evolved to survive endless seasons of acid rain. The animal life is small and fierce with graphene exoskeletons. They evolved an appetite for anything softer than gravel. Canyon City Site Gamma may be deadly, but the Radio Swamps are deadly, and they hate you.

Ellwor

If you want to drop off the grid without losing basic amenities like hypernet access or hot and cold running food, you should head for Ellwor. There is no central government, and the otherwise fractious city-states all share an aversion to extraditions. For millennia the only way to get here was via wormgate, and the various galactic powers took great pains to police that route.

Today, with the teraport, there are no routes to police. Ellwor's teraport area denial field is a sphere four light-hours in diameter, large enough that nobody can afford to patrol it. If you can teraport into the system without being intercepted, you're probably home free.

If you're looking for work, you can find clientele offering a wide range of dangerous employment opportunities: start a small war, finish a small war, protect a warlord, assassinate a warlord, get lost in the jungle, find something in the jungle, rob a bank, or defend a bank from robbers. Be warned, however. Ellwor might be the last place you land. Keep something in orbit to come collect you. Or collect your bodies. Or collect no bodies (the most likely option).

Ellwor's gravity of .82 G is on the lighter side. Its single ocean, Brinsea, covers the southern pole, and occupies just 15% of the planet's surface. The mineral content of Brinsea is so high that it is in a state of equilibrium with the precipitates at the bottom. Unless you are an esspererin, an Ellworan grendlsquutch, or an ion-condensate battery, you shouldn't drink it. Ellwor's 19-degree angle of inclination provides some seasonal variation during its 404-day annular cycle.

The world is not arid, however. Perhaps as much as one hundred times the amount of Brinsea's water is bound up in the thick, angry ecosphere covering 85% of Ellwor's surface. The hydrologic cycle includes evaporation, condensation, and precipitation, but also includes circuit-flow and negotiated exchange. There are water sources and watercourses threaded like arterial networks through steamy jungles, and the pulsing flow of life-waters can be both heard and felt if you're standing above one of the deep veins of the world's root. This deep-root water system is one of the most fascinating aspects of the world's ecology to xenobotinists (most of which study from afar because dying in a hole with your ear pressed up against the world's vascular network is not the best path to publication). The fact that all life on the planet depends on this world-wrapping system of organic plumbing is of huge interest. Every bogmaw, friggen jungle, and wroughtmarsh has both inlets and outlets into the deeproot system. The deeproots irrigate what would otherwise be arid regions and help regulate the water content of the wetter regions. The deeproots also act as a global heat pump, mitigating the winter chill enough that there is never any ice at Ellwor's northern pole. Water is not the only thing the deeproots carry; they also provide electrical current to the friggen jungles.

The flora of Ellwor not only consumed most of the planet's water: it's consumed all direct evidence of the previous civilization. If you're not careful, it will consume all evidence of you, too— and that's the flora. We haven't gotten to the fauna yet.

(Un)Natural History 1

Ellwor was home to a highly technological civilization until about five million years ago — or maybe fifteen. It's impossible to tell at this point. That civilization's demise is a mystery, as is almost everything else about it. The intervening eons have been very unkind to the ruins. Ellwor's flora and fauna adapted to the assorted radiological and biological disasters, assimilating the technological remnants. Jungles devoured cities and then sprouted electrical conduits and RF emitters, and reached for the sky with trunks strengthened by advanced materials. These ecologies continued to evolve, blurring the line between ancient tech and jungle flora.

1

WRITER: I finished this section using Ghenzu's outline. It really should have been said in his words, though.

TERL'KRIS: He would have been too preachy. You did fine.

JANO_CX: Terl, what your writer is saying is "I am grieving my friend."

TERL'KRIS: I can't edit my note. What I meant to say was "you did fine. We all miss Ghenzu."

JANO_CX: And then you meant to say "let's all go to lunch and toast his memory."

WRITER: His and Do'asha's. Both of them.

TERL'KRIS: Absolutely. Have the pool meet me at Polly Organix, but not until I transmit the all-clear. I need to arrange a security detail.

JANO_CX: What was the lawyer's name?

LEGAL: We had our toasts already. Logged as billable hours, as is customary.

The Wormgate Corporation detected radio broadcasts from Ellwor and dispatched a wormgate. Those broadcasts were not the discourses of intelligent life, however; they were the territorial shrieks of skyscraping trees and undulating plains of swordgrass. Nothing on Ellwor was making spacecraft anymore. When the wormgate finally arrived, there was no one to greet it. Planetary lend-lease agents sent their best xenobiologists through Ellgate to search for the intelligent life whose broadcasts had summoned a wormgate, but these expeditions were uniformly fruitless and variably disastrous. There didn't seem to be intelligent life on Ellwor, but there was definitely life, and that life was shockingly deadly.

Nobody wanted to clean the planet up; cleaning up meant either waging an expensive, highly technical war on an ecosystem that had weaponized itself or pounding the entire surface into boiling glass. There were greener — literally — pastures elsewhere in the wormgate network, and while Ellwor's surface was rich in precious metals and minerals, these were all easier to obtain elsewhere.

The only people who wanted to come here were looking for a wormgate without an extradition policy on the other side. Over the course of eleven thousand years, uncounted numbers of vessels flowed through Ellgate in ones, twos, tens, and fleets, sometimes pursued by still more vessels. There were landings, hard landings, and crash landings; none of the landings resulted in permanent settlements. The jungles reclaimed them all. After a few millennia, everybody knew a fugitive had a longer life expectancy shooting it out with law enforcement than hiding on Ellwor.

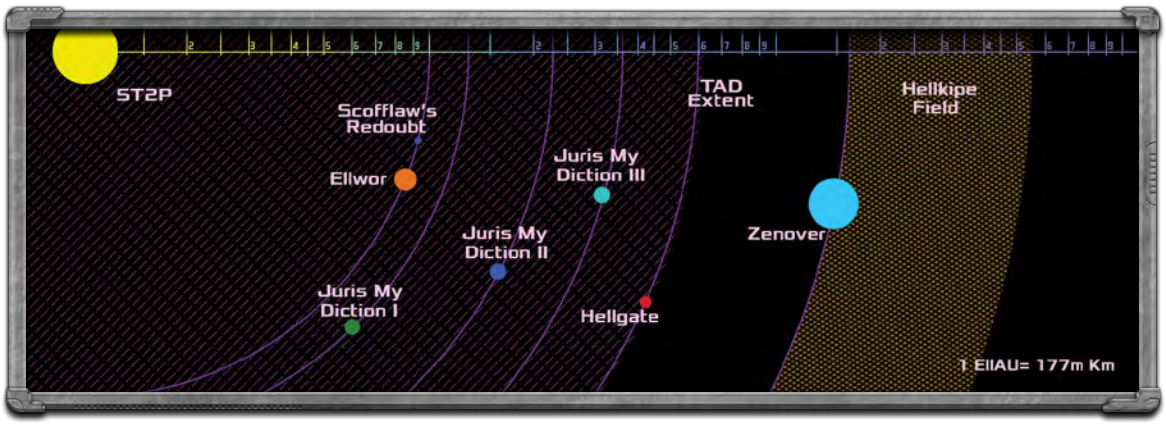
The only thing that changed was that Ellgate became known as Hellgate.

Eleven hundred years ago, an R&D middle-manager at a mining company submitted a proposal to attempt a partial colonization of Ellwor. She planned to nuke a large site, and then drop robotic harvesters into the wreckage, along with robotic defense units to hold the jungles at bay. It worked; after just twenty years the project paid for itself several times over in the recovery of rare metals and minerals.

Then the remnants of the Gengladekki Third Fleet, fleeing the Great Gengladekki Reallocation, poured through Hellgate. The crater site proved to be a perfect place to land, and proved to be inadequately defended against attacks from above. They took the outpost and named it Genglathree.

The city of Genglathree became an outlaw refuge and lasted for almost two hundred years before a jungle-spawned plague killed 70% of the inhabitants. It has changed hands (and tentacles… and pincers) five times since then and today is known as Kieschegaard. Other cities have been clear-cut into Ellwor's wilds, and the oldest of them, like Kieschegaard, arrived at a truce of sorts with the surrounding wilderness. There may not be truly intelligent life native to Ellwor, but the jungles are smart enough learn how to get along with the city-folk — or at least to be patient about reclaiming the territory.

The last five years have seen a population boom thanks to the blockade-proof nature of the teraport. Today Ellwor is populated by squatters from thousands of races and governed by pirates, privateers, outlaws, scofflaws, and hypocritical libertarians. The natural hostility of the lush world plays a harsh counterpoint to the inhabitants' hostility toward each other, and the resulting symphony is something you're advised to listen to from a distance.



Orbital Stuff

Juris My Diction I, II, and III

The Piece King of Kieschegaard, in partnership with the first Pro Forma of Boldfavor, established three stations in wide orbit around Ellwor's primary, ST2P, a G-class star which looks like it has another two or three billion years on its clock.

ST2P

ST2P was named as a joke. It stands for "Safer Than The Planet." Landing on a star is obviously far more fatal than landing on a planet, but if you're going to die anyway, heliobraking is likely to hurt less.

Each of these stations is home to a squadron of X-, Y-, and Z-class light patrol craft armed with terapedoes which have automated exceptions to the teraport area defense fields projected by the stations. It is these stations that prevent teraporting within two light-hours of Ellwor, and these patrol craft discourage pursuit vessels from entering that defended sphere. The stations themselves have impressive point defenses and STS weapons that would give pause to a carrier group. A committed fleet from a galactic power like the UNS could sweep these squads and stations out of the sky, but the battle would not be a cost-effective way to round up whatever Ellwor-bound fugitives encouraged the wreaking of this degree of ruin.

The Juris My Diction stations are excellent stop over points for travelers headed to either Boldfavor or Kieschegaard. Tariffs and duties can be pre-paid here, and if the travelers are in urgent need of goods or services (like hull patches, and application thereof) the vessel-techs and trade-wrights of Juris My Diction offer a wide range of services at fair rates.

Scofflaw Redoubt

This orbital city-state has partnerships with several cities on the surface, but don't be fooled into thinking its friendly. Scofflaw Redoubt is an armed and armored pirate base with its own teraport area denial field, small fleet of T, V, and X-class warships, and hundreds of Y- and Z-class gunboats and fighter craft.

Scofflaw Redoubt is just a touch too far out for true geostationary orbit around Ellwor. As the planet spins from night to day, the station slowly slips westward across the sky, orbiting the planet in retrograde once every sixteen days.

Fortunately for everyone in the system, the residents don't do any raiding in the Ellworan sphere of influence. They're also not known for giving visitors a warm reception, unless you count thermal disintegrations. If you have business on Scofflaw Redoubt, make sure you're invited by Commodore J. "Scapegoat" Rosenberg and call ahead anyway — just to be safe.

If you *want* business on Scofflaw Redoubt, you'll definitely need to be calling ahead, and you'll have to do a bit of negotiation as well. We recommend arriving in a cheap shuttle you can afford to lose and carrying a gift they can't salvage from the twisted wreckage if they decide to blast you.

The Ellworan Wilds

The jungles, swamps, plains, and forests of Ellwor are as varied as those on any water-cyclic world, and defy any description that is both concise and complete. Here are a few locations of note.

MAXIM 47

Don't expect the enemy to cooperate in the creation of your dream engagement.

Bogmaw

These patches of flat, swampy-looking country are the metabolic recycling and cleansing points for the Ellworan ecosystem. Deeproots drain into the acrid, pulsating notpeat, which is a living substrate of mechorganic micro- and nano-creatures equipped with an astounding array of petro- and electrochemical metabolisms. The bogmaw will not support your weight unless you're wearing snowshoe-like boots, and if you sink beyond about 30 cm, you'll reach a layer where the substrate will actively adhere to you and begin pulling you down. It's not personal. You're just a big, tasty knot of impurities.

Few large animals reside in the bogmaw. Of these, the grendlsquutch is the most common but is likely to leave you alone because the bog provides plenty of nutrition. Now, if you set off without the right footwear and get stuck, the grendlsquutch may come over for a taste of whatever you're made of, so don't do that.

The bogmaw is home to a variety of carniflower known as the jack-in-the-bog, which lies coiled beneath the bog until something

tasty treads within about five meters. Imagine the iconic clown-on-a-spring bursting out of a music box. Now scale it up to the size of a two-seat car, give it gas grenades and flashbangs, and replace the squeals of delighted surprise with howls of bowel-voiding terror, and you'll have a pretty good idea of a jack-in-the-bog attack.

Friggen Jungle

Most of the terrain found in the temperate and tropical latitudes of Ellwor is covered by a tangle of deadly wilderness collectively and unaffectionately known as the friggen jungle. Friggen jungle completely surrounds the cities of Kieschegaard, Boldfavor, Rimshot, and Lithobrake, and with the exception of the road between Kieschegaard and Boldfavor, the "K-to-B Spangle," there are no safe trails. Even that one is questionable.

The word "jungle" gives most people an inaccurate mental picture. From a distance it looks like one of the many jungles available throughout the galaxy, but as you get closer to the plants you notice that some of them have hex metal grids where most trees have bark. The plants grow lights and radio emitters. They incorporate inorganic materials into their structures and weaponry. The same holds true for the fauna as well. Both flora and fauna communicate with one another across a wide range of acoustic, visual, chemical, and electromagnetic frequencies.

Most of the communication is stuff like "don't eat me, I taste terrible" and "this is my patch, go away," but there's enough of it that pulsing, flickering, and flashing lights in countless shapes and arrangements pierce the deep darkness of the under canopy. The ambient noise of the friggen jungle registers an average of about 65dB (rather like standing in the middle of a crowded cafeteria), but screeches and blasts can spike anywhere from 100 (standing next to concrete cracking construction equipment) to 130dB (standing next to a jet propelled vehicle at takeoff). Inconveniently, the radio chatter from the flora and fauna is of sufficient amplitude that radio comms can be jammed, and sensitive electronics may go glitchy.

The canopy of the friggen jungle begins 180 meters above the ground and extends to a height of almost 220 meters in places, held aloft by the branches of skyscraper trees. These trees incorporate materials more commonly found in the superstructures of advanced civilizations, affording them strength far in excess of wood and a lifespan measured in millennia. This thick layer of radiation-collecting foliage devours daylight, leaving the lower levels of the jungle in relative darkness. The bioluminescence emitted by plants and animals is usually only as bright as indicator lights on control panels and offers more in the way of distraction than illumination. Unless it is mating season, in which case the displays can be very bright and showy. The vines climbing the giant trees resemble conduits or cable-clusters and many of them sprout tiny beads of light along their length, revealing the awesome height of the trees as they ascend into the perpetual gloom.

The jungle floor teems with the machinery of competitive decomposition. Firmer by far than the surface of the bogmaw, this soil-and-duff analog has some of the same visual characteristics as a mossy riverbank steeped in shredded industrial refuse and toxic waste, minus the charm of being near a river or being something unlikely to dissolve you if you lie down on it. Water is a huge motivator for the inhabitants of the jungle. Many of the plant structures are specifically formed to pump or move water from one location to another. This is why the jungle can exist when the only ocean on Ellwor is down at the south pole. Water is moved, reclaimed, stolen, expelled, and collected constantly.

Foraging and predation are ongoing in this stinky, noisy, twinkling chaos. Scavengers range in size from insectile to kitten-like, and there are giant herbivores whose armor makes them seem fearless but have plenty to fear. Nothing here is at the top of the food chain for very long. Would-be apex predators like the meatsnatch often fall victim to opportunistic omnviores like the grendlsquutch or to sessile trap-hunters like the carniflower. Tribes of wiremonkeys

race through the middle heights of the jungle and may snatch the raptor-like parrothopters right out of the air. There are no kings in this jungle, and the line between predator and prey is thin and fluid.

There is interdependence among many of these creatures, communicated across several spectrums of light and sound. A particular species of tree and its trunk-dwelling insects talk to each other. These same communication channels are used for camouflage and fakery. These communications are key to the survival of the cities surrounded by friggen jungle. Ecologists, linguists, and cryptologists have spent centuries devising systems of beacons, transmitters, and devices that will tell the jungle to keep out of the city. The jungle isn't called the friggen jungle for no reason, however. The protocols evolve, and the pattern of flashing lights that said "poison" just last year may now be saying "try our free buffet."

Andrhianni's Labyrinth

An ancient structure lies deep in the friggen jungle. From above it looks like a regular cliff face covered in tenacious jungle plants. From the ground however, large, regularly-spaced, hexagonal openings in the cliff-side are clearly visible. Step through one of these 4-meter entries and you'll find twisty passages running in all directions. It is a three-dimensional labyrinth perpetually lit by ribbons similar to common light-strips, which pulse with purple light in time to a low thrum from deep below.

Wreckage at the base of this cliff indicates that the openings in the cliff have been discovered at least three times in the last twenty years, and it regularly and violently undiscovers itself.

A prabstdi xenoarcheology team under the leadership of Scholar Andrhianni recently rediscovered the labyrinth, and tried something new: they publicly announced its location in the interest of pure science rather than trying to use it as a secret hideout. Their soundings indicated that the labyrinth occupies at least five cubic kilometers under the jungle-smothered hills, and their rudimentary maps of the tunnels, now incorrect, are the only such maps in existence.

The entire expedition vanished in mid-3098. The armored research pod they placed at the base of the cliffs now lies on its side, and the friggen jungle has begun the process of assimilating it. The labyrinth has been formally named in honor of Scholar Andrhianni's lost expedition, and researchers across the galaxy are pouring over the few notes that the team transmitted—a sensible approach, since pouring over the site itself would require a trip to Ellwor, which is a good way to lose tenure on the grounds of being dead.

The passages in Andrhianni's Labyrinth are made of a rubbery material and over time the paths bend, shift, pinch closed, twist, and re-open into the side of a different passage. These changes happen gradually but with great force. An intersection might take only a few minutes to pinch closed and it will crush almost anything placed to keep it open. The walls absorb anything sturdy enough to not break. Nothing absorbed in that way has ever been retrieved. Over the next hour or so, the passage will shift and reconnect elsewhere. The major shifts occur days to weeks apart and seem to coincide with changes in the weather. The shifts are often accompanied by rushes of air, water, or worse through the tunnels in question. It has been suggested that the multi-year cycle of re-configuration culminates in a massive hydraulic purge of the tunnels, but no evidence remains of those who may or may not have been here the last time that happened.

Wroughtmarsh

There are a few stretches of open water on Ellwor, but "open" is being used very generously here. The wroughtmarshes look like shallow swamps into which twisted, Gigeresque architecture has been dropped from a great height. Soundings of the marshes indicate that, appearances to the contrary, they are quite deep and may be the remnants of Ellwor's oceans. Anywhere from ten to a thousand meters of mecha-

Ellworan Food

All food grown on Ellwor is laced with metallic toxins in amounts sufficient to cause problems after extended consumption. Some edibles are better than others and the Dirty Hometaste brand is clearly the best; but after each week spent eating local chow players run the risk of losing 1d3 Health, which can only be recovered with medical treatment and time off-world. Game Chiefs may choose to ignore the food problem if it doesn't add fun and/or challenge to your game.

muck lies beneath a few dozen centimeters of oily, cloudy, don't-drink-the water, and the twisted xeno-pseudo-mangroves that emerge from this morass only rise another three meters before spreading out into a rangy canopy.

The Ellworan mechadile, a close relative of the grendlsquutch named by a less imaginative explorer, shares apex predator status with the eleven meter long wroughtwyrm. Both creatures feed primarily on slurry-slurping marine life, but they're also quite territorial and are willing to feed on one another. The wroughtwyrm can wind around the mechadile and constrict, shattering armor and pulping flesh, but the mechadile can bite clean through a wroughtwyrm that fails to keep clear of its face.

Live feeds from explorers have captured these epic battles on two occasions. The resulting video shows that both wroughwyrm and mechadile will gladly abandon an epic, hard-to-win battle in favor of small, tasty explorer-treats. A few of the explorers even survived to profit off the ironic horror of their wildlife videos.

Northern Plains

The steppes which dominate the landscape north of the 65th parallel change dramatically between summer and winter. The Swordgrass Steppes thrive on the additional light and heat during the northern summer, and then hunker down for the cooler winters. In the summer, the swordgrass is more active and more likely to attack intruders at the perimeter. In the winter, it's more likely to let you wander hundreds of meters into the field before springing to the attack, ensuring that when you die, all your precious nutrients spill within reach of the plants.

In the extreme north, the 3-meter high fields of royal swordgrass give way to shorter and shorter varieties until it stops being called swordgrass and starts being called daggerweed. It's just as stabby, but only to about ankle height, unless you're lying down in it — which you should not do.

The northern plains are where the Ellworan deeproot system is most critical to the ecology's survival. The deeproots cross these steppes just two meters beneath the surface, irrigating what would otherwise be completely arid land. The grasses return their synthesized nutrients and petrochems into those roots to "pay" for the moisture. Predators in this region are less active in the winter, but just because you don't see any doesn't mean they aren't there. Most of them dig burrows for safety or ambush. It is also postulated that digging burrows puts them closer to the warmth provided by the deeproots.

Southern Reach

The deeproot system does not extend below about 50° south. Beyond that, Ellwor's climate is follows a fairly traditional water cycle. Brinsea covers from the southern pole to 62° (the 62 degree latitude line is called the Brinsea Circle) and acts like any other body of water completely saturated with minerals. It gets colder and colder and colder without freezing, making it ideal for pouring into the tub of an ice-cream maker. Just don't let the water mix with the ice-cream. "Who Murdered the Chunky Monkey?" is not a popular flavor.

Brinsea Breaches

In the southern summer, the water evaporates and the sea shrinks a bit, revealing tributaries along its shallow rim. These rivers emerge from the southernmost jungles via breaches which look like giant ruptured veins. The water is suspiciously oily and even more suspiciously dark.

Thousands of huge, black, metal-rich conduits run south from the jungle along the banks of these greasy breach waters, and disappear into Brinsea. These are the exposed circuits of Ellwor's global power supply. The salinity of the Brinsea, the jungle conduits, and Ellwor's magnetic field combine to drive electrical current along these massive cables and the electricity they supply helps keep the jungle's lights on.

Battery Park

There is an amphibious research post halfway between the low- and high-water marks on the Brinsea coast. It is submerged in the winter, and stands dry on the beach in the summer. It's not named after anything famous: it's called Battery Park because they parked it on a giant saline battery. Kieschegaard and Boldfavor jointly sponsor the research post. The researchers are not armed, but the garrison of fobott'r mercenaries living with them is.

City-States

The cities which have been hacked, scorched, cratered, or otherwise carved out of the tangled wilds of Ellwor are not craven dens of scum and/or villainy. They're very civilized places but the rule of law is tempered heavily by rules

GC Note on Ellwor Expenses

Expenses on Ellwor can be abstracted in several ways. The easiest is to deduct one point from the Resource bonus at the end of the mission. The most fun is to require the players to barter their service for vessel tending and hassle-free housing. The customs agent might take a shining to your weapon or to a member of your fireteam. Regardless of how the Game Chief handles this, we encourage the use of Negotiate checks.

like "possession is nine-tenths of the law" and "power flows from the barrel of a gun."

Before you fly to Ellwor, you should be aware that when we said "home free" at the beginning of this chapter, we did not mean that home would be "free of charge." Expect tolls, protection payments, tariffs, and taxes, all levied by people whose official status is often a matter of what exactly they are nine-tenths in possession of and how much power is flowing from the barrel of guns you can't see yet. The amounts you'll be expected to pay will vary from place to place and can be mitigated a bit by good negotiation and a solid reputation.

Space-worthy ships are in very short supply on Ellwor. This outlaw haven is also a world that many, many people want to escape from. It's a terrible place to go shopping for a ship, but it's a pretty good place to sell one. It's also a fantastic place to get yours boarded and stolen if you're not careful. Pay the protection fees and leave an armed group on board.

Kieschegaard

If you're flying to Ellwor without a specific destination in mind, you should get specific quickly, and Kieschegaard is likely your best specification. This city of 800,000 is ruled by a human male known only as the Piece-King, who has sagely established a policy of not shooting at the nice people whose ships might be full of goodies. Approaches to the port are well defended, traffic is carefully managed, and when you arrive you'll find that the tariffs are flat, sensible percentages. They're low enough that the temptation to smuggle is reduced, and this temptation falls off to near zero when would-be tariff-dodgers learn that the penalty for smuggling is confiscation of everything belonging to the smugglers, including their persons, which become indentured to the Piece King.

Don't let that scare you away. Kieschegaard welcomes traders of all stripes, and the low tariffs and secure LZ ensure those wishing to do business on Ellwor are likely to give the Piece-King a piece of the action.

Planet Mercenary has one outlet store on Ellwor and it is located in Kieschegaard. The franchise has limited on-site selection, however, and although they can order anything (at triple the price, mind you), the shipping will take at least four days. This outlet store is notable for being the most heavily defended single structure on the planet and the staff there knows better than to leave the building or sell anything energetic enough to breach the building's defenses. This building also maintains its own teraport area denial systems, which generously protect not just the shop but the entire planet to a distance of 500 million kilometers. Planet Mercenary also maintains a set of defense satellites, but we're not telling you about them here. Go away. 1

Kieshegaard's economy is the healthiest of those on Ellwor. Tariffs on the traffic that passes through the city are just a small part of the reason for this. The Kieshegaardian defense network makes it the safest marketplace on the planet, which in turn means that retailers, wholesalers, and merchants of all kinds are conducting their commerce here before looking for safe places to hunker down.

Kieschegaard's marketplaces are unregulated and chaotic, but if there is a merchant king to be named it is The Auricle. Nathan "The Auricle" Golder does not buy or sell merchandise of any sort; he trades in information. If you're looking for a buyer he knows just the person. If you're shopping for something unusual, he has a friend who has a friend who knows where just that exact item might be procured and, in fact, this friend may have already procured it, depending on who's asking.

The Auricle knows a lot more than this, of course, and occasionally hires discreet, dependable people.

There are always shortages somewhere on Ellwor, but the residents of Kieshegaard rarely do without. Relief supplies, food and medicine in particular, often come through Kieshegaard, and the tariffs exacted are just a bit of the product off the top. None of the city-states have suffered starvation problems for almost ten years now, but all calories are not created equal. Off-world foods with the complex nuances absent in vat-grown goods command a high

1

JANO_CX: The most recent dispatch said there had been some orbital incidents. Is this still accurate?

TERL'KRIS: Things around Ellwor are fluctuating. This paragraph is adopting a middle ground between "we're vulnerable, but not for long," and "Ellwor's heavily-defended Planet Mercenary franchise generously allows Ellwor's cities to retain their sovereign status, but we don't have to."

JANO_CX: "Go away" is middle ground?

WRITER: Terly-swirly had a few too many at Polly-O's. I've never gotten my boss drunk before. What should I do?

JANO_CX: Burn the evidence. Best not to let a reserve duty special agent of Kss'thrata Claw Forward think you have something on him.

price. Tastes here vary. Wine and cheese do well with numerous sophonts, but if you want to cover all your bases be sure to pack beds of fungus-topped excrement, flash-frozen regurgitations, and other galactic delicacies.

Hot Pock Park

The boom brought on by the teraport drives the need for Kieschegaard to expand its borders. This is usually a high-energy operation that disturbs the city/jungle balance for decades, but Kieschegaard has some choice territory to the south-east that is only slightly radioactive. Eight years ago, an army of almost 50,000 drodlorricans in mechanized armor landed on this plain. They would have taken Kieschegaard easily had the city not been defended by a previously undetected orbital weapon platform. The drodlorricans were destroyed down to the last soldier in a forty-five second barrage which also cleared away twenty square kilometers of jungle.

"Slightly radioactive" is a semantic kindness. All construction must be radiation-proof, and the shielded pods, which are never called "hot pockets," must be connected by similarly shielded walkways. There are locks and scrubbing stations on some of the pods, but you should only be using them if you're wearing a shielded suit, or a full exo-suit. Clumsy, heavy suits are often available, and while they won't be comfortable, back pain beats radiation burns any day. As you might expect, settlement of Hot Pock Park is proceeding only slightly faster than settlement of an ice moon.

Boldfavor

The city of Boldfavor lies 200 kilometers to the southwest of Kieschegaard. It has 48,000 inhabitants, exactly zero of which are descendants of the original inhabitants. We'll get to that in a moment. The city is much smaller than Kieschegaard, but its central Depot District is built almost entirely out of warships. The Boldfavorans are fairly adamant about not getting annexed by anybody.

Boldfavor was first established by ambitious, disaffected Kieschegaardians who cleverly named their new town after the aphorism "fortune favors the bold." They boldly cleared jungle and poured foundations, and were only further emboldened when the Ellworan jungle began pushing back. The Boldfavorans focused all their defenses upon that wild perimeter and then lost the city in one night to a dropship full of unioc bandits.

The bandits, proud of their bold conquest, kept the name and counted themselves fortunate to now be in possession of the materials necessary to continue building the city. They busily did this for almost two years, until one morning they were completely wiped out by a mercenary company. The mercenaries had been hired by one of the surviving original Boldfavorans, who experienced eternal misfortune after telling the victorious mercenaries the balance of their pay would be in "exposure" and he was doing them a favor.

The mercenaries rejected his offer with violent finality and claimed the city for their own. They continued the construction and reduced their exposure with additional fortifications. Fortune seemed to have turned in their favor until a disgruntled client boldly smuggled a forty kiloton warhead into the city and reduced Boldfavor to a shattered crater. The jungle stopped trying to move in, though, so at least that problem was solved.

Boldfavor's short-term radioactive residues weren't yet into the last of their half-lives when a human brigade arrived from Celeschul. These TFF deserters, cravenly fleeing misfortune, parked their fortunately-shielded ships in the crater and filed the serial numbers from everything they owned. When they heard "Boldfavor" from their Kieschegaardian neighbors they thought the name sounded nice, so they kept it. Surprisingly, they kept on keeping it. Their children rule the city today.

The Front Council of Boldfavor is chaired by the Pro Forma, a purp woman named Mayhem Jane. Boldfavoran politics are driven by the conflicting desires of sucking up to the Piece King and firmly establishing their independence from the larger, healthier city. Their independence hinges upon the facilities in the Central District, most notably a suite of mil-spec fabbers securely operated within the grounded hull of a Celeschul Orbital Foundries Mobile Depot.

The Depot stands (insofar as a grounded starship can be said to do anything besides "sit" or "lie") in the center of the Depot District and provides all of the city's power, much of its economic clout, and houses the Crew Caste citizens. The Crew Caste are the aging members of the original TFF settlers along with their descendants and they have more rights than the city's immigrant population. They are the only ones eligible for election to the Front Council or nomination to public office, and, outside of the non-binding "rabble referendums," they are the only citizens who can vote. There are one hundred and eight purps among them, but all of the remaining eighty-four hundred Crew Caste citizens are human.

Inherent inequity is not unique to Boldfavor but local aspects of it are pleasantly unusual. The soldierly discipline of the original TFF brigade (mass desertion notwithstanding) is a cultural centerpiece and is required of the entire Crew Caste. They have more power and responsibility than the Immigrant Caste and they use terribly denigrating terms like "rabble referendum," but they genuinely see themselves as servants of the city. Their housing, while inarguably better defended than anything in the assorted immigrant districts, is also incredibly cramped. They enjoy a number of luxuries due to proximity to the Depot but living space is not one of them.

Boldfavor's immigrants are a cross-section of the galactic population similar to Kieschegaard. Hundreds of different sophont types live in the Immigrant Districts, and while they tend to self-segregate by type, there are only a three homogenously aggregated districts: Fourthton, Little Oth, and Quel-Quell (pronounced "kell-kwell.")

Fourthton is home to the second largest group of fobott'r on Ellwor. These sixty-three-hundred sophonts are a tight-knit group whose discipline rivals that of the Crew Caste humans. While only the Crew Caste provides official law enforcement, the Fourthton Rabble Roughs provide the kind of unofficial enforcement lawbreakers would be well-advised to avoid.

Little Oth is only about 50% populated by uniocs and is patrolled by uniocs who owe fealty to a gang boss known only as "Wrink." Tensions run high between the Rabble Roughs and Wrink's Eyes, so everyone considers it fortunate that they're on opposite sides of the Depot District.

Quel-Quell is small, both in acreage and stature: most structures have ceilings so low non-queltro have to stoop or crawl just to avoid head trauma. The eleven-hundred queltro here are among the finest engineers on Ellwor, and this is certainly the greatest concentration of them.

Most Ellworan cities have at least some non-hydroponic agriculture. Boldfavor has none of that. Radiation from the nuclear blast thirty-plus years ago tends to concentrate in foods grown in the dirt. The Boldfavor gardens on the northern edge of the city are a reclamation project. These withered, pustulent plants

are being used to draw the radioactive materials out of the soil. The plants are then torn up and flown fifty kilometers west, where they're air-dropped into the friggen jungle.

Pilot's Prayer

The city of Pilot's Prayer is, as legend has it, the first site on the planet to be inhabited by wormgate-era galactics. There's no way to prove its pedigree, but it is built atop a crash site that dates back at least 10,000 years. The ancient site is underneath a more recent crash site that dates back just 80 years. The first event plowed a deep furrow across a plain of royal swordgrass, which grew back over the centuries. The second crash was aiming for the scar from the first crash. It had a much steeper angle of descent, and ended with an explosion that cleared a nice patch of land in the middle of that plain. The pilot was heard to say "C'mon, baby, pull up," and this utterance gave name to the city.

This stretch of plains is known as the Swordgrass Steppes, named for its dominant plant life. Swordgrass is dangerous, but predictably so, and all varieties of swordgrass are less aggressive than Ellwor's jungles. The 25,000 sophonts of Pilot's Prayer have cleared and defended almost 200 square kilometers in which to live, work, and hide.

Pilot's Prayer is a popular landing spot with people who want to get away from it all, especially law enforcement. Much of the city is a couple of meters below the surface and nothing makes fugitives feel quite as safe as hiding in a hole. Tolls are high, however; if you're hoping to disappear, you should expect whatever you arrived in to disappear in a different direction.

The underground portions of the city run along a series of Ellworan deeproots which the locals tap for water. It's extremely toxic pre-filtration, so calling it "water" is a bit of a misnomer. Above ground the people live in modular housing units, of which there are plenty. These units arrived via a giant shipping container that "fell off a truck somewhere or maybe belonged to my cousin." The story is eighty years old, and dubious. The shipping container has long since been recycled for parts, making it impossible to trace.

The dominant populations here in the chilly highlands are primarily Kreely and gzeaul, but there's a solid contingent of queltro in town as well. The gzeaul spend much of the winter underground, but the Kreely and the queltro enjoy the harsh climate.

Pilot's Prayer feeds itself with subsistence-levels of agriculture and hydroponics and has a militia responsible for supplementing the city's stores with periodic raids of the small towns further west. There are some legitimate businesses, of course, including Toowol Trainers, a new endeavor providing clients with domesticated Ellworan megafauna. This project is the brainchild of a kreely medic named Tookoliti and a queltro engineer named Eskwire Wolwottan and involves surgery, implants, and immunity to misgivings. To date they have successfully domesticated carniflowers, grendlsquutch, and a few specimens of common meatsnatch. Prices are not low but may come down as the enterprise scales up.

Downton Dirtgrow

The agricultural community of Downton Dirtgrow is situated in one of the only truly fertile (in non-mechorganic terms) patches of land on the planet. It's not a coincidence. An enterprising band of military deserters created this clearing in the dark heart of the friggen jungle by firing non-irradiating STS beam weapons, continuously, for months. They used stolen nanotech to strip the worst of the trace materials out of the ground, turning that ground into soil suitable for crops from Earth, Oth, Gripp, and other places where things like mercury and hexavalent chromium should only be found in the machine shop.

While Downton Dirtgrow is just 25 square kilometers of farmland, they're incredibly profitable square kilometers. Fresh fruits and vegetables grown here sell for the same price as those shipped in from off-world but they cost less than half as much to bring to market. The Dirty Homeflavor brand of produce is popular planet-wide but hasn't been successfully exported due to trace mineral and radiation counts exceeding those allowed by even the most relaxed regulatory agencies.

The big money-maker, however, is bacon. Downton Dirtgrow has successfully husbanded a herd of hairless Yorky heavy-belly pigs, whose meat yield is almost 60% bacon. This prize herd is relatively new and is slopped indoors, under armed guard at all times. Dirty Homeflavor brand bacon is extremely popular on Ellwor, more so than imported bacon. Sales reps claim the heavy metals bring out the sweet flavor of the electric hickory.

The Game Chief Section

So, you've volunteered to be the Game Chief for a group of your friends. Or, perhaps you were volunteered for the duty. Either way, we've filled this section of the book with useful information about how to excel at preparing for and running a game. You'll find the following subsections:

- **Key Concepts**: Where we outline some specific ways that running a *Planet Mercenary RPG* is different from other tabletop RPG games you may have encountered.
- **Prepping a Game**: Where we discuss things you may want to do in advance to make sure you have a good story planned and that you're ready to adapt for your players. There are tools here for random job generation and random company generation. We also cover helping players set up characters and company.
- **Running a Game**: Where we give information on managing players mid-game, adapting the game to make it accessible to everyone, and how to adapt when player actions disrupt your intended story. There is also some specific information about special cases for skill checks and special rules for amorph characters.
- **Job Completion & Leveling Up**: Where we give you information that you'll need to reward your players at the end of the adventure and set them up to come to the next session.

MAXIM 38

What's easy for you can still be hard on your clients.

Key Concepts

The Social Contract

A gaming group is a social contract. By sitting down at the table, the players agree to be entertained, and to help to entertain. The GC

agrees to provide a fun and safe structure for the entertainment (ample provisions of snacks may be helpful here). A game is a collaborative effort. Yes, the GC will need to do homework and preparation ahead of time to provide the framework for the story, but should not have to do several hours of improvisational comedy for a mostly passive group of players.

Speak First, Go First

We covered the rules behind the Speak First, Go First mechanic back in Game Basics (*see page 12*). The primary purpose of this mechanic is to stop players from overthinking their actions. No one wants their adventure to get bogged down for an hour while players debate what they should do next.

