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Thundercloud Galaxy™

BY BRADEN CAMPBELL AND KEVIN SIEMBIEDA



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Dedication

To Holly-Ann and Annachie, who put up with me while I took this long, dark journey.

– Braden Campbell, 2011

Dedication

To the Palladium staff past and present, but most notably *Alex, Wayne, Julius and Kathy*, for helping me create and explore the many worlds of Palladium Books. It has been a journey rife with adventure, challenges and danger, but also one filled with triumph, lasting friendships and wonder. I tip my pith helmet to each and every one of you. May we continue to explore many new worlds and find joyful adventure for years to come.

– Kevin Siembieda, 2011

The cover, by *John Zeleznik*, depicts a team of explorers in the Thundercloud Galaxy running into a little trouble with one of the planet's monstrous life forms.

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– *Kevin Siembieda, 2011*

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The Thundercloud Galaxy

Rise of New Imperialism

“Civilization degrades the many to exalt the few.”

– Amos Bronson Alcott (1799 - 1888)

“All of these stars . . . these vast worlds that remain out of reach. If I could, I would annex other planets.”

– Cecil Rhodes (1853 - 1902)

“It is an easy task to sum up the situation in the Thundercloud Galaxy: It is, quite simply, an unmitigated disaster.”

– TVIA Inspector Addison Sholl
(9944 - present; 10,000 TE)

“Unchecked hubris and greed always creates a memorable spectacle worth savoring.”

– Splugorth Lord Desslyth the Elder
(Late Second Galactic Era to present)

In the year 9998 of the Third Galactic Era, the *Consortium of Civilized Worlds* elected a new Prime Minister. For the first time in decades, this new leader was from a species other than juman. **Voirr Jhawn**, a former Wulfen Quatoria, was elected to office with forty-seven percent of the popular vote. Her conservative platform was just what many in the Congress wanted. It included such initiatives as tougher sentences for criminals, forcing the T'Zee to adhere to the *Civilization Compact* and eventual reunification of the Wulfen Republic under the CCW (Consortium of Civilized Worlds). She stood for common sense and an end to political corruption.

Six months into her term, Prime Minister Jhawn ordered an inquiry into the activities of both **Naruni Enterprises** and the **Thundercloud Development Company**. The lone member of this investigative committee was TVIA Inspector **Addison Sholl**. Although only fifty-six years old (not even middle-aged for a human), Sholl had a reputation for being a shrewd and honest observer driven by detail and minutiae. His ex-wife described him as cold and incorruptible.

In 9999, after touring the Consortium holdings in the **Gaelra Arm of the Thundercloud Galaxy**, Inspector Sholl returned to Terra Prime and sequestered himself in his office to write his report. After three months, the one thousand page document detailing everything that he had seen and experienced was finished. Then, before anyone else could read it, he purged the data files from his computer, threw the printed report into a garbage pail and burned it. The next day, instead of submitting his findings to the Prime Minister, Inspector Sholl quit his job and moved to Center.

Questions have run rampant ever since. Had the Company bribed Inspector Sholl to keep quiet? What had he seen to cause him to throw away his illustrious career? No one knew. Just as no one in the Prime Minister's office was sure of what was going on in the Thundercloud Galaxy. Prime Minister Jhawn ordered a second round of investigations. This time, hundreds of TVIA Inspectors began the long journey to find some answers. Some would never return, vanishing forever in the foreboding *Crèche*

Clouds. Some would succumb to illness or disease and spend the rest of their lives hooked to life support machines, or die in the jungles on some unnamed planet. Others traveled throughout the Thundercloud Galaxy and witnessed myriad conflicts and atrocities. Some would fight the darkness, other would succumb to it.

Regardless of their ultimate fate, none of those men or women would emerge from their experience in the Thundercloud unscathed.

In the beginning . . .

In order to understand how the current situation got to where it is today, one must first understand something of the history leading up to it.

Tens of thousands of years ago, long before the rise of Humanity, or Wulfen, or Kreeghor, or Noro, the Three Galaxies were peopled by the Elder Races. These species were so ancient and powerful as to be aptly described as “deific.” Their magicks and technologies were one and the same, and their cultures dated back millions of years. Then, they began to fall, one by one, against the onslaught of one of their fellow Elder Races. So terrible was their campaign of genocide, that these Elders would become known as the **Dominators**.

Though few are aware of it today, the Dominators' home world was located near the center of the *Thundercloud Galaxy*. It was destroyed 50,000 years ago by a collective of the Elder Races who had banded together with Cosmo-Knights and other heroes of the day, to stop the Dominators. The weapon they used has since become a thing of legend, and has never been created or used since. The legendary *Black Hole Projector* caused an implosion in real space with an area effect one hundred light-years in diameter. It left a gigantic black hole, equal to 170,000 stellar masses, in its wake. An aftershock from the Projector traveled through the galaxy killing or *mutating* almost every life form it washed over. Emergent species, some of whom were just beginning to colonize other planets and travel out into space, had their evolution set back by eons. Bacteria and viruses changed by the blast front caused plagues that obliterated the populations of entire worlds, and caused civilizations to crumble and descend into anarchy. Other stars suffered from harmonic disruptions and became premature supernovae, detonating in vast clouds of plasma gas and radioactive energy. Moving from its point of origin at near the speed of light, the shock wave would take fifteen thousand years to traverse the entire Thundercloud before finally dissipating in the intergalactic void.

For the next thirty-five thousand years, the galaxy churned and tried to settle itself. Most intelligent life forms had been driven back to the Stone Age. The only new threat to rear its head during this time was the arrival of the **Splugorth Lord, Desslyth the Elder**. Although Desslyth was far too old to retain direct control of his kingdom, his High Lords began sending out minions to raid and conquer the indigenous populations of many worlds. With no one to stop them, the Splugorth slowly but surely overran planet after planet. The dawning of the *Third Galactic Era* saw the *Kingdom of Desslyth* encompass around one third of the Thundercloud Galaxy.

By the time any species in the **Corkscrew Galaxy** began to study the heavens, all they saw in the Thundercloud was a hot, volatile region filled with bright protostars and vast nebulae. It whirled angrily around a central “vortex” while flashes of gamma radiation lit up its hidden interior like parsec-wide bolts of lightning. It looked frightening and uninviting. Thus, in terms of space exploration and colonization efforts, the Thundercloud Galaxy was avoided by the people of the Corkscrew Galaxy for a long time. A few probes and long-range scouting missions charted out tiny portions of the Thundercloud’s “Arms,” but the conditions in the **Crèche Clouds** made accurate mapping impossible without manned spacecraft armed with a battery of sensors.

According to legend, the **Wulfen Republic** of old had made some effort to the colonize worlds within the Thundercloud Galaxy. Others also looked to the galaxy and made small attempts to explore and colonize it. However, it was the **Great War** that would change everything.

In 9314 TE, the **Transgalactic Empire (TGE)**, together with the Dark Tribe Wulfen, moved to conquer the remaining half of the Wulfen Republic. It was not long before the war spread throughout the entirety of the Three Galaxies. In response to their helping the Republican Wulfen, the Transgalactic Empire and its allies declared war on both the *Noro* and the *Human Alliance*. As war raged and the TGE succeeded in crushing space fleets and conquering worlds, smaller power blocs and independent worlds joined forces with the *Noro* and the *Human Alliance*. This would result in the forming of the *Consortium of Civilized Worlds (CCW)*. The Kreeghor’s own early and ruthless conquests would result in their undoing, as worlds flocked to join the CCW for their own survival. As the CCW grew in size, it also grew in power. Fearing conquest and enslavement by the savage and warlike Transgalactic Empire, these member worlds poured vast resources into building massive fleets of starships to stop the Kreeghor. Humans, *Noro*, Wulfen, Minions of Splugorth and many other people battled the invading Kreeghor in both the *Gaelra* and *Oswoe’s Arms* of the Thundercloud Galaxy.