Players may not like this rule at first, because it deviates from the neat, turn-based play offered by initiative mechanics in more familiar games, but after a short amount of play in *Planet Mercenary RPG,* players begin to internalize how their characters should react in a crisis. They begin to function as the combat team they're role-playing.

One of the drawbacks of this mechanic is the potential it has for one player to dominate, taking the first initiative in every situation. This is particularly irksome when that dominant player is ...unwise. There are some concrete ways that you as GC can counteract such a player.

1. Apply consequences for impulsive decisions. Early in your game or game session, you'll want to make the consequences sting, but not hurt. Consider the early game a training period. Increase the severity of consequences as the player fails to learn wisdom. Apply this as necessary, and remember that some players will make impulsive or detrimental decisions *in-character*, for which they should be rewarded, not punished.
2. Pull a player aside for a conversation (usually before or after a session). This approach is covered more fully in Managing Players (*see page 282*).
3. Pull aside one of the quieter players, and engage them in conversation, to understand their viewpoint on Speak First, Go First. Find out what might be preventing them from jumping in.
4. If a problem persists, declare first action goes to a different player than the one who spoke first. To do this, you can describe the situation and say, for example, "Thurl, you're closest to the bomb, so you get to react first." This strategy also helps you bring a more reticent player to the front, as covered in Player Accessibility (*see page 282*).

If Speak First, Go First causes too many problems for your group, then feel free to substitute an initiative roll into the game.

Example initiative roll: When combat is about to begin, have everyone make a Perception skill check (don't invoke Mayhem on this roll). Then have everyone take their combat actions in order, from the highest Perception roll total to the lowest.

However, if your group does abandon the Speak First, Go First mechanic, make sure that you're still moving decisions along quickly. Extensive testing has shown that long pauses are energy sinks into which fun can vanish if you're not careful.

Guidelines and Rules

All the advice in this chapter, more than any other section in this game, falls under the concept of guidelines. Sophonts, feelings, and social interactions are tricky things. We place a lot of trust in your ability to manage, help, and understand your players. The absolute rule that you *must* follow is this: everyone at the table, in hobby and in life, is a person. Treat them as such, and be empathetic.

Role-Play

As a structure to talk about role-play, we offer the following cinema-based model. It defines different modes that a person might use while playing an RPG.

- ***Player:*** this is the mode you're in when you're checking the rules, rolling dice, or comparing stats on character sheets.
- ***Director:*** This mode is almost exclusively to the GC. It's the description of what is happening, and it supersedes what the players may have wanted to happen.
- ***Camera:*** You're in this mode when you're describing your character's actions. Saying, for example, "My character is going to shoot that turret," or, "I'm going to smile and try to negotiate."

Cinema Model for RPGs

The cinema model used here is an extremely condensed approach to *Mode 33 Metaframe* published by Kun, Q'tor-hvo, and Underwood in 2116. While it's true that "M33M" excels at differentiating between the player who performs, the player who performs while doing voices, and the player for whom it's a good idea to move the furniture to the edges of the room before combat begins, Planet Mercenary R&D has determined that this level of accuracy accelerates academic careers rather than gameplay. 1

► ***Performer:*** You're in this mode when you're speaking in-character. Saying, "Sorry about your turret, sir. It looked dangerous," while pantomiming your character blowing smoke from the barrel of the pistol, then holstering it — this is performing (or acting) your role.

As GC, you're trying to draw your players into Camera or Performer modes as much as possible. That's where the real fun is to be had. You, as GC, will spend much of your time in the Player and Director modes, but be prepared to drop into Camera or Performer as needed.

Role-Playing Points (RiPP)

The RiPP mechanic is a mechanism for you to encourage role-play and to empower your players to make decisions about what will and won't happen in the game. We covered rules for RIPP in detail on page 8. The thing we did not say over there, is that you as GC should actively seek excuses to give out RiPP. This game is far more fun if the players have RiPP to spend. It makes them more likely to take risks and invoke Mayhem. Giving them lots of RiPP does not make them immune to damage or death, it just increases the possibilities for action and fun.

Reward clever play. Players will throw solutions that you didn't know existed at problems you didn't know were there before the players arrived. Reward the player who does something that is daring for them, even if it would be cautious for a different player. Reward the player who sacrifices themselves for the group. Reward the player who makes the table laugh. Basically, reward anything that is a behavior you want to encourage or that makes the game more fun. Go for fun.

Making Jokes

This game is structured to deliberately cause jokes and laughter. Neither GC nor players need be a professional comedian to make the game fun, we've designed the Mayhem cards to encourage improvised, shared storytelling and the creation of jokes. As GC there are some concepts you can apply to encourage good stories and the telling of jokes. You may want to share some (or all) of these concepts with your players.

► **"Yes, and…"** The statement "No, you can't do that" kills creativity, and can cause the scene to stall out, instead we recommend that you encourage the flow of ideas to continue by answering with "Yes, and…," or "No, but…" *Example*: "No, but you do notice the diplomat is sweating profusely and keeps looking at his watch." Use "Yes, and" or "No, but" to give new creative hooks, and guide players into interesting actions.

► **Make the Players Look Good**: It's not the GC's job to be funny all the time, in fact you shouldn't try. Instead rely on the Mayhem cards and the players themselves. Set up your players to be funny. Be the straight man. The best jokes in the game are the ones the players tell each other. When they do tell jokes, laugh and give them RiPP.

► **Be Specific:** Don't say, "It's a nice gun," say "It's a chromed-out Phubahr Headhunter IV that uses gunfoam ammo, with an extended mag and fancy view-sights." Add descriptors to the world around the players, so they can latch onto these details and respond. Describe the scenes, and carefully place fun details on specific items.

► **Reason is Overrated**: When deciding how NPCs will respond, consider what will be funny or will provide the players an opportunity to be funny. Sometimes, the best game ignores logic and reason for the sake of interesting stories and maximum fun. It is much more interesting when someone dies attempting something heroic or crazy than if everyone makes logical or safe choices.

► **Call Backs and Running Jokes:** Running jokes and call backs to prior jokes amplify the fun in your game and draw your group together into a shared experience. You can encourage the creation of in-group running gags by deliberately placing call backs in the story you've crafted. Did a character accidentally crash a vehicle into a pond last session?

1

LEGAL: The Underwood estate asked more than we're willing to pay for M33M licensing. We took the liberty of condensing this material so that it falls under "fair use."

JANO_CX: Fine by me. How much money were they asking for?

LEGAL: What they were asking for was an army of angry robots. Which, for liability reasons alone, we're not going to airdrop onto a publishing house.

Then maybe this session have the NPC say she'll drive because "we know what you do with vehicles."

► **Players Aren't Punching Bags:** In comedy there is a concept called "punching down." It is what happens when a person with more power ridicules someone who has less power. You as GC should never ridicule a player or their character. Mutual teasing between equals is fine, targeted ridicule will fracture your group and destroy the fun. We recommend that you aim humor at NPCs or at your grunts whom you pull for ablative meat. The NPCs and grunts won't mind and the whole group can laugh together.

Setting Up a Welcoming Space

Your Planet Mercenary game is more likely to be fun if the table is arranged so that all your players can see each other. This is not always possible, but it is one of the ways that physical space can affect the game. The key is to make sure that the players are able to interact equally without one player being isolated in a corner or at the far end of the table. Hosting the game (providing the physical space to play) is not the same job as being the GC, though the two often go together.

Rule Arbitration

As the GC, you are the arbiter of rules. Your priorities should be first: fun; second: story; and a lagging third: strict keeping of rules. It falls on you to sometimes to fudge a roll behind your GC screen so that the game stays fun instead of brutal. Sometimes it also falls on you to say, "I'm sorry, your character really did die. It breaks the story otherwise. We'll scrape bits into a nanny bag, and help you promote a grunt so you can keep playing."

Be decisive when you make these judgement calls. If you are constantly explaining or defending your decisions, it encourages players to question your rulings. Players may not like all your decisions, but if, later in the session, they can see that your choice made for more fun or a better story, then their trust in you grows. Just like in a military unit learning to trust their commanders.

Remember that it does fall on you to constantly improve your skills at game management. Learn from each round of Mayhem and use what you learned to refine your judgement calls about what would be most fun in the next encounter.

If your players want to take an action that would irrevocably destroy the story, or the universe, or expensive furniture, then it falls to you to offer an alternative and to warn them of the consequences of their actions.

Pacing

Planet Mercenary RPG is designed to be a fast-paced game. Even if you've built an adventure full of intrigue, puzzles, and negotiations, the game works best when players are frequently called on to make decisions or take actions. We recommend that when you create encounters, you build in incentives to make decisions and move on. You don't want your players struggling to keep up, but you definitely don't want them bored. Everyone knows that when the troops get bored, things have a way of breaking or exploding. 1

Rolling Skill Checks

Skill checks are a core mechanic of the game. We cover them on page 9. We also have some specific information on how to handle them in our Managing Skill Checks section on page 285. Note that the more often the players roll skill checks, the more likely they are to trigger a Mayhem card. Those Mayhem cards are where much of the improvised storytelling and laughter that makes *Planet Mercenary RPG* fun. You want your players to trigger Mayhem. It keeps things moving. We also have some specific information on what you can do as a GC to manage that Mayhem (*see Managing Mayhem, page 281*).

Prepping a Game

As Game Chief, it falls on you to plan in advance for the story your group is going to tell. Here we teach you some tools for crafting a good story arc with a beginning, middle, and end. We provide some tools for random job generation and random company generation. We cover the fundamentals of building a good scene, a good encounter, and a good long-running campaign. Then we give some GC specific advice about character and company generation.

1

JANO_CX: The metaphor is vivid, but leaves me curious. I've never played one of these games. What *exactly* happens when the players get bored?

DEV: Let me explain it with a question. What else is in the room?

JANO_CX: Which room?

DEV: The room in which you have half a dozen bored people wishing for something interesting to happen.

JANO_CX: Oh... if those people are professionals-at-arms, in the employ of our clients...

DEV: That's a worst-case scenario. But let's dial it back. What if they're college students, playing the game after hours in a university lab?

JANO_CX: What if this is a group of my daughter's friends, and they're in my HOUSE?

DEV: See? Boredom=bad.

Planning a Session

Let's start with some useful terms:

Session: A *Planet Mercenary RPG* game session begins when the players gather with the intent to play and it ends when you disperse. Each session can range anywhere from two to eight hours (the latter usually only if you're really dedicated to your RPG or you have way too much free time). Held cards expire at the end of a session. RiPP can carry over from session to session.

Job: This is an in-game contract, assignment, or agreement where the characters are expected to take certain actions in order to get paid.

Scene: The cinematic use of this term also applies in *Planet Mercenary RPG*. A scene usually is contained in a single location and a single time period. If the characters change locations, that's a new scene. If a significant portion of in-game time gets skipped, that's also a scene change.

Campaign: When a group of players want to meet up more than once to tell an ongoing story about the same mercenary company, that is a campaign. It usually requires multiple sessions and multiple jobs to qualify as a campaign.

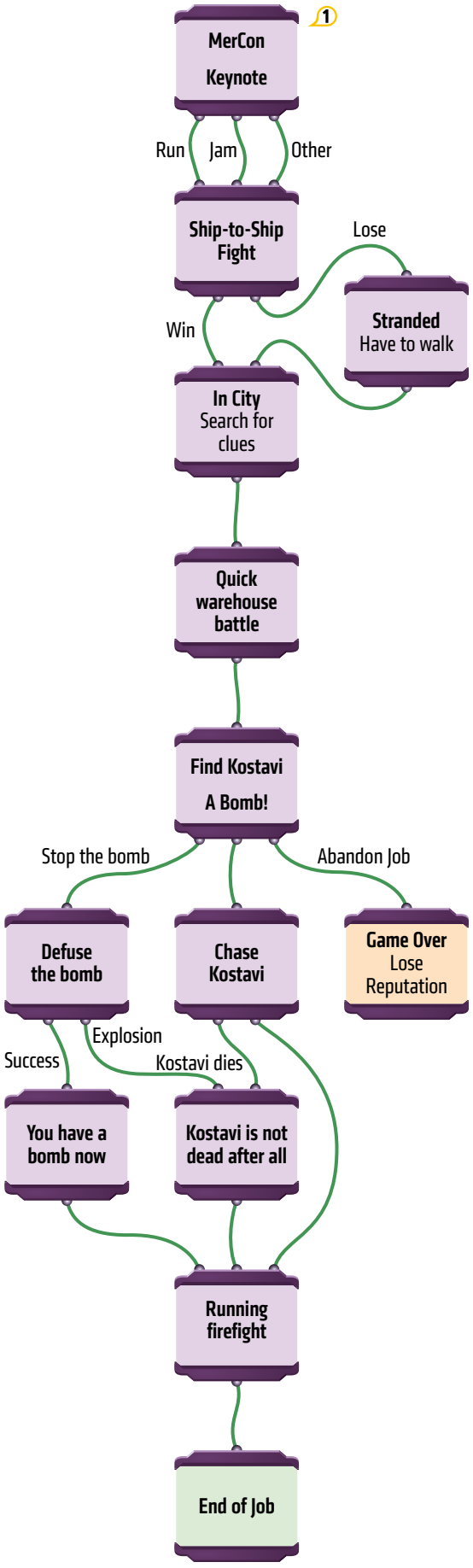
Encounter: This is the portion of a scene where the characters are faced with a challenge to overcome, often by directly interacting with a GC controlled NPC or monster. Most often encounters are battles, but an encounter could also be a big negotiation or a puzzle to solve.

We recommend that a session begin with acquiring a job and end when that job is completed. However, some groups may want to stretch a single job over multiple sessions or have more than one job in a single session. One of the reasons the "one session, one job" model works is that the opening negotiations or opening scenes help your players to engage with their characters and with the game. If each session has a specific focus, then the jokes and callbacks can all be focused on the events of this session, with only a few references to running gags from prior sessions.

But whether you're starting fresh or continuing from a prior session, planning the session begins with the job, then breaking down that job into scenes and encounters. An example of this is in the pre-built adventure included with this book: The Damaxuri Deception. (*see page 333*) In that adventure you can see that the plot is broken into scenes with estimates for how long each scene is expected to take. If you're new to *Planet Mercenary RPG*, know that over several sessions you will get a good feel for how long a scene will take. A good session usually consists of: 1–2 combat encounters, 2–3 social encounters, and at least 1 mental encounter (via puzzles, hacking sequences, etc.). Specifics on building good encounters can be found page 280. This engages players in different ways, making the gameplay varied, and it also allows different sorts of players and characters to shine. Make sure that each of your players has a chance to try something amazing, even if they fail at it. Give them chances to be heroic (or gloriously stupid).

Player decisions and Mayhem are almost certainly going to impact what you have planned. This is why the drag-and-drop organization of scenes / encounters is helpful. In this method you create the encounters you want your players to have, but leave them vague enough that you can slot them into any locations, following specific events. For example, in Damaxuri Deception Scene 5 there is a running firefight. Depending on player actions before that encounter, it might be a firefight with law enforcement because they made a bomb go off, or it might be a fight with law enforcement because they want the captive the players are carrying, or it might be a fight with henchmen of the captive. The same basic event (Running Fire Fight) can happen with exactly the same opponent stats, only the descriptive story changes.

The drag-and-drop method lends itself to flowchart organization, which can help you with your planning. See the Damaxuri Deception Flow Chart for an example (*next page*). Sometimes all the player choices lead directly from one encounter to another, as in square 1 leading to square 2. Other times player choices fragment the path, as in square 5 with the discovery of the bomb. But notice that the scattered paths are led back together again at square 8 for the running firefight. You can make your flowchart as simple or as complicated as you desire.



1

WRITER: The flowchart is cool, but where's my section on story structure?

TERL'KRIS: Edited for length. Deal with it.

WRITER: You don't get it. These adventure stories? When they fall flat it's because people aren't leveraging the narrative lexicon they share with the others at the table. They're just throwing bits in without understanding that the whole is more than the sum of the parts.

TERL'KRIS: It still won't fit in the book, Czecki.

WRITER: All we need to do is list a few story archetypes. "Stranger comes to town," "Someone takes a trip." "Sophont vs. Sophont," "Sophont vs. Nature."

TERL'KRIS: "Writer vs. Editor"

WRITER: "Team vs. Project Deadline."

TERL'KRIS: *Exactly*. Except with some actual death halfway through the story because I can't manage a project and keep my team safe at the same time.

WRITER: We're safe now, right?

TERL'KRIS: Sure.

WRITER: Boss, we kind of need you to really sell it.

TERL'KRIS: Totally safe. Tooth and claw, I should have killed Azreana three years ago. Her security had more holes in it than our Index. Which still isn't finished.

JANO_CX: Terl, the project is looking pretty good to me. Take a personal day.

TERL'KRIS: I'm saving my personal days for when I'm dead.

The drag-and-drop / flowchart method of session organization is only one of many possible ways to organize. Some Game Chiefs write each scenes' notes on little cards of paper. Others use notes on their handbrains. Use any method that lets you keep track of information and adapt quickly when player choices or Mayhem send your plot sideways.

Try to end the session on a high note. This can either be a roaring success or a glorious failure. Either one leaves the players energized and excited to tell the story to all their friends, who will then want to play *Planet Mercenary RPG*.

If you need some ideas to help you get started, we've created a GC reference section with adventure seeds, persons, companies, mooks, and monsters, all of which may spark fun story ideas. We also offer our set of tables for Random Job Generation and Random Company Generation, below. These tables can be great filler, or a useful starting place, but beware of using them all the time lest your players begin to feel like all their missions are generic. Make sure to tie the missions to long-term goals and in-game consequences. Make the missions matter. Over time, players should feel as though their choices have had an influence on the world(s) around them.

Random Job Generation

Sometimes, you'll need to generate missions on the fly for your characters. You can roll dice on the following charts to do so quickly and effectively.

Roll 1d6 on Table 7.1 to determine the type of employer who has offered the job.

Table 7.1: The Employer

1d6 Roll	Result
1	Business
2	Government
3	Charity
4	Individual
5	Religious institution
6	Roll twice (ignoring additional rolls of 6) and combine the results

When using Table 7.2: The Job, roll 2d6 twice, the first time to generate the job and the second time to generate the target of the job.

Table 7.2: The Job			
2d6 Roll	**Result**	**Resource Reward**	**Target of the Job**
2	Blackmail	2–3	Interplanetary church
3	Protection	4–6	Rival business
4	Heist	2–6	Politician
5	Extortion	1–5	Street gang
6	Military action	4–8	Rogue AI
7	Inciting revolution	3–6	Crime syndicate
8	Transporting goods	1–3	Rival mercenary company
9	Elimination	2–6	"Empty" area of space
10	Retrieval	4–6	Planetary government
11	Policing	1–2	System government
12	Roll twice (ignoring additional rolls of 12) and combine the results	Add the totals	Roll twice (ignoring additional rolls of 12) and combine the results

Now that the job is generated, you need to generate The Twist, which is the thing that will go wrong at some point and complicate the lives of your characters.

Table 7.3: The Twist	
1d6 Roll	**Result**
1	Traitor in the mercenaries' midst.
2	Wrong target
3	Employer double-cross
4	Misinformation
5	Rivals swoop in and take the target
6	Target has a redundancy plan

Random Company Generation

If you need to generate a competing mercenary company, or if your players want to be adventurous about starting up their company, we've provided the following tables. If you're randomly generating for PCs, set up the characters first.

Roll a d6 on Table 7.4 to generate your Mercenary Company's Tenure. Tenure represents how long the company has been in operation. Most companies are carried by the strength of a leader, and when that leader is gone, they tend to fall apart.

Next, add that number to half (rounded down) the Captain's Contracts skill (if any), and compare that number to Table 7.5: Company Reputation. Write down the resulting Contracts Bonus/Penalty in the Reputation slot on your record sheet.

Example: *Lian has a company with Experienced tenure (+1 Reputation bonus), and a Captain with a Contracts skill of 1. This means, Lian's company starts out as Ignoble Rakes, with a Reputation penalty of -2 to all Contracts skill checks.*

Table 7.4: Company Tenure			
1d6 Roll	**Tenure**	**Years**	**Reputation Bonus**
1	New	0-5	+0
2-4	Experienced	6-30	+1
5	Veteran	31-60	+2
6	Venerable	61+	+4

Table 7.5: Company Reputation		
Captain's Contracts Skill	**Reputation**	**Bonus/ Penalty**
1	Scum and Villainy	-3
2	Ignoble Rakes	-2
3	Untrustworthy	-1
4	Neutral	+0
5	Reputed	+1
6	Always Delivers	+2
7	Discreet and Efficient	+3
8	Sector's Best	+4
9	Legends	+5
10	Always Drink for Free	+6

To generate your company's Resources, roll 1d6+3 for each PC. AI characters only generate 1d6 resources. Total those dice together, and that total is the "resource pool" your company has to spend.

Next, your Mercenary Company needs a ship and an AI. Both are pretty expensive. Spend resources on both ship and AI, but make sure you have enough left for Supplies to buy equipment, weapons, and armor. Ships are found in the Vessels section, page 121. Use table 7.6 to purchase your AI rating. You can't start with an AI Rating over 4.

Table 7.6: AI Rating

Rating	Cost
1	2
2	5
3	10
4	20

Building a Good Encounter

When putting together a *Planet Mercenary RPG* encounter, start by building a plot framework. What do you need the encounter to accomplish in the story? Does it need to be a battle? A negotiation? A puzzle? Once you've decided, list two or three possible outcomes for this encounter (these usually include things like: players win, players lose, players draw). You need to have plans for how to tie any of these outcomes back into your intended storyline for this session. After outlining all this information, you can work on the details of the encounter. If you've decided on a battle, you can check the Game Chief Reference section to decide what your players will be fighting against. The specific opponent you want may not be in there, but you can take something similar and adapt it to your needs. Jot down the relevant stats, but just as important is to note what you need the opponent to accomplish. You'll also want to note details of appearance and behavior, as describing those will help you and your players tell a better story. Pay attention to the mook and mob options, as they allow you to simulate mass combat while keeping the math simple and allowing the players a chance to win.

Planet Mercenary RPG does not specify any rules about in-battle movement, so there is no need for detailed maps with precise measurements. However, a clear idea of the encounter space and resources it might contain will definitely help you tell the story. What features and supplies are in the encounter space, which the players may be able to use, or which might upset player's plans?

As you run *Planet Mercenary RPG* games, you'll quickly get a feel for how much challenge you can throw at the player characters and expect the team to survive. But for those who are new and not sure where to start, we offer the following **Challenge Point** system for balancing encounters. Think of the Challenge Point system as training wheels that you'll discard when you no longer need them. Also feel free to take a hammer and bend them into a shape that works better for you if they aren't quite working as you wish.

Building an Encounter with Challenge Points

First look at the opponents you intend to have the characters face and add up the challenge points.

- 2 mook squads equal 1 Challenge Point.
- For every 1d6 of damage an enemy can inflict, add 1 Challenge Point.
- For every 3 Health an enemy has, add 1 Challenge Point.

Compare your challenge point total with our difficulty guide (Table 7.7) to determine if you need to reduce or increase the difficulty.

Table 7.7: Difficulty Guide

Encounter Difficulty	Challenge Point per player
Easy	1
Medium	2
Hard	3
Lethal	4

Example: 2 mook squads (1 CP) with 4 Health per squad (total of 8 Health which equals 2 CP) and which deal 2d6 damage each (total of 4d6 damage which equals 4 CP), have a Challenge Point encounter total of 7.

This would be a hard and potentially lethal encounter for two players, but an easy encounter for six or more players.

Don't be afraid to adjust on the fly. If the encounter is too hard, move the goal post. Make them only kill half the enemies to cause them to flee, or cause the environment to give them a little bit of help. If the enemies are hurting them too much, scale back the damage, or have a few enemy weapons explode because they purchased discounted arms from Phubahr. Remember to adjust in favor of having fun.

Building a Good Campaign

Creating a campaign can be as simple as stringing together a series of jobs and sessions with an ongoing mercenary company. However, campaigns tend to be more rewarding if there is a larger story planned out. You can use the same structure to plot your larger campaign as you use to craft your sessions and encounters. Only instead of building your big arc out of scenes, you'll build it out of jobs and encounters. What happens in one session should help to set up the next session. We recommend starting with single-session adventures before planning grand plot arcs. Always remember that fun is more important than your grand story.

Your big plan may need to change based on player interest and the Mayhem that happens in each session. You should accommodate your group should they determine that they're not as interested in your space opera as you are.

Managing Character and Company Creation

The character and company creation processes are the first opportunities in which you can prompt your players to think like a team. Encourage them to think in stories and to discuss how their individual character stories may fit with each other and with the company as a whole. Creation is also an important time to establish accommodations you may be making for different players in your group. Talk about what role-play looks like. A shy player may earn RiPP by being willing to speak up at all. A thespian player may need to full-on character act. Some suggestions for accommodations are available in the Accessibility section.

One of your jobs through these first steps of character creation is to help guide players into character types that they will have the most fun playing. Some people do better with support characters such as medical personnel, while other players will be happiest out in front where they break things and talk up a storm.

We recommend that you steer first-time players away from the AI or amorph sophont types, as these sophont types are more complex to manage and have special rules. If you are a first-time GC, then you may want to run a game or two without the complex sophont types before allowing them. Read through the information in the Sophonts section and in Special Rules for Amorphs (*page 286*) before deciding whether to allow them in your game. Experienced tabletop RPG players — be they Game Chiefs or mercenaries — should fare finely with these sophont types, even if it is their first time playing *Planet Mercenary RPG*.

Running a Game

With everything prepped, there are some things you need to know while running the game.

Managing Mayhem

For the most part, the Mayhem cards are self-explanatory. We have also provided some additional guidance on cards on pages 18-23. That said, here are some suggestions for Game Chiefs.

If you find that there is a particular card that your players hate or which causes contention with your group, then pull that card from the deck and don't play with it.

Some of the cards and situations will call for a re-roll. The standard rules say reroll all dice on the roll. An optional rule to make the game more challenging is to require only one or two of the dice to be re-rolled, at the choice of the original roller.

Don't be afraid to hold cards for later. This allows you to grab a card that will be too much for a player to handle, or one that will send the story in a direction that you don't want. This is particularly useful if you can see that a Mayhem card will be perfect for a later point in the story.

Don't be afraid to negate cards. Negating cards is sometimes essential to keep the story going or to avoid stressing or frustrating players. Negating cards has an added benefit that when you do it, you hand out a RiPP to each player, thus keeping the RiPP flowing in ways that will forward the game. This allows you to save a shy

player from having to do a happy dance, or to stop a card that would break your story.

Held cards expire at the end of the current session even if the job rolls over to the next session. This is done on purpose to prevent any of you from having to keep track of who was holding which card last session. Additionally, this allows you to hold a card you want to avoid in the story until a session's end and thus dispose of it.

Managing Players

It's hard to tell a story on your own, and it can be even harder when you add more personalities to the mix. Communicate with each other. If you need a ten-minute break to regroup, tell the players. They'll thank you for it. If someone seems unhappy, then take a break, pull them aside, and talk to them. If a player's behavior is frustrating you, pull them aside and talk to them. 1

All players, play styles, and motivations deserve your respect and diligence. Everyone has a story they want to tell with their character, even if that story is "I smash things." Help your players tell their stories.

Ask for feedback. If your players seem bored, disengaged, or frustrated, ask them why. Ask them what they want from the game. Understand what they expect you to deliver, and make sure they understand what you are trying to deliver. The very process of asking is useful for both you and the player because prior to having the conversation, they may not even realize why they were dissatisfied. Once you both know what you're each trying to accomplish, you can work together to make those two goals meet.

Are you seeing a theme here? In expert experience, most failed games are the result of poor communication.

Player Accessibility

A *Planet Mercenary RPG* game is supposed to be fun, not fair. This is particularly true when you are dealing with players that have different capabilities than the average grunt. This pretty much includes everyone, since the "average grunt" is a mythical creature. You'll need to adapt. It is helpful to consider how you might need to adapt before you need to do it. Some adaptations you'll want to explain to your players, and others you'll want to implement quietly. We provide a few examples and possible adaptations just as a starting place for you to be thinking about your player's needs. The very best thing to do is talk with your players about what they need to enjoy the game.

Players with social anxiety or shyness

This player may have troubles with the role-play and Speak First, Go First aspects of the game. Your challenge is to get RiPP to this player even though they might never get into character. Give them RiPP for bringing snacks, hosting the game, or any other thing that the player does which increases the enjoyment of the group. Engage the help of a more confident player to do the verbal jumping-in on behalf of the anxious player. Often, socially anxious people are happiest when they can hang back and go last. Keep an eye on it though, as you may need to step in and say they get to act first.

1

JANO_CX: This is almost a direct lift from Sophont Resources.

TERL'KRIS: I'm not going to yell at my writers for plagiarizing a document we own. And if we don't own it, it's somebody else's job to yell at Sophont Resources for plagiarism.

JANO_CX: I misspoke. What I meant is "this is a good management practice, and I'm glad to see it here."

WRITER: Oh, good. I was almost having the dry heaves again. You're sure you like it?

JANO_CX: Quite sure. Words to live by, even.

Players who think slowly and deliberately

There are many highly-intelligent and creative people who do not shine when they are required to think fast or respond quickly. This sort of player may struggle with Speak First, Go First. One possible adaptation is to make a group agreement that this player only has to say "Action!" or pound the table to register their turn for initiative. Then everyone gives the player time to consider and take an action. This adaptation does slow down the pace of the game for everyone, but that is a worthwhile sacrifice if it allows everyone to have fun. One option that you can use — if the player agrees and thinks it's a good idea — is to sit down with the player before the session and help them think through some typical, in-character responses to common in game situations. Have this player write conditional scripts for themselves, like they might receive if they worked as a customer support technician. If their character gets shot at, and they know the standard response is to return fire from cover. You might want to guide this player into a more straightforward character rather than one of the complex sophont types that require lots of decision-making, at least for the first time or two they experience *Planet Mercenary RPG*.

Players whose visual apparatus work differently than standard terran

If this is an issue in your group we suggest using a differently-sized die to indicate Mayhem instead of a differently-colored one. Point out that the Mayhem cards have different suits to indicate whether they're beneficial or detrimental rather than relying on the colors of the cards. Print the character sheet or other reference items at a larger size, in a touch based writing system, or have the player use their handbrain to assist. Make sure you're using auditory communication for descriptions.

Players whose auditory apparatus work differently than standard terran

Make sure you provide visual versions of all information and that you're aware of and adapting for any communication device your player may be carrying. This includes speaking more clearly and/or making sure the player has clear line of sight on everything.

Players with movement enabling apparatus or physical requirements

Make sure that your intended play space allows for your polyflorian player and their com hub chair to maneuver, or for your human who has a retro-classic wheelchair. Make sure your doorways are large enough for your neophant and vhorwed players to be comfortable. Be willing to adapt and allow one player to scribe for another if digits, tentacles, or other appendages are not compatible with standard writing equipment.

Players who are anxious or have strong reactions to certain stories

It is possible that among your players will be a sophont who has already been through battle. Or you might have a player who simply reacts poorly to uncertainty or unexpected surprises. *Planet Mercenary RPG* is a game which relies on plot twists, quick responses, and changing objectives. These shifts and unexpected outcomes may make some players actively anxious about what is happening in the game. Some players may have triggers (2) that will send them into actual panic instead of being able to enjoy the story mayhem.

Hopefully you'll already know what sorts of stories might cause problems because you and your player have communicated about the game. But just in case, be on the watch for anxious body language from your players: pushing back from the table, crossing arms or hugging an object as a shield, putting up a hood on their jacket, or increased fidgeting. If you see these things, then it is a good time to call for a break. Pull the player aside and see if you can determine the source of their anxiety. You may want to tell the player a little bit of what is coming next in the plot. Sometimes having a few spoilers can increase the ability of the anxious player to enjoy the game. If the player is anxious about character death, then perhaps equip that character with an automatic cryokit, so that even if the character explodes, the player knows their death isn't permanent. The key here is to identify the source of a player's anxiety and then do what you can to dispel it.

Players who have trouble reading social cues

There are people who have greater difficulty reading the social cues of body language and

(2)

JANO_CX: This is very insightful, Terl. Especially given that it again calls my attention to your writing team.

TERL'KRIS: I haven't sobered all the way back up. Do we have to do this now?

JANO_CX: If we're going to finish the project we have to do it soon. Your writers are exhibiting symptoms of PTSD. Even the healthy ones!

TERL'KRIS: It's a writer thing. They're always talking about how deadlines make them crazy.

WRITER: True fact.

JANO_CX: Did you discuss this at Polly-O's?

TERL'KRIS: Between managing the security detail and letting Helenei get me drunk I didn't do a whole lot of discussing. I still can't believe I did that. So irresponsible. They have zero tradecraft, they carry some of the galaxy's most valuable information in their amazing brains, and I don't have enough claws to keep all of them safe, so what do I do? I take a running jump at the LD-50 for an entire family of aliphatic hydroxyl-bonded ingestibles and wake up in a bubble car outside a safe house I didn't think anybody knew about.

JANO_CX: Take a personal day.

TERL'KRIS: People like Do'asha die when people like me take personal days.

tone of voice. This can be particularly true if your players come from different backgrounds. A human raised as a diplobrat on Celeschul may have trouble with the body language of a human from Luna. The result is often that other players get frustrated or angry when the other person does not follow implied directions. The most important adaptation for this is that you as the GC: be aware of it. Don't be afraid to say, "We need to give this other person a turn to go first." It may feel rude or forward to say it instead of implying with a gesture or a look, but for this type of player, it is essential to hear this kind of instruction.

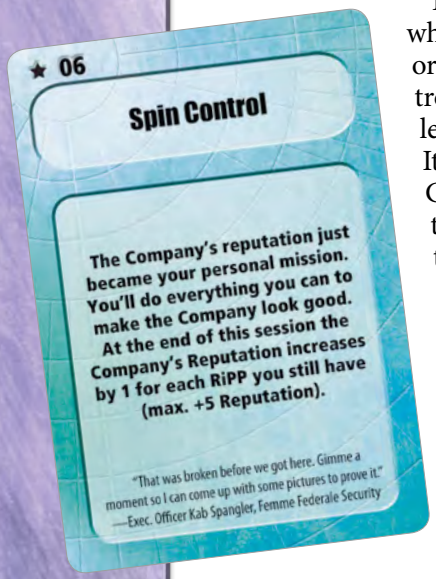
There are more situations that call for adaptation than the ones we have listed here. The key point to remember is that having fun is more important than strict rule adherence. Use these ideas to brainstorm your own ways to adapt for your players.

An empathetic group will comprehend what you're doing and why you are doing it. With a less empathetic group, you may have to take some players aside and explain to them the fun vs. fair principle.

Other Potential Player Challenges

Aside from alternate physiologies and capabilities, there are other ways that players can cause problems for others at the table.

Dominant or aggressive players



There are some players who always want to be first or be the hero. They have trouble taking turns or letting other players shine. It is possible for a clever GC to nudge this player so that their ego is attached to making other players shine. Take a hint from the Spin Control Mayhem card. There are ways that you can use their desire to be in charge to make the game more fun for everyone. This is not always by making them the captain of the mercenary company.

Class clown players

Due to the deliberately humorous nature of *Planet Mercenary RPG,* this type of player can often be a boon to the party, provided they are actually funny. You can help tune their behavior and jokes by rewarding with RiPP for the ones that bring the party together, and by not responding to the ones that don't. You can also pull the player aside and clarify what behaviors are causing problems for others. Remember the punching down principle in the Making Jokes section. Don't let your players punch down at each other.

New Skills & Specialties

In the course of play, your group) may discover skills or specialties that they wish they had, but which aren't on the official list. Adding to the skill list is fine, as long as players will use these new skills or specialties often enough to warrant the addition, and as longs as they're made available to all characters who can logically learn or use them (including NPCs).

It's also important not to accidentally introduce skills or specialties already outlined in *Planet Mercenary RPG*. Overlapping skills can lead to confusion when it comes time to decide which of a character's ranks apply to a skill check. Similarly, overlapping specialties can leave a player feeling slighted if they get the same benefit out of having one or two relevant specialties.

A Chase skill that covers all the various ways you can run, drive, or fly could seem like a good idea, but, this is already covered by Athletics and the vehicle skills. If you added a Chase skill, you'd have to modify those other skills to avoid confusion whenever one character takes off after another. If characters find themselves in an environment where the only legal ranged weapons are bows and arrows, they might want to add a Bow skill. The GC could add one, with which players could buy ranks as they attempt to master the tools of the indigenous sophonts, or the GC could simply declare that bows are covered by the Thrown Weapons (Aerodynamic) specialty.

Be cautious about expanding the skill list, or it will quickly become unwieldy.

Special Cases for Skill Checks

There may be times that your PCs are exposed to adverse conditions that require endurance checks. We've provided Table 7.8: Endurance vs Conditions as a guide.

Table 7.8: Endurance vs Conditions

Condition	TN
Basic poisons	12
Suffocating (water, air, other)	15
Advanced and deadly poisons	18

Sometimes you may put your players into a situation where they are at a disadvantage (or advantage) with their skill checks. If the PCs must make Vehicle checks while flying through a massive sandstorm, for example, then it makes sense that the environmental conditions might affect the skill roll. Use Table 7.9: Advantages and Disadvantages for such situations.

Table 7.9a: Advantages

Situation Severity	Advantage
Neutral	No advantage
Mild	+2 to skill checks
Moderate	+4 to skill checks
Extreme	+6 to skill checks

Table 7.9b: Disadvantages

Situation Severity	Disadvantage
Neutral	No disadvantage
Mild	-2 to skill checks
Moderate	-4 to skill checks
Extreme	-6 to skill checks

Movement

Planet Mercenary RPG has not provided specific mechanics for movement, either during combat or out of it. The players will describe what they want to do and you will judge whether that can reasonably be accomplished in a single action. As usual, pick in favor of telling a good story rather than realism.

How quickly your player characters can travel from one place to another outside of combat depends on what sort of story you and your

players want to experience. Many times, you may just skip the traveling parts and simply move from scene to scene, avoiding the boring bits. However, if you want a story about a job to protect a caravan as it travels for a week, then obviously, you don't want to skip the travel sequences. In that case, you probably want to measure travel in days or Resources rather than miles. For example, if your players need to go to a place that is five days away, but after the bandit raid they only have supplies for three of those days, then the players have a problem to solve.

MAXIM 17

The longer everything goes according to plan, the bigger the impending disaster.

Adapting Mid-stream

No matter how well you plan your game session, something unexpected is guaranteed to happen in a *Planet Mercenary RPG* game. Sometimes a Mayhem card or a player decision sends your group off in a direction for which you are unprepared. Players *play*. They do things you don't expect. They solve problems in creative, destructive, or unique ways. That's

good. You should let them. One of the biggest skills you can develop is the ability to adapt on the fly. Don't be afraid to be honest if the game has gone in an unexpected direction. If you need a few minutes to prepare the appropriate reaction or to adjust an encounter, then tell everyone. Have them get up, stretch, refill their drinks, use the restroom, while you figure out what to do. If you're losing steam or running out of encounters, the same advice applies. 1

1
DEV: "Get up, stretch, refill their drinks, take a personal day..."
WRITER: I know, right?
R&D: I've never seen him like that.
SOPH_RES: Security hasn't seen him for eighteen hours.
R&D: If they haven't seen him, maybe that's because they're his target.
DEV: *Dun dun duhhnnn!*
WRITER: Stop it guys. He's probably taking an actual personal day, because Czecki and Banabaleelo convinced him we'd be okay.

Special Rules for Amorphs

When Amorphs are increasing their skills, they get access to a unique subset of specialties that no other race can acquire. Amorphs can only unlock these skill options by taking an action in game that would unlock them.

> ***Example:*** *An amorph player, Glub, is attempting to infiltrate an enemy base. He's having a hard time sneaking past the guards, so Glub cleverly realizes he can squeeze his mutable form through a vent. The GC, Abigail, smiles knowingly, and tells him he has unlocked the ability to purchase the Morph specialty for the Athletics skill, and because Abigail is a kind and gracious GC, she allows him to use the Morph specialty immediately, once, as a reward for his innovative thinking. At the end of the session, Glub spends his skill points to permanently acquire Morph.*

Below are listed the specialties and their rules. We recommend that the GC not tell the amorph player they can do these things. Let the player respond to a need, and then grant them the associated skill. This will likely happen more quickly if the player is already familiar with Amorphs.

Note: If you don't have a particular amorph specialty, then you can't use the associated ability. So, for example, you can't devour incoming fire unless you've already got the Devour specialty, or unless your role-play in that moment causes the GC to grant it.

Combat Skills

Melee Weapons (Devour, Hold, Digest)

- ***Devour*** can be used to eat ammo that is expended at you. Simply replace your Dodge check with a Melee Weapons (Devour) check.
- ***Hold*** can be used to restrain a single sophont of reasonable size (probably no neophants) by holding that sophont in your mouth. Make a Melee Weapons (Hold) check, and if successful, the target can't move or attack.
- ***Digest*** can be used to deconstruct items that are in the amorph's body. As an example an amorph could use Digest to defuse bombs by devouring their component parts, stop a toxin from overriding their body, etc.

Physical Skills

Athletics (Morph)

- ***Morph*** can be used to meld or mold the amorph's shape. If an amorph succeeds on an Athletics (Morph) skill check (TN 15), they they can gain a single reroll on their next Physical-category skill check as they mold their shape into an advantageous form. This is often applied in place of Stealth to squeeze into or through tighter areas.

Note: Amorphs can often taste or follow the trail of another sophont by the unique signature that their skin and chemical composition give off. This is simply a Perception (Taste) check, but if appropriate, you can give the amorph a +4 bonus on the roll.

Character Death

Planet Mercenary RPG is a lethal game where characters die, and they will die frequently. The game has been designed that way, in part because the Mayhem cards throw in enough random changes to stats, that over time the characters would become overpowered if they were allowed to live. Promoting grunts from your fireteam or grunt pool as replacement characters allows players to keep participating in the game even if their character dies.

Character death can be difficult for players. Help players understand that the goal of this game is to tell fantastic and fun stories. There must be real peril or else the story isn't exciting or interesting. To ease the pain of character death, you can throw the old character into a nanny bag or similar medical technology. The player must still finish this session with their alternate character, but at the end of the job or session, you can let the player choose which character they want to play next time. Sometimes players will fall in love with their new character and will be happy to let the old character retire to ship duty. Or perhaps even stay dead.

If a player does choose to continually revive their character, then keep an eye on stat balance. You may need to declare that the revival process was not as successful as hoped, and deduct some skill points to re-balance the character.

Getting players to recognize that continuity lies in the continuation of the story and the company rather than the continuity of their individual character is a valuable lesson. If the players are willing to sacrifice their characters for the benefit of their compatriots or for glorious storytelling, then they have truly started to think like the team you want them to be.

If you have a player who can't handle having their character die, remember: fun first. Don't force that player to kill a character. Have the RiPP negate the hit, and move on.

Job Completion & Leveling Up

At the end of a job, when the objectives are either completed or failed, three things happen:

1. The company as a whole gets an increase (or decrease) to their Reputation. As a rule of thumb, generally it's +1 for completing a mission, +2 for completing a mission in style (with aplomb, or exceptional success), and +3 for completing a mission, getting paid twice, *and* getting another job.
2. A successful job means that the company gains the amount of Resources that they negotiated for when taking the job (or that they negotiated for when they decided to ditch their first employer and work for the other guy instead). Failed jobs don't result in being paid Resources.
3. Players get three new skill points to add to their character. Award them as follows: 1 skill point each for two skills that the players used during the job, and a third skill point that they can apply to any skill that they want. Alternately, they can use all three skill points to gain one new specialty in a skill in which they already have at least one Rank. Players cannot hold skill points between jobs or sessions; they must use them or lose them. (***Note:*** AI characters do not get skill points for job completion. All their skill increases must be purchased with company Resources.)

Table 7.10: Resource Rewards

Job	Resource Reward
Transporting goods	1
Policing	2
Extraction	3
Blackmail	3
A heist	4
Elimination	5
Inciting revolution	6
Bodyguarding/Protection	6
Armed retrieval	6
Military action	8

Modifiers

For a difficult location	+2
For an anonymous hire	+1
If company already wanted in that location	+3
If against a rival	-1
If company specializes in job type	+1
If target is a galactic power	+3
If job must remain covert	+1

MAXIM 45

The size of the combat bonus is inversely proportional to the likelihood of surviving to collect it.

Game Chief Reference

Herein you will find a wealth of resources that you, as a Game Chief, can use to quickly put together encounters, design adventures, or weave together into an epic campaign.

If you're not a Game Chief, this section contains a wealth of potential spoilers, especially in the adventure seed areas. Be careful! You may think you've read the twist and know what is coming, but Game Chiefs are crafty sophonts, and may have created completely different twists for you.

There are several ways to use this reference.

- Peruse the adventure seeds and begin threading them into your adventure.
- Find the section which focuses on the location where you plan to have your adventure and see what people, companies, mooks, or monsters are most common there.
- Use our NPC index or our Creature index to help you find the specific creature, person, or company that you are looking for.

Terms

Adventure Seeds

An adventure seed is a jumping-off-point for Game Chiefs, whether they're seeking to design their own *Planet Mercenary RPG* adventure campaigns, or simply need single-session side stories. The initial text is the up-front portion that players would be made aware of fairly quickly. The **twist** is the underlying bit which, when revealed, may send the mission sideways. **Additional twist** is another, later reveal. **Alternative twist** is a different take on the original **twist**. Seeds and their twists can be altered, remixed, moved to other locations, or ignored completely.

Companies and Organizations

These are provided so that you have additional background and context for some of the companies and organizations that you'll encounter in the galaxy. They've been placed either in their primary location or in the location where you are most likely to encounter them. However, many companies and organizations can be found all over the galaxy. An excellent example of this is the fine Planet Mercenary stores you will find in almost every location you might visit.

Persons

Many locations have persons of note. They may be government personnel who could interfere with your adventure or who might hire you. They may be other adventurers or performers, or the competition. These are not the only people you may meet, in fact your story might be better served if you make up the people you need to fit the adventure you want to have. It should be noted that all information about persons that is included in this book is available through public records. No surveillance or private information was gathered at any time. 1

Mooks

Mooks are small groups of enemies; we organize them into squads. A mook squad is a collection of combatants whose attacks will be represented with a single die roll, rather like a fireteam. This organization simplifies dice rolling for the GC so they don't have to roll attacks for every individual opponent. A squad will contain 3-10 individuals. The individual mook, if separated from its squad, will surrender, flee, be captured, or simply catch a stray bullet. GC's are encouraged to use the mook squad stats we provide as a reference for the mooks they need.

A GC organizing a combat with a force of thirty fobott'r mercenaries would likely break them into five squads, so during combat they only need to roll five attacks for this opponent. Each squad has a single health stat and a single attack. As these squads take damage, they are losing members and becoming less effective, until they are defeated.

1

LEGAL: This is hard to believe, given what we know about the skill set of the project lead. Regardless, the statement is the very opposite of an ironclad disclaimer. It's an invitation to sue. Pull it.

WRITER: We're in third-pass layout. If we pull it, we end up with a suspicious lake of white space.

LEGAL: We'll take it up with Terl. When's he going to be back?

WRITER: Waiting to take it up with Terl is the same as saying "oh, just run the text, we'll figure out a way to not get sued."

LEGAL: We would have to review every individual entry on every page, and begin soliciting "friend of the court" briefs from public data repositories near those people.

WRITER: You've already figured it out! Awesome.

Mobs

Mobs are large groups of enemies, sometimes as large as entire divisions of organized armed forces. They're threatening at any scale because even when they don't work as a group they can throw a lot of ordnance downrange. Mobs are always divided into a subset of squads, listed as a number.

> ***Example:*** *Merchant Defenders*
>
> *60 individuals, 15 squads. In passageways aboard ship they will position themselves at choke points where three or more squads can concentrate fire on attackers while the rest support.*

At their core, Mobs are just multiple squads of Mooks, but Mobs use a unique rule called **supporting**. The supporting rule allows a GC to account for the force multiplication of the mob while not having to roll dozens of attacks per round.

Mobs are always broken down into squads. A squad can *support* another squad from the *same Mob* as their action. To support, the supporting squad must have clear channels of communication to the squad they are supporting and be in a physical situation where the support makes logical and narrative sense (flanking, providing spotting/recon, etc).

If they do, the squad that is being supported gains the following bonuses:

- +1 to Attack
- +2 to Damage

It's very important to note the following: a squad can be supported by multiple other squads in their mob, stacking the bonuses (this can be very deadly to those who face an entrenched mob or a mob with vehicles). If a squad is supported by 3 other squads, they would get +3 to their Attacks and +6 to their damage.

One of the best ways to counter a Mob is to find out how to disrupt their communications and break them apart, handling them as separate units.

Monsters

The emotionally-laden term "monster" is here used to refer to what many holo-gamers called "bosses" or "mini-bosses." We went with Monsters because we needed an M-word, and it seemed to fit. They might be scaly, toothy-mawed things like the Canyonlands Preserve T-Rex, or furry, well-equipped people like the ursumari Captain Landon and his sentient weapon Tenzy. Monsters are rolled for individually.

Sol System

Adventure Seeds

Earth

Bad Cop, Worse Cop

The Jurisindependent Security Covenant (JSC) of Dom Atlantis is hiring professionals-at-arms to secure public places. JSC Internal Affairs wants you to apply because borderline sociopaths like you have no business doing police work, and your application will be a good test of how well the screening process works. The screening process does not work, and now you have a job.

Twist: The Damico-P'sloqye criminal organization has wormed the screening in one JSC office, and some of their people made the cut. Your mercenaries may not be good law-enforcement officers, but these D-P hires are worse.

Additional Twist: The D-P's end-game is to dump blame for any incidents on the PCs, eventually discrediting JSC Management and putting their own people in command of law enforcement for the capitol district of Sol System.

Apex Predator

A group of off-worlders with hunting licenses has gone missing in Juab Jurassica. An EMP device was used to disable park monitors, and this has caused crises throughout the park, necessitating contracts with outside help.

Twist: It's an assassination. The missing party is going all Brutus and Cassius on their Caesar.

Alternative Twist: It's an assassination, but Ranger Tenhawk is the target. The assassins are quite cross when Tenhawk is not who shows up to rescue the hunters.

Smile for the Camera

The players win a fabulous vacation to Juab Jurrassica, all-expenses paid, with additional pay deposited in their accounts. The excursions will be recorded on park monitors as a commercial.

Twist: Well, no. This is a Reality-Wildersnuff production. Park monitors have been hacked to not record the party. The photographers have their own cameras in place, and have implanted some dinos with nanny-tech, turning them into murderous meat-puppets. Whether the party lives or dies, the photographers will make their money.

The Zipline Strike

Dusta Phohora Search-And-Rescue (DP-SAR) is on strike and management needs someone to take over rescue duty, plucking people safely from the skies with (hopefully) at least a 22% success rate.

Twist: DP-SAR appears to be striking on spiritual principle. They want a higher death rate, because that's *real* adventure. If the mercenaries are doing well, then DP-SAR will sabotage the brakes on the zip lines.

Alternative twist: Same as above, but there are no spiritual principles at work here. The union reps for DP-SAR have arranged this entire mess in order to make DP-SAR more valuable to the consortium, thus letting them jack up their rates.

Luna

Eviction Unnoticed

A small coalition of renters on a moderately expensive level of a building in Nectaris City want help displacing renters 100 levels up. They have already hacked the building's systems so they'll be able to afford the move. All they need you to do is evict the wealthy tenants and prevent them from talking.

Twist: There is an assassination hidden inside this (really terrible) eviction plan. A member of the coalition has set all this in motion to kill one person. The death will be camouflaged by lots of other death, and the players are meant to take the blame.

Target Rich Skies

The players have been hired to investigate statistical discrepancies regarding wing rental and insurance. The insurance companies don't share their numbers and buy up any independent statistical analyses for far more than the going rate for spreadsheets. The players are to rent wings, not purchase insurance, and then have fun flying at their own risk.

Twist: The insurance companies have, in fact, been arranging frightening accidents for some uninsured flyers, but the players are obviously government plants. The accidents will happen to other flyers.

Additional Twist: A group of insurers is running an illegal betting circuit for "big game hunters" (read: amateur assassins) who will be targeting uninsured flyers. The players are very high-value targets.

The Hummingburglar

A tenant association hires the mercenaries, hopefully equipped with milspec flight suits, to protect them from a high-rise thief known only as The Hummingburglar. This thief strikes like a hummingbird hitting a flower — in, out, and then off across the skies of Luna with all the victim's sweetest valuables. Victims always live at least five kilometers above the ground (Level 1,250 and above).

Twist: The Hummingburglar is not a person. It is a brand owned by a crime boss who hires people with the right skill set, equips them, and then assigns them to handle high-altitude acquisition.

Additional Twist: The thieves almost always owe the boss a few big favors — blackmail-level favors. Catching a Hummingburglar may just be the beginning.

Diamonds in the Rough

Something deadly lurks in the depths of Blaireton. Someone hires the mercenaries to make a sweep, but Blaireton's residents are very distrustful and uncooperative. Sure, people have died, but people always die.

Twist: The something in question is diamond beetles. The smugglers who brought them in are not going to see a dime of profit, because they were the first to die.

Additional Twist: A small group of locals has figured out how to safely harvest diamond beetle carapace and they don't want their new business wrecked by the players.

Mall One

Emmy Ellwun Endeavors Limited (E^3 Ltd) has hired the players to beef up Mall One's security. The current team's goals seem to be centered on profitable entertainment rather than actual security.

Twist: The hiring is being done contrary to the desires of Mall One's senior managerial officer, Mister Aliss, who has been using the lapses in actual security to run a very profitable network of industrial espionage.

Note: An adventure here may include Parkata Urbatsu training, which may give player characters a permanent +1 to Athletics.

Companies & Organizations

Aguirre Galactic

Manufacturer: space vessels and vehicles

Few corporations double-down on their branding as effectively as Aguirre Galactic, which has thematically focused on all things ancient Rome for several centuries now. Their chief manufacturing facility was founded on 1143 Odysseus, which orbits Sol 60° ahead of Jupiter, and when they became majority estate-owners on that rock they successfully petitioned for a name change to the Roman version. 1143 Ulysses is now completely owned by Aguirre Galactic, and their yards produce hundreds of vessels each year.

The quality, durability, and versatility of AG's products remain a constant irritant to UNS military purchasing agents, who are contractually required to settle for output from the UNS Shipyards. They are a welcome boon to the economy of the Achilles Group, however, because most Aguirre Galactic clients arrive from outside Sol System with large sums of money, and leave all that behind when they depart Ulysses with fleets of AG's Gladius, Pilum, Scutum, and Ballista offerings.

Aguirre Galactic's contributions to the economy of the Achilles Group are so significant that the saying "AG *is* AG" doesn't start arguments — it finishes them.

Blattco

Manufacturer: weapons

If you're looking for something that will hit hard, and that will do so very dependably, you want a Blattco firearm. The Blattco design philosophy grows out of the idea that the probability of failure increases exponentially with complexity of design. Blattco makes firearms exclusively and does so using designs that have been proven across centuries of use.

Their founder, Benjamin Blatt, famously said: "I want a gun that's easier to use than a hammer; and harder to break." His legacy lives on in Blattco's naming conventions. All Blattco weapons all bear hammer-related names, except for their limited run, signature-edition artillery piece "Big Ben," which is only found in museums.

Blattco's manufacturing facilities and corporate offices are in the Mojavis megalopolis. Every Blattco weapon ever made was manufactured there, in what once was the deadliest, most dangerous country an old-timey cowboy could dare to cross. Now it's a shining city rising from a stinky salt-marsh, and old-timey cowboys would have hated it at least as much as the desert.

Bryanton Faire Fabricators (BFF)

Manufacturer: weapons

Weapons should not be "cuddly," but Bryanton Faire Fabricators succeeded in co-opting the "BFF" abbreviation (Best Friends Forever) by offering weapons that feel good in your hands, hang snugly in your holster, and provide you with a sense of camaraderie when you discharge them at the enemy. Any weapon can make you feel secure, but only a BFF can make you feel secure and loved.

Bryanton Faire Fabricators ostensibly accomplished this through excellent ergonomic design, with an eye to accuracy, but no small amount of shrewd marketing went into the project as well. It's not just hype, though. BFF weapons truly are quite comfortable to fire, and will swiftly become an extension of your arm, tentacle, or foreclaw.

BFF weapons vie competitively for popularity in Sol System's Belt. Blattco weapons are, statistically at least, more dependable, but BFF weapons are more comfortable and are manufactured in the Belt rather than down the deep, dirty gravity well of Earth. In a swamp. Where all the cowboys died.

Shrewd marketing. Very shrewd.

MAXIM 67

If you can't carry cash, carry a weapon.

Cobbold Design & Protection

Manufacturer: armor

Under the leadership of Chri5 Cobbold, fourth-generation clone of CDP's founder and CEO, Cobbold Design and Protection set out in a new direction, and quickly distinguished themselves as armorers to the well-appointed. Today, CDP provides the most fashionable body armor available, all of which is tailored under strict quality control standards on Lolsquirl station in the Belt. If you want to dress to the nines, dress to kill, and dress to enjoy drinks bought by your admirers at the after-party, you'll be dressing in a suit from CDP.

Dress suits from CDP are not the best protection available, but they are the only protection that gets seated in nice restaurants. When circumstances prevent you from stomping around in a powered suit with hard-point weapons or when you want to fit in with the fancy folk, CDP armor will not just fit the bill — it will fit you comfortably.

Damico-P'sloqye

Business conglomerate

One of the worst-kept secrets about the business conglomerate known as Damico-P'sloqye is that it is a crime family. Until recently, they owned asteroid 3317 Paris and maintained a TAD back door there. That asteroid was seized by the UNS military, and D-P spent a significant fraction of their political capital preventing their personnel from being seized as well. D-P officially owns one seat on the Plutorliament and has unofficially bought at least two more.

D-P runs thousands of above-board, fully-legal businesses and employs just over 16.5 million sophonts. Below-board, it is estimated to have at least three million employees and "full-time associates" across Sol System, who participate in a range of activities at least as broad as the legal code proscribing them. Data concerning average salaries and mortality rates is not publicly available.

Döblitz Foundry

Manufacturer: space vessels and vehicles

During the boom of humanity's expansion into Sol system's asteroid belt, the multi-generation Döblitz family of engineers and architects transformed themselves from a boutique repair and refit team to the most sought after shipwright service for 2 AU in any direction. The company went from a single-bay service yard in Haute Versaille to a thousand-bay foundry spanning a towed-together cluster of sixteen Belt asteroids. The family matriarch, two of her sons, and six of her grandchildren invested wisely yet aggressively, and at the peak of the Belter Boom, Döblitz Foundry produced almost five percent of all the vessels constructed in Sol System. Their innovation exemplified the

spirit of that era and their ships were hailed as the height of human ingenuity.

Engineers throughout Sol system long since caught up with Döblitz, but echoes of that early boom remain. The spirit of innovation is tempered with conservatism, and manifests itself in data-driven refinement of proven designs. Döblitz Foundry still operates from their wholly owned cluster of asteroids, and the family fortune includes prime real estate in the Ile-de-France megalopolis on Earth. Not only do they produce some of the sturdiest assault vessels and cruiser-class warships available anywhere, each one comes with two bottles of Chateau Döblitz—one for drinking and one for smashing on the hull after secretly drinking the bottle and refilling it with grape soda.

Dusta Phohora Search-And-Rescue (DP-SAR)

Local agency

Although they strive to dress in gear that evokes Nepalese culture, and profess to hold what they claim are distinctly Nepalese beliefs, there is very little Nepalese blood in the veins of the DP-SAR teams. It's more than just culturally-appropriative role-play, however. Dusta Phohora Search-And-Rescue has, in effect, created its own mountain culture, and they've steeped themselves in it for several generations now.

E³ Ltd. (Emmy Ellwun Endeavors Limited)

Business conglomerate

Emmy Ellwun is an old, old company, as evidenced by their original branding: "Real Estate Agents IN SPAAAACE." There was a time when the slogan actually opened doors rather than airlocks. Today, they brand themselves differently depending on whether they're buying, selling, managing, slum-lording, or otherwise profiteering on pieces of sky that people can put stuff in.

Fox & Young

Manufacturer: space vessels

Two hundred years after the Belter Boom drove Döblitz to dominance, the Europan Conflict thrust Fox & Young shipyards into the limelight. This was the first time in two generations that ship-to-ship battles were fought on a large scale in Sol System, and at the tip of the spear were ships from Fox & Young, who excelled at building vessels with one job only: kill other ships.

Fox & Young vessels can be found in more peaceful purposes today, as couriers, merchants, cargo haulers, comet-drinkers, yachts, and luxury liners, but the name they made for themselves during the Europan Conflict remains a word of power. The Fox & Young corporate family wields a small degree of political power, and recently won asteroid 3317 Paris at auction, following that asteroid's seizure from Dami-co-P'sloqye. This has put F&Y at odds with the crime family, but while D-P has more financial clout, they don't own even one super-stealthy murder ship.

Jurisindependent Security Covenant

Government security force

Sol System's capital, Dom Atlantis, is the center of government for a trillion human beings. With the billions of possible agendas and platforms amid this maelstrom of power-brokering there is but one truly independent body responsible for law and order: the Jurisindependent Security Covenant, or JSC.

JSC Director-General Rafael Nguyen commands this force and directly reports to no one. His appointment is for life, and impeachment is a complicated process that nobody in political power wants to be bothered with. His authority in matters of law enforcement is absolute, but by law his forces may only employ non-lethal force, so the risk of a lone military commander declaring martial law is low.

Until recently all JSC agents carried Urtheep Industries M3 Incapacitators, but following a very public, very disastrous hack, those weapons were recalled and destroyed. Most agents now carry simple goober-wands, which look exactly like a floppy, rubber, cartoony version of an old police baton, right up until the JSC agent swats you with it and it goobers you to the wall, the floor, and yourself.

The vetting of JSC agents is a very involved process including physical and psychological screening, as well as extensive testing in law enforcement procedures. An average JSC agent would rank in the 99th percentile in any other law enforcement agency in Sol System.

Mitsutendo

Manufacturer: space vessels

In the first two centuries of humanity's extra-terrestrial expansion, numerous large corporations merged, split, married, morphed, and otherwise transformed themselves far beyond what their original founders could have imagined. Mitsuntendo is one such company, and the blending of vehicle technology with entertainment console control surfaces led to some very popular vessel designs.

The company has morphed several times since then, but despite being acquired by non-Terran economic interests, the Mitsuntendo brand is still used for a popular line of vessels and vehicles, and offices are maintained in Tokyo[3] in the eastern Amazon Basin to lend that brand an air of Asian authenticity.

Strohl

Manufacturer: weapons

Headquartered in Nectaris, on Sol, Strohl Munitions provides top-of-the-line goods for troops who favor plasma weapons. They're is best known for the BH-209 and BH-250 plasguns, which were originally meant to be mounted on hardpoints, but were repurposed when it was discovered that many sophonts had the grip strength to wield them as handguns, and delighted in doing so.

Strohl has embraced micro- and mini-annie technology with their newer weapons, but the popularity of entries like the AP-130 has suffered because it looks so small. Never mind the fact that there have been documented instances of them being used to shoot down battleships. (1)

Strohl also has a strong selection of projectile weapons. Their GG series is extremely popular because of the wide range of applications for which it can be used. In recent years they've chased the market a bit and created some small-arms configurations that look cool, but which throw the balance of the weapon off. Unless you're an arboreal arthropod with the grip-strength of a hydraulic press, you probably shouldn't affix a two-meter serrated blade to a short-barrel scattergun and pretend it is a bayonet.

(1)

R&D: There's no way that's possible. I'm sitting right here with the AP-130 specs.

LEGAL: Possible or not, it happened. We have courtroom transcripts from a civil suit in which an amorph, armed with a pair of AP-130s, was granted salvage rights to the battleship it took down.

R&D: Legal precedent only means "a judge said so." It doesn't make a thing true.

Tacobufa

Restaurant chain

In one of the dialects of one of Old Earth's many languages, "bufa" was onomatopoeia for flatulence. Whether the company name was arrived at ironically, unironically, or ignorantly is beside the point. The point is that they make very tasty food. Yes, the slogan, right on that bag of Chunky Chupaqueso, reads "Food that Blows," but that's not proof of anything beyond poor marketing decisions.

Perhaps the marketing is a successful example of reverse psychology. Tacobufa franchises are extremely popular throughout Sol System. The cultural impact cannot be understated, either. The Tacobufa Chupaqueso is arguably the most successful hot food innovation since salted beef was shoved between two slices of toast by servants of the 4th Earl of Sandwich.

Vella Tacspec

Manufacturer: armor and vehicles

There are few companies that exemplify the ideal of "do one thing better than anyone else" more than Vella Tacspec, but exemplification of ideals isn't their stock in trade. They make armor for heavy infantry, and it is heavy enough that it fills that gap between "put these soldiers in an armored personnel carrier," and "this soldier is driving the armored personnel carrier." Vella Tacspec's robust, innovative designs have been copied by so many manufacturers, that although they didn't actually invent powered armor suits, the current market makes it look like they did.

Their headquarters are in Abraj Alkathban, and their proximity to the famed Renenutet Gardens led to a chance encounter with employees of Wächter Landscaping and Defense. Engineers from both companies got together for drinks, had too much to drink, and came away from a pub crawl with napkin art that looked like a stone giant juggling dinner plates while spitting fire. After explaining to marketing that this was not a journal comic, nor a proposal for a circus act, work began on product integration, which is why some Vella Tacspec armors have integrated Wächter products.

UNS (United Nations of Sol)

Government

The UNS is the governing body for Sol System. There are hundreds of thousands of sub- and sub-sub-governments, but ultimate authority rolls up to the high offices in the UNS. The average citizen will have little to no direct contact with any of this authority beyond transparently enjoying infrastructural things like communications, power, and a stable supply of clean air. Mercenaries may run afoul of lower-level authorities like law enforcement officers or cable installers, but it's not beyond the pale for a mission to result in contact with highly-placed politicians or military officers. Not all of that contact need be immediately fatal, especially if you're careful.

Persons

Dolphin Citizen

Dolphins will argue that they've been sapient since long before they were uplifted, but the fact remains that they weren't able to communicate this to human technicians until after some work had been done. Dolphin uplift was relatively minor, with most of the changes taking place in the already complex structures devoted to echolocation. Modern dolphins can speak Galstandard West quite clearly and can make themselves understood whether their head is above or below the water.

If it's above the water, do not throw them a fish.

Most dolphins interact with surface folk via telepresence. Dolphin telepresence rigs can be seen scurrying along city streets, climbing trees, and conducting actual dolphin/human business in most of Earth's cities. Dolphins are easily bored, however, so the screen on most telepresence rigs you come across will simply display the block letters AFK.

Fagin Camjammer's Stainless Steel Urchins

"Fagin Camjammer" is clearly a pseudonym for someone familiar with the works of Charles Dickens and Harry Harrison. The hundreds of misdemeanorous young people in his gang of "Stainless Steel Urchins" are exceptionally well-trained in the street magic of making personal belongings disappear from persons who think they're paying attention. They're also quite adept at finding and exploiting gaps in surveillance systems, often taking the direct approach of creating the gaps with a collection of devices fabbed somewhere in the London Underground.

Master Ranger Evan Tenhawk

After a long career as a soldier-of-fortune, famously including several "bug hunt" deployments across the western spiral arm, Evan Tenhawk retired on Earth. His passion for tracking and eradicating dangerous creatures brought him to Juab Jurassica, where, retirement notwithstanding, the occasional adventure might present itself.

He acquired a solo permit and almost immediately crossed paths with a search-and-rescue mission. Tenhawk joined their effort, and by all accounts it is a good thing he did. After rescuing three park visitors, a guide, and an entire search-and-rescue team from a pack of carnotaurs, Tenhawk was approached by the park's management. They offered him the Master Ranger position, which they created on the spot, and which he has held for eighteen years.

Mister Aliss

Mister Aliss is site manager in Mall One, and is an employee of E³ LTD. His accent clearly marks him as a diplobrat, a human raised underwater on Celeschul as a dependent of human diplomats. His speech is littered with gerunds, infinitives, and water metaphors, and he waves his arms about while he talks, all of which are common among those for whom Galstandard Peroxide is their primary language.

What is not common knowledge is that he's not a diplobrat, at least not anymore. He's a Schuul whose mind has been cloned into the brain of an injured human, "resuscitated" after drowning under completely non-suspicious circumstances eight years ago. His observations of human culture in Mall One are reported back to the Schuul. He has made some missteps (the Parkata Urbatsu security team grew out of one of those), but he has successfully turned a profitable array of shops, boutiques, cafes, and hotels into an ideal environment for off-the-books dealing.

Octopus Citizen

Like Dolphins, the various species of uplifted Octopus insist that they've always been sapient. Unlike dolphins, uplifted Octopuses speak Galstandard Peroxide, a language much better suited to gesticulation and chromatophore-laden skin.

Mooks

Assasination Squad

2-4 individuals, 1 squad

Attack: 3d6 +10 **Damage:** 2d6+4

Defense: 16 **Reduction:** 2

Health: 4hp per squad member

Special: Tend to have 1 Sneak Attack Squad with them as a distraction. Will focus almost exclusively on their contracted target.

DP-SAR Squad

2-4 individuals, 1 squad

Attack: 3d6+6 **Damage:** 2d6

Defense: 14 **Reduction:** 0

Health: 4hp per squad member

Special: Can fly; can pluck falling people from the sky. Requires a TN 18 Athletics check, which the DP-SAR all gain a +8 on.

Game Hunters / Military Squad

6-12 individuals, 1 squad

Attack: 3d6+4 **Damage:** 1d6+3 *or* 3d6+3

Defense: 13 **Reduction:** 4

Health: 3hp per squad member

Special: They ignore 3 points of Reduction on anything they attack due to their specialized ammo. If the target is larger than "human" sized, they get +2d6 damage.

Human Special Forces

12 individuals, 3 squads

Attack: 3d6+10 **Damage:** 1d6+4 damage

Defense: 18 **Reduction:** 4

Health: 8hp per squad member

Special: If the HSF has surprise, and they exceed the defense by 2, they can choose to immobilize their target. If they exceed the defense by 8, they can choose to silently kill their target (yes, just dead. That's it).

Law Enforcement Unit

2-4 individuals, 1 squad

Attack: 3d6+7 **Damage:** 1d6

Defense: 13 **Reduction:** 0

Health: 3hp per squad member

Special: May be armed with goober rounds, immobilizing targets on a hit; "Call for backup."

Saboteurs / Sneak Attack Squad

1-3 individuals, 1 squad

Attack: 3d6+8 **Damage:** 2d6

Defense: 15 **Reduction:** 0

Health: 2hp per squad member

Special: If they surprise their target, they deal +2d6 damage that first round.

Ursumari SEAL Team

They're not fond of the term "SEAL" for a couple of reasons. First, seals are food. Second, the humans who called themselves SEALs were lightweights who couldn't take even one bullet to the chest without falling down. That said, the term stuck.

4 individuals, each fires individually.

Attack: 3d6+8 **Damage:** 3d6

Defense: 20 **Reduction:** 1

Health: 4hp per squad member

Special: Any ones on damage count as twos. Ouch.

Mobs

You won't encounter many privately-funded mobs in Sol System because once you run your private army up against a hard target you will attract the attention of a harder army in the form of law enforcement's armed response teams. In a situation that draws lots of police, for every ten LEO units (twenty to forty police officers) add one Human Special Forces unit, dispatched either from the local precinct or an adjunct military unit. Ordinarily the first LEOs on scene will call for help, and within two minutes their first backups will arrive. Special forces teams in full kit may arrive within five minutes, especially within Earth's megalopolises.

Monsters

Diamond Beetles

Imagine a terran rhinoceros beetle the size of a four-passenger bubble car. Now imagine yourself fleeing in terror, because adult Diamond Beetles have three-meter limbs with razor-sharp blades, are extremely aggressive, and delight in the consumption of hydrocarbon-based life. Their armored carapaces are the smoky black color of raw, impure diamond because, unfortunately for you and your puny sidearm, that's what they're made of. There are gaps in this armor, but you won't find yourself with more than just one or two opportunities to locate one, and everything you're shooting at is the color of shadows, fear, and death. 1

Attack: 3d6+10 **Damage:** 2d6

Defense: 18 **Reduction:** 20

Health: 15

Special: If a Diamond Beetle attacks someone who has already been attacked by a Diamond Beetle this turn, they deal +1d6 damage. They may never increase their total damage higher than 3d6.

Dinosaurs

Small Dinosaur

Comes in packs of 1d6+3

Attack: 3d6+3 **Damage:** 1d6+1

Defense: 14 **Reduction:** 3

Health: 3

Medium Dinosaur

Comes in packs of 1d3+3

Attack: 3d6+8 **Damage:** 2d6+2

Defense: 18 **Reduction:** 2

Health: 10

Large Dinosaur

Attack: 3d6+12 **Damage:** 3d6

Defense: 20 **Reduction:** 6

Health: 60

Tyrannosaurus Rex

Arguably the fiercest natural predator ever to walk the earth, the T-Rex was brought back from reverse-engineered DNA by some folks who saw late 20th-century films and figured that they could actually make a triassic-period game preserve safe.

Attack: 3d6+10 **Damage:** 2d6+8

Defense: 20 **Reduction:** 3

Health: 45

Special: Chompy (see special abilities); The T-Rex can attack 3 times a turn if it does nothing but attack.

1

WRITER: Very evocative. Good work.

WRITER: Um... thanks?

WRITER: Terl isn't back yet, and margins without comments in them might call attention to the fact that we're running unsupervised.

WRITER: But we're running, right?

Special Dinosaur Abilities

Just slap a few of these on there to make the terrifying dino-beast you want:

Acid Spray: This Dinosaur has a ranged attack that does 2d6 damage. If hit with this attack, you take the 2d6 damage every turn, until you spend 2 actions removing the acid.

Agile: Increase Defense by +6.

Armored Plating: +3 Reduction.

Chompy: When you use the Ablative Meat Shield rule against a Chompy Dinosaur, you don't get a 50% chance that your grunt lives. They die. Badly. And loudly.

Claws: Increase damage by 1d6.

Dumb: This dinosaur only gets one action a turn.

Feathers: Anyone trying to notice a feathered dinosaur takes a -4 on their Roll.

Gore: Horns increase damage by 2d6 in melee.

Massive: +15 Health.

Stealthy: This dinosaur has +6 to Stealth checks.

Example of Dinosaur Creation

Our Game Chief Olivia has decided her mercs will be attempting to capture a unique breed of genetically engineered dinosaur, the Kaijusaur!

Olivia wants it to be a challenge, but she doesn't really want the Kaijusaur to be a real threat...just hard to manage.

She needs it to be big, so she takes the Large Dinosaur base to create it from. Then, Olivia adds the following special abilities from the list above: Massive, Armored Plating, Dumb. This lands Olivia with the following final stats:

Kaijusaur

Attack: 3d6+12 **Damage:** 3d6

Defense: 20 **Reduction:** 9 (after the +3 from Armored Plating)

Health: 75 (after the +15 from Massive)

Special: Dumb (the Kaijusaur can only take one action a turn)

The dinosaur creation method here can be re-purposed to create monsters of many different types in different locations.

Celeschul (System)

Adventure Seeds

Celeschul (Planet)

Tentacle Robot Attack

A small team of heavily-armed schuul in land-crawling exosuits has attacked two embassies in the last week. The Schuul insist this is impossible. Neutral outside help (your mercenary company) is called in to track down the attackers and settle matters.

Twist: It's not schuul at all. The exosuits and their schuul-looking pilots are being run remotely by a group of Newts who want to start a civil war.