In the end, the Kreeghor’s Imperial Fleet was decimated and the Empire forced to make peace before it lost its many planetary conquests and holdings.

The final peace treaty included the ratification of the *Tanet Agreement* to run concurrent with the *Lanator Accords*. This meant that everything agreed to in the armistice also applied to the exploration and settling of the Thundercloud Galaxy.

- The Transgalactic Empire (TGE) would immediately and unconditionally surrender in *Oswoe’s Arm*, and a demilitarized zone with a diameter of 3,500 light-yearss from SY-124-616-628 would be established.
- The TGE would relinquish any and all former Thundercloud colonies to the Consortium, and could never again occupy said colonies.
- The use of weapons of mass destruction would no longer be used by either party within the atmosphere of a planet inhabited by intelligent life forms, and belonging to the opposite party.
- Such inhabited planets would no longer be attacked from orbit by starship-borne weapons.
- The Transgalactic Empire would accept full responsibility for causing the Great War.
- The Empire would pay war reparations to the Consortium of Civilized Worlds (CCW).

The **Tanet Agreement** set forth certain rules and conditions with regards to the colonization of the Thundercloud Galaxy by major political powers from elsewhere in the Three Galaxies. Though originally designed for the two super powers – CCW and TGE – its rules were adopted by everyone.

- The Annach and Hollan Gulfs would be made free for ship traffic, and therefore unclaimable by any power or corporation.
- The principle was set down that any solar system or territory of space in the Thundercloud Galaxy claimed by a power bloc must contain colonies set up by that same power bloc.
- Claiming rights of ownership over any solar or planetary system in the Thundercloud Galaxy would require the power making the claim to notify the other intergalactic powers.

Note: Though heralded as a great achievement in the CCW, the Agreement was forgotten by the TGE almost as soon as it was signed. The Empire was more concerned with rebuilding its armed forces in the Corkscrew and Anvil Galaxies so it might one day have its revenge on the Consortium of Civilized Worlds.

The Creation of the Company

The Thundercloud Development Company

In the aftermath of the Great War, many member races of the Consortium of Civilized Worlds (CCW) swore that such a conflict would never happen again. They concluded that the means to a lasting peace lay in transforming *all* the thousands of planets and independent civilizations in the Three Galaxies into Consortium member worlds. The logic was simple: When all societies were molded into the likeness of CCW society, future disputes could be resolved via diplomacy, not war. This line of thinking marked the beginning of a new sociologic trend in the Consortium, that of an aggressive *New Imperialism*.

A governmental branch called the **Consortium Authority** was created specifically to oversee the task of bringing new frontier worlds into the CCW. Their mandate was simple: To explore and colonize the remaining sectors of the Three Galaxies, and to help newly discovered sentient beings and nascent civilizations join the galactic community by becoming productive members of the Consortium of Civilized Worlds.

In order to perform this monumental task, the Consortium Authority shares command of the **Discovery Corps** with the Grand Admirals of each **Galactic Task Force** (Corkscrew, Anvil and Thundercloud). This lets the Authority direct starships and exploration teams to sectors of space that look promising for colonization and development. In the process, they have compiled the most accurate star charts yet known. The Consortium Authority was also given Congressional permission to create “Chartered Companies.”

A **CA Chartered Company** is an association formed by investors or shareholders for the purpose of trade, exploration and colonization. The creation of such “companies” enabled the Consortium Authority to use private resources, such as corporate sponsorship, to help fund its work to explore and colonize the Three Galaxies. As an “official” government sanctioned representative, each of these privately held, Chartered Companies had the power to make binding treaties with alien Heads of State, establish banking institutions and arrange lines of credit, manage the buying and selling of land to CCW colonists and industry for development, and establish its own “police force” to protect said colonies and private interests (terraforming, mining, lumber operations, etc.). In return, the Chartered Companies agreed to de-

velop the territory they controlled, to respect indigenous people, their customs and laws, to allow free trade within the territory(s) held by the company, and to respect all religions.