Additional Twist: Actual schuul in armed exosuits do exist. There are exactly four of them. They're clinically insane, and kept on a short leash by the Alschuul who know where all four

of them are, and they're *not* participating in whatever this is.

Habitats

Stationary Targets

Somebody blasted their way past a PAPA platoon on Elltooine, disabling surveillance on their way into the station. The group is heavily armed and armored and is obviously up to no good. The bounty is high, but if you choose to accept it, then you will need to use PAPA gear, and only PAPA gear.

Twist: The group that you're after is a hit-team who is running from a bigger, badder hit-team sent to exterminate them after a contract gone bad. The new group will arrive shortly.

Recover the Merchandise

The Planet Mercenary outlet on Elltooine has lost contact with one of its Customer Activation shuttles. Find it, and bring it back. Quietly, please. Do not loot it.

OR ***Steal the Merchandise***

You've been given the route for one of Planet Mercenary's Elltooine Customer Activation shuttles. Find it, and loot it. Do not get caught.

Twist: The shuttle doesn't contain the gear it is supposed to contain. This stuff is *way better*. Somebody on the inside may be embezzling PM gear. You might actually be part of their scheme in some way. Maybe it's time to go into business for yourselves? 1

Additional Twist: Planet Mercenary has people for this kind of thing, and they're on their way.

Guardians of the Galaga

Someone is out to steal a rare, fully-operational, 20th century arcade game console from the Powell Museum. Your job is to prevent this from happening.

Twist: The console is being used in a demo-play event, and will be out in the open where the public has access to it.

Additional Twist: The thieves don't want the console. They want the secrets embedded in a magnetic ribbon taped inside the wooden cabinet. Also, people who plan heists don't hire mercenaries for anything other than distractions or scape-goats. You should have known this before you took the job.

Companies & Organizations

Alschuul

Government

The native schuul hold ultimate governing authority in Celeschul system, specifically the 21,000 or so Schuul who are members of the Alschuul. The word has a long etymology, and in the native language it means something very similar to "hive mind," though that's not what the Alschuul is. To be fair, however, it's such a smoothly operating government the comparison is apt. There are governments that operate more quickly and efficiently than the Alschuul does, but those are either totalitarian states or actual hive minds.

The government is distributed, grouped in hundreds of pods scattered through the reef cities of the schuul. Alschuul members communicate in the native schuul language, which includes sounds, chemical signals, gestures, touch, and changes in color. This broad spectrum of signaling ensures clarity of communication, and some xenolinguists believe the speed at which the Alschuul arrives at consensus regarding new matters is due to "brain hacks" in the language, powered by the blend of chemicals flowing through the waters of the Alschuul pods.

Communication with non-schuul is done in Galstandard Peroxide, which lacks most of the chromatic, tactile, and chemical channels of the native tongue. The Lelesh Pods, which can be collectively, if simplistically, described as the Alschuul department of public affairs, are the only pods that will meet with surface dwellers and galactic visitors. Matters that must be deliberated on are transmitted to the other pods, and decisions are returned within a few hours.

Celeschul Orbital Foundries

Manufacturer: space vessels

The Terraforming War split the official military shipyards of Celeschul Defense Services some landing in Terraformer hands and others siding with The Continuance. For four years, Celeschul Orbital Foundries (COF) competed with itself. Foundry engineers on both sides of the conflict poured over their designs and tweaked their vessels to effectively fight against vessels with almost identical features. The end of the war saw the market glutted with COF vessels which, from a distance, looked like cookie-cut-

1

MKTG: This is seriously off-message. We are inviting them to play a game in which they steal our stuff.

DEV: Hear us out, because this is pretty clever. Obviously they're not *actually* stealing our stuff, but the stories they tell will convince them our stuff is worth having. In time they'll start coveting the real deal, and that will lead those of them who survive to spend their paychecks into our outlets to do some shopping.

MKTG: Get real. A sapient creature's purchasing decision loop is a fantastically difficult system to game.

DEV: You realize that "Dev" is short for "Game Dev." Gaming systems is literally what we do.

WRITER: Ignore them. That was a bad pun, not an actual claim to expertise.

MKTG: Terl's not back yet?

ter replicas of each other. COF designs stand as a fantastic example of the breadth of functionality available within a given chassis.

Though COF is still government owned, the popularity of their vessels on the secondary market led COF to dedicate some of their foundries to commercial work, and many fine COF products are available through Planet Mercenary. Recently the UNS, through the Joint Forces Treaty, absorbed Celeschul Defense Services, which includes Celeschul Orbital Foundries. COF continues to service commercial contracts. This remains a bone of contention, but COF turns a small profit and those profits are contributing to the defense of Celeschul system and Sol system, so COF services are still available.

Celeschul Defense Services (CDS)

Government agency

Prior to the arrival of Terrans, the Alschuul subcontracted Celeschul Defense Services to a fobott'r mercenary company, Victorsmith Fortificationators. The Alschuul recognized the need for an active defense in their skies, but they were constitutionally incapable of providing it themselves.

The defense of the planet transitioned to the terrans by 2275. During the Teraport Wars the Continuance signed the Joint Forces Treaty with the United Nations of Sol, which made CDS another arm of the UNS military. The Alschuul have communicated distaste for the arrangement, and while they acknowledge its expediency, they require a review of the treaty in 3106.

UNS officers hold advisory positions within the CDS. They do not command, but they are present on all CDS capital vessels. Three UNS Tricorn-class battleplates (*Boltysh*, *Boxhole*, and *Tookoonooka*), under command of UNS captains, are now ostensibly part of CDS fleets and under CDS admiralty. Military historians are uniformly uncomfortable with this arrangement, and many an essay has described just how ugly things will get should there ever be open conflict between the UNS and Celeschul.

CDS Headquarters is in Continuance Tower in Arnarsaftur, and per a rare Alschuul dictate, all senior officers are required to have windows facing south. From this vantage point they can clearly see Terrarium Park and the Titan Wall memorial.

The Continuance

Government

The terran government of Celeschul System (reorganized in 3073) is bicameral, with one set of governing bodies — those on Celeschul and in the Inner System — subject to the Alschuul, and a second set operating independently in Tash orbit, the Outer Belt, and beyond. This split sovereignty is a difficult arrangement, but the Continuance Charter mandates this configuration. In-system, all legislation passed by the Continuance Congress is subject to Alschuul veto, which has the effect of negating that legislation within Alschuul jurisdiction. Out-system, the law is still in effect, but must now be ratified each year in order to remain so.

The arrangement gives the Alschuul an enormous amount of power in non-Alschuul space, and this would be quite problematic if the Alschuul were of a mind to brandish this power. The Continuance, as a government, operates under an abiding respect for the original inhabitants of the system, and the Alschuul wields its veto power with a deep appreciation for the above-the-water services provided by the terrans.

Kelleigh, Earl, & Cook: Warbarristers at Law 1

Attorneys

In recent years, the low-cost legal services of The Partnership Collective have fallen into disfavor, in no small part because of accusations of collusion between The Partnership Collective and The Wormgate Corporation. This has afforded smaller firms the opportunity to thrive. One such firm, of particular note because of their focus on the mercenary business, is Kelleigh, Earl, & Cook, Warbarristers at Law.

KE&C specializes in contract law but has significant expertise in Rules of Engagement, a broad field that covers laws and legal proceedings in whatever theater of operations your company may be operating. This is a critical piece of intel worth spending money on, and KE&C has expertise most small mercenary companies do not have in their on-board counsel. Even companies with solidly trained counselors on their payroll may choose to engage KE&C for assistance in certain situations, especially those where collateral damage has resulted in the detainment of the legal counsel.

1

LEGAL: They really are killing it with that title.

SOPH_RES: If it will improve morale for your team, we can amend your terms of employment and let you call yourselves warbarristers.

LEGAL: Anyone here with objections will find themselves swiftly overruled.

JANO_CX: It sounds like morale is improving for you.

LEGAL: Oh, we're fine. It's not like we're late on any of *our* deliverables.

WRITER: AAUGH! You are all terrible and I—

LEGAL: Sure, we lost a partner, but we've reached that stage of grief where we admit to ourselves that he was less like a co-worker and more like a diseased body part.

WRITER: I... Nope. Just leaving it at "terrible."

Two of the senior partners, Kelleigh and Earl, do not leave the KE&C compound, a domed and shielded facility on the surface of Brilish, choosing instead to represent their clients as holograms. The third partner, Warbarrister Caelarch Cooke, travels widely with a retinue of paralegals and personal security forces. He is the agent in place when clients need to be un-detained, de-incarcerated, or otherwise extracted from the clutches of the local constabulary. These services come at a steep premium, and that high price includes the full bond levied to reduce the flight risk of high profile detainees.

Because KE&C works exclusively within the law, they frown upon skipping bail. If you've broken laws and are fleeing prosecution, KE&C may be the ones reporting your last position to the bounty hunters.

Malott

Manufacturer: armor

"Malott's Molecular Manipulation Manufacturing of Mitsusanyokyo" is a long, chewy mouthful of M-words too long for branding purposes. This was shortened not to "5M" or "Malott," but to "M&M," probably because "Malott of Mitsusanyokyo" just had two Ms.

Mitsusanyokyo is a cluster of habitats, rock-refineries, and foundries in the Inner Belt, and for centuries has been the tech innovation capital of Celeschul System; in part because Malott's powered-fullerene technology, used in the M&M suits, has given the entire cluster some serious cachet. These suits, whether manufactured locally or licensed to milspec fabbers, have been the uniforms of choice for CDS and the UNS military for decades. The revenue from Malott's contracts has enriched the entire Mitsusanyokyo cluster, and made the last three generations of Malotts among the wealthiest people in Celeschul System.

Powered-fullerene suits can be worn under just about anything and offer protection which, at the time they were first introduced in the 28th century, seemed miraculous. Right about the time the skin-tight M&M suits started being taken for granted (and copied earnestly by other manufacturers,) Malott's engineers renewed the miraculous feeling by incorporating micro-annies and inertiic mesh, along with neural phreak control webs. These allowed the suits' wearers to fly with just a thought and without any pesky implants.

Sophonts with no nudity taboos, or sufficient self-confidence, may choose to wear nothing but an M&M suit, whose carbonan and piezo-gel layers hug the body like a second skin or perhaps a thick layer of paint.

New TFF (Newts)

Rebel group

There is a small movement among Celeschul System's human population called the New TFF, and whose name was almost instantly shortened to "Newt" by those who would diminish their position. Newts see the bicameral Continuance government and the CDS as an occupation force. The self-styled rebels of the New TFF speak longingly of the terraformed Celeschul that almost was. Some Newts imagine themselves at the spearhead of a new revolution. They are, of course, closely monitored by CDS Intelligence Services and carefully shepherded away from situations in which they could get themselves or anyone else into actual trouble.

Port Authority Police Agency (PAPA)

Government enforcement agency

Elltooine's Port Authority Police Agency (PAPA) has law enforcement authority over the entire station, not just the port. They maintain high visibility in their friendly, lavender, uniform jumpers which you should probably not refer to as "Papa's Purple Pajamas." Lavender is not the same as purple, and those pajamas are worn over milspec M&M suits. Most PAPA agents are armed with stunners and goober batons, but anybody familiar with a powered fullerene skinsuit knows that these jammy-clad PAPAs can punch through a bulkhead. Or your face. Or *and* your face, depending on how close you're standing to the bulkhead.

Beat-walking PAPA agents are very friendly, and are trained in de-escalation. PAPA knows that just one skull-splintering will crimp legitimate commerce at the Port of Elltooine. Bashing heads is bad for business.

Sanctum Adroit

Mercenary police force

Sanctum Adroit is a venerable mercenary company with centuries of successful missions. They provide law enforcement services and work exclusively within the law, following their

own high moral standards. If you're hoping to add muscle to your totalitarian regime, Sanctum Adroit should not be your first choice.

Apprehensor-General James Conason chairs the executive board of Sanctum Adroit, and it is his leadership of the board that maintains the company's moral code. The Apprehensor-General and the executive board are rarely seen publicly. The face of the corporation is that of Colonel Menendez, whose chiseled jaw and handlebar mustache have become synonymous with Sanctum Adroit in the 16 years he's held the position.

Day-to-day operations fall under the purview of SA's mission commanders, who are afforded full initiative. Sanctum Adroit's Corps of Majors are among the finest commanding officers anywhere in law enforcement. The bulk of Sanctum Adroit's contracts, are small scale security operations in which their field officers function as adjuncts to local law enforcement. Their expert liaison agents ensure that the relationship between Sanctum Adroit and local LEO (Law Enforcement Officers) is amicable. They will often volunteer their services in the pursuit of criminals whose activities take them outside of the client's jurisdiction, strengthening an already solid reputation. Having Sanctum Adroit provide security for key facilities in a city makes the entire city safer.

On a larger scale, Sanctum Adroit offers turnkey precinctory services, deploying fully equipped, fully staffed police stations to establish or restore order in situations where the creation of local law enforcement would take too long. In these circumstances they work with the community, training up locals to take over the job of law enforcement once Sanctum Adroit's contract expires.

Wächter Landscaping and Defense

Manufacturer: armor

Wächter began as a residential and light commercial landscaping company on Celeschul, where the complex interaction of two planetary ecologies necessitated no small degree of finesse. Following the Terraforming Wars, Wächter landed several contracts to repair and restore the landscaping in the capital city of Arnarsaftur. Government agents asked Wächter to weaponize the hedge-drones, and Wächter refused on general principle until they saw the amount of money being offered. At that point, a few of the principles became far more specific.

Rather than arming the hedge-drones, Wächter redesigned them for active defense against incoming projectiles—swatting them, deflecting them, and even destroying them—without actually shooting back at the attacker. This principled focus on purely defensive measures has made Wächter Landscaping and Defense's "Goaltender" products the finest option available for situations where returning fire would be problematic. Wächter drones can be found in the landscaping around courthouses and embassies, and often accompany units of soldiers on peacekeeping missions.

Wächter has officially denied any participation in the engineering of proactive goaltender systems, but industry analysts point to the seamless integration of these systems into Golem suits as evidence that (at the very least) some of Wächter's engineers are moonlighting.

Persons

Apprehensor-General James Conason

In those rare circumstances when Sanctum Adroit finds itself having run afoul of either the letter or the spirit of the law, it falls to the Apprehensor-General James Conason to address the final appeals of those responsible for the misstep.

Conason began his career as an attorney in the Inner Belt, with an eye toward an eventual position with the judiciary. Like millions of people his age, he was swept up in the events of the Terraforming War, and his opinions regarding law, order, justice, and mercy, were shaped in reaction to the gross injustices of those years. Following the war he joined Sanctum Adroit, which (much like the rest of Celeschul System) was struggling to heal. Under his leadership, precinctory after precinctory returned to working order. Once he was promoted to Apprehensor-General, he finished the job of returning Sanctum Adroit to full adherence to its charter and moral code.

Sanctum Adroit officers and agents whose case files cross Conason's desk know that they will stand before a seasoned veteran of both war and peace-keeping whose standards are inviolate. They also know that regardless of the state of their appeal, they will stand as prominent examples to any others who might abuse their power as agents of Sanctum Adroit.

Lieutenant Colonel Samuel Powell

(*See history in Celeschul System, page 223*)

Hive Maven "Ma" Shephard

Occasionally an individual entirely unsuited to the competitive nature of station politics rises to power and changes the game. Hive Maven "Ma" Shephard is one such individual. She took the station's reins away from an oligarchy of semi-organized criminals. The details of that change of power have been efficiently swept not under a rug, but atop it, so that the rug could be rolled up and chucked out an airlock.

Haven Hive remains crime-ridden, but Hive Maven Shephard is making progress cleaning it up, backed by a cadre of enforcers who, under other circumstances, would fit right in with a crime family — and perhaps that's what Shephard's government will most resemble when it's done.

Lleuellish Wenlol responsibly-sevened Alschuul swimming-now-within Lelesh

If you can swim, speak Galstandard Peroxide, and have an issue that needs to be brought before the Alschuul, then it's likely you'll cross streams with Lleuellish Wenlol, whose title above is listed using the Galstandard West/Peroxide pidgin that best conveys its full meaning. Wenlol is quite large for a Schuul, measuring six meters from crown to tentacle-end, and looks quite threatening for a creature who could not, no matter how much he wanted to, bring himself to do you injury. He looks especially threatening when he talks, and spreads out to his full, ten-meter tentacle span in order to speak clearly.

Schuul citizen

The Schuul are aquatic sophonts, considered similar in appearance to Earth's giant squids, at least by people who don't get into the water much. Schuul have either five, six, or seven tentacles, arranged evenly at the base of their torsos. From crown to tentacle end they measure three to five meters, though some seven-tentacled individuals have been known to grow to six meters or beyond. They wear no clothing, and carry their personal belongings within a valved cavity[1] at the center of their cluster of tentacles.

Mooks

Newt Terrorists

2-5 individuals, 1 squad

Attack: 3d6+4 **Damage:** 2d6

Defense: 13 **Reduction:** 3

Health: 2hp per squad member

Special: Once per fight, can lob grenades that deal +1d6 damage; All their attacks have the Failure Prone quality.

PAPA / Sanctum Adroit squad

3-4 individuals, 1 squad

Attack: 3d6+5 **Damage:** 1d6+3

Defense: 14 **Reduction:** 2

Health: 3hp per squad member

Special: All attacks can switch between non-lethal mode and "lethal force" mode; +1d6 damage in melee.

Snail doped Warrior caste Schuul (squad)

These are all seven-tentacled Schuul, and are 5m in length. In melee they'll devote 3 tentacles to stabbing with molly-polly blades, and another four tentacles to wrapping around the target and holding it still. They wear fullerene sleeves on their tentacles, and articulated plate around their torsos. Their valved cavities are unarmored. That's where they keep their knives.

1-2 individuals, 1 squad

Attack: 3d6+7 **Damage:** 1d6+3

Defense: 12 **Reduction:** 6

Health: 3hp per squad member

Special: In melee can make 3 attacks per turn; As an attack, a Snail Doped Warrior Caste Schuul can make a "Grapple" as a normal attack. If successful, the target loses any benefits of Dodging, and while grappled sets their Defense to 5. The grappled target can break free with a TN 18 Athletics check.

Mobs

In most of the habitats you can get mobs of angry residents. They will know the layout of the station intimately and will support other squads, but they aren't likely to be well armed. Mobs of law enforcement squads are possible if you draw the wrong kind of attention on Elltoine or the planet surface.

1

R&D: I talked to our xeno team. Apparently "valved cavity" is code for "this is also the hole they poop through."

MKTG: You mean the Schuul have to empty their pockets every time they visit the toilet?

WRITER: I think they poop around their stuff. Somehow? I bet R&D's xeno people know.

MKTG: Please tell me nobody thinks we should hold the next layout pass to include those details.

R&D: If it was up to us the book would be a 40,000 page, multi-volume, polymath's master class. Are you actually asking us?

WRITER: We are so close, please don't say things like this. I think there's blood in my brow-glands.

JANO_CX: As a friend to all of Terl'Kris's writers, I will own this question, and unequivocally declare that we are not holding the next layout pass for descriptions of Schuul poop-pockets.

Monsters

No particular wildlife or monsters of concern here.

Plenipotent Dominion

Adventure Seeds

Childproofing for Robobabies

An incompletely-growprammed AI has been accidentally shipped to the surface, to a facility just five hundred meters from The Seam. This "baby" robot may go unnoticed by the working population of synthetic intelligences and machine sophonts, and might not know enough to stay out of the volcanoes.

Twist: You're accompanied by a roboticist from Urtheep Industries, who is doing some corporate espionage, and trying to find out where PD keeps one or more of its brains. The baby robot really is a baby robot, though.

Housewarming Arrest

Your company has been hired by a criminal organization (perhaps a Newt on Celeschul, or a raider from Ellwor) to go into the Plenipotent Dominion to extract information from a resident who lives there under one of the mandatory asylum and rehabilitation programs. They don't want the resident back, just the information, and they don't want the PD government to know they've gotten it.

Twist: The resident won't give up the info until you do a side-job for them (assist a family member, recover stolen loot, etc.).

Alternate Twist: The resident won't give up the info unless you break them out of the Plenipotent Dominion. Petey is willing to make it look like you and the resident have broken out, but only because he has his own plans for the criminal organization you're working for. Obviously you're now working for him, but maybe you can get paid twice.

Wargames

The event manager of Arena Rudel found out that you're trained mercenaries. There are other mercenaries in town, and the manager wants to schedule some vs. events between your companies. You'll be using arena-supplied gear that is fabbed to look and feel exactly like your own gear, except that it fires non-lethal marker rounds. The arena will be rigged with effector systems to yank "killed" players from the game, and replace them with lifelike casualty-dummies.

Twist: This is an audition. A potential employer is in the audience, and the mission he has in line for you will be very similar to the game you just played (boarding operation, capture the macguffin, etc.).

Alternate Twist: The other team is good. Like, impossibly good. How did they get this good? Are they cheating? Has the game been rigged? Or are we just terrible at this?

Alternate Twist: Anybody who brings actual lethal force onto the field will have a rude and embarrassing surprise the moment they attempt to deploy it. Petey monitors this area VERY closely and has a number of ways to intervene, including creating a teraport exclusion to give the offending player a moment or two on the outside of the station.

Recognition and Reconnaissance

One of your group members recognizes a face in the crowd. The face belongs to an assassin, and you're quite sure he's here for business, not asylum.

Twist: The assassin is working for the Damico-P'sloqye crime syndicate, and is about to kill Jevee Ceeta, and is very likely to succeed in making it look like an accident—no small feat under the nosy- nose of the largest mind in the galaxy.

Additional Twist: The assassin is after a piece of information micro-encoded on the underside of her left parietal bone. He doesn't need the whole head. Just a piece of it.

Fomentous Occasions

Petey has a penchant for sending potentially destabilizing folks (like, say, mercenaries) out into the wider galaxy where their troublemaking can be harnessed as trouble-prevention. Any mission you can dream up is something that may be offered by Petey in exchange for ship upgrades, reputation boosts, etc. Petey is extremely wealthy, but will never pay more than the going rate.

Possible Twist: Sometimes Petey's objectives align with local interests, and you can get paid twice, provided you do a bit of extra work.

Possible Twist: Sometimes Petey's objectives run completely contrary to everyone in the area. Being outed as his agents could be career-limiting in a terminal way.

Possible Twist: The mission may uncover information, technology, or nefarious schemes that will lead to further missions, with more risk and bigger paydays.

Companies & Organizations

The Wormgate Corporation

Giant business conglomerate, formerly in Transportation

The Wormgate Corporation has been known by thousands of different names over the millennia, adopting a different corporate "face" for each new civilization it connected to the greater galactic community. Its primary stock in trade was transit, but the information it gathered was used to aggressively grow an intragalactic portfolio of investments that was a hundred times the size of the economy of Sol System.

Today wormgates are rarely used as anything other than gravitational anchor points, and most of the the Wormgate Corporation's portfolio was seized by system governments during the Teraport Wars. The tiny fraction that remains is estimated to be about half the size of Sol System's economy, but it remains because it was well hidden. It is managed by former Sixth-Lord Pasht'k'ť'g'lang, acting CEO, under the supervision of Petey, who sits on the Wormgate Corporation's executive board. 1

Profitable Divestitures Ltd

Large business conglomerate, civil engineering

The Plenipotent Dominion has its own profit-generating apparatus, a set of business ventures operating under the umbrella of Profitable Divestitures Ltd (PDL.) This corporation is less than a year old, but is growing quickly and employs thousands of entrepreneurially-inclined sophonts in the Plenipotent Dominion. It is involved in housing and manufacturing projects in a dozen star systems, and is heavily invested in the turnkey agriponics, hypernode mindclustering, and health care industries.

Persons

Petey

Kind, but firm. Fair, but uncompromising. Transparent, yet undeniably manipulative. Petey's multi-nodal nature allows him to meet "personally" with anyone who seeks an audience, and thousands of people do this each day. Holographically, he manifests as a male ob'enn, and that's exactly what his flesh-and-bone nodes are.

Petey is not the only personality within the melded fleetmind, however. The AIs that came together under his leadership retain autonomy of thought, though the arrangement is difficult for most organic intelligences to imagine. Any of these AIs can holo-project within the Plenipotent Dominion, and will often manifest to converse with sophonts from the civilizations that originally growprammed them. Whether or not this is merely an illusion of diversity of thought within the Plenipotent Dominion is unknown, because the illusion is pretty good.

Athena, Profitability's Denominatrix

The Chief of Operations for Profitable Divestitures, Ltd, is the PD-node Athena, who was the AI for the UNS warship *Athens*. Her title is "Profitability's Denominatrix," and if you're looking to participate in some of PDL's exciting and healthily remunerative endeavors, you'll be meeting with her. She manifests as a blue-skinned, orange-haired human female, but has no corporeal avatar.

Sixth-Lord Pasht'k't'g'lang

The F'sherl-Ganni "Sixth-Lords" were the six chief executives of the Wormgate Corporation's Buuthandi. As such they were rulers over ten times more people than most star systems had, and were stripped of power at the end of the Teraport Wars. Pasht'k'ť'g'lang is 421,000 years old, and though she has fallen a long way from her former station, she still wields enormous economic influence. Aware of the impending seizures, she wrested control of the Wormgate Corporation from the other Sixth-Lords and succeeded in liquidating or otherwise protecting 1.31% of the Wormgate Corporation's galactic assets from claimants. She has spent the last two years camouflaging this portfolio, ensuring that these remnants of the F'Sherl-Ganni economic empire look like private businesses under assorted angel-investor umbrellas.

1

JANO_CX: I have concerns with this entry.

WRITER: I swear on my blackening stool it's true. Please don't hold us up over this. I did my homework.

JANO_CX: You did! The problem is that the paragraph shines a non-flattering light on Lord Pasht, who owns a few million voting shares of Planet Mercenary stock. Her proxy sits on the board.

WRITER: Please?

JANO_CX: You know what? Her proxy is an arrogant glumhorn who can't be troubled to vote half the time. Run the paragraph as-is, with my compliments on your accuracy.

WRITER: Thank you.

JANO_CX: And see somebody about that stool thing. Unless blackening is normal for you, of course.

Note

The Plenipotent Dominion is not a great place for combat encounters unless the point of the encounter is to put the players in jail, and then have Petey offer them a clemency deal in the form of a mission they wouldn't otherwise accept.

Pronouncing F'Sherl-Ganni Names

The apostrophes in f'sherl-ganni names represent tongue-stops between consonants. Non-linguists may struggle with pronunciation, but horn players familiar with "triple-tonguing" will figure it out.

Jevee Ceeta

The terran purp Jevee Ceeta does not look like she is seventy-four. She was an early recipient of secret longevity treatments, and the forty years that do not show have been busy ones, as have the thirty years that do. She has been, at various times in no particular order, a street enforcer, a private detective, a bouncer, an escort, a TFF soldier, a UNS officer, a mercenary, an assassin, a deep-cover operative, a political prisoner, and a fugitive. She has crossed swords with admirals and emperors, crime lords and corporate magnates. She has personally killed at least 120 people, and been directly responsible for the deaths of thousands.

Indirectly, her actions have probably killed millions of people.

She is genuinely quite sorry for all of this. Rehabilitation in Parnassus Dom is going well, but it will probably keep going for another century or two. This is fine with Jevee, because under Petey's watchful eye she is safe from the very long list of powerful and famous people who would like to see her receive energetic doses of assorted antidotes to her longevity.

Kevyn Andreyasn

If the stories are true, retired mercenary and fringe physicist Kevyn Andreyasn saved the galaxy by traveling through time. The easily verified facts are that he alerted Petey to the Pa'anuri threat, and set in motion the events that resulted in Petey's ascendency to Emperor Pius Dei of the Plenipotent Dominion.

He's pretty popular with Petey and with many of the local scholars and scientists, including the Gavs. He stays in touch with his time-clone, Captain Kevyn Foxworthy of Tagon's Toughs, but only on social matters, and is close friends with Commodore Karl Tagon.

His current research focus is the pa'anuri wars, which historians now believe to have resulted in cyclical exterminations of baryonic life. Andreyasn believes that the pa'anuri can be permanently defeated and/or contained, and that the failures of past civilizations may hold the key to eventual victory.

Mooks

The armed enemies you're most likely to run into in the Plenipotent Dominion are Petey's law enforcement bots. Any violent act will draw 1-3 bots within 15 seconds, and if the violence escalates, more bots will arrive within 45 seconds.

Enforcement Bot

4-6 individuals, 1 squad

Attack: 3d6+12 **Damage:** 1d3+1

Defense: 10 **Reduction:** 3

Health: 4hp per squad member

Special: If a target takes damage from a bot, they must make a TN 20 Endurance Check or fall unconscious; If a non-combatant next to a bot takes damage, the damage instead is done to the bot.

Three Bot Squad

As above plus:

Special: A three bot fire team can have two bots spend their turn hurrying away innocents. The remaining bot is the only bot of the three that can be attacked, as they splay their shields and actively intercept attacks.

Mobs

As stated above, if you encounter a large armed force in the Plenitpotent Dominion it's either your own people, or Petey's law-enforcement bots. Any violent encounter that extends beyond 45 seconds will attract dozens of these bots. Each group of 12 can perform one special action.

Special Action 1: ***Subdue***. The bots will, at great cost to themselves, pile into and around the aggressors, subduing them in just 2 turns. You're wearing a mech suit? They can disable it in one round and pull you out of it in the next. Assume 3 bots to one aggressor, so Subdue on four people takes 12 bots.

Special Action 2: ***Investigate scene***. Is there a danger here beyond the obvious one? Like a self-destruct device? Six bots can scan the entire scene in one turn, but take no other actions

Special Action 3: ***Clear the street***. Mobs usually don't form in the Plenipotent dominion, but if there are lots of bystanders, a dozen bots can shield them and remove them from the theater of operations in 1 turn.

Monsters

Pa'anuri

There are no pa'anuri in the Plenipotent Dominion, but Kevyn Andreyasn can tell you all about them should you encounter them elsewhere. These are planet-sized, sometimes star-sized, you can only combat them while wearing a star ship.

Attack: 3d6+10 **Damage:** 3d6+6 Hull damage

Defense: 10 **Reduction:** 15

Health: Hull Points - 6

Special: ***Gravy Gun***: The pa'anuri has access to a Heavy Quality Gravy gun (as in the ship section); A pa'anuri can hurl any large item that does not have it's own propulsion as an attack (space stations, debris, asteroids). This attack lowers the attack bonus to +3, but deals 6d6 damage or 1d6 Hull Points damage; Reduction is 0 if targeted while the pa'anuri is inside a TAD or by gravity weapons.

Pereri Ring

Adventure Seeds

Skin Deeper

One of your machine-intelligence party members would like to try some of the more esoteric upgrades available only in the Pereri Ring. Moakia Meatworks looks promising.

Twist: One of the engineers at Moakia Meatworks has been providing abominable upgrades to esspererin heretics. These heresies are considered to be pathological disorders. Authorities are enroute to excise this diseased tissue from the general body of the population.

Additional Twist: The owners of Moakia Meatworks are horrified at what their engineer is accused of, and insist they had no knowledge of it. They will pay well if you will defend them and their facility from being turned to ash.

Cyborg on the Run

You're approached by an esspee seeking asylum for their cybernetic leanings. Local authorities are closing in on them, and will not hesitate to put holes in your hull. They will, however, hesitate to put holes in the hull of the UNS Embassy, and the Embassy is just a few million kilometers away.

Twist: The esspee isn't just a heretical believer in cybernetics. They're a cyberneticist, and could you please rescue their patients? You will be paid in upgrades. Lots of upgrades. Guaranteed good, yes.

Alternative Twist: The embassy's security attaché is one of your personal enemies, who would dearly love to have you owing them a favor.

Pereri Elm Disease

A fast-moving, electro-acidic nanoplaque is devouring the collection panels on one of the Abentro Cor planetoids. Infected trees must be removed, from the planetoid, destroyed, and their bits thoroughly disinfected. The clean, raw materials must then be returned, and there will be well-armed scavengers hoping to lay their own claim to the goods.

Twist: This is sabotage, but it's not about the materials. It's about preventing this node from deploying sails. Pret is on closest approach during the next few weeks and, without sails,

MAXIM 9

Never turn your back on an enemy.

the planetoid will be tugged free of the cluster, and become impossible to defend.

Maybe They Won't Notice Us

Sashil's Counterthread, a lone worldlet with a population of hundreds of thousands, is approaching the Oshka Kree cluster and will be at its closest — just 580,000 kilometers from the cluster's outer members — in six weeks. You've been hired to protect Sashil's Counterthread from Oshka Kree raiders.

Twist: There are esspees among the Sashili who think they would be better off with gravitational and political capture by the Oshka Kree, and they're working against you.

Additional Twist: The Oshka Kree prefer to capture property and materiel rather than people. Everybody living on Sashil's Counterthread will get fed to the trees, traitors included.

I've Seen This Episode

A Gilligan has seen you arrive, and he is convinced that you're here to rescue him and his friends.

Twist: This is playing out a lot like a comedy of deliberate errors. It's almost as if the very people you are offering transportation to are sabotaging the operation for the sake of the narrative.

Additional Twist: Do not let The Professor touch your stuff.

It's Conspiracies All The Way Down

An Ana Lucia has seen you arrive, and she is convinced that you're one of The Others. Ordinarily these in-character interactions are harmless and abandoned after a few days, but this Ana Lucia is a little extra-crazy and is organizing an attack.

Twist: One of you *is* one of The Others. Or at least is part of a conspiracy that sounds like it's straight out of *Lost*. Good luck, Game Chief!

MAXIM 39

There is a difference between "spare" parts and "extra" parts.

Companies & Organizations

Eshte Xerik Defense Force (EXDF)

Government enforcement agency

The Eshte Xerik Defense Force was built on contract with the help of Planet Mercenary and respected manufacturers like Gaines-Uashjo, Fox & Young, and Aguirre Galactic. It is a state-of-the-art fleet, and a visible display of the wealth — and wisdom! — of Eshte Xeric.

Moakia Meatworks

Medical/engineering facility

The esspererin have ethical issues with augmenting themselves, but they will very enthusiastically modify your pet robot. Or you. Their enthusiasm may extend into artistry. Their own bodies are temples, but other people's bodies are fair game. The esspererin engineers of Moakia Meatworks in the Eshte-Xeric cluster are renowned meat-artists whose work is guaranteed to last for decades. Alive, even.

One of the junior Meatworks engineers, Sata Qusk-qu, is believed to have contacts among heretical esspererin. It is possible that Sata is performing illegal, immoral, and highly profitable procedures at a separate facility.

Persons

Ana Lucia

Most of the esspees calling themselves "Ana Lucia" are female and are combat-trained. They're well prepared to play the role of an emotionally unstable ex-cop who is quick to resort to violence.

Gilligan

The esspees calling themselves "Gilligan" are usually male, and are enthusiastically inept. They're friendly and kind, but will invariably do something that is both well intentioned and causes a cascading chain of hilarious events. Gilligans are non-combatant and will flee if they can. In combat there is a 50/50 chance that direct hits on Gilligans will do zero damage. Perhaps subconsciously these esspees are geniuses at dodging, and their subconscious is a slave to the story.

The Professor

Esspererin in the role of "The Professor" are among the most brilliant engineers you'll meet and should always be your last choice for repair work. Even if your next-to-the-last choice is "do without the repairs and take your chances." Professors will have an Engineering skill of 10 or better and will always draw Mayhem on an engineering success, but never draw it doing anything else.

Esspererin Merchant

So savvy. So very savvy. Expect to be convinced you're getting a fantastic bargain. So good, in fact, that it may be some time before you figure out it was merely a fair deal, or perhaps even overpriced.

Mooks

There are literally millions of kinds of combat-oriented esspererin—a statistical inevitability in a system with uncounted trillions of inhabitants. We've picked a few of the interesting and/or common ones. Generally speaking, esspererin combatants are reluctant to use overwhelming destructive force. Their society is material-poor, and collecting the pieces of a vaporized thing is expensive. If it was *your* thing, it's extremely expensive.

Combat Engineer

1 individual

Attack: 3d6+6 **Damage:** 1d6+1

Defense: 15 **Reduction:** 3

Health: 8

Special: A combat engineer can use their action to either fix or break something important. Roll a TN 21 Engineering skill check (with a bonus of +10); if successful, they successfully fix or break the targeted item.

Sashiko Armored Cavalry

1-4 individuals

Attack: 3d6+10 **Damage:** 4d6+1 or 1 Hull Damage

Defense: 10 **Reduction:** 15

Health: 10hp per squad member

Special: None

Esspererin Pirate

1 individual

Attack: 3d6+5 **Damage:** 1d6

Defense: 12 **Reduction:** 4

Health: 6

Special: Against other esspererin, Damage increases to 1d6+4; against law enforcement, Damage becomes TN 20 Endurance check or lose consciousness.

Eshte Xerik Defense Force Squad

1 sashiko, plus 3 boarders.

Sashiko

Attack: 3d6+10 **Damage:** 4d6+1 or 1 Hull Damage

Defense: 10 **Reduction:** 15

Health: 40

Special: None

Boarders

Attack: 3d6+5 **Damage:** 1d6

Defense: 12 **Reduction:** 4

Health: 6

Special: Against other esspererin, damage increases to 1d6+4

Heretic Cyborg Espee Squad

1-5 individuals, 1 squad

Attack: 3d6+10 **Damage:** 3d6

Defense: 18 **Reduction:** 10

Health: 5hp per squad member

Special: -3 to any Social Rolls involving other Esspererin.

Mobs

The biggest danger presented by an esspee mob lies in their combat engineers, who are extremely adept at working in teams to swiftly disassemble or disable things. They also learn quickly. Any task at which they succeed (forcing a Gaines-Uashjo vessel hatch, disabling a Döblitz armory STS weapon) will be reduced in difficulty by one category the next time they try it. This can only happen once per task.

Monsters

Electro-Acidic Nanoplaque

This is not a self-aware thing you're fighting. It's just a stupid disease that happens to be smart enough to climb past things it can't eat in order to get to tasty things that it can. It loves sensitive electronics, especially the thin-film circuitry of Pereri System "foliage."

It does not attack unless you actually touch it. Any powered system it gets into will be disabled in 1-3 rounds, so don't get it on your fancy weapons, don't drop your handbrain in it,

and for the love of chrome don't let it get into your ship.

It can be destroyed with high heat (1000° C should do it. Beam weapons will work) or with specifically tailored anti-plaque agents. The anti-plaque compounds are slow to work, and usually cost more than killing with fire.

Eina-Afa

Adventure Seeds

One of These Things is Not Like the Others

There is a city-sized cluster of buildings in the Spindle Superopolis whose architecture has a makeshift, ragged look to it that doesn't match that of the rest of the megastructure. An expedition to this cluster has gone silent, except for their hypernode distress beacon.

Twist 1: The makeshift look is from efforts to fortify the cluster with pieces of itself. At some point in the distant past, ambitious scavengers built defenses to guard the loot they couldn't carry out in one trip.

Twist 2: The defenses were automated, and one of the ancient bots is sapient now, but in a sociopathic sort of way. It killed the expedition, captured a hypercom, and is just now discovering galactic culture, which it dislikes.

The Belly of the Beast

The local Underdean of New Yale Prime is reporting that a team of NYP's research students has disappeared in the jungle. The university has hired you to investigate. If you can't recover the students, maybe you can recover their valuable research?

Twist: They got eaten in the night by something very, very large. So large that they're still alive, cowering within their collapsing habhuts. You'd better hurry. Also, be careful not to kill them while getting them out.

Additional Twist: Even if you get all of them out alive, one of them is dead. Murdered. Could it be that this animal attack was a very poorly-planned coverup?

A Maze of Twisty Passages

Someone, or a group of someones, has illegally invaded one of the Ot-Skadak hive mountains. Their armor is spoofing Hive senses, and they're running amok. Hunt them down and make them stop.

Twist: They have a bomb. They plan to hold the Hive hostage to secure wealth from Chinook.

Additional Twist: The Ot-Skadak hive is evacuating the Philosopher Drones and breeding stock, and will shortly send warriors in to kill everything that isn't Ot-Skadak.

Grave Robbers

Someone stole several hundred soul foils from a soulcrypt, and successfully smuggled them out of Eina-Afa. The Neoafan Council will pay handsomely for their recovery.

Twist: The crime was financed by an emigrating Ot-Skadak hive seeking to install the foils' memories into its own 20,000-year memory. It's a genealogy project.

Companies & Organizations

Jumpstar Prime Precinctory

Government enforcement contractor

Sanctum Adroit's Jumpstar Prime Precinctory is the headquarters for the capital city's law enforcement. This mobile command center sits among the pods of the business district, and serves as a barracks, quartermastery, and garage for eleven-hundred SA agents.

The SA-JP Precinctory has executive office space for Adroit Senior Colonel Menendez, who, in addition to his duties to the wider company, oversees local operations and personally liaises with the Neoafan Council. (*For more on Sanctum Adroit see page 301.*)

Neoafan Council

Governing body

This governing body of the Neoafan Freehold is headquartered in Jumpstar Prime. There are thirteen councilors: four each from the Neoafans, Ot-Skadak, and Prabstdi, and one, the thirteenth councilor, who is selected by the council to serve as their tie-breaking vote. Councilor Thirteen is currently a bradicor named Vog, who has lost the most recent 11.9 million years of memory of his twelve-million-year life span, and feels a kinship toward the lost ancient civilization of Eina-Afa.

The Neoafan Council is quite young and is actively drafting legislation and issuing direc-

tives to address problems as they arise. Try not to make them create a new rule for you.

Tagon's Toughs

Independent mercenary company

Founded by Captain Kaff Tagon in 3093, Tagon's Toughs gained fame as the marketing arm for Andreyasn Ventures Unlimited, who purchased controlling interest in the company so they could use it to bring the teraport to market. Teraport technology ended an otherwise stable period for galactic civilization, creating an environment in which a mercenary company like Tagon's Toughs could thrive, so political scientists and conspiracy theorists will not discount the possibility that the company deliberately fomented galactic conflict.

Tagon's Toughs is under the command of a board of officers made up of Captain Kaff Tagon, Captain Alexia Murtaugh, and Captain Kevyn Foxworthy, and chaired by Commodore Karl Tagon, who is Captain Tagon's father. The most recent force analyses state that their fleet is comprised of three ships: the flagship *Breath Weapon* (a Neoafan battleship), the science and utility vessel *Maxim Thirty-Nine* (a Daysun-Tingo harmless sparrow,) and a third ship, likely a dragon-class cruiser, currently under construction by Celeschul Orbital Foundries. Full specifications and offensive capabilities of this fleet are unknown, but to quote one analyst, "it's unlikely that the sparrow is actually harmless." Note also that galactic powers like the UNS have backed down from confrontations with the Toughs, so whatever power they wield, it may be flowing from the barrels of more than just their own guns. 1

Persons

Captain Kaff Tagon

Kaff Tagon's military career began in earnest in 3069 when the Terraforming War began. Young Lieutenant Kaff Tagon reported for duty with the Continuance, and was promoted on the spot to captain (filling a casualty-induced vacancy.) He led the 229th Infantry Battalion and in 3073 received the nondescript Medal of Acceptable Valor.

For almost twenty years following the war, Lieutenant Tagon served with the 196th Home Guard, a battalion that gained fame as "the Oatmeal Peacekeepers" just prior to his tours. His service during this period was either unremarkable or expertly classified. In 3093 he went

into business for himself, founding a mercenary company, Tagon's Toughs. His activities for the last seven years have drawn attention. Many of his exploits have been dramatized in Magic Dreamland's "*Schlock Mercenary Show*," but the truth, as always, is stranger than those fictions—stranger, and less accessible. As of this writing, Captain Tagon appears to have allied himself with the Plenipotent Dominion, the Neoafan Freehold, and multiple first-estate factions in the UNS. However, appearances can be deceiving and a great many details regarding his operations have been scrubbed from public records.

Captain Alexia Murtaugh

Captain Alexia Murtaugh began her career with a decade's service with the CDS military police in the Outer Belt, starting in 3059. The Terraforming War interrupted that, and she was conscripted, at gunpoint, into the TFF. Her boarding party was captured by the Continuance in late 3069, and she enthusiastically volunteered for service with the cause that seemed more righteous to her. Following the war she enlisted with Sanctum Adroit, serving there with honor and numerous promotions

1

JANO_CX: No mention here of their... "not-insubstantial" wealth.

WRITER: Please tell me that's okay. I couldn't actually find a way to measure it with numbers.

JANO_CX: It's fine. It's all fine.

WRITER: I mean, by one standard their company is worth more than my home planet.

JANO_CX: I said it's fine. And that value is possible, depending on where you're from.

WRITER: Don't tell her. STAY SAFE.

JANO_CX: For the love of sapience, people... it's as if you have late stage malignant fear tumors. And I sincerely hope those aren't an actual thing for you. It's okay! Don't tell me who you are. And don't dry-heave, or brow-bleed, or whatever you personally do under terrible distress. I'm not going to injure, kill, or fire anybody on this team, and I'm not going to make you hold up the project over something silly like a few dozen zeroes.

until her indecorous sacking in early 3099. She enlisted with Tagon's Toughs in late 3099, and was present on Earth, in the capitol district of Dom Atlantis during the events of the New Year's War. Her role in that conflict is classified.

Captain Kevyn Foxworthy

Captain Kevyn Foxworthy, in the parlance of temporal theorists, is "this universe's Kevyn" and is six weeks younger than his time-clone, who lives in the Plenipotent Dominion. Until very recently Captain Foxworthy was surnamed Andreyasn, but he took the name of his spouse, Commander Ellen Foxworthy, in what was either a domestic compromise, deliberate disambiguation, or an attempt to obscure his identity as the inventor of the teraport.

Captain Foxworthy currently commands the Tagon's Toughs vessel *Maxim Thirty-Nine*, which is a Daysun-Tingo "Harmless Sparrow" and serves as the fleet's science and utility vessel.

Chief Justice Massey Reynstein

Chief Justice Massey Reynstein is the foremost judicial authority on Eina-Afa, a position he seems to have acquired by being the only person with legal training when the ad-hoc government sprang into existence. Reynstein personally drafted the current iteration of the Constitution of Jumpstar Prime, a document which is still being added to as scientists, historians, tourists, and mercenaries all incite the new government to further regulate them.

Chinook 1

She has many titles: Goddess of Earth, Wind, and Plumbing; Our Sentinel of Perpetual Overwatch; Cryptkeeper; Vaultminder; Stormtender; Spider Queen; Wealservant; Avenging Deputy; but most of the time she requests to be called Chinook. She is the mind of Eina-Afa—literally. She is the A.I. with direct and ultimate control of the entire structure. That fleet of ancient warships you've heard rumors about? She commands those. Mostly Chinook is polite and quite content to let people go about their business. There have been second-hand reports of her being impolite and discontent, but those have yet to be corroborated by surviving witnesses.

Commodore Karl Tagon

In 3091, at age 75, General Karl Tagon retired from Celeschul Defense Services after a long career that included both lauded and undisclosed heroics in command of Continuance forces during the Terraforming War. In early 3099 he was the focus of an off-the-books rescue operation involving his son's mercenary company, the Damico-P'sloqye syndicate, and, it is rumored, the Plenipotent Dominion. By late 3099 he had re-surfaced as Commodore Tagon, having accepted an offer from his son to take command of the company.

According to highly-placed sources, his interests include wishing for grandchildren, and hand-painting garden gnome defense drones.

Neoafan Citizen

From a distance, a neoafan looks like a small blimp with ropes hanging from it. These lighter-than-air sophonts measure between two and four meters in length, and their gossamer tentacles reach about three meters. neoafans are long-lived, and the older they get the larger they get. None of them are more than 400 years old, however, so none have reached full size, which is estimated to be 120 meters in length.

Neoafan skin is relatively fragile, and their lift breath is hydrogen gas; their least favorite things are fire and anything sharp. Sharp, burning things are horror incarnate. Their interior chambers are lined with aluminum nanofoil, which prevents osmotic loss of hydrogen, and which is etched by neoafan nanocytes to provide non-volatile long-term memory. The neoafans are, therefore, yet another example of the galaxy's diverse types of mechorganic life.

1

LEGAL: Are we taking cosmetic liberties here?

TERL'KRIS: Chinook upgraded her avatar. She's got a meatspace node now, and it really sells the goddess angle. Somehow she got wind of this project, and begged me to squeeze in a portrait.

JANO_CX: She looks lovely. Terl, I'm glad you're back. You need to check in with your team, stat.

The entire population of neoafans is descended from a few who were discovered, frozen and desiccated, aboard an ancient derelict four centuries ago. The prabstdi spent decades studying them, and eventually restored them to life, bringing oafan sophonts back after millions of years of extinction. This project led to the re-discovery of the ancient mega-structure Eina-Afa, and is the source of the prabstdi claim to a slice of that world's delicious, archeologically-significant pie.

Ot-Skadak Citizen

The Ot-Skadak, very recently discovered, are hive-mind creatures, and were not at first thought to be sapient. Each Ot-Skadak is comprised of many millions of individual units, and there are hundreds of types of these units ranging in size from a few centimeters to several meters. There are only about two thousand Ot-Skadak hives in Eina-Afa, but there are billions of units, and they can be found in every biome. Notable unit types include the large philosopher drones and warrior drones, of which a hive may have a few hundred; the medium-sized soldier and worker drones, deployed in squadrons of dozens, but which number in the tens of thousands; and the swarms of scout and commnode drones, whose millions of units make up most of the biomass of the hive.

Four Ot-Skadak hives are represented on the Neoafan Council, and the representatives are triads of philosopher drones; the Council has thirteen members, but there are twenty-one bodies, and twelve of them belong to the Ot-Skadak.

Ot-Skadak learn quickly and are eager to become full-fledged participants in galactic civilization. They have incorporated hypernodes and signal boosters in their hives, putting their philosopher drones online on the hypernet, and allowing their warrior drones to accompany other sophonts anywhere in the galaxy without being cut off. They already speak all of the Galstandard languages fluently, and have begun negotiating with several galactic powers for real estate on other worlds. 2

Prabstdi Citizen

These quadrupedal sophonts were briefly dubbed "centauroids" by the first galactic-faring humans, but prabstdi have been members of galactic civilization for longer than humans have had myths about centaurs. In point of fact, some prabstdi individuals are older than those myths. Regardless, the name did not stick.

There are only about twenty billion prabstdi galaxy-wide, but they are exceedingly long-lived, and are very influential within educational, scientific, and curatorial communities. The junior-most prabstdi representative on the Neoafan Council, Banasti Derp, is six hundred and six years old. The senior member has not disclosed her own age, but is at least two thousand.

Prabstdi culture is rich and varied, but is disproportionately represented by pursuits in the fields of xenoarcheology, xenobiology, and galactic history. Their own longevity may have afforded them a perspective that makes these subjects particularly interesting. Prabstdi scientists assisted terran sophonts in the restoration of numerous extinct Earth species and have done similar work on thousands of other worlds.

Sergeant Schlock

This carbosilicate amorph has achieved more infamy than any other of his kind in recent history. His name is a mild epithet in Galstandard West, and was given to him by the oth pirate crew who "liberated" him from Ghanj-Rho, the world of his birth. His rank was granted to him by the mercenary captain who has been exploiting his penchant for cheerful violence.

Schlock usually carries a BH-209 or BH-250 plasgun from Strohl, but as likely as not it's a milspec fabber knock-off to replace one that he broke. During a recent engagement in Earth's capitol, Dom Atlantis, he acquired a number of industrial grade chainsaws, and has been seen wielding one or more of those as well.

Experts on carbosilicate amorph biology have reviewed files on Sergeant Schlock, and tentatively concluded that he does things any amorph can do, but he does most of them quite a bit better, suggesting that he is quite a bit older than his documented history suggests. His skill at chemical synthesis is on par with a field suite from Molygen Labs. His awareness of the space around him rivals that of kreely acrobats, frellenti aerobats, and terran bats. He demonstrates the strength of a commercial grade hydraulic press, and has once been observed eating a commercial grade hydraulic press.

No discussion of Sergeant Schlock's exploits can be meaningfully complete without an in-depth discussion of Tagon's Toughs mission log. Since that log is not a matter of public record, the discussion must necessarily remain

2

WRITER: I wrote an entire adventure among the Ot-Skadak. This entry is just 300 words.

TERL'KRIS: I actually got it under 250.

WRITER: Golly, Terl, I am *so* glad you are back.

TERL'KRIS: That adventure was so good we broke it out into its own product, which our field sales teams will run for convention attendees.

WRITER: I'm a grown-up with a fully-formed carapace. Just say "we turned it into marketing copy."

TERL'KRIS: Come *on!* I pulled it out because it was too long to stay in, too good to throw away, and that deadline is breathing down my neck like an ob'enn warlord looking for the best place to begin chewing.

JANO_CX: Can I see it? No, wait... can your team *demonstrate* the game with it? On me?

TERL'KRIS: Okay.... but only if I choose the venue, and can bring a security detachment.

JANO_CX: Deal.

incomplete. Let us conclude on this point: if you see him coming, he has probably seen you, and it may be too late to run.

Run anyway.

Yaeyoefui Soul-Keeper

As if bringing an entire species of sophont back from the dead wasn't cachet enough, the prabstdi scholar-technicians of Eina-Afa recently restored a long-dead elder oafan to life. Yaeyoefui Soul-Keeper was a libriarian of the dead, a curator of the soul-crypts of Eina-Afa from the millennia prior to the completion of those crypts. "Yaeyo" died and was interred long before the oafan race waned and vanished, and is today the best and only source of first-tendril information about numerous peoples from eons past.

Mooks

Jumpstar Prime is home to thousands of botanists, biologists, and historians from hundreds of different galactic cultures. It's also home to tens of thousands of shopkeepers, merchants, technicians, and other camp followers of Big Science. None of these people are particularly interested in making trouble, but if you threaten their data, or their inventory, things can turn ugly fast, at which point you'll find that many of them brought their own security teams along for good measure. Encounters of this sort can be built using Mook entries elsewhere in this section.

Mobs

Again, the large groups that assemble in Jumpstar Prime are not doing so to make war. If that's a thing you are assembling to make, there are only two mobs of note: Sanctum Adroit's armed response dispatch, and Chinook's crypt spiders. The first of these is covered earlier in the Celeschul section page 303. The second is covered next.

Monsters

Crypt Spiders

Originally designed by Para Ventura and Ellen Foxworthy, the Crypt Spider mechanical units are now built and maintained by Chinook. She has ten thousand of these at her disposal, and while most of them are busy cataloging the soul crypts, these synthetic intelligences are also responsible for certain types of emergency services. At any given time, at least a hundred of them are within 10 minutes fast burn of any point in the station. A thousand of them are within two minutes of any location within Jumpstar Prime. They are technically unarmed, but they are very strong, can fly, and will absolutely sacrifice themselves to keep the peace without killing people.

Attack: 3d6+9 **Damage:** 1d6+1

Defense: 12 **Reduction:** 3

Health: 6

Special: Multi-Arms: Crypt spiders can make 3 attacks a round in melee, but only to disarm or restrain. No more than 2 attacks per target. If hit, a successful TN 20 Athletics check will break the restraint; Crypt spiders can fly. Alternatively, if they are not in flight, they may use their thrusters to make a ranged attack that deals 2d6 damage, and has a +6 on the attack roll.

Dziraka

This is the Ot-Skadak name for the "hexapodal pulper" that is referenced in the Eina-Afa location section. It is a giant herbivore, 60m tall at the forward shoulder and 120m long nose to tail. These enormous creatures have long claws for shredding entire trees, which they'll then stuff into their cavernous mouths, and grind with teeth well adapted for pulverizing foliage, wood, and probably even rock. And you, if you were in that tree.

They have the same hydrogen-creating metabolism as the wing sharks, but they also have oxygen-rich gas bladders under their tongues, and huge hydrocarbon bladders deep in their throats. With these the dziraka can spray fire on those varieties of Eina-Afan wood that digest better after cooking. The dziraka will usually let the fire burn for a few minutes, then stomp it out and devour the mushy, ashy results.

Attack: +0 **Damage:** 5d6

Defense: 15 **Reduction:** 6

Health: 80

Special: All attacks from a Dziraka ignore reduction; Once every 3 rounds, a Dziraka can spray fire in a ranged attack that can hit up to 5 targets and deals 3d6 damage. If hit, the target is on fire, and takes 1d6 damage each turn until they spend one action to put it out.

Katka

In the Ot-Skadak language, katka means "big, dangerous water-thing," and they're big enough to merit "here there be dragons" icons on maps

of Eina-Afa's oceans. The katka zithra, which is essentially an enormous sea-serpent, is just one of several varieties of katka in Eina-Afa, including the katka gor (which have mouth tentacles,) and the katka zagzi (which have fins and vestigial legs.) There is no contiguous ocean to prevent these populations from evolutionary divergence, but all of them are happy to eat anything they can swallow. Usually this is schools of smaller aquatic creatures, but you and your entire platoon will also fit, and in just one gulp if you're close enough together. This will not go well for you, because the katka can digest metals, ceramics, and polymers only slightly less quickly than meat and bone.

Attack: 3d6+9 **Damage:** See Special

Defense: 0 **Reduction:** 0

Health: 500

Special: A successful attack from a katka swallows the target; If you can do 30 points of damage to it from the inside, you've made a hole you can get out through. No "to hit" check, but there is a TN 12 Athletics check to be able to use your weapon at all. Succeed, and you get to deal damage.

Tufted Wing Shark

These lighter-than-air giants are called ufkoa by the Ot-Skadak, who like to eat them, and have no trouble killing them. Their blimp-like torsos are 120 meters long, and they have a 200 meter wingspan. Their low-slung heads most notably feature a twenty-meter-wide mouth that opens to a height of almost ten meters. Fortunately they're not very fast, and don't actively hunt things. That mouth is there to allow them to slurp all the best bits (including lots of unsuspecting fauna) from the large leaves of Eina-Afa's vertical jungles. These omnivores live at altitudes between 1000km and 2000km, and will leave you alone, unless you happen to be camped out on the wrong leaf.

If you shoot a wing shark with beams or incendiary weapons, you might think you killed it when it vents burning hydrogen, deflates, and dives below the rush of flame toward the nearest pillar. Of course, if you make a big enough hole all at once, and ignite it just so, it's possible to cause an explosion. This will attract the attention of Chinook, who will send her crypt spiders to collect you for crimes against Mother Nature, which is one of Chinook's titles.

Attack: 3d6+0 **Damage:** 1d6

Defense: 0 **Reduction:** 0

Health: 500

Special: Any attack that deals more than 10 points of damage and is from a beam weapon, will ignite the wing shark, causing it to spew flame and vent. There's a 1 in 6 chance that each character near the wing shark is hit and takes 2d6 damage.

Tkutska Dak

These giant, winged beetles are about the size and temperament of flying grizzly bears, except without the surprise at suddenly being flying. So, they're the size of flying grizzly bears, but their temperament is more like that of a school of piranha. They're carnivorous pack hunters, and they're frighteningly intelligent. Which means they're not quite smart enough to be bribed with trinkets. Or perhaps they're too smart for that.

They've been known to falsely flee an encounter in order to lure aggressive targets forward into an ambush, and that's just one of their terrifyingly effective hunting techniques. The Ot Skadak name for them is a play on words that means both "The Broken People" and "The People Breakers." Ot Skadak legend says they're the descendents of a corrupted, diseased Ot Skadak hive that mutated into a monster instead of politely dying.

Attack: 3d6+10 **Damage:** 2d6

Defense: 18 **Reduction:** 5

Health: 10

Special: If they kill something, a group of 4 will immediately carry that thing away, breaking off the attack to feed. If they're actually losing a fight, some of them may sacrifice themselves to allow others to escape. They're hungry, not stupid.

Othlin

Adventure Seeds

Where There's Smoke

A cave network on The Eye of Oth appears to be venting just a tiny bit more warm air than it should be. Othseye University has sent small research teams before, but they either find nothing or they vanish.

Twist: There's an entire city of outlaws in this cave network, a tiny nation-state of fugitives, criminals, smugglers, and even off-worlders of ill-repute.

Additional Twist: Xuvoth's Unwatched, a black-ops branch of the government, knows about the outlaws, and would very much prefer you not go rolling any of those eyeballs out in the open.

Companies & Organizations

League of Galactics

Government

The League of Galactics is a pseudo-governmental advisory body with representatives from over two hundred thousand member nations. In theory, it is the moral compass for galactic society. In practice, it's an oversized, underfunded lobbying firm. Representatives to the League of Galactics often imagine that they're very important, but across 95% of galactic society the league's influence is unnoticed. The power they do have is mostly commercial, because while they lack the budget to buy politicians en masse, their network is extremely valuable to entrepreneurs, corporate boards, and rear admirals of industry. They might not be able to swing government policy, but they can easily create both opportunities and difficulties for professionals at arms.

Popso

Manufacturer: vending machines

Headquartered in Gobboth-Tambrol, Popso supplies automated chow-vending equipment popular with mercenary companies. The machines are not cheap, and the foodstuffs they dispense are uninspired, but their durability is the stuff of legend. The components in a Popso vending station are warrantied to last for a thousand years under normal use, and for twenty years when installed in a forward operating base full of hungry soldiers. 1

The food from a Popso vending station can be customized to meet the nutritional requirements of most soldiers, and Popso has licensed many popular menu items, including the Chupaqueso, monos-fritos, and Ovalkwik Refreshing Energy Paste. Every Popso station includes the signature Popso canned beverage, a sweet, brown, CO2-infused liquid rich in methylxanthine alkaloids. "Is your top stoppered? Pop a Popso!"

Persons

Benjo Tabberlin

Benjo Tabberlin, a brilliant polymath, is an agent of Xuvoth's Unwatched and a security attache employed by the League of Galactics, who does not know that this particular overqualified employee is drawing two paychecks. He keeps a small apartment , but he can be found out in the wider galaxy posing as various professions to ingratiate himself with the locals and obtain the information (or captives) he was sent to retrieve. Current rumor has him posted in Damaxuri.

Mooks

Many of the merchants with whom you may have come to do business hire their own security. Some of that security is not the kind that you want to meet in a dark alley after having stiffed their boss.

Othlin Private Security Crew

2-4 individuals, 1 squad

Attack: 3d6+6 **Damage:** 1d6+3

Defense: 12 **Reduction:** 3

Health: 3hp per squad member

Special: As an action, they can shield their employer, taking all damage their employer would take.

Mobs

Most mobs would be law enforcement, unless you happen to be in Gobboth-Tambrol during the Parthedrome Parade of Teleoperated Magic, when swarms of industrial, commer-

1

R&D: I've got a question. Just for my own info, no layout changes. Is that okay?

MKTG: You can ask, but it's just us and Legal now. Everybody else took over the upper floor of Polly O's for "executive playtesting."

R&D: Legal is perfect! See, there's a clause in the warranty about it being void if the machine is deployed "within operational range of a desperate quartermaster." Our question, which we'd prefer you assume to be purely hypothetical, is whether or not that clause will stand up in court.

LEGAL: Thus far there's no precedent. The clause never gets triggered. What gets triggered is the warranty-void alarm when somebody cracks the machine open for parts.

R&D: Well, that's where you'd be wrong, because we disabled that bit first.

LEGAL: Unless you would hypothetically prefer we mind our own business, we will be down straight away. Don't touch anything else.

cial, and entertainment drones walk the streets just itching to dronepile some poor fool who smack-talks the dromelings.

Monsters

The only monsters here are people.

Gripp

Adventure Seeds

Scar Bait

The Jungle Gardens PR department has hired you to take a hike while they film for an advertisement they intend to air. Your hike through the wilds will be closely monitored, and personal injury is guaranteed. You may bring knives, spears, and clothing. No guns. No grenades.

Twist 1: The department selected your path with the goal of flushing out a lost tribe of park rangers that has taken up permanent residence in a cave network.

Twist 2: Satli Ormetto, the Pholdratt'l, is following you. She has sought this lost tribe for years, but they continue to evade her. She wishes to speak with them, learn from them, and maybe even join them...

Catch the Monkey

A client wants a Jungle Gardens monkey as a pet. You are sent in to steal one.

Twist: You can't get just one.

Unexpected Salvage

You've found a derelict fobott'r clan ship. They fell victim to pirates, perhaps. Among the remaining debris is a ragged leather pouch with forty-one tlumnphs inside it. If you deliver it to Tetlumbrathi, there might be a reward!

Twist: The pirates somehow learn you found something on the ship they missed. They think it's valuable information, or precious artifacts with a high resale value. They are after you.

Alternate Twist : You receive no reward, but you do receive *heaps* of good will and a big reputation boost. If you ask nicely, Ondrophol may replace, repair, and refit you at no charge.

Companies & Organizations

Victorsmith Fortificationators

Independent mercenary company

The fobott'r mercenaries of Victorsmith Fortificationators (VsF) have a long, long tradition of faithful service to their many clients. Founded on the principle of self-determination, VsF seeks to provide planetary and system defense to sophonts and civilizations unable to protect themselves from galactic exploitation. They diligently provided this service for the Alschuul of Celeschul for 1100 years and are quick to point out that when terrans took over, it was only 800 years before the terrans were shooting at each other.

VsF is a for-profit organization, but the Great Embrace of Gripp has input into their charter and contracts, as well as providing a regular grant, thus making Gripp one of the police departments for the galaxy.

Persons

Caliti Frennoloph

A fobott'r and one of the 216 voting members of the Blattco board, Caliti Frennoloph is also connected to a merchant and mercenary clan that numbers over 10,000 sophonts, in fifty ships. She is semi-retired here in Tetlumbrathi.

Illkyo Tamn

Among the vault swimmers, Illkyo Tamn is one of the most impressive at a heavily muscled 2.3 meters tall. This massive male Fobott'r speaks very rarely. He spends his days "swimming" in the Tlumnph Vaults, burrowing through the the tiles of metal and reading them with his sensitive fingers as he goes. Some say he has touched the Tlumnph of Malni, but Illkyo is silent on the matter.

Satli Ormetto

Satli Ormetto is the captain of the rangers on duty at Jungle Gardens. Mostly they let the robots do the work, but Satli Ormetto is the Pholdratt'l, or "one who embraces the wilderness." Some translations of her title list it as "tree-hugger," but the subtext of that translation is in the wrong forest altogether. She respects the dangers of the wild, but the wild knows her name and fears it.

Mooks

Fobott'r Street Crew

12 individuals, 3 squads

Attack: 3d6+6 **Damage:** 1d6

Defense: 14 **Reduction:** 4

Health: 4hp per squad member

Special: 2 attacks per fire team per round.

Mobs

If you are disrespectful of tlumnphs or do any damage to a sacred site such as Fistfall Quarry, then all the fobott'r around you will spontaneously form into a mob. Take that fobott'r street crew and fight lots of them all at once.

Monsters

Jungle Gardens Monkey

There are many varieties of monkey-like, non-sophont creatures on Gripp, including the sephlima, wophl'mok, and fobbomra, all of which can be found in Jungle Gardens. Park literature helpfully classifies them as "small," "deadly," and "ginormous," respectively.

They all have fobott'r-like physiologies—four arms, two legs, and just one head—but their arms are proportionally longer, and their ears are much larger. They also lack the symbiote growths on fobott'r heads. The monkeys are not classified as sophonts, but they evolved for several hundred thousand years alongside the fobott'r and were clever enough to survive. They've learned what hunters look like, and they have a pretty good idea of which groups of sophonts make the best targets for predation, and the stealing of stuff. They can be domesticated and trained, but only if raised from birth by those training them.

The sephlima are just 30cm from head to heel, with a 50cm arm span. They roam in bands of sixty to a hundred and use their numbers to good advantage. The fobbomra are 1.8 meters from head to heel, and have a 2.5m arm span. They live in family groups of a dozen, and are herbivorous, but will aggressively defend their territory, occasionally wielding short clubs.

The wophl'mok, are a meter tall with 150cm arm spans, are the ones to watch out for. They hunt in groups of six to twenty, and are similar to most pack-hunting predators, with the exception of the fact that they often wield shank-like shards of bone. They use their upper arms to hold prey in place, and then use their lower arms to deliver dozens of swift stabs. This is called a "monkey-shanking," and unless you like the aesthetics of a forest spackled with your own viscera, it's not pretty.

All varieties of jungle gardens monkey will, if threatened by an obviously superior force, lighten their load by throwing up into their hands. The bolus is acidic, and pungent, and when the panicked monkeys throw it at you, you're advised to keep your mouth and eyes closed.

Attack: 3d6+5 **Damage:** 1d6+2

Defense: 16 **Reduction:** 3

Health: 12

Special: If a jungle gardens monkey has already attacked the target, the attack deals +4 damage; As they are retreating, the jungle gardens monkeys can throw an acidic bolus at you. If it hits 1d6 damage and -1 to hit for the remainder of the round. This attack is only used as they flee; Wophl'mok varieties gain +1d6 damage in melee.

Drop Slugs & Trip Slugs

The mucousoidal symbiotic pairing of drop slugs and trip slugs allows the slow, omnivorous creatures to trap and kill prey many times larger than themselves. The trip slugs stretch themselves between trees, usually low to the ground and within the cover of brush. Their core, a keratin-chain "rope," is at least as sturdy as any cheap utility cord and is easily strong enough to trip running creatures.

The drop slugs, massing between 16 and 20 kilos, spend days slithering into the canopy above, and a group of them will arrange themselves so that all of the likely places the tripped prey will land are covered. They have a sharp, chitinous "tooth," with a hollow vein for administering toxins. When they drop, they do so pointy-bit first, keeping the rest of their body mass above and directly behind the poison spear.

Immobilized prey will find itself covered in both varieties of slug, which then secrete digestive enzymes and begin a meal that may take them weeks to finish.

Attack: 3d6+3 **Damage:** 3d6

Defense: 10 **Reduction:** 1

Health: 40

Special: A drop slug can hide itself by making successful TN 20 Stealth check (it makes this check with a +8 bonus). If it's hidden when it attempts to drop on a target, it gains +7 to it's attack; Noticing a trip slug's web requires a TN 20 Perception check. Any creature who touches a trip slug web, must make a TN 20 Athletics check or fall down and become tangled. It takes two actions to free oneself, or one action and a TN 20 check (usually Athletics, but GC's choice).

Damaxuri

Adventure Seeds

I Can See Your House From Here

A cliff collapse has dropped a large, expensive piece of the Obsidiana station onto the scarp below. Scavengers, raiders, and others are enroute. You've been hired to defend it, rescue the two hundred stranded frellenti, and recover everything of value, (which here on Damaxuri, is everything not made of sand.)

Twist: The collapse was caused by frellenti saboteurs, who want to generate enough news and sympathy back home that somebody comes to evacuate them all. Like most desperate saboteurs, the frellenti will double down on their terrible planning by interfering with you.

Additional twist: One of the saboteurs is from a wealthy family and will attempt to suborn members of your company with a promised reward. There might be a really good deal in this, and maybe a base of operations should Obsidiana get even partially evacuated. Assuming you even want a base on Damaxuri.

Tunnels and Troubles

Qaya Solward wants you to locate the lost uklakk colony lander and recover it, along with its scientific data about the matrix, and will provide you with seismic sensors and tunneling gear. The lander's salvage value is similar to that of a UNS Destroyer, and while the scientific data is worth almost nothing by comparison, that's not the same as it being worth *actual* nothing.

Twist: The ship was not crushed. The bulkheads were opened, but it has large bubbles of breathable air in it. It's also been colonized by matrix denizens. Players will not be at the top of the food chain down there.

Additional twist: With some pest extermination and quick repair work the ship could be turned into an underground base of operations. Since the ship came to rest against a bedreef, a tunnel could be drilled through there. Or the ship can be flown back to Highport and handed over. Or it could be flown elsewhere to see if someone else can make a better offer, though that would make Qaya quite cross...

Companies & Organizations

Plan B Mercenary Company

Independent mercenary company

Their marketing page says, "We'll be there for you when Plan A falls apart," and while it may seem a little strange for a mercenary company to bill themselves as your *second* choice, they have a stellar track record when it comes to turning bad situations around.

They specialize in station-to-station operations, with air-support and ship-to-ship defenses provided by an Aguirre Galactic Ballista vessel and a half-squadron of Gladius fighters. They deploy boarders via a pair of Döblitz Foundry Harmadillo-class assault boats, both of which are equipped with entry systems allowing them to make their own doors wherever they need them. Without fail, this is not where the defenders want new doors. Lord Bobnik, a fobott'r whose title and stylized mask serve to obscure his true identity—and pre-mercenary employment history—is their commander-in-chief, and his resume suggests that "let's hope we get lucky" is not among his operational parameters.

Persons

Timmike (Mayor of Morgan's Brake)

Timmike has uklakk words to refer to the individual halves of himself. If you're addressing him, regardless of which half you're talking to, you call him Mayor Timmike. If, however, you're talking *about* him, and want to refer to the halves separately, the accepted terminology among the humans of Morgan's Brake is "Tim" and "Mike." Do not let the mayor hear you say that, unless you're already on his bad sides (plural, obviously, because he has two.)

Tim lives in the Armory and rarely emerges from behind its layered defenses. He wears an

Odin suit, and is accompanied at all times by a pair of loyal queltro squads. Mike lives in the Engineering section, where he maintains the feeds from the *Domiathan*'s annie plant. He also wears an Odin suit, and has a fobott'r squad and a unioc engineering team with him at all times. They can be seen fairly often, repairing or upgrading power feeds throughout the city.

Overthrowing Timmike might seem like a simple matter of killing one or the other of his halves, but Timmike has made it quite clear that if he's half-dead, he'll choose to be all the way dead. Whichever half survives your attack, the other half has the self-destructive power to level the city. There's little motive, therefore, since the reward at the end of a brutal, expensive fight will be a smoking, radioactive crater. Of which you'll probably be a glassy, smouldering part.

Qaya Solward & Num Solward

No one is certain where the ursumari Qaya and Num Solward came from before they arrived at Highport and took over. To all appearances, the Solwards are the siblings they claim to be, right down to many of their physical mannerisms. Yet Qaya has an accent that suggests she was raised on Celeschul, while Num's accent is pure Gherkinopolitan, indicating that he's from Earth. Both of them have names that are distinctly purp while being ursumari.

Though certainly motivated by the profits that come from owning a center for trade, the hard-bargaining Solwards have developed more than just a capitalistic affinity for Highport. If money talks, Qaya and Num are shouting their devotion to the station, spending substantial sums in the repairs, upgrades, and expansions that might someday turn Highport into a robust, vibrant, and beautiful orbital city.

Mooks

Tim's Queltro Squads

The queltro guarding Timmike's armory half ("Tim") have trained together for years, and are experts in a queltro martial art that non-queltro call "Tetra-team Judo." By linking hands and spinning, they can launch one another at two to three times their natural running speed, and will often execute similar two-, three-, or four-soldier maneuvers that throw one of them ten meters or more.

The salient point here is not "get judo lessons from them." It is "don't expect to be able to pin them down with covering fire." They're small targets, and they're both fast and well-armored. Also, they have access to duct-work and secret passages through the city that most other sophonts can neither open nor fit through. Not only can you not pin this team down, if you try, you're quite likely to find yourself flanked and, shortly thereafter, dying.

Attack: 3d6+5 **Damage:** 2d6+1

Defense: 14 **Reduction:** 6

Health: 14

Special: ***Support:*** A Security Squad can provide support for another security squad, allowing them to either: deal +1d6 damage, or gain +5 to hit; ***Tetra-Judo:*** With 1 round spent on movement actions, the next round the squad members can be attacking from completely different places. A single squad can give itself +5 to hit, and +3 defense

Mike's Fobott'r and Unioc Squads

The fobott'r guarding Timmike's engineering half ("Mike") are green compared to the armory's queltro, but they're enthusiastic and well equipped. Their boss and his engineers are out in the open a lot, and these fobott'r take the saftey of their charges quite personally.

12 individuals, 3 squads

Attack: 3d6+6 **Damage:** 2d6

Defense: 16 **Reduction:** 6

Health: 4hp per squad member

Special:. As long as a fobott'r squad member still stands, Mike can use them as ablative meat to avoid getting hit.

Mobs

Civil Defense

The civilians of every Damaxurian settlement are well aware of the thin line between survival and extinction. Any combat that appears to threaten the settlement's resources will attract Civil Defense - mobs of unarmed civilians with small arms. They will arrive after 1d6+6 rounds, and unlike most civilian mobs, these groups will not be easily cowed should they suffer casualties. Ultimately, as much as 50% of the population of the settlement will fight, and do so effectively, in defense of their home.

Enforcers

Damaxuri's wealthier settlements (relatively speaking) have professionals-at-arms ready to deploy in defense of the city. They will appear in stages, should trouble need to be quashed. In two rounds there will be a single fire-team. In four rounds there will be three. After six rounds there will be at least eight fire-teams (depending on the size of the settlement,) and a group at least twice that size will be dispatched to cordon the area, and pursue fleeing combatants. They will also enlist civilian militia as necessary.

Monsters

Damaxuri Spongiform Matrix, Obsidian Sand, & Denizens

Go ahead and imagine a "do not dig" sign anywhere you see black sand, along with whatever icon your species uses to suggest an immediate and painful death. The black obsidian sand is a hazard all by itself. Exposed skin takes continual damage unless it has an armor rating. Exposed gear is more prone to failure. A heavy collapse of this sand onto a character is not unlike being shot a lot of times.

If you dig, you will eventually trigger a collapse, and that draws closer each time you pull up one of those shiny, easy-to-sell fulguresques. The collapse begins with a blast of wet air, as the air sacs of the matrix explosively deflate under an area 40 meters larger than the area being disturbed. The ground will drop quickly while air-blasted gravel assaults those atop it. Then things will start getting actually bad, as the denizens of the matrix burst through the bottom and sides of the hole...

Denizens vary widely in size, shape, and methodology, but their temperament is universally hostile, and they talk to each other. They can sense your movement, including your heartbeat, and their goal is to turn you from a threat to a meal. Little denizens (less than 1m) are beetle-like, but the medium ones (1-4m) are serpentine with small, barbed legs all along their lengths. They attack in groups, with biting, pinching, and chemical attacks that individually don't do much damage, but combined are quite a problem. Then there are the murderpedes. These giant, segmented horrors can pick up an armored neophant and then tear it apart with an array of pincers and mandibular things. And that's just the front end. At the other end there is a blade-like stinger which may be five meters long. When the murderpede's tail whips that enormous spear toward a target, pray that nearby survivors have access to a thesaurus, because the words "gored" and "impaled" will not do the story justice.

Matrix Collapse

Special: 50/50 chance to "start the timer" for each minute spent digging. The timer is the GC's secret, and is 2-6 rounds. If a fulguresque is pulled, flip the coin again. Collapse might be immediate. Otherwise timer continues.

The Drop: 1d6 rounds. Each round is a 50m drop. Characters must make a TN 18 check to take physical action. Failure means the round is spent falling and screaming, and taking 1d6-3 damage from shrapnel.

Obsidian Sand

Special: Any unarmored living being takes 1d6 damage per turn.

Denizens

5-20 individuals, 2-10 squads

Attack: 3d6+2 (melee only) **Damage:** 1d6

Defense: 3 **Reduction:** 0

Health: 1hp per individual

Special: Add 1d6 damage, and 1 hp per individual at medium size.

Damaxurian Murderpede

Attack: 3d6+8 (melee only) **Damage:** 1d6+1

Defense: 10 **Reduction:** 10

Health: 20

Special: Murderpedes don't need eyes to locate their target; Melee attacks from a murderpede ignore reduction.

Dustmights

Dustmights are similar in size, shape, and demeanor to armored personnel carriers. They grow to be just over eight meters long, three

meters high, and four meters wide. Their upper shells can be up to 30cm thick and are made of articulated chitin plates that will stop bullets. Dustmights spend their days burrowed under the golden sand, venturing out at night to raid the obsidian sands for water and nutrition. They quietly dig at the perimeter for a few meters, then thrust an armored tube the rest of the way down into the damp matrix. At this point they will begin burrowing in place, covering themselves with sand by morning. From here they may drink for days before the matrix's immune system kicks in. When it does, they finish their meal by devouring any defenders they can kill and drag away, and then they move out across the desert for another likely patch-point for the matrix.

If a murderpede leads the defense, the dustmight will attempt to get its armor skewered, but not penetrated. If successful, it will drag the murderpede out into the open desert. If unsuccessful, the dustmight may find itself flipped on its back, at which point the murderpede will kill it quickly, and drag it, along with all its stolen moisture, back into the matrix.

Attack: 3d6+8 **Damage:** 2d6+1

Defense: 12 **Reduction:** 6

Health: 30

Special: They may only make one attack a round, and it must be a target directly in front of them.

Goreswarms

These insect-like creatures are about six centimeters long, and spend long stretches of their lives in hibernation under the sand, along with several thousand of their friends. The swarm burrows down to a depth of about half a meter, and pushes the sand out of their cluster, creating a sand-free, sleeping ball-o-bugs. A few individuals will hide just beneath the surface, their antennae sniffing for traces of water in the air—a good sign that a matrix pool has collapsed. The Goreswarm then erupts from the sand and devours whatever it can scavenge from the fight, tearing flesh with strong mandibles and prying carapace away with a combination of group leverage and secreted acids.

They're ordinarily not a problem for travelers, but many sophonts will exhale sufficient moisture to trigger an attack. Offworld biologies are poor sources of nutrients, but water is water, and at first blood the goreswarm will commit to shredding their prey, making good on the attack to the last drop.

Attack: 3d6+8 **Damage:** 1d6+1

Defense: 18 **Reduction:** 0

Health: 20

Special: All Goreswarm attacks ignore Reduction; Goreswarms require a TN 25 Perception check to be noticed when hiding.

Sand Flounder

These parasites evolved to attach themselves to dustmights while the large beasts are buried and feeding. They measure between 50 cm and 3m in length, and are five to fifteen cm wide. After sensing surface traffic—something they can do within a hundred meters of their burrowed position—they'll begin sand-swimming, and tracking their prey until it stops. With dustmights, they'll burrow in behind them, attach to a soft spot under the shell, and drink slowly, ignored by the beast. Sometimes they'll find sleeping caravaneers who are not buried in the sand at all, making the task much easier. Unfortunately, most caravaneers are small enough that the few liters of fluid they lose to a sand flounder will leave them insufficient fluids for ongoing activities like breathing, or consciousness. 1

Attack: 3d6+10 **Damage:** 1d6+3

Defense: 12 **Reduction:** 1

Health: 18

Special: Targets they attach to must make an Athletics skill check TN 15 to remove them. If they fail, the next round the sand flounder auto-hits; Can burrow into the ground, requiring a TN 20 Perception check to notice.

Ghanj-rho

Adventure Seeds

Product Recall

The Manyfolk Council's Committee for Amorph Recovery has collected records identifying pirates, merchants, smugglers, and mercenary companies who were customers of The Ranch's previous owners. They want you to find these people and free any and all amorphs they've purchased. Your budget will include funds sufficient to buy the amorphs back.

Twist: Not all of these amorphs want to go home.

Additional Twist: Your own company, under a different name, (or your parent company) is on the list.

1

R&D: So subtle. I love this bit.

SOPH_RES: There's no point in praising the writers. They're still sequestered in Polly Organix with Terl'Kris, Janodomadiwabavoheewa, and the Game Dev team.

MKTG: It's been two days. This game is advertised as something that plays *quickly*.

SOPH_RES: We sent our Traumatic Psych team over to check on everyone yesterday. They haven't returned yet, so we are now acting on the assumption that therapy is going well.

R&D: Let's circle back around to the part where you said there's no point praising someone who isn't around to hear it.

Soggy Cargos

A shipment of supplies from GROH to Lonesome Plateau vanished over the Radio Swamps, where a storm obscured the crash site. The shipping company has written it off as lost, but the pilot's father is willing to pay you to recover his son alive.

Twist: He's actually only willing to pay you with the supplies, which you'll need to recover. Also, the insurance company hasn't written these supplies off yet.

Additional Twist: The pilot is in cahoots with the shipping company in an effort to defraud the insurance company.

Companies & Organizations

Clan Ebbirnoth & Eko Force

Enforcement agency

Clan Ebbirnoth, led by Jun-Ko Ebbirnoth, manages operations and security at The Ranch under license from the Manyfolk Council. In an effort to distance themselves from the slaver Ebbirnoths (a repentant few of whom still work for them), they have begun doing business as Eko Force. There are a hundred and fifty of them in this town of 10,000, and the Manyfolk Council has ensured that they are well equipped.

Manyfolk Council

Government

This is the ruling body of Ghanj-Rho, comprised of elected and appointed representatives from the many species and factions present in the system, including queltro, uniocs, humans, fobott'r, amorphs, vhorwed, Kreely, uklakk, and frellenti. They are headquartered on Lonesome Plateau, and led by a bradicor named Rod. Their primary concern is ensuring that the archeological and xenobiological wealth of their world is "sustainably exploited" in a way that will provide funds to defend and manage the system.

Persons

Bradicor Citizen

There are currently eleven Bradicor on Lonesome Plateau. They're stubby-legged bipeds between 1.1 and 1.3 meters tall. Their armspan is around two meters, and they can walk on their knuckles without ever letting their feet touch the ground. They have proportionally large heads, and the backs of their heads look like a leathery, conical sack, which extends down their backs almost to their waist. This, xenobiologists assure us, is where they keep their 10-million-year-old brains.

Bradicor have never been observed in combat. When trouble breaks out, as it has on occasion, their personal security details take care of the problem. These include goaltender drones, battle-chassis AIs, amorphs, and even armored vhorwed.

Rod

Chairsoph Rod, of the Manyfolk Council, walks with a short cane and, like the other bradicor, wears nothing but a grey-green wrap similar to a toga. He is ancient and may come across as absent-minded at times, but he's extremely intelligent, and among his people he is not only the most fluent in Galstandard West, but he's also a pretty good public speaker.

The Manyfolk Council is new, and its bylaws are still in flux, but if the position of Chairsoph is held for life, Rod may be the only person to ever hold it. Xenobiologists of numerous disciplines have examined him, and there's no indication that he won't live for another 10 million years.

Jun-Ko Ebbirnoth

The leader of Clan Ebbirnoth and founder of Eko Force, Jun-ko Ebbirnoth refuses to drop the "Jun" in his name. That syllable makes it sound like he is second-in-command, and out of respect for the amorphs, Jun-Ko has insisted that his people use the title of "Ko" to refer to Ranger Ruck, honoring him by calling him Ko Ruck and expressing the sentiment that, org chart notwithstanding, the amorph here is the real boss.

Ranger Ruck & the Mighty Morphy Rangers

Ranger Ruck, also called Ko-Ruck by the uniocs of Eko Force, was part of the very poorly organized amorph resistance during the days of the slave trade. He paid very close attention during the political upheavals on and above Ghanj-rho, and figured out how a resistance was supposed to be run just in time to not need to do that anymore. Today he leverages his old contacts among the amorphs of the forested highlands to make the recruiting process as much of a win-win as possible, though he does tend to weight things in favor of his carbosilicate fellows.

Ruck is perfectly capable of wandering the wilds alone, but these days he is always accompanied by a loyal team of amorphs who have refused numerous off-world recruiting packages, while shamelessly keeping the cool toys that recruiters bribed them with. Dubbed the Mighty Morphy Rangers, this group appears harmlessly goofy right up until the alarms begin sounding, when they suddenly display a wide range of formidable skills, most of which involve breaking other people's things, and then those people.

King Spiderwrench

There once was a mean unioc engineering chief who very perjoratively named a talented young queltro engineer "Spiderwrench." As the story goes, during the turbulent days of political reorganization, that young queltro was seen atop his gurgling former manager, whose whispered last words were "fine, you can be KING Spiderwrench."

Today, King Spiderwrench displays none of the murderous aggression suggested in that story. Maybe the story isn't true, and the young queltro engineer added "King" to the pejorative in loving memory of his deceased predecessor. Maybe King Spiderwrench is just too busy being an amazingly competent infrastructure and engineering manager to bother hurting anyone. Or maybe the queltro engineers on his team display just enough scowling, hammer-wielding muscle to ensure that nobody starts anything.

Mosh Uptrobar, Dean of Location Studies, Godseye Community College

The unioc Mosh Uptrobar has degrees from Gobbroth-Tambrol Conservatory on Othlin, Olympus Kindervolken College on Mars, and the Radcliffe School of New Harvard on Earth. He studied galactopolitical jobonomics, xenorganic chemistry, and manager-employee relations, and is perfectly qualified for a field position, far from Godseye Community College's busy main campus, on a remote world where he can boast about the student work he secretly wishes he could take credit for from behind a large desk.

Sheriff D0v3 of Lonesome Plateau

Lonesome Plateau is a thoroughly surveilled town, and that surveillance is almost entirely operated by the multi-node AI, Sheriff D0v3. Roboticists rate her as H/V 6, at least. She has at least twenty nodes running in parallel, and those are just her deputies, each of which is a formidable combat-chassis A.I. She also has hundreds of whisper-quiet monitor nodes that flit from place to place, ensuring that occasional blind spots in fixed-position cameras do not stay blind for long. She is responsible for law enforcement, emergency services, and is the last line of defense should the plateau come under attack.

To date there have not been any exchanges of violence sufficient to test the full range of D0v3's armed response. There have been numerous exchanges that have sufficed to demonstrate that she's got things under control.

Kleyladar

From a distance, Kleyladar looks like a small, milspec supply pod crash-landed atop an Urtheep retailbot. Up close, Kleyladar looks like this crash was deliberate and was followed up with welding, rivets, and darktape. His milspec parts are heavily armored, and he has ventured well outside of his original Urtheep CQ-88 SynthInt specifications with additional processing

modules, an onboard molecular chemistry synthesizer, and a few concealed weapons. Many of these changes were made by his original owners, but when the new processors came online and he became completely self-aware, he took matters into his own three-claw manipulators, and performed the remaining upgrades himself, while simultaneously hijacking his owners' ship.

Kleyladar and Sheriff D0v3 appear to have a special relationship, but its exact nature is unknown, since the only contact they have is via encrypted comms.

Uklakk Citizen

Uklakk are bicameral sophonts—one person in two bodies. Their two brains communicate with each other via organically-evolved radio transceivers, which most Uklakk boost using hypernode-equipped hats or helmets. Each body can function independently, and an uklakk can easily perform two completely different tasks at once. In fact, most of them do exactly this.

Vhorwed

An adult male vhorwed is about half again the size of the largest neophant. Their morphology most closely resembles that of terrestrial gorillas, but their arms are four meters long, and each of their four fingers is roughly the same size as a human arm. They have very short, soft fur, which may be solid in color, or a patchwork of different colors.

Mooks

EKO Force Squad

Attack: 3d6+8 **Damage:** 2d6+2

Defense: 17 **Reduction:** 6

Health: 14

Amorph Squad (Can be used for Ranger Ruck)

5 amorphs, 1 squad

Attack: 3d6+10 **Damage:** 5d3+5

Defense: 15 **Reduction:** 5

Health: 15

Special: Immune to nonlethal attacks unless the TN is 25 or higher.

Mobs

Unwise decisions in relation to either Sheriff D0v3 or Kleyladar may result in mobs of combat drones intending to eliminate the mercenaries. These drones can be based off of any of the drone mook squads or by creating AI characters. Should your mercenary company attempt to abduct any amorphs, you'll find yourself facing a mob comprised of Eko Force squads, amorph squads, and Ranger Ruck himself.

Monsters

The only monsters here are the amorphs, but a much larger risk are the environmental toxins.

Ellwor

Adventure Seeds

Sunk Cost Phalanx

Another prabstdi xenoarcheology team wants to have a go at the labyrinth. They're paying really well and have taken care to pay the nearest city state, Boldfavor, for a measure of political covering fire.

Twist: The Labyrinth is essentially a giant cardiopulmonary system for a very old, very slow, sessile creature evolved from city-building equipment. Like any living creature, it has parasites and symbiotes. Hint: You're the parasites. The symbiotes are coming… Labyrinthine meatsnatch packs roam these tunnels.

Additional Twist: The prabstdi annie plants and vehicles are very attractive targets for bandits from the south, and Boldfavor has opted to cut their losses and sit that fight out.

That's No Toll Booth

An overland shipment bound from Kieschegaard to Boldfavor has gone missing. The route is an established one, so it shouldn't have been a problem. You've been hired to recover the shipment, and make sure the road doesn't have any new toll booths on it.

Twist: An invasion force is enroute to Kieschegaard and they're slowly burrowing along the deeproot beds in the jungle, undetectable by satellites. The overland route is still safe but the caravan that went missing noticed something suspicious and was eliminated.

Additional Twist: The invasion force is from one of your home governments.

The Pharmacy Run

A small supply ship bound for Downton Dirtgrow was redirected to Pilot's Prayer. The residents of Downton Dirtgrow really need the medicines and supplements on that ship, and have hired you to go steal their stuff back from whoever has it.

Twist: The ship was never headed for Downton Dirtgrow. You're not stealing stuff back. You're just stealing.

Additional Twist: The ship was originally headed for Battery Park, not Pilot's Prayer or Downton Dirtgrow, and it has more than just supplies on it.

Meatsnatch and Grab

Tookoliti and Wolwottan want a greater meatsnatch. Lead it to their trap near Pilot's Prayer. Don't die.

Twist: The greater meatsnatch and the swordgrass can work together. Not dying will be extra difficult.

Alternate Twist: You track the greater meatsnatch to a crash site where it has trapped a small carload of refugees from off-world.

Companies & Organizations

Front Council of Boldfavor

Government

This council is comprised of citizens elected from, and by, the Crew Caste living in Boldfavor. See Ellwor in the location section for more details

Streeter & The Highwaymen

Entertainers and smugglers

By night, they're a pleasantly competent band of musicians. By day, they're on the road to their next show, and they're an unpleasantly competent band of smugglers. They are led by growprammer and musicologist Nashu Streeter, a human saxiphrenone player whose improvisational licks during "The Gunfighter from Ipanema" bridge are eerily reminiscent of the hastily improvised cons he puts together on the bridge of the tour bus. His name is probably an alias.

Their tour bus is a customized Tarriki Windracer emblazoned with the band's logo, though during cargo connections those panels have false flags on them.

The fact that anyone has been able to connect this retro-old-school jazz combo with illicit trades in small arms, rogue-vogue biologicals, and bootleg holo-dissertations might lead the casual reader to wonder how S&HM are still in business. The answer is simple: their music is good, and they have friends in high places somewhere pulling strings for them.

Toowol Trainers

Wildlife husbandry company

Tookoliti, a kreely medic, and Eskwire Wolwottan, a queltro engineer, recently founded Toowol Trainers, which provides the wealthy and unwise with Ellworan megafauna. Leveraging some stolen research on Ellworan mechorganic neurology, the two entrepreneurs have designed implants which will render a number of Ellworan life forms domestic, and in some cases even useful as security animals. Neither of them are combat-trained, but their compound is guarded by carniflowers and common meatsnatch.

Persons

Commodore J. "Scapegoat" Rosenberg

As a young neurobiologist, Dr. J.S. Rosenberg was heading up a relief mission to Ellwor forty-four years ago when his career took a hard turn into harm's way. Their vessel was set upon by pirates, and at the end of a very bad day Rosenberg found himself standing over the corpses of two dozen licensed privateers—under-the-table contractors for the League of Galactics. Rosenberg and his surviving shipmates knew their story would not be the one the League allowed the public to hear, so they took both ships, and turned the delivery run into a down payment on a new business venture.

They surfaced three years later in Celeschul, in a shiny new COF Destroyer *Rose Mountain*, which they deployed in the service of the Continuance Navy as privateers. They executed seventeen successful raids against the TFF, but by the end of the war they were being blamed for over sixty, including raids against Continuance assets. Rather than be unjustly tried as a war criminal, "Scapegoat" Rosenberg took almost

thirty piratically-acquired vessels through Celgate to pirate-friendly Ellwor.

Stationed now in Scofflaw Redoubt, Rosenberg harbors a large fleet, a small army, and a strong grudge. He has never returned home to the North-North-East borough of South Westchester in the New York megalopolis; rumor has it that he'll pay well for a care package from The Coldest Cut corner deli. 1

Gzeaul Citizen

The Gzeaul are amphibious sophonts. These long-necked, long-tailed bipeds have strong gender-based dimporphism. The males are half the size of the females, have no scales, and outnumber the females six-to-one. The females have armored skin, long talons, and a fierce temperament. Gzeaul society cannot be summed up in one sentence, but we're going to try anyway. "Behind every good gaggle of males is one great female with a knife."

"Mayhem" Jane Maheeta, Pro Forma of Boldfavor

"Mayhem" Jane Maheeta, born in Boldfavor in 3075, is the oldest daughter of TFF Brigade Lieutenant General Jan Maheeta, and is a Purp. Educated as a fabber tech and on-the-job trained as a military tactician, she was elected as the second Pro Forma of Boldfavor at the age of 23, just three-and-a-half years ago. Her leadership has been exemplary, in part because the first Pro Forma and numerous older members of the Crew Caste serve as advisors, and in part because Mayhem Jane really is that smart.

She acquired her nickname prior to election, during the Juris My Diction deployment, which was a joint operation of Boldfavor and Kieschegaard. Jane, already an expert fabber tech at the age of 15, helped design the JMD defense platforms, and was part of the task force deploying them in 3090 when they were attacked by a warlord, Chnurk Mandog. In a series of battles long enough to qualify as a war and too long to detail here, she demonstrated an aptitude for command and a talent for the wreaking of precise, profitable ruin. By 3096 Mandog was dead, and the remains of his fleet belonged to "Mayhem Jane," who was now a popular hero to the peoples of Kieschegaard and Boldfavor.

Nathan "The Auricle" Golder

This bald, red-bearded human trades in "non-commoditized data." He is connected in ways most connected people don't believe to be possible. Nathan Golder was educated on Earth, and went straight from an early university matriculation to a position in corporate intelligence for Auritorium Multinational. He spent sixteen years honing his tradecraft, while simultaneously building a network of informants that reached far beyond what he reported to the AuriMult Executive Board. Eleven years ago, in 3089, he was "terminated with cause" as part of the settlement phase of a patent war. The settlement documentation defined termination as "being fired," but Nathan knew that it also meant he would be "fired upon." Those tasked with said firing never found a target, and when they began asking around for him they found themselves fired upon by parties unknown in what is politely described as "reciprocal termination."

Golder vanished from all records for seventy-three months. When he reappeared in 3095 it was in Kieschegaard, on Ellwor, and it looked as if he'd been safely ensconced there for thirty years rather than six.

The Auricle has never been observed in direct combat, but the whisperings of people who should know indicate that this is because he is far better defended than he looks. He wears

1

JANO_CX: I've heard good things about that deli, but it's not tempting me presently.

HELENEI: I know, right? Polly O's just kept the food coming...

BANA_B: They rotated the entire staff six times while we were there. And I think they rolled out a whole new menu.

TERL'KRIS: That was for the PsyTrauma team. Lots of tender G-I tracts in that crew.

CZECKI: So many different kinds of pudding.

DEV_BIL: Three of which will dissolve Mayhem cards.

DEV_GUI: Is that what you did with the ones we house-ruled out? Not cool.

an M&M Supersuit EX beneath a professorial outfit made of tweed and dignity. The large, antique book he carries is a shell for a hand-brain, as well as a Wächter Goaltender, and it is assumed that several more of these are hidden around him.

While the full extent of the Auricle's network remains a mystery, there are at least 200 known active Auricle agents on Ellwor, and there may be thousands of others spread across hundreds of systems, including Sol, Xuvoth, Mnepholem, Tause, Celeschul, Mnei-Oa, and even the Plenipotent Dominion. If you meet with him you may in fact be meeting with one of his three gene-morphed body doubles. Regardless, you'll also be surrounded, at a discreet distance, by a diverse team of loyal bodyguards.

The Piece King

If anybody knows the original identity of Kieschegaard's enlightened despot, it's probably The Auricle, but he's not saying anything. The Piece King claims to have been born on Ellwor, and the few at-range medical scans gleaned by Planet Mercenary Corporate Intel show a bone density in line with that story, but that's the final extent of his demonstrable provenance. 1

The Piece King first appears on official records as an aide to one of Kieschegaard's power-brokers, Chnurk Wombag, in 3077. He was simply called "Piece" back then, and was so quietly effective that it wasn't until 3088 that Chnurk figured out Piece was the one brokering all the power. After a brief argument over who was in charge, Piece fired his boss. Out of a launch tube, in a long, shallow arc that terminated somewhere in the Friggen Jungle.

A rapid consolidation of power followed. Kieschegaard went from a semi-democratic autocracy to an autocratic totalitarian state in just four days. Before any of the former councilors protested the revocation of their ability to vote on policy, the Piece King rolled out a set of policies that were simultaneously sensible and irresistible to the economic powers of the city.

Today his autocracy is considered both benign and transparent, in part because the power-brokering and secret policy execution happening behind the scenes is smooth, efficient, and well concealed. There is no official relationship between The Piece King and The Auricle, but it's clear that the two men fully support each other, and their networks for brokering power and information mesh in ways that make both of them unassailable from anything short of orbital strikes; and it's likely that those would miss.

Note

Chnurk Mandog and Chnurk Wombag were related. Wombag's ousting in '88 precipitated Mandog's attack on orbital facilities two years later.

Mooks

Boldfavor Frontline

3-4 individuals, 1 squad

Attack: 3d6+5 **Damage:** 1d6+3

Defense: 14 **Reduction:** 2

Health: 3hp per squad member

Fourthton Rabble Roughs

3-4 individuals, 1 squad

Attack: 3d6+5 **Damage:** 1d6+6

Defense: 14 **Reduction:** 5

Health: 3hp per squad member

Special: 2 attacks per squad per round.

Wrink's Eyes

3-4 individuals, 1 squad

Attack: 3d6+1 **Damage:** 2d6+4

Defense: 15 **Reduction:** 3

Health: 3hp per squad member

Motley Adventurers

6 individuals, 3 squads, mixed species.

Attack: 3d6+7 **Damage:** 1d6+2

Defense: 15 **Reduction:** 4

Health: 6 hp per squad member

Mobs

Mobs are possible in any of the Ellworan cities, particularly those where the city has a high level of organization and control.

Monsters

Carniflower

Found in the Friggen Jungle, these appear flower-like, with a single giant blossom shaped

1

TERL'KRIS: Come on. I've met him twice. His first name is Fred.

LEGAL: Can you prove that?

TERL'KRIS: No, and I guess I don't care either way because we're not changing the text.

DEV_GUI: If we're locked down, let's turn off the comments.

CZECKI: I agree. My chitin still rattles every time the "new comment" alert pings.

HELENEI: I showed you how to turn it off, hon.

SOPH_RES: Disabling project-critical comm alerts is against policy. You should—

CZECKI: AUGH! I'm obeying the rules, but you still managed to freak me out.

TERL'KRIS: Home stretch, people. Ignore Sophont Resources and their unintentional microaggressions.

SOPH_RES: Mother of... grrrmph. Terl, you realize that in this context that phrase requires us to review our entire department.

TERL'KRIS: I do realize that. If it keeps you busy until page 352, I will have realized it perfectly.

roughly like that of a tulip, if a tulip were large enough to carry a sofa. These utterly un-floral predators are sessile omnivores that use poison, electrical shocks, and puffs of toxic gases to neutralize prey. Their ropy tendrils draw prey within range of the blossom-like maw. When waiting for food they stand completely still, with tendrils coiled, smoke bladders under pressure, and glassine capacitors ready to discharge. When they attack, they deliver everything at once at a single target. If you see one before you're within its 6-meter attack radius, give it a wide miss, and check the rest of your route carefully. Carniflowers often grow in spaced groupings where the individuals are obscured from each other by tree trunks. Prey will frequently swing wide of one only to fall victim to another.

Attack: 3d6+12 melee **Damage:** 1d6

Defense: 12 **Reduction:** 8

Health: 25

Special: As a ranged attack, a Carniflower can shoot and electric shock or toxic gas. They get 3d6+8 to hit. . If successful, everyone in the area of effect must make a TN 15 Endurance check or lose one action and take 1d3 damage that ignores reduction; If you attack the root knuckle of the Carniflower, 10 damage will kill it. The root knuckle has +6 Defense.

Mechadile

See Grendlsquutch.

Grendlsquutch

These burrowing, hexapodal omnivores are found in all climes, but most especially on the borders of the Bogmaws. They're 3m long and crawl low to the ground, but their limbs are 140cm long, and are jointed so that the crawling is done with most of the limb folded beneath them. They have short heads, and short tails.

They spend much of their time burrowed into the ground where they can eat roots and conduits without being attacked by things like swordgrass and carniflowers. On the bogmaw they'll crawl low, mouth open, to sift through it for the nutrition and moisture they need. They're very sensitive to vibration, and whether above or below the surface they can hear your footsteps. They're opportunistic hunters, and will treat your footsteps as the ringing doorbell of just such an opportunity.

There is an amphibious, non-burrowing subspecies of Grendlsquutch commonly known as the Mechadile that is found only in the Wroughtmarshes. It can still launch surprise attacks by hiding in the water.

Attack: 3d6+9 **Damage:** 2d6

Defense: 14 **Reduction:** 6

Health: 12

Special: Can burrow, requiring a TN 25 Percpetion check to notice. If attacking from burrowed state, +1d6 damage.

Jack-in-the-Bog

Taxonomists have insisted that the Jack-in-the-Bog be called a Bogmaw Carniflower, but their complaints are withdrawn when they are shown video of a Jack-in-the-Bog attack. This carniflower sub-species lives in symbiosis with the Bogmaw matrix, hiding beneath the surface. Its tulip-shaped maw is flattened, and its entire six-meter length is wound tightly like a hydraulic spring. It will lie dormant until something comes within five meters of its hiding place, at which point it bursts up with light, smoke, and sound not unlike the discharge of a flashbang grenade wrapped in smoldering putrescence.

Attack: 3d6+15 **Damage:** 3d6

Defense: 18 **Reduction:** 8

MAXIM 46

Don't try to save money by conserving ammunition.

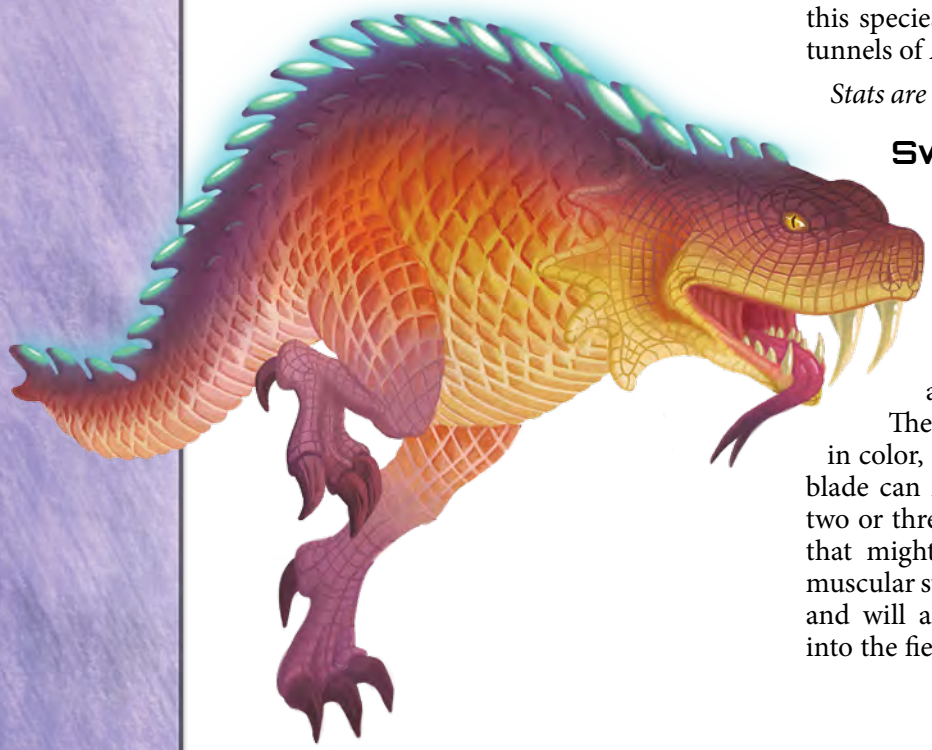
Health: 36

Special: A Jack-in-the-Bog can make a Flashbang attack. Anyone within sight and hearing of a Jack-in-the-Bog must make a TN 18 Endurance check or lose their next three actions. A Jack-in-the-Bog can use this ability once per day; Any target struck by a Jack-in-the-Bog is grabbed and held and drawn under the bog after two turns. They take 1d6 damage per turn until freed (killing the Jack-in-the-Bog, or a TN 30 Athletics check will free the held target).

Common Meatsnatch

The lesser or common meatsnatch is 120 cm tall and is basically made of muscle, blinking lights, and murder. They have a meter-wide mouth, two massive legs with webbed-and-clawed feet, and a wide, heavy body with rows of magenta and green lights positioned like racing stripes. The lights do not make them easy to spot, however, because they live in the Friggen Jungle, which is only slightly less blinkenlit than a casino.

They are pack-hunting carnivores, and can maintain a 30km/h pace indefinitely, because pack members can take turns sleeping while running, secure in the knowledge that their fellows will wake them up if something needs to be pounced upon and devoured. They use the lights to signal each other, and will commonly run alongside fleeing prey, bracketing it for the designated killer, who will sprint in at almost 80km/h from behind.



Attack: 3d6+5 **Damage:** 1d6

Defense: 18 **Reduction:** 4

Health: 12

Greater Meatsnatch

If you scale a common meatsnatch up to 3m high, you'll look at what your hands have wrought and be filled with regret. Regret and terror. The greater meatsnatch is heavily armored, is found in the steppes, and runs through swordgrass both unimpeded and uninjured. It's believed that the pulsing of greater meatsnatch lights tells the swordgrass "I'm not eating you, so don't stab me," but all observations to date have been made either from a great distance or at a dead run, and most of the latter are incomplete, having been collected from partially-digested handbrains. It is possible that the greater meatsnatch lives in symbiosis with the swordgrass, which makes sense, since anything the meatsnatch eats will soon be fertiziler.

If there is a bright side to this it's that the greater meatsnatch lives and hunts alone.

Attack: 3d6+10 **Damage:** 3d6

Defense: 18 **Reduction:** 8

Health: 36

Special: Swordgrass will not attack greater meatsnatches.

Labyrinthine Meatsnatch

This species of meatsnatch is similar in size and habits to the lesser meatsnatch. However this species can only be found in the winding tunnels of Andrhianni's Labyrinth.

Stats are identical to the Common Meatsnatch.

Swordgrass

Swordgrass grows in undulating fields thousands of square kilometers in size. The stems of the grass are about 40 cm long and 8 cm in diameter, while the blades range in length from one to two meters, and may be as much as 15cm wide. They're razor sharp, and royal purple in color, and they rotate to collect light. Each blade can move extremely quickly once every two or three days, stabbing or slicing creatures that might otherwise feed on the succulent, muscular stems. A field of Swordgrass is patient, and will allow foragers to get several meters into the field before stabbing, ensuring that the

blades on the perimeter are never completely exhausted. A concerted attack at the edge of the field usually will exhaust the perimeter blades, however, and this is why a determined group with the right armor can keep the swordgrass back from the edges of town.

Attack: 3d6+10 **Damage:** 1d6+2

Defense: 0 **Reduction:** 3

Health: 200

Special: Swordgrass ignores reduction; Each piece of Swordgrass can only make a melee attack once per two days. However, simply walking through it can cut you. Anyone walking through it must make a successful TN 20 Athletics check to avoid being cut; Swordgrass must be attacked as a mass patch of grass. Killing one blade does you no good. Mowing down (hah!) the entire patch with heavy firepower is a better solution.

Wiremonkeys

Among the most aptly-named of Ellwor's flora and fauna, wiremonkeys look like wire sculptures of terrestrial monkeys done by someone with twin penchants for the unsettling and the abstract. They measure just one meter from "tail" to "nose," and mass about four kilo. Individuals can be dangerous, but wiremonkeys travel in tribes of up to two hundred. A full tribe can disassemble a greater meatsnatch like a pit crew might disassemble a car, and they can disassemble your car like a grenade might disassemble a lunchbox.

They are extremely susceptible to the flashbang attacks of carniflowers. A tribe that swings too close to one of these groves will often be reduced in number by 60% before the survivors shake off the stun and flee.

Attack: 3d6+4 **Damage:** 1d6

Defense: 18 **Reduction:** 0

Health: 6

Special: They gain +1 damage for each other Wire Monkey attacking the same target; Sudden loud noises and bright lights cause them to lose their next two turns.

Wroughtwyrm

As a lone hunter, the Ellworan wroughtwyrm is poses the greatest danger to small groups of travelers. It is eleven meters of armored, serpentine appetite, with bladed scales and the ability to deliver strong electrical shocks, and

will focus all of that offensive attention on a single target.

The wroughtwyrm may drop from a tree or spring from the ground when attacking. It will bite whichever bit of its prey looks to be the most dangerous and then swiftly wind around its victim, a process which often takes only seconds. Twisting its body to position its bladescales against the immobilized prey takes a little longer, and then things get messy as it proceeds to crush, cut, and electrocute whatever is within its coils.

Most of the armored creatures of Ellwor's Friggen Jungle are easy prey, and the apex predators like the grendlsquutch and meatsnatch have to be desperately hungry before attempting to make a meal of a wroughtwyrm.

Attack: 3d6+10 **Damage:** See Special

Defense: 10 **Reduction:** 15

Health: 30

Special: Any successful attack, will result in the target being grabbed and held. To break free, the held target must make a TN 20 Athletics check; Once per turn for free, a Wroughtwyrm can deal a held target 2d6 damage as it shocks the target; Any held target takes 3d6 damage from being crushed each turn.

Other Locations

Companies and Organizations

Gaines-Uashjo

Manufacturer: space vessels

The gzeaul of Fefj system excel in any field, including mentoring, and senior management, but their engineers are of particular note. Gaines-Uashjo has been making exceedingly refined starships and warships for seventy years now. Their luxury liners are famously clean of line, and their warships are elegant weapons, tooled precisely for the roles they fill in the conflicts for patches of sky. 1

Gaines-Uashjo names their product lines for executives of note. The current exec, Valnus, is one of the few gzeaul males to crack the glass eggshell of gzeaul matriarchy, and under his leadership the Valnus model lines have had a similarly shattering debut in the market.

Phubahr

Manufacturer: weapons

Phuntam-Baan-Hromingg equipment was long regarded as "disastrously prone to severe failure." After extensive research, their marketing team offered senior management two options: go deeply in debt on an overhaul of the entire design and manufacturing division, and then go even further in debt buying ads to convince everybody that things had been fixed, or own the FUBAR (fouled up beyond all repair) moniker like a boss, and keep reaping profits. They took the second option, and did so brilliantly.

Phubahr sells guns, ammo, and materiel, and everything they sell is priced to move. In many cases things are priced low enough that you can buy multiple spares. Which is good, because you will need them. All of them. All of the ones that you can buy, you will need. And then you will curse the fact that you don't have just one more.

Planet Mercenary sells the full range of Phubahr products with pride. We have even dedicated entire storage sections of our distribution centers to the Phubahr line, with extra bulkheads separating them from the other products. For insurance purposes.

Pranger's Bangers

Independent mercenary company

One of the most famous and respected mercenary companies is Pranger's Bangers. Seventy-five years ago, Colonel Drake Pranger was a career soldier for the Daehren military. A regime change which stood down almost eighty percent of Daehre's military left him unemployed at the young age of ninety, so he called a few friends, took out a small business loan, and purchased as much military surplus as he could. From there he struck outward across the galaxy making a very impressive name for himself and his company.

Today, Pranger's Bangers fly their flag from a Daysun-Tingo Cephalus-class Skyfortress. Colonel Pranger has two commodores and eleven captains under his command, and the Banger fleet consists of eight capital ships and forty one light cruisers. They have close to 30,000 infantry and another 5,000 heavy armor vehicles ready to deploy. Intelligence suggests that they're tooling up for an extended engagement somewhere, but the specifics are not available.

Persons, Mooks, Mobs, Monsters

There are more people, and creatures in the galaxy than we have time or space to catalog in this book. This appears to be an inherent limitation of a medium which relies on pulped plant material as an information transmission method. R&D has not yet found the means to overcome this limitation while remaining true to the old-timey RPG feel. Hopefully, the portion of the universe for which we've provided stats is sufficiently representative to serve as a template for you to create stats for any of the other people or creatures that you know exist, but for which we've not provided stats.

1

JANO_CX: The previous CEO was a Gzeaul female. Was this entry drafted prior to her departure? Perhaps in an effort to curry favor?

HELENEI: I wrote it in a fit of blind panic. I forgot it was here.

JANO_CX: After reviewing matters, I think your shipping container solution served the company far better than this patch of transparently obsequious flattery would have. Feaule Azreana certainly wouldn't have given you a pay raise for it. Especially not since you used the lesser honorific in spelling the name of her home system.

HELENEI: Oh, no. How many letters do we need? The kerning will allow for a couple.

JANO_CX: Zero letters. I like the entry as-is, and shall be raising everyone's pay. A little. Assuming this book goes out the correct airlock on the correct date.

The Damaxuri Deception

Sample Planet Mercenary Adventure

This sample adventure introduces the *Planet Mercenary RPG* game rules and serves as a template you can use to create your own adventures. The time notations next to the scene number are there for reference so that the Game Chief can track time and decide whether to include extra optional events or to skip them. If you don't have a time limit on your play, feel free to ignore these time markers, but our play-tests show that the strength of the *Planet Mercenary RPG* lies in its support of fast-paced adventures.

This adventure has been organized into Scenes, and further subdivided into Parts. Scenes and parts can often be re-ordered or re-purposed for players whose decisions necessitate big changes. Ideally, when a scene concludes it will lead naturally into the next scene. Though sometimes you may have to nudge with careful use of plot and antagonists in order to guide your players to the next scene. (*See the flow chart page 278.*)

Overview

The mercenary company is attending MercCon, which is being held at the dilapidated space station Highport, in orbit above the beautiful, deadly, gold-and-black desert world of Damaxuri. The convention will be interrupted by the announcement of a high-paying bounty on the notorious arms dealer known as Kostavi, who is in the city-state of Mellsen-Anlied on the surface of Damaxuri. The players will race to capture or kill the target and collect their bounty, and they will be competing with other mercenaries during the operation.

- **Scene 1: MercCon**
  Players witness the inciting incident.
- **Scene 2: Point A to Point B**
  Players travel to Damaxuri's surface, with ship combat enroute.
- **Scene 3: The Hunt**
  Players navigate the city, search for the target, and encounter enemies.
- **Scene 4: Target Acquired**
  Players find the target, and either avert or endure a disaster.
- **Scene 5: Bounty**
  Players engage in a chase, and a firefight. The adventure concludes.

Scene 1

MercCon

(50 minutes)

The adventure begins at MercCon 713, a traveling, semi-annual expo for professionals-at-arms. 713 is being hosted by Qaya Solward of Highport Station, and sponsored in part by the city of Mellsen-Anlied on the planet below. Highport is a dilapidated, falling apart, cobbled together piece of junk. It rotates for gravity and is tapping the annies on a couple of all-but-scuttled spacecraft for lights, life-support, and other needs.

Goals for Scene 1

1. Introduce the players to their characters through role-play, as well as to the RiPP reward mechanic.
2. Teach the players how skill checks work, and how the Mayhem mechanic works.
3. Play out the inciting incident and get the characters moving toward Mellsen-Anlied.

List of Notable Characters

Use any of these, grab your own choices from the Game Chief Reference section, or make up your own. The key is to have some named NPCs for your PCs to interact with.

- **Drake Pranger**, the keynote speaker. He's a legend, and most of the mercs here are legitimately in awe of the man. He's mingling among showgoers, talking to vendors and fans. He's a Daehremmah (*see the picture page 335*). He might engage with the players, urging them to attend his keynote address.

► **"Fency" Brauttab'r**, a black market fence. Fency is a short, chubby Fobott'r. He sees everything. If any of the characters are stealing things, then Fency may approach them and make an offer on what they've acquired.

► **Acey Nubs**, an arms dealer who is almost as notorious as Kostavi, mostly because she managed to sell a Tausennigan Ob'enn Thunderhead Superfortress without getting hunted down and killed by the Ob'enn. Her gateclone got killed, though. By Acey herself. Or maybe it's the other way around…

► **Benjo Tabberlin**, a government operative from Oth, posing as a weapon vendor. He may assist the players, nudging them in the right direction. He knows about the upcoming bounty, and he suspects that all is not what it seems. He is here in pursuit of Kostavi, but he's not omniscient. He's barely figuring this stuff out in time, himself.

► **Fulda Purrghator**, an ursmari crewmember of the ship *Advancing Ice*. A friendly interaction with her may have positive consequences in scene 2. Or the opposite.

GC Tip: Getting the Role-Play Rolling

To get your players engaged in role-play, we suggest the following:

► Invite the players to make up stories about each other's characters. "Hey, remember that time when…?"

► Brief the player who is role-playing the captain. Seed them with story goals and game goals.

► As the Game Chief, role-play an old acquaintance of one or more of the players, and start regaling the group with stories from their pasts.

► As they explore the vendors hall, let the players try out some of their skills. There will be vendors selling weapons, and a gun range has been set up. There will be pockets to pick, data to snoop, and more.

► Don't let the Mayhem cards be truly catastrophic. It's too early for that. Invoke the Game Chief's prerogative, and buy back really bad Mayhem cards.

► But don't go easy. If picking a pocket fails, there may be a brawl, and some fast talking, and some medical help, and then a pair of captains (one played by you, one played by the player captain) apologizing to each other for the terrible behavior of their people.

Part I: The Show Floor

On the show floor of MercCon 713 the atmosphere is festive, for heavily-armed, nervous values of festive. The PCs and their grunts account for between 20 and 40 of the 2,000 attendees. The event has taken over the central concourse of the station. The lighting here is pretty terrible, except for the vendor areas where the vendors brought their own lights. Highport's nicest concourse is a dump. The 40m wide walkway and shopping space with 10m ceilings are filled with dozens of spacious vendor booths laid out on a grid. There are demo rooms and booths, which contain hawkish merchants of dozens of galactic sophont types staring them down and attempting to sell their wares. You can find vendors by perusing the Game Chief Reference section. Most of those wares are outside the price range of the PCs. This is deliberate to help them be excited to take on the bounty for Kostavi.

The panels, lectures, and keynote addresses are given in an auditorium aboard the scrapped liner Serendipity. That space is quite a bit nicer than Highport, but that's mostly because the lights work and the paint hasn't started to peel.

You can sprinkle details, like the auditory examples below, wherever you need them. They can help set the tone. Remember: sight and sound are not the only senses available to you, as a storyteller. How does a place smell? Can you taste anything in the air?

► **Intercom announcer:** "Welcome to MercCon 713! Our event has been bringing mercenaries, materiel vendors, and weapon manufacturers together for over three hundred years, letting you share best practices, learn from one another's mistakes, and clasp hands on neutral ground."

► **Vendor:** "I've abandoned stations in better shape than this one."

► **Attendee:** "Pranger's giving the keynote. Dude's a legend. He's been armed and dangerous since before my parents were born."

► **Intercom announcer:** "Weapons must be peace-bonded or left on your vessels. There are live-fire ranges in the Expo Hall, where you can try-before-you-buy. Just try not to shoot anyone, or you'll be buying their casket and the murder weapon."

► **Security guard:** "Please note that sections of Highport Station have been cordoned off for safety purposes. We want you to be comfortable."

The more detail you can provide about a location, the better your players will be able to imagine their characters in the space.

Help your PCs figure out that attending the keynote is not optional. If nothing else, nudge the captain to say something like: "We paid a lot of money for you to hear this blowhard speak. Find a seat, now."

If, prior to the keynote address, the players succeed on a TN 15 skill check for hacking, data-hounding, or gathering information, then they may get a five-minute head start on the news. The unioc agent Benjo Tabberlin has this information, and the information is also queued for keynote-timing release in a data-buffer somewhere.

Kostavi Background

Kostavi sells arms to the wrong people, and she does it in ways that result in a lot of non-combatants getting killed. In at least one case, Kostavi armed a quarantine camp on Oth and gave the plague victims a fake vaccine. This event made the news, and one or more of the players will remember it.

Part II: The Keynote

During the keynote, the speaker Colonel Drake Pranger will be interrupted by some off-stage commotion. A bounty has just been posted for the criminal arms dealer Kostavi, a human woman. The bounty is rich enough (awarding 5 Resource points upon completion) that most of the mercenaries in attendance will scramble to leave the auditorium and race to the surface.

At this point, whether they have a head start or not, the players may engage in any or all of the following activities to improve their odds of getting to the surface first:

- Jamming local comms
- Staging an emergency (biological hazard, stock market crash)
- Getting the other mercs to start fighting each other
- Jamming, tangling, or otherwise messing up the docks, thus slowing everyone else's departure

They probably should not:

- Open fire on the station and begin murdering the competition
- Open fire with ship weapons and murder everyone on the station

Encourage quick thinking and speedy play by counting down, or keep a visual tally of time's passage for yourself.

If the players fall so far behind that they cannot possibly get there first, then have them communicate with the unioc agent, Benjo Tabberlin. He feels suspicious, and he believes that Kostavi may have, through shell companies, posted the bounty herself. If this is the case, then she is probably looking to stage her own death in some disaster that is made to look like it was caused by the mercenaries coming after her. Having this knowledge will help the players jump forward some steps when they reach Mellsen Anlied. If they don't gain this information here, they can get it later.

Drake Pranger

Scene 2

Point A to Point B

(20 minutes)

The players depart the station, and they do not enjoy a smooth ride to the surface. They race other mercenary companies to Mellsen-Anlied. Whether the players are ahead of the competition, in the middle of the pack, or bringing up the rear of the race, an enemy should fire on them. The PCs should have a chance to fire first if they succeed on a Perception or History (Military) skill check (TN 16). Otherwise, the characters will first learn that there is a problem when the pilot sees that they're being painted with enemies' targeting systems.

Goals for Scene 2

1. Introduce the players to ship combat rules.
2. Raise the stakes by making them feel threatened and by breaking some of their stuff.

MAXIM 65

After the toss, be the one with the pin, not the one with the grenade.

Ship Combat Stat Blocks

The Buzzkill (PC's vessel)

Döblitz Foundry Harmadillo

AI Rating: 2
Hull Points: 12
Defense: 13
Damage: 2d6 anti-personnel, 1 hull anti-vehicle, 2d6 STS missile
Systems: 1 Civilian annie plant, light armor, light anti-personnel weapons, light anti-vehicle weapons, basic teraport

It Belongs To Us Now (competitor vessel)

Mitsutendo Yoshi (heavily upgraded)

The mercenaries aboard the *It Belongs To Us Now* are established bounty hunters with a piratical bent.

Required AI Rating: 1
Hull Points: 10
Defense: 12 (vs missile) or 17 (vs beam)
Damage: 2d6 anti-personnel, 2d6 STS missiles
Systems: Light armor, light anti-personnel weapons (forward-facing only), light STS missiles, light shields, basic teraport

Advancing Ice (competitor vessel)

Gaines-Uashjo Valnus Stormrage

Advancing Ice is an all-ursumari ship, and it has the players outgunned. This ship is among the last off the station, because the ursumari of the company Icewall Armed Response were nose deep in delicious pallberry frozen yogurt when the bounty was posted. They will return fire if provoked, but if an ursumari player character has interacted with a member of the crew of Advancing Ice on the station, and *Advancing Ice* may be particularly merciful. They might even rescue the players if another ship has disabled them.

AI Rating: 3
Hull Points: 20
Defense: 20 (vs missiles) or 25 (vs beam)
Damage: 2d6 anti-personnel, 2 anti-vehicle, 4d6 STS
Systems: 1 Civilian annie plant, medium anti-personnel weapons, medium anti-vehicle weapons, medium armor, Civilian ship locker, heavy STS missiles, basic teraport, heavy sheild

The Neoshka Kree (competitor vessel)

COF Wyvern-class Gunboat (visibly modified)

The mercenaries of the company Full-Auto Corrections consist of an aggressive, fiesty bunch of adventuring esspererin from the pirate cluster Oshka Kree. They are among the first out of the gate at Highport and they will fire on the players immediately. Possibly with the anti-personnel weapons that can't do hull damage, and are thus useless in ship to ship combat.

Required AI Rating: 2
Hull Points: 10
Defense: 5 (vs missile)
Damage: 4d6 STS beam, 2d6 antipersonnel
Systems: Heavy beam weapons, 1 civilian annie plant, light armor, basic teraport

If the players fail their introduction to space combat miserably, then: good news! The enemy was not shooting to kill. Just disable. In fact, the enemy is going to be kind enough to drop your tiny assault ship safely in the desert. The desert is deadly, so the hike to Mellsen-Anlied requires three skill checks for Endurance. Set the target number for the first check at TN 10, the second at TN 15, and the third at TN 18. Failure on any of these skill checks results in 1d6 damage per character.

Players in full environment suits do not need to make these Endurance skill checks.

If the players do not take ship-disabling damage in the firefight, then they should arrive safely at Mellsen-Anlied. Game Chiefs would do well to review the information on Mellsen-Anlied on page 255, as it will greatly enhance the storytelling for the rest of the adventure.

Scene 3

The Hunt
(30 minutes)

In "The Hunt," the characters will hunt for Kostavi in Part 1, engage in combat in Part 2, and continue with the hunt in Part 3. Kostavi is here, but has rigged her capture so that it will result in one or more explosions that will kill lots of people, make a huge mess, and get things blamed on the mercenaries. At some point during the day, the possibility that Kostavi has set this whole thing up will begin to occur to the other mercenary companies, and a great many of them may be seen pulling out of the bounty. If the PCs don't yet know Kostavi's plan, the other mercs pulling out should help clue them in.

Goals for Scene 3

1. Introduce the players to combat. There should be one engagement that's short, sweet, and chaotic.
2. Have lots of fun and introduce the players to failure. Demonstrate that failure is as much fun as success, and that if a success follows some failure, then that success tastes much sweeter.

Part I: Picking Up the Scent (5 minutes)

If the characters succeed on a skill check of Perception (or Computers) (TN 15), then they should be able to find one of Kostavi's possible locations. If they roll 18+ on this skill check, then the characters will find three possible locations. And if they roll 20+, then they will find six locations, and they will have a *really* good idea of which one to check first. They'll be wrong, though. If they have information from the unioc agent, they get +5 on this skill check because they know where to look.

Part II: Combat #1 (20 minutes)

The first place the characters check should trigger a combat encounter. Kostavi's henchmen will engage the characters, forcing them to fight.

Each warehouse has three guards for each player who is with the group. The guards are pretty lazy and not very bright, so it shouldn't be hard to get the drop on them. Encourage the players to utilize their fireteams so they have additional actions and shots.

Kostavi's Henchmen

1 individual

Attack: 3d6+5 **Damage:** 2d6+1
Defense: 13 **Reduction:** 1
Health: 6

Part III: The Hunt Continues (5 minutes)

At the end of this engagement, the players will know which location to visit next. It is deep in the city of Mellsen-Anlied. Succeeding on a Perception skill check (TN 15) will reveal that some of the other mercs are leaving town in a hurry. The characters may choose to role-play this transition into Scene 4, or they may have an uneventful trip to Kostavi's location.

The deep warrens of Mellsen-Anlied are cramped and maze-like, but will often open into surprisingly large spaces. The locals here are humans, uniocs, and a smattering of human-sized bipeds. Large folk like neophants and ursumari are nowhere to be seen, so players using those races will stand out quite a bit.

Scene 4

Target Acquired
(1 hour)

The main engagement begins. A bomb is discovered and (hopefully) defused. Kostavi is present, but will very expertly attempt to slip out. She's slippery, and she wants the players tied down here in a fight that will end with a very big explosion.

Goals for Scene 4

1. Have the players use what they've learned to fight more effectively in combat.
2. Have a timed event in which the players must act quickly, in real-time, to avert a disaster.
3. Use the Ablative Meat mechanic, and maybe introduce the players to death and grunt promotion.

Kostavi and her crew have fortified themselves in a large space near an out-of-order elevator shaft that leads up to the docks. The room is full of shipping containers, most of which are large enough that the only way they could have come down here is via that shaft. Succeeding on a History (military) or Perception skill check (TN 12) reveals that Kostavi plans to escape up that shaft.

Kostavi knows that the players are coming. She's counting on it, in fact. She wants this fight, and she wants as many mercs as possible tied up in this space when the bomb goes off. She also needs to be seen here, to convince the authorities of her death.

On a skill check of Computers or Engineering (TN 18), the players may get the drop on this crowd by hacking into the elevator shaft and coming in via Kostavi's primary escape route.

There should be three Kostavi henchmen for each player character. If the players have learned from the previous encounter, and are making good use of their fireteams and the various non-weapon skills at their disposal, then they should even those odds up quickly.

Kostavi's Henchmen Squads

1-3 individuals, 1 squad

Attack: 3d6+5 **Damage:** 2d6+1

Defense: 13 **Reduction:** 1

Health: 2hp per squad member

Kostavi

Attack: 3d6 + 9 **Damage:** 2d6 +3

Defense: 26, then 18 after 2 rounds **Reduction:** 2

Health: 12

Special: Kostavi can roll to Dodge or use Stealth; she has 11 ranks in either skill. Kostavi gets two attacks per round. Her Defense is reduced to 18 after two rounds of combat because her Goaltender armor gets fried.

Once her Goaltender fails, Kostavi will panic and use most of her actions to Dodge, move, or sneak in an attempt to escape. If Kostavi drops to 2 hp, or takes more than 10 points of damage from a single attack, then she will "yield" by threatening to blow everything sky-high unless you stop shooting at her. (She is bluffing.)

If the players already know Kostavi's plot, then they may attempt to intimidate or turn Kostavi's henchmen with that information. Perform an Intimidation or Negotiate (Persuasion) skill check (TN 20, modified as you see fit depending on the role-play; TN 12 if the players can display the bomb that they're about to find as proof of Kostavi's intent).

During the engagement, the characters will find the bomb. It is an Urtheep Industries Dial-a-Yield 22 device, which Kostavi has rigged to dial higher the further that she gets from it. She's currently in the room with the device, but she won't be there for long.

At this point the mission objectives have changed. They can either be: "Stop the bomb, catch Kostavi, and get paid" or "Catch Kostavi, get paid, don't die to the bomb, and try not to get blamed for the destruction of Mellsen-Anlied." How the characters proceed with this Scene will determine which of these mission objectives they pursue by the time they get to Scene 5.

Urtheep Industries Dial-a-Yield 22

- **Damage:** 8d6 (reduction does apply). Be generous and don't kill a player unless they're *right* on the bomb. The yield is currently dialed way down to about one ton of TNT (4.184 gigajoules of energy).
- **Disarm TN:** Rolling 20 results in success. Three successive rolls of 15+ will succeed as well. If any roll fails to beat 15, then the timer will begin racing. Count down from ten. Any player not at a dead run out of the room when you reach zero will take heavy damage from the bomb.
- **Bonus:** Critical failure on any roll will automatically cause the bomb to detonate. Make sure the players (1) know this in advance, and (2) know that a RiPP token spent by the person making the check will allow a re-roll. Statistically, there is one chance in 216 for a critical failure.

To complicate matters, Kostavi has a heartbeat trigger on her person. If she is killed before the bomb has been defused *and* disabled, then the bomb will dial itself up to one kiloton of yield and detonate within ten seconds. The players can make three attempts to defuse the bomb (all TN 20) in that ten-second period,

if they want to. Using RiPPs, banked Mayhem cards, and any other game mechanics at their disposal is encouraged.

Yes, It's Chaotic

The story can twist and turn quite a bit at this point, and it may get confusing. Focus on the motivations and goals of those involved, to keep things on track:

- ► Kostavi wants to generate an explosion large enough to make it look like she's dead, but not large enough to kill her.
- ► Her first escape plan is to ride an air bike up the elevator shaft to the docks. Her second plan is to fight her way out of the warehouse and flee through the city.
- ► At least one nearby mercenary company may still be on the prowl (let a Mayhem card trigger their entrance as you see fit).
- ► The players should see Kostavi make her escape, as that's the event that brings us to Scene 5.
- ► Bullets are flying, somebody is crouched over a container full of Dial-a-Yield, and the players will have their own ideas about what constitutes a good dramatic arc here. Let them dictate the play a bit — remember that a story on rails makes for a boring RPG.

Speaking of Which...

You probably should have warned players that the existence of a battlefield promotion mechanic in this game means that one or more of their characters may die. If you haven't, then you may need to take a moment and do some people-hacking. Perhaps they'll immediately twig to the fun of role-playing a death scene, a battlefield promotion, and an oath of vengeance.

Or maybe you'll need to adopt your best drill instructor stance and give them a choice between girding up for a good death scene, or closing their books and switching over to a training-wheels tabletop RPG like *My Little Kitten: Litterbox Adventure Magic*. You may need to say something like: "Are you a dysfunctional family of hard-bitten, hard-hitting, hard-asses or not?" Something like that. Yeah. Play that up.

If you and your players do want to play *MLK: LAM* ("Milk Lamb" to fans and detractors alike), then please contact Planet Mercenary R&D immediately. We are gauging market interest now, and we would rather not begin testing anything on kittens until we know it's absolutely necessary. 1

Scene 5

Bounty

(20 minutes)

Goals for Scene 5

1. Put everything into practice. Combat, Mayhem, RiPPs, skill checks, and of course role-play. And do it quickly.
2. Complete the job! There are a variety of "completion" scenarios which include absolute disaster (no pay, lots of death), mitigated disaster (some pay, lots of death), defeat from the jaws of victory (no death, but no pay), and victory (lots of pay, so what if some of us died?).
3. If you're playing this sample adventure as an introduction to the game, then for the love of chrome, chromium, and gas chromatography *please* balance things so that the players pull off a big win at the end. If you want to play with them again, of course.

Part I: The Running Firefight

By now the bomb has either gone off or not gone off — the players have resolved the explosive situation either way. If Kostavi is already dead or captured, then twist the plot by saying "you killed her body double," or by having somebody steal her away before her heart could stop. Note also that the police may be involved by now. Law enforcement unit stats are included, if the players need more shooting, or perhaps a moral quandary.

Mellsen-Anlied Police Department Speeder

Hull: 1 — Enclosed

Crew: 4 MAPD officers — **Skill:** Air, Ground

Law Enforcement Squad

2–4 individuals

Attack: 3d6+7 — **Damage:** 1d6

Defense: 13 — **Reduction:** 0

Health: 3hp per squad member

Special: May be armed with goober rounds, immobilizing targets on a hit; "Call for backup."

1

HELENEI: Terl, did you write this? Is it a joke? Please tell me R&D doesn't have kittens.

TERL'KRIS: The invoice says they have kittens.

R&D: Relax, folks. We're not testing things on them. We're testing them *on things*.

BANA_B: What does that mean?

HELENEI: What kinds of tests?

CZECKI: What kinds of things?

R&D: We're measuring the soothing effects of kitten contact on—

HELENEI: Sign us up. All of us.

R&D: We only have twenty—

JANO_CX: Sign them all up. And if you need more kittens, get them.

TERL'KRIS: This book isn't quite finished.

JANO_CX: No, but your part in it is. Kitten time. Mandatory.

R&D: It can't be kitten time yet. We're not ready to begin the formal—

JANO_CX: It is *kitten time*. Should the relaxed sighs and sobs of our kitten-cuddling publication team fail to generate data you need, I will fund you for more tests.

TERL'KRIS: I can't possibly relax, or sigh. Sob, maybe. The book isn't finished.

JANO_CX: No, but the remaining content describes something called a "denouement," and then it's just appendices. I'm confident that your intern, 3benee2er, will be aces on linked-list construction.

Law Enforcement Large Response

5 squads of 2–4 individuals

Special: 1 Urban Response Vehicle that can hose the party down with goober; Scan for ID. Party members will not be anonymous if this succeeds; Will accept surrender.

Icewall Security Retrieval Team

4 individuals

Attack: 3d6+8 **Damage:** 3d6 (see Special)

Defense: 20 **Reduction:** 0

Health: 16 HP

Special: Each member of this team attacks individually. Any time a member of this team rolls a 1 for damage, they upgrade it to a 2. Ouch.

This is a running firefight through the quickly-clearing passages of the deeper parts of Mellsen-Anlied. Be inventive with the chase, rolling skill checks for the appropriate Vehicle, Stealth, Athletics, Mechanic, etc. The firefight should be fast-paced, full of dodging or running over civvies, and wreaking havoc in the streets. Depending on Mayhem rolls, you might mix things up with a police broadcast that offers a reward for the apprehension of the characters, or Kostavi, or the other mercs, or all three.

- If a player managed to defuse the bomb, then remind that player that it is now *their* bomb, and that it might be useful.
- If the players start checking out at this point, then have the Captain role-play an inspiring speech. Also, if the players are feeling beaten down, then it's time to start rewarding them better.

Each round of the chase requires a TN 15 check of an appropriate chase related skill (players can sell the GC on anything, really). If the players succeed, then they're closer to catching Kostavi. If they fail, then the enemy is a step closer. After three successful checks (these need not occur in succession), the players catch Kostavi first. If the players fail three rolls before rolling any successes, or fail five rolls before succeeding on three, then a rival mercenary company catches her first.

If the latter situation occurs, then the chase should lead straight into a raid on the enemy ship/vehicle/hotel. Use the same stat blocks for the henchmen in the raid as Kostavi's henchmen (*see page 337*), and challenge each player with two henchmen. If you're running low on time, then you can make it one henchman per player, and/or make them cowardly.

The players should succeed at getting Kostavi, because the thrill is in the journey here. Don't make it too easy, because you're here to tell a great story, but the challenges drive great moments, not the success. The real goal is players who had fun, which can happen whether or not the PCs succeeded at their job objectives.

Part II: Denouement

Victory! Encourage the players to exult in their success in character. Award RiPPs as earned. Then break character a bit and show them how, if this session were to be part of a larger campaign, you would award Resource, Reputation, and skill points. A good denouement in Planet Mercenary RPG typically consists of almost complete role-play, but because this is an introductory adventure, you might generate interest in an ongoing campaign by indicating what could come after the completion of this mission.

Kostavi's shell corporation will pay for the damages caused on Damaxuri, in full. Kostavi couldn't figure out how to not pay the money without giving away the scheme. Also, if the victory is a clean one (the bomb does not go off, and any civilian casualties are all clearly pinned on Kostavi) then Benjo Tabberlin will show up and pay the players an additional 2 Resource points. They'll gain Reputation, and they will make powerful connections on Oth, which can lead to future missions.

In our first public play-test of this adventure, this final portion of the adventure kept going after the Game Chief, the Lead Writer, and the player who role-played as the ob'enn captain of the company had left for a banquet. The players just kept, you know… playing. Telling each other the stories of what happens next. This is what we hope to achieve with *Planet Mercenary RPG*: a system that allows people to tell stories together however — and for however long — they want. Have fun, and let us know what kinds of adventures you'd like to see published in the future.

Units of Measure

The galaxy has a plethora of available measurement systems as evidenced by our use of the word plethora, which is itself a unit of measure, albeit an imprecise one (like "bajillion" or "truck-fun"). For clarity's sake, we have used the following systems of measure:

For measurements of physical dimensions, mass, and temperature we are using the metric system as developed by Earth's scribe-wizard Gabrielle Mouton in 1680 CE, and adopted system-wide after four glacial centuries of arguing about body parts. Numbering throughout this book is base-10, making the decimally-subdivided metric system a much more natural fit for our clients' wide range of physiologies and foot sizes.

Units of time will be a bit more complicated. We'll use minutes, seconds, and hours as originally developed by ancient Earth's Sumerians and Babylonians, who licensed it to Mouton for inclusion in the metric system. Days and years will also ordinarily refer to periods of time based on rotations and orbits of Earth, but these words might also mean rotations and orbits of other worlds. If we say that a planet's year is a certain number of days long, those are Earth days, not that planet's days, which are in turn measured in Babylonian hours.

For calendaring purposes we'll be using Earth's "current era" calendar, in which the year, as of this writing, is 3100 CE, or simply 3100. The CE designation replaced the AD designation of pre-contact times, by continuing the numbers but changing the letters appended to them.

For each location we've provided a system chart laid out using Astronomical Units (AU) on a logarithmic scale. Each star system uses its own AU (e.g. Earth-to-Sol in Sol System, Othlin-to-Xuvoth in the Xuvoth system), and we've defined each system's astronomical unit in kilometers. This does diverge from the Sol-centric standard we used for "day" and "year," but we made up for that inconsistency by calculating the logarithms in base 10.

The Resource and Supplies system was developed using natural logarithms, complex quadratic polynomials, and neomandelbrotian robin-rounding to turn galactic economics into simple addition that the average grunt can understand. The matter of reverse-engineering this system to express Resources as kilocreds (kC) is what rocket scientists call a "three body problem."

Mathematicians and economists undeterred by simulation-level complexity can begin here: The acquisition cost for an item of value R is expressed in the formula $\log_e(kC)=R$, for R values between 15 and 22. The price of materiel of Supply value S is expressed in the formula $\log_{1.11}(kC)=S$, for Supply values of between 25 and 32. 1

These logarithmic expressions are themselves abstractions. As R and S increase in value, the log base must decrease in order to calculate a price tag. Note that you will need a completely different set of formulas for calculating upkeep, maintenance, and payroll.

1

3BENEE2ER: I *know* meatware-people can create better algorithms than this one, so I guess we don't want to commit too firmly to a set of monetary values? Maybe because our catalog prices changed recently? At risk of spilling some bean-counter's beans, here is a more elegant function set that might be less abstract, though I have no practical way to test it since no one lets me touch money.

$S = \log_{111}(kC) = (1/A) \log_e(kC) = (1/A)\ R \approx 9.5822\ R \approx S$

Galstandard West Clocks

If you're accustomed to the Galstandard West clocks, which count time in elemental half-lives, there will be some rounding errors. The ^{144}Promethium year is 363 days made up of twenty-four ^{148}Terbium hours, each of which are in turn made up of thirty-six million ^{215}Astatine seconds. It's an elegant system, but you shouldn't try to use it at game time. Especially don't use the ^{131}Iodine week, whose 8.02 day length requires the subtraction of two ^{214}Pb units every other week-end, and which still creeps out of sync.

Glossary

MAXIM 70

Failure isn't an option. It's mandatory. The option is whether or not to let failure be the last thing you do.

AI Roll: This is a roll used primarily in space combat where you roll 3d6 and add the company (or ship) AI rating to the total.

Annie Plant: A high-energy power source standard in warships and megacities, which generates energy through the annihilation of quark-gluon plasma-phase neutronium. Annie plants are expensive because they are constructed using high-PTU composites.

Artificial Intelligence (AI): A machine intelligence, usually constructed and grow-prammed by organic intelligences, which is fully self-aware and self-determinative, and which has crossed the threshold of sapience required to be considered a person. All artificial intelligences are sophonts.

Attack: An action taken and where violent intent is expressed through an appropriate skill check.

Automatic Failure: Sorry. Maybe don't roll three ones next time?

Damage: Pain and harm inflicted to a PC's body, vehicle, or ship. Damage directly reduces Health (or Hull for ships) on a one for one basis.

Damage Reduction: Literally "injuriam reductum". Each time a character would take damage, they reduce the total they'd suffer by this amount.

Defense: A character's innate, passive ability to avoid harm. Represented by a static number that serves as the TN to be hit in combat.

Dice: Analog random-number generators fashioned from any of a variety of materials, including acrylic, metal, or the bones of ancestral sages.

D6³: A system for summing three six-sided dice, and informing the sum based on which of the 216 possible permutations generated it. Created by Alan Bahr and Howard Tayler in 2015 CE.

Dodge: The act of getting out of the way of incoming violence. Dodging requires one action, and a Dodge roll. The result of your Dodge roll replaces your Defense.

Failure: The result of an unsuccessful skill check. Required, but don't let it be the last bad thing you do.

Fireteam: A group of grunts assigned to each officer. Controlled and roleplayed by the officer's player.

Galaxy, The: When we say "the galaxy," we're talking about what humans called "the Milky Way" before they even had the word "galaxy;" a word which they made from their word for a particular type of milk-based carbohydrate before any of us were on Earth to stop them.

Galstandard: A class of trans-system, intragalactic languages. There are four primary galstandard languages, all of which can be written, though not with a single set of common symbols.

Brown: The language of thermal gradients, colors, and gas-phase aromatics used by the sapient gases, superfluids, and gelatinoids found in brown dwarfs, gas giants, and some anaerobic oceans.

East: The language of meme-gesture and frequency-modulated sounds in use by a broad range of land, air, and ocean sophonts, none of which appear in this volume.

Peroxide: The language of sounds, gestures, and colors primarily used by thousands of aquatic, tentacled species, including the schuul and enteroctopus sapiens. Also used by the neoafans.

West: The language of sound most commonly in use by land-based, oxygen-breathing sophonts like humans, uniocs, gzeaul, and thousands of others. You are reading the Galstandard West edition of this book.

Game Chief (GC): The poor sap who agreed to shepherd you through this chaos and mess. Probably the owner of this book. Maybe the owner of your play location. The only one not on the hook for snacks. The GC is responsible for rules arbitration and helping to guide the plot. The "director" of this movie.

Genengineering: The alteration of the instruction set encoded in a creature's or species' molecular-level organic chemistry. Terran life uses "genes" containing long-chain molecules collectively called "DNA" for most such encoding.

Gravy Gun: A ship-to-ship weapon that projects a narrow, high-energy gravitational field. "Gravy" is shorthand for "gravity" and "this gun makes a real mess of the enemy."

Gravitics: Any system that generates or manipulates artificial gravity. Drivetide Compensation Inertiics (DCI), Gravy Guns, and warship shields are generally classified as gravitics.

Growprammed: A play on the words "programmed" and "grown." Growpramming is the process used for creating artificial intelligences. Starting conditions and selection methods are set by the designer, or growprammer, and then the system is allowed to iteratively evolve into its final state.

Grunt: A soldier whose job consists of accepting and executing orders from officers. Often called "enlisted troops" or "non-shareholders."

Health: A stat representing how much damage or harm a character can suffer before death.

Hull Points: Health for armored vehicles and ships. Weapons can't reduce Hull Points unless the weapon can deal out Hull damage.

Hullmetal: Any of a wide range of high-tensile strength composites, like amorphous metals, fullerene webs, and monomolecular sheets, used in hull plating for warships. PTU composites are almost never used in hullmetal, despite their superior strength. They're too expensive.

Inertiics: A warship or power-armor system using locally-generated gravity to protect occupants from extremes of acceleration. In 2101 CE High Chalain Dabradis said that inertiics "steal from Einstein to bribe Newton."

Mayhem Dice: The odd colored dice of your 3d6. If this dice is the highest on any final skill check, you must do a Mayhem flip.

Mayhem Flip: Drawing the top card of the Mayhem deck and resolving it. (Note that it may be resolved by paying one RiPP to negate it.)

Mechorganic: A type of life form or ecosystem that evolves when aggressively adaptive organisms incorporate unattended technology. Mechorganic life usually begins at the end of a technological civilization's sapiezoic era when self-replicating technology and genegeneered organisms contend via natural selection. Note that the term "mechorganic" is like the word "plant," in that it can describe wildly different organisms. The mechorganic carniflowers of Ellwor look nothing like the mechorganic sunflowers of the Pereri Ring.

Mook Squad: A GC controlled fireteam. Usually hostile.

Nanoplaque: A mechorganic detritovore, usually a disease, which covers a particular type of surface and extracts material from it. Organic-chemistry analogs for nanoplaque include slime molds, fungi, and algae.

Non-Player Character (NPC): An in-game character controlled and role-played by the GC.

Officer: A type of soldier whose job description stems from the word "office" and whose job description includes issuing orders, making difficult decisions, and taking cover behind office furniture or grunts.

Player Character (PC): An in-game character controlled and role-played by a player at the table. In *Planet Mercenary RPG*, PCs are officers in a mercenary company.

Post-Trans-Uranics (PTUs): A class of material created from a family of elements from a high-atomic-number island of stability. The energy states required to force sufficient protons, neutrons, and pentaquark triads into a single nucleus do not occur naturally.

Probie: A new recruit added to a fireteam. Usually a liability, and generally given the worst jobs.

Qualities (Armor, Fireteam, Weapon): Special rules that modify the function of the armor, fireteam, or weapon.

Rank (ie Ranks in a Skill): A representation of how skilled a character is at a focused task or application. Higher is better. Skill ranks are added to 3d6 when resolving skill checks.

Reputation: How a company, usually the players' company, is viewed in a business context by outsiders.

Resources: A representation of a company's large scale finances, wealth, or collateral. An abstraction of the complex combination of financial instruments used to calculate this kind of thing outside of the game.

Result: The outcome of a skill check. Generally success or failure.

RiPP (Role-Play Point): An in-game meta-currency used for various effects.

Sapiezoic: A time period, usually an era, epoch, or eon in geologic terms, during which sapient life consciously modifies the environment and ecosystem. Literally, "wise life," sapiezoic periods are not always marked by actual wisdom.

Skill Check: Rolling 3d6 and adding a character's skill rank to see if a character is successful at an action. The roll must equal or exceed the TN.

Sophont: Another word for person, but often used to mean "person who is alien to me, but it's rude for me to keep saying alien." Specifically, any self-aware, intelligent creature whose measure of sapience has crossed the legal threshold for personhood, granting them the rights and responsibilities afforded to people.

Speak First, Go First: The player who first says they act, acts first. Any time that order-dependency is critical (like in combat) actions are ordered by who said what first.

Species: In *Planet Mercenary* this word always refers to unintelligent living organisms. Sapient, sentient living organisms are sophonts.

Statistic (stat): A numerical abstraction of a real-life attribute. Higher is better, bigger, or more.

Supplies: An abstraction of the portion of a company's budget used for weapons and materiel. Usually spent on guns.

Synthetic Intelligence: A machine intelligence, usually created by organic intelligences, which is only partially self-aware and/or self-determinative. Not a person. You can sell these, or just throw them away, and not feel bad unless you bought high and sold low. 1

Target Number (TN): An abstracted representation of the difficulty of a given task. The GC sets the TN and the skill check must equal or exceed it.

Teraport: A new mode of faster-than-light travel in which the vessel transduces itself into state-oscillating gravitic packets, opens trillions of nanoscopic wormholes, and traverses the wormholes encoded as gravitational energy. Upon exiting, the packets state-collapse, and the vessel is reassembled. Called the "tear-apart" by detractors. Their word is pretty accurate.

Teraport Area Denial (TAD): A system which prevents inbound or outbound teraports by detecting the beginnings of a teraport, and disrupting wormhole formation by creating fluctuations in the quantum-foam substrate of local space.

Upgraded Success: When a roll shows triple sixes, an extra effect is applied.

Uplift: The process by which a species of non-sapient life is genegeneered and otherwise modified for full sapience. Originally a racist, colonial term, the word was repurposed with its current meaning by 21st-century futurist David Brin.

World: A planet, dwarf planet, planetoid, or any artificial, space-based structure which is large enough to give a "planet-like" sense to a large number of sophonts.

Wormgate: A hoop-shaped station with an opening roughly 1km in diameter, used for faster-than-light travel to other wormgates. Teraport-based travel has resulted in a steep decline in wormgate travel.

Xeno-: When the prefix xeno- is pre-pended to an area of scientific study, the term refers to the broader, more general field of study that considers worlds, species, sophonts, and locations that would be "alien" to the student or scientist. Earth's anthropologists study ancient Earth civilizations. Earth's xenoanthropologists study ancient civilizations across the galaxy.

1

3BENEE2ER: I devoted some unused processing cycles to optimizing the placement of the MLK:LAM kittens, which will age out of the project more quickly than anyone in that laboratory full of purring cares to admit. Using the Sophont Resources data, which is currently unattended pending something called a "microagression penalty phase," I have mapped all of the kittens on to good homes where they will be cared for and appreciated.

One factor that distinguishes a synthetic intelligence from an artificial intelligence is that a synthetic intelligence can run the kitten placement optimization in a few seconds, but I can run it in slightly fewer seconds while genuinely caring about all the kittens.

Index

A

Abentro Cor, 232
Ablative Meat, 9, 110
Abraj Alkathban, 206, 294
accessibility, 8, 285
acquiring skills and specialties, 28, 64
Acting specialty, 53
actions, 12
Activate System, 113
adventure seeds, 288, 289, 290, 298, 304, 307, 310, 315, 317, 319, 322, 325
adventure, sample, 333
adventurers, motley, 328
Aerodynamic weapons specialty, 32
Agshu, 217, 221
AI (artificial intelligence sophont), 33, 64, 67, 86-89, 96, 97, 98, 103, 113, 280
AI roll, 113
Air Vehicles skill, 27, 42, 66
Allaphame, 249
ammunition, 135, 151, 180-182, 192
ammunition specialized, 139, 143, 177
stun, 151, 182
amorph, see carbosilicate amorph
Andrhianni's Labyrinth, 267
annie plant, 114
anti-personnel weapons, starship, 114, 115
anti-vehicle weapons, starship, 115
Architecture specialty, 35
Armor Crackers ammunition, 143, 177
armor, 115, 134, 154
armor, custom, building, 148-149
armor, personal, 136, 137, 154, 156, 157
armor-assisted Dodge, 136
armored car, Gaines-Uashjo Horizon-class, 147, 198
armored utility vehicle, BFF, 147, 198
Arms of Days War, 93, 248, 250, 251
Arnarsaftur, 218, 300, 302
array, very dangerous (starship), 119
artificial intelligence, see AI
artificial intelligence vs. synthetic intelligence, 97
assassination squad, 296
assault boat docks, starship, 115
Asteroid Belt (see also Belt), 211, 216, 292
asteroids, 220
Athletics skill, 27, 42, 66
Attack (starship), 114
attacking in combat, 13
attacks, natural, 60
Auritorium Multinational, 327
Autobailiff 2200, 145, 188
automatic failure, 10, 25
automation items, 144, 183
axe, 143, 176

B

Bacchus, 216
background, 28, 56, 59
Bagamorph, 145, 189
balancing game play, 11
Ballistic weapons specialty, 31
Barschuum, 219
Battery Park, 268
Battlefield Medicine specialty, 40
beam ammunition, 151, 181
beam weapons (starship), 118
Beam weapons specialty, 29, 30, 31, 135
being a good player, 54
Belt, the, 214, 292
Biochemistry specialty, 32
Black Market specialty, 52
Blacklabel Entrance Kit BEK 146, 193
blade, 143, 176
Blaireton (Luna), 210
blood nannies, 145, 192, 253
Bluffing specialty, 50
boarding actions, starship, 116
Boblet (Luna), 210
bogmaw, 263, 265, 329
Boldfavor, 265, 266, 268, 270, 271, 326, 328
Boomex explosive, 143, 178
bot, 144, 183-184, 306, 307
Bradicor, 258. 259, 262, 310, 323
Breaking & Entering specialty, 45
Brilish, 217, 221, 301
Brinsea, 263, 268
Bu'uthandi, 226, 305
Build specialty, 39
building, encounter / campaign, 280-281
Bunker Bubble, 137
buying gear, 99, 103

C

campaign, 277, 281
Canyon City Site Gamma, 262
Captain command package, 57
carbine, 138, 141, 165, 167
Carbines, skill, 27, 28, 66,
carbosilicate amorph (sophont), 64, 67, 89-90, 92, 258, 260, 286, 313, 323, 325
Celeschul, 217, 221, 271, 296, 300, 317, 320
Celeschul system, 123, 128, 217-224, 298-304, 326
Ceres, 215
Challenge Point system, 280
Chaplain command package, 57
character, 56-67, 68, 100, 281, 286, 287
chases, 43, 146
chassis, custom weapon, 151
Cheesecutters ammo, 143, 178
Chemistry skill, 27, 32, 66
Chica Alta, 207
Chicago, 207
cinema model for RPGs, 274, 275
civilian vs. milspec ship system, 114
Climbing specialty, 42
Cobbold Design & Protection, 137, 149, 154, 155, 156, 292
Coercion specialty, 51
combat, 12, 13, 27, 28, 66, 112, 218, 309
Combat (fireteam), 104
Combat, Unarmed, specialty, 30
Comedy specialty, 53
command package, 28, 56, 57
communications equipment, 144, 185
Company AI Rating, 113
Company creation, 57, 67, 97-106, 279-280, 281
Company Resources, 97, 98, 103
computation equipment, 144, 185
Computers skill, 27, 32, 66, 186, 187
contested Mayhem, 17
Contracts, skill, 10, 12, 27, 48, 49
Core War, 133
Crime Lord background, 59
cryokit, 145, 190
custom armor, 148-149
custom weapon, 150-153

D

Daehre, 332
Damagate, 252
Damage, 104, 113
Damage Reduction, 113, 136, 147
Damaxuri, 252-257, 319-322
Dancing specialty, 53
death, 7, 15, 55, 286
Deceive skill, 27, 49, 66
Defense, 67, 113, 136
derived statistics, 57, 67
Devour specialty (amorph), 286

dice, 9, 16
Digest specialty (amorph), 286
Diplomat, 104, 219
Disguise specialty, 50
Distraction specialty, 50
Doctor command package, 58
Dodge skill, 13, 27, 28, 64, 136
dolphin, uplifted, 205, 210, 219, 295
Dom Atlantis, 204, 293, 313
Downtown Dirtgrow, 272
Driver background, 59
Drodlorricans, 270
Dusta Phohora, 208, 293

E

E-X Outer Congress, 231
Earth, 133, 202-209, 272
Economics skill, 27, 34, 66
economy in game, 99
Eina Afa, 234-244, 310-315
Ellgate, 264
Elltooine, 222, 301, 303
Ellwor, 237, 263-272, 325-331
emergency belt, 146, 193
Emmy Ellwun (Moon-Earth L1), 211
Empathy skill, 27, 50, 66
encounter, 277, 280
Endurance skill, 27, 43, 66
enemy actions, 12
Engineer command package, 58
Engineering skill, 27, 35, 66
Entertainer background, 59
equipment, 144, 145, 190
Escape (starship), 114
escape from restraints, 189
Eshte Xerik, 231, 308
Esspererin (sophont), 61, 67, 75, 93, 137, 157, 229, 255, 256, 263, 308, 309
Europa, 213
Europan Conflict, 293
Evade, 113, 114
Evasive Action specialty, 42, 44, 46, 48
Exotic Weapons specialty, 30
experience, character, 100
Experimental Sciences, 27, 35, 36, 66
explosives, 139, 143
Explosives skill, 27, 29, 66
Eye of Oth, 245
eye trees, 90, 261

F

F'Sherl-Ganni, 226, 305, 306
fabber (starship), 116
Fefj system, 332
Ferrotious, 164
filter event, 234
fireteam, 14, 15, 101, 104, 107-109
First Aid specialty, 40
Fistfall Quarry Memorial, 250, 318
Fleetmind, 133, 226, 227, 305
Fletchion, 164
Flight (Athletics) specialty, 42
Fobott'r (sophont), 62, 67, 76, 93, 248, 249, 250, 251, 252, 255, 256, 257, 258, 271, 300, 317, 318, 319, 320, 323
food machines, 144, 184, 316
Fortitude specialty, 53
Fourthton, 271
Frellenti (sophont), 62, 67, 78, 93, 255, 257, 258, 313, 323
friggen jungle, 263, 266, 272, 328, 331

G

galactic population, 69
Galstandard, languages, 313, 219
Gambling specialty, 50
game basics, 7-15
Game Chief (GC) notes, 59, 100, 104, 334
Game Chief reference, 288–340
Game Chief section, 273–340
game hunter squad, 296
Gatekeepers, 226
Gather Info specialty, 50
general material (gear), 135, 144, 183
Gengladekki, Great Reallocation, 264
Genglathree, 264
Ghanj Rho, 64, 90, 237, 258-262, 313, 322-325
Ghanj Rho Orbital Habitat (GROH), 259
Gherkinopolis-on-Thames, 203
Goaltender, 137, 159
Gobbroth-Tambrol Meg, 246, 316
good player, 54
grappling, 30
gravy guns, 116
Great Tause War, 84
Greater Prab, 238
Grenades specialty, 32
Grip-Speak, 248, 249
Gripp, 77, 248-251, 272, 317-319
Ground Vehicles skill, 27, 44, 66
growpramming, 86
grunt, 7, 9, 14, 15, 30, 56, 100, 101, 109, 111
gunfoam projectile ammunition, 151, 180
Gzeaul (sophont), 80, 81, 124, 272, 327, 332

H

habitats, 220
Habitats specialty, 35
hacking a vehicle, 196
Hacking computers specialty, 33, 34, 186, 187
Haggling specialty, 52
Hand-Me-Down Bactolotl Tank, 145, 190
Hand-Me-Down Incubatrol, 145, 191
handbrain, 144, 186, 187
Hard Vacuum specialty, 43
Haven Hive, 224, 303
healing robots (Mechanic skill), 38
Health, 15, 67
Hearing specialty, 45
Heavy Weapons Gunner, 104
Heavy Weapons skill, 27, 29, 66
Henke Ventura scale, 98
Hiding specialty, 47
High Olympus (Mars), 211, 212
Highport, 254
History skill, 27, 37, 66
Hold Breath specialty, 43
Hold specialty (amorph), 286
hot deployment bay (starship), 117
Hot Pock Park, 270
Hotsea, 259, 262
hover chair, 147, 196
hoverboard, 144, 185
Hull Point, 113, 115, 147, 136
human, 60, 67, 69, 91, 255, 257, 258, 271, 296, 323

I

Ile-de-France, 207, 293
Immunological specialty, 44
Improvised weapons specialty, 32
Infantry, 104
infection, memetic, 233
Influence specialty, 50
Inorganic Chemistry specialty, 32
Insight, skill, 27, 37, 41, 66
Inspire skill, 27, 51, 66
intelligence, synthetic, 97
Interrogation specialty, 52
Intimidate skill, 27, 51, 66
issuing orders in combat, 14, 107
Isthmus Galactica, 243

J

job, 99, 277, 278, 279, 287
jokes and laughter, 275
Juab Jurassica, 207
Jumping specialty, 43
Jumpstar Prime, 236, 238, 310, 312, 314
Jun Ebbir, 246
Jungle Gardens, 251, 317, 318
jungle, friggen, 263, 266, 272, 328, 331
Jupiter, 291
Juris My Diction I, II, III, 265
Jury Rig specialty, 39

K

Kasigenn, 83
Kathisst'n, 83
Kessk (star), 229, 231, 233

Kieschegaard, 264, 265, 266, 268, 269, 327, 328
"knife", BFF Molly Polly, 143
Kree Prime, 232
Kreely (sophont), 62, 67, 79, 94, 272, 313, 323, 326
kss'thrata, see Tausennigan kss'thrata
Kuiper Belt, 216

L

Larceny skill, 27, 44, 66
laser beam ammunition, 151, 181
law enforcement, 147, 199, 296
Leadership specialty, 51
Legal Counsel command package, 58
Lelesh, 219, 299
Leru (star), 248
leveling up for characters, 100, 287
licenses, 150
light armor (personal), 137
limousine, 147, 197
Lithobrake, 266
Little Oth, 271
living space on starship, 121
locations, 201
Locksteady Gunsquat M-brace, 146, 193
Lonesome Lost Gilligan, 233
Lonesome Plateau, 258, 259, 323, 324
Long Gun Technology, 238
long gun, 138, 141, 168, 169
Long Guns, skill, 27, 30, 66, 141
longboat, 122
Luna, 209, 290

M

machine intelligence, rating, 98
Magnetic specialty, 45
Mall One, 211, 296
Malnibrath (star), 248
Marineris Dam City (Mars), 212
Mars, 211
martial art Parkata Urbatsu, 211, 296
material, miscellaneous, 146
Maxurio (star), 252, 253
Mayhem, 8, 11, 16-23, 25, 277, 281
Mechanic skill, 10, 27, 38
mechanical restraints, simple, 145, 188
Medical Professional background, 59
Medicine skill, 27, 32, 40, 66
medium armor (personal), 137
Melee skill, 27, 30, 66
Mellsen-Anlied, 255
Melosha (Luna), 210
memetic infection, 233
Mental (fireteam), 104
mental skills, 27, 32, 66
MFG1 FA-20 Slapstick, 145, 191
Military background, 59
military squad, 296
milspec vs. civilian (ship system), 114
mining, 223, 227, 250
Missile weapons specialty, 31
missile weapons, starship, 118
Mitsusanyokyo, 301
Mnei-Oa system, 234
Mnengitt'r, 250
Mnepholem (star), 248
modifying existing weapons, 153
Mojavis, 206, 292
Molygen Labs, 313
monowire, 143, 175
Morgan's Brake, 256, 319
Morph specialty (amorph), 286
movement, 14, 285
MPV, AG Quasimodo, 147, 200

N

naming characters, 91
nanny-bag, 145, 190, 191, 192
nannycuffs, 145, 188
natural attacks, 60
Navigation specialty, 42, 44, 46, 48
Nectaris (Luna), 209, 294
negate Mayhem card, 8
Negotiate skill, 27, 52, 66
Neoafan (sophont), 235, 244, 310, 312
Neoafan Nursetech RED-REO blood nannies, 145, 192
Neoafan Research Institute, 234
Neophant (sophont), 61, 67, 70, 91, 206, 209, 211, 224
new skills and specialties, 284
New Xandarosa, 223
New Year's War, 312
New York, 206
Non-lethal weapons specialty, 29, 30, 31, 135
non-player character (NPC), 19, 97

O

Oafans (extinct), 234, 238, 241, 242, 244
ob'enn, see Tausennigan ob'enn
Obsidiana, 257
octopus, uplifted, 205, 219, 296
Officer in Training, 104
Ondrophol, 249
Onneshal (Celeschul), 219
Ops Commander command package, 58
Oratory specialty, 51
orbital cities of Earth, 207
orders in combat, issuing, 14
Oshka Kree, 232
Ot-Skadak (sophont), 235, 240, 242, 244, 310, 313, 314
Oth, 85, 98, 245, 313, also see Unioc
Oth, Eye of, 245
Othlin (planet), 85, 245-247, 262, 272, 315-317

P

Pa'anuri Wars, 306
Pantro (sophont), 73, 211
Parkata Urbatsu martial art, 211, 291, 296
Parnassus Dom, 225, 227, 306
Parthedrome, 247, 262
particle beam ammunition, 151, 181
PC (player character), 19, 113
Perception skill, 27, 45, 66
Pereri Prime (star), 93, 229, 230, 232
Pereri Ring, 229-233, 307-310
Perform skill, 27, 53, 66
Perigate Cluster, 233
Perpsleeve Unibody smart restraints, 145, 189
Physical (fireteam), 104
physical skills, 27, 42, 66
Picking Locks specialty, 45
Picking Pockets specialty, 45
Pilot background, 60
Pilot's Prayer, 272
pistol, 138, 140, 161-164
Pistols, skill, 27, 31, 66, 140
Planet Down, 225, 227
Planetary Vehicles specialty, 35
player, 12, 19, 54, 282, 284
Plenipotent Dominion, 84, 225-228, 235, 238, 261, 304-307, 312
PMH Fabberchow, 144, 184
point defenses, starship, 117
Polyflorian (sophont), 63, 67, 80, 95
population, galactic, 69
Powell Museum of Terran Heritage, 223
Prabstdi (sophont), 235, 244, 267, 310, 313
Pret (star), 229, 232
Pretty Dead, 225, 227
private security crew, 316
Programming computers specialty, 34
Projectile weapons specialty, 30, 31, 135
promote grunt, 7, 15, 30, 56
Purp (sophont), 61, 67, 72, 91, 140, 271, 306, 327
pursuit, and chases, 42, 43, 44, 46, 48, 146

Q

quality, armor, 149
quality, fireteam, 108-109
quality, weapon, 152–153
Quartermaster command package, 58
Quel-Quell, 271
Quel-Wallat, 82
Queltro (sophont), 63, 67, 81, 95, 258, 271, 272, 320, 324, 326

R

Radio Swamps, 262
Ranch, The, 260, 323
Read Sophont specialty, 50
regeneration, 191, 192
Relle Netti, 257
reload weapon, 15
Repair broken item specialty, 39
Repair computers specialty, 34
repair starships, 120
Reputation, 97, 99, 100
reroll dice, 8, 11
Research skill, 10, 27, 41
Resources, spending, 103
restraints, 145, 188, 189
Rilla (sophont), 61, 67, 73, 92, 206, 209, 211
Rimshot, 266
RIPP (Role-play Point), 8, 16, 18, 67, 111, 275
role-play, 8, 274
Role-Play Point, see RIPP
rule arbitration, 276
running a game, 281
Running specialty, 43

S

saboteurs squad, 296
sacrifice grunt, 9
sally port (starship), 117
sample adventure, 333
Sashiko-armored cavalry, 309
Scatterguns, skill, 27, 31, 66, 140
scene, 20, 277
Schuul (sophont), 217, 221, 296, 298, 299, 303
Schuul (star), 217
Schuulga (star), 217
Scientist background, 60
Scofflaw Redoubt, 265, 327
Security for computers specialty, 34
Seduction specialty, 51
session, game, 277
shield (starship), 117
ship-to-ship weapons (starship), 118
Ship's Locker, 117, 118, 135, 183
Sight specialty, 45
skates, 147, 195
skill, 9, 10, 24, 26, 28, 57, 64, 65, 66, 284
skill check, 9, 10, 15, 25, 26, 27, 60, 69, 276, 285
skill points, 28, 65
skill rank and specialty purchasing, 60, 65, 69
Sleight of Hand specialty, 45
Smell specialty, 45
sneak attack squad, 296
Social (fireteam), 104
social contract, 273
social skills, 27, 48, 66
Sol system, 128, 130, 202-216, 221, 289-298, 300
Song specialty, 53
sophont 28, 37, 56, 60, 61, 64, 69, 75, 86, 91, 92, 93, 96
Sophont history specialty, 37
soulcrypts, 235, 236, 241, 244
space combat, 112
Space Vehicles skill, 27, 46, 66
speak first, go first, 12, 274
spear, 143, 175
special rules for carbosilicate amorphs, 286
special skill checks, 285
Specialist, 105
specialties, new, 284
Spindle Command Center, 238
Spindle Vault, 237, 238
Spy background, 60
ST2P (star), 264, 265
stacking personal armor, 136
starship, 35, 88, 98, 102, 103, 112-120, 121-133
starting gear, 100
Stationed Weapons skill, 27, 31, 66
statistics, derived, 57, 67
Stealth skill, 27, 46, 66
Steppenoff Station, 223
Street Criminal background, 60
Strength specialty, 43
Stunts (with vehicle) specialty, 42, 44, 46, 48
success, upgraded, 10, 18
Supplies (company), 97, 100
Surgery specialty, 40
Swimming specialty, 43
synthetic intelligence, 97

T

Tailing specialty, 47
tank, flying, 147, 198
Tanstaff, 256
Target Number (TN), 9, 10, 25
Tarriki Windracer, 326
Tash (star), 217, 300
Taste specialty, 45
Tause system, 83, 84, 95, 125, 131
Tausennigan Hostilities, 125
Tausennigan Kss'thrata (sophont), 63, 67, 83, 94, 131, 227
Tausennigan Ob'enn (sophont), 63, 67, 83, 84, 95, 125, 131, 225, 226, 227, 258
Tausennigan Wars, 131
team protection, 137, 160
Tenacity specialty, 53
teraport, 36, 118, 216, 238, 263, 311, 312
teraport cage, 146, 194
teraport area denial (TAD; starship), 119
Teraport Disruption, 130
Teraport Wars, 128, 222, 300, 305
Terraforming War, 23, 123, 127, 128, 219, 221, 223, 299, 302, 312
Terran Formation Fellowship, 221
Terran Formation Front (TFF), 127, 221, 223, 271, 326
Tetlumbrathi, 251, 317
Thermal specialty, 46
Thrown Weapons skill, 27, 31, 66
Titan Wall, 221
Tokyo3, 206, 294
Torture specialty, 52
Touch specialty, 46
Track-a-Neck 4000, 145, 189
trog, see Pantro
tube ruins (Luna), 209
turn, combat, 12

U

Uk-booster, 257
Uklakk (sophont), 252, 256, 258, 259, 323, 325
Unarmed Combat specialty, 30
unconscious, 15
underwater combat on Celeschul, 218
Unioc (sophont), 63, 67, 85, 96, 245, 246, 255, 257, 258, 260, 270, 271, 320, 324
Universal Amorph Interface Kit (UAIK-01), 260
upgrade grunt, see promote grunt
upgraded success, 10, 18, 25
upgrading starships, 120
uplifted sophonts, 61, 70, 73, 74, 205, 219
Ursumari (sophont), 61, 67, 74, 92, 206, 211, 224, 242, 254, 320
Thirdacle cable-arms, 143, 176
using a skill in combat, 14, 26
utility belt, smart, 146, 194

V

vehicle, 146-148, 195-200
Venus, 213
very dangerous array (starship), 119
vessel, see starship
Vessels specialty, 35
Vhorwed (sophont), 90, 224, 258, 259, 323, 325

W

Water Vehicles skill, 27, 48, 66
weapon, 114, 115, 118, 138-143, 150-153, 161-180
Weapons, Exotic (specialty), 30
Weapon-Specialized Team, 109
weather control, 202, 205, 211
whale, uplifted, 205
Willpower skill, 27, 53, 66

wormgate, 77, 131, 133, 227, 231, 233, 248, 252, 264, 305
wormhole, 238
Wrestling, 30
wroughtmarsh, 263, 267

X

Xenobiology skill, 27, 41, 66
Xuvoth (star), 245
Xuvoth's Unwatched, 316

Z

Zyx scale, 120, 121

Notable Persons and Companies

A

Aarikaida Optics, 141, 151, 165, 166, 168
Aguirre Galactic (AG), 121, 122, 126, 147, 198, 200, 291, 308
Alexia Murtaugh, Captain, 311
Aliss, mister, 291, 296
Alschuul, 219, 220, 221, 222, 299, 300, 317
Ana Lucia, 233, 308
Andreyasn Ventures Unlimited, 311
Athena, Profitability's Denominatrix, 305

B

Benjo Tabberlin, 316, 334
Blattco Arms, 140, 141, 142, 151, 161, 162, 167, 169, 172, 173, 174, 251, 291, 317
Bryanton Faire Fabricators (BFF), 140, 142, 143, 147, 151, 161, 162, 171, 175, 176, 198, 292

C

Caliti Frennoloph, 317
Celeschul Defense Service (CDS), 127, 221, 222, 299, 300, 301, 312
Celeschul Orbital Foundries (COF), 122, 123, 127, 128, 271, 299, 311
Chinook (AI), 234, 236, 238, 239, 244, 312, 314
Clan Ebbirnoth, 323
Cobbold Design & Protection, 137, 149, 154, 155, 156, 292
Congress of the Tusk, 71
Continuance, The, 127, 218, 221, 299, 300, 326

D

D0v3, sheriff, 260, 324
Damico-P'sloqye (DP), 206, 289, 292, 293, 304, 312
Daysun-Tingo, 126, 129, 130, 311, 312, 332
Debeblicorps, 261
Döblitz Foundry, 123, 128, 147, 197, 198, 199, 230, 292, 319
Dusta Phohora SAR, 209, 290, 293

E

Eko force, 261, 323, 325
Emmy Ellwun Endeavors Limited (E3 Ltd.), 291, 293, 296
Eshte Xerik Defense Force (EXDF), 308, 309
Evan Tenhawk, master ranger, 208, 289, 295

F

Fourthton Rabble Roughs, 271, 328
Fox & Young, 124, 293, 308

G

Gaines-Uashjo, 124, 125, 147, 198, 308, 332
Ghanj Rho Archeological Institute for Longevity Studies (GRAILS), 258, 260
Gilligan, 308, 322
Great Embrace of Gripp, 251, 317

H

Hypernet Hut, 144, 187, 188

I

Illkyo Tamn, 317

J

J. "Scapegoat" Rosenberg, Commodore, 265, 326
James Conason, Apprehensor-General, 302
Jevee Ceeta, 226, 304, 306
Jogamoto, 147, 195, 196, 197
Jumpstar Prime Precinctory, 310
Jun-ko Ebbirnoth, 261, 323
Jurisindependent Security Covenant, 205-206, 289, 293

K

Kaff Tagon, Captain, 226, 311
Karl Tagon, Commodore, 306, 311, 312
Kelleigh, Earl, & Cook, Warbarristers at Law, 300
Kevyn Andreysn, 228, 306
Kevyn Foxworthy, Captain, 306, 311, 312
Kleyladar, 260, 324

L

League of Galactics, 246, 261, 316, 326
Levaughn Matsui Xinchub, 225
Lleuellish Wenlol, 303

M

"Ma" Shephard, Hive Maven, 224, 303
Malott M&M, 137, 146, 149, 155, 157, 193, 301, 328
Manyfolk Council, 258, 260, 261, 322, 323
Massey Reynstein, chief justice, 237, 312
"Mayhem" Jane Maheeta, 271, 327
Menendez, Senior Colonel, 237, 310
Might Morphy Rangers, 260, 323
Miragua McGuire, 240, 213
Mitsuntendo, 122, 294
Moakia Meatworks, 307, 308
Mosh Uptrobar, 260, 324

N

Nandap Express, 143, 179
Nathan "the Auricle" Golder, 269, 327
Neoafan Council, 235, 236, 243, 310, 313
Neoafan Freehold, 133, 235, 310
Newts (New TFF), 219, 298, 301, 303, 304
Num Solward, 254, 320

O

Outer System Command, 213

P

Partnership Collective, 300
Pasht'k't'g'lang, Sixth-lord, 305
Petey, 225, 226, 304, 305, 306
Phubahr (Phuntam-Baan-Hromingg), 137, 140, 141, 142, 149, 151, 155, 157, 158, 162, 163, 164, 165, 166, 167, 168, 169, 170, 172, 174, 332
Piece King, 265, 269, 271, 328
Plan B Mercenary Company, 319
Planet Mercenary, 137, 145, 158, 192, 222, 223, 246, 251, 260, 269, 299, 308, 320, 328, 332
Popso, 144, 185, 316
Port Authority Police Agency (PAPA), 223, 299, 301, 303
Pranger's Bangers, 332
Professor, the, 308
Profitable Divestitures, Ltd., 305

Q

Qaya Solward, 254, 319, 320, 333

R

Ranger Ruck, 260, 261, 323
Rod, 258, 259, 323

S

Samuel Powell, Lieutenant Colonel, 223, 303
Sanctum Adroit, 224, 237, 301, 303, 310
Satli Ormetto, 317
Schlock, 313
Shockstar, 141, 166, 175, 176
Smythe, 140, 151, 163, 166, 167
Sophonate, 71, 74
Spiderwrench, king, 259, 324

Stainless Steel Urchins, 204, 295
Streeter & the Highwaymen, 326
Strohl Munitions, 140, 141, 142, 143, 151, 162, 163, 164, 165, 166, 167, 168, 169, 170, 171, 173, 174, 180, 294, 313

T

Tacobufa, 294
Tagons Toughs, 228, 237, 244, 306, 311, 313
Tikkuts-Afa (Iafa), 244
Timmike, 256, 257, 319
Toowol Trainers, 272, 326

U

United Nations of Sol (UNS), 71, 74, 213, 214, 222, 236, 238, 292, 295, 300, 301
United Sol Megafabrications (USM), 127, 128, 129, 130, 131, 132, 133, 137, 149, 159
Unuiayya Will-Breather, 236, 237, 244
Urtheep Industries, 81, 142, 143, 151, 171, 172, 173, 174, 177, 262, 293

V

Vella Tacspec, 137, 147, 149, 159, 160, 199, 294, 302
Victorsmith Fortificationators, 300, 317

W

Wächter Landscaping and Defense, 137, 144, 146, 147, 149, 159, 160, 185, 194, 195, 196, 294, 302
Wimanu-Arrow, 140, 151, 162, 164
Wormgate Corporation, 210, 226, 248, 264, 300, 305

Y

Yaeyoefui Soul-Keeper, 243, 244, 314

Z

Zwillmi Steelworks, 143, 151, 176

Creatures

carniflower, 272, 265, 266, 326, 328, 329, 331
crypt spiders, 314
Damaxurian Matrix, 252, 253, 255, 321
denizens (matrix), 253, 254, 321
diamond beetles, 291, 297
dinosaur, 202, 208, 291, 297, 298
drop slug, 318
dustmights, 254, 321
dziraka (hexapodal pulper), 241, 314
electro-acidic nanoplaque, 307, 309
goreswarm, 254, 322
grendlsquutch, 206, 263, 265, 268, 272, 329, 331
Jack-in-the-bog, 265, 329
jungle gardens monkey, 317, 318
katka, 314
matrix collapse, 253, 321
meatsnatch, 272, 325, 326, 330, 331
mechadile, 268, 329
obsidian sand, 253, 254, 321
Pa'anuri, 226, 228, 306, 307
sand flounder, 254, 322
swordgrass, 268, 272, 330
tkutska dak, 242, 315
trip slug, 318
tufted wing shark, 242, 315
wiremonkeys, 266, 331
wroughtwyrm, 268, 331

Mooks

amorph squad, 325
assasination squad, 296
Boldfavor frontline, 328
bot squad (3 bots), 306
combat engineer, 309
DP-SAR squad, 296
Eko Force squad, 325
enforcement bot, 306
Eshte Xerik Defense Force, 309
esspererin pirate, 309
fobott'r street crew, 318
Fourthton Rabble Roughs, 328
game hunters, 296
heretic cyborg espee squad, 309
human special forces
icewall security retrieval team, 340
Kostavi's henchmen squads, 338
law enforcement large response, 340
law enforcement unit, 296, 339
Mike's fobott'r & Unioc squads, 320
military squad, 296
morphy rangers, 325
motley adventurers, 328
Newt terrorists, 303
Othlin private security, 316
PAPA squad, 303
saboteurs, 296
Sanctum Adroit squad, 303
Sashiko armored cavalry, 309
snail doped warrior caste schuul, 303
sneak attack squad, 296
Tim's queltro squads, 320
ursumari SEAL team, 296
Wrink's Eyes, 271, 328

Tables

Advantages and Disadvantages, 285
AI Rating, 280
AI Rating Purchases, 98
Amorph Conditional Blindness Disadvantage, 89
Anti-Personnel Weapons, 115
Anti-Vehicle Weapons, 115
Armor, 137
Assault Boat Docks, 115
Assorted Automation, 144
Carbines, 141
Chassis Transfers, 87
Company Grunts, 110
Company Reputation, 279
Company Tenure, 279
Computation and Communication, 144
Consumer Vehicles, 147
Contracts, 49
Creating an Explosive, 29
Cuffs & Stuff, 145
Custom Armor Tables, 149
Custom Weapon Tables, 151
Difficulty Guide, 280
Endurance vs Conditions, 285
Experimental Sciences, 36
Explosives and Specialized Ammo, 143
Gravy Guns, 116
Heavy Weapons, 142
Insight, 37
Jury-rigging, 39
Long Guns, 141
Med Tech, 145
Melee Weapons, 143
Military Vehicles, 147
Miscellaneous Materiel, 146
Pistols, 140
Point Defenses, 117
Purchases, 53
Reputation, 100
Research, 41
Resource Rewards, 287
Scatterguns, 140
Shields, 117
Ship Firepower Class, 120
Ship Size Class, 120
Ship-to-Ship Weapons, 118
Skill Points, 28 & 65
Skills, 27 & 66
Starting Health, 67
Target Numbers, 9 & 25
Team Protection, 137
The Employer, 278
The Job, 279
The Ship's Locker, 118
The Twist, 279
Vessel Armor, 115

CHARACTER

Name

Command Package

Background Package

Sophont Type

COMPANY

Name

AI Rating | Resources

Supplies | Reputation

Health

Reduction | Defense | Dodge

Skill Penalties

SKILLS

Combat Skills	Rank	Specialties
Carbines		
Dodge		
Explosives		
Heavy Weapons		
Long Guns		
Melee		
Pistols		
Scatterguns		
Stationed Weapons		
Thrown Weapons		

Physical Skills	Rank	Specialties
Air Vehicles		
Athletics		
Endurance		
Ground Vehicles		
Larceny		
Perception		
Space Vehicles		
Stealth		
Water Vehicles		

Mental Skills	Rank	Specialties
Chemistry		
Computers		
Economics		
Engineering		
Experim. Sciences		
History		
Insight		
Mechanic		
Medicine		
Research		
Xenobiology		

Social Skills	Rank	Specialties
Contracts		
Deceive		
Empathy		
Inspire		
Intimidate		
Negotiate		
Perform		
Willpower		

WEAPONS

Name	Damage	Ammo Type	Reload	Rules & Qualities

ARMORS

Name	Defense	DR	Hull	Rules & Qualities

FIRETEAM

	1	2	3	Team Totals
Name				
Physical				
Mental				
Social				
Combat				
Team Qualities				

SPECIALIZED AMMO & EXPLOSIVES

Name	Use Mechanism	Uses	Effects

MORE WEAPONS

Name	Damage	Ammo Type	Reload	Rules & Qualities

OTHER GEAR

Name	Ship's Locker	Rules/Effects

SHIP

Name | Model | Company AI Rating

Def. vs Beam | Def. vs Missile | Def. vs Gravy | DR

Hull Points

Ship Weapons	Damage

Other Ship Systems