The first of these Chartered Companies was the **Thundercloud Development Company**, founded when *Folvel Tanet's* group of trillionaires and scientists joined forces with Explorers Limited Investments. Deals were struck with corporations like Naruni Enterprises and Macrocode, a standardized training program for potential colonists was established, agreements were made with the Church of the Forge and exploratory missions were sent out into the Arms to catalogue colony sites. The Thundercloud Development Company had visions of the Thundercloud Galaxy dominated by colonies and member worlds of the CCW, bringing vast riches to the Consortium and establishing hundreds of shining colony cities on hundreds of worlds.

The first "Company World" was named **Eden Three**, settled in 9549 TE. At the funeral of Thundercloud Development Company founder Folvel Tanet, a short time after the establishment of **Eden**, new CEO *Kestrel Hobbs* promised to carry on Tanet's dream to bring [the CCW's vision of] civilization and unity to the many worlds of the Thundercloud Galaxy. He pledged to bring the civilizations of newly discovered alien cultures to the CCW in a bid to bring "peace and harmony" to their galactic

neighbors and "to pierce the darkness which hangs over entire peoples." He went on to proclaim, "This is a crusade worthy of our enlightened society. May the influence of the Consortium someday stretch from one arm of the Thundercloud to the other."

The following year, a wave of colonists, *twenty million* strong, left the Anvil and Corkscrew Galaxies to start new lives in Eden and beyond. In the name of progress, harmony and enlightened unity, they would lay claim to 50 new worlds in the Thundercloud Galaxy.

The Scramble had begun.

The Scramble

The official beginning of the **Scramble** started with the settling of fifty new planets in the Gaelra Arm of the Thundercloud Galaxy by colonists of the Consortium of Civilized Worlds. Each world colonized gained instant recognition as a member of the CCW. The year was 9550 TE, and this was *the Company's* initial push to "open up the Thundercloud." Their strategy was to extend the reach and influence of the Consortium one world at a time, so each of these new planets became filled with as many as four million colonists apiece. Once they arrived, the Company helped them build roadways and space ports, erect housing, and



establish an infrastructure before moving on to the next world, the next frontier. It is important to note that none of the original fifty "Company Worlds" had any kind of intelligent life on them, as to settle an already inhabited world would have been a gross violation of the Civilization Compact. The colonization of the Thundercloud started out with high ideals and earnest methodology. That would soon change with the reappearance of the TGE.

The Kreeghor Return and the Scramble Begins in Earnest

A few decades after the Great War, the **Transgalactic Empire (TGE)** had rebuilt enough of its Imperial Armada to begin expanding by conquering other worlds with advanced civilizations. After several failed attempts to conquer the *Faustians*, the *Kelathra*, and the *Hule* – all of whom quickly joined the *Consortium of Civilized Worlds (CCW)* for protection by the Consortium Armed Forces (CAF) – the TGE decided to change their tactics.

In the Anvil Galaxy, the TGE began searching for the *Cosmic Forge*.

In the Corkscrew Galaxy, the TGE started to pick on alien people whom they believed the CCW would be reluctant to accept as members.

In the Thundercloud Galaxy, the Kreeghor went to war against the Splugorth. The Kreeghor themselves had been slaves of the Splugorth who had, triumphed in their rebellion against their cruel masters. Having only known ruthlessness, war and tyranny under Splugorthian domination, the Kreeghor built an Empire based on similar harsh principles of terror, tyranny and brute force. For a long time, the Kreeghor looked upon the Thundercloud Galaxy – home to the Splugorth Kingdom of Desslyth, with superstition and fear that stemmed from their own origin as Splugorth slave stock. They were all too familiar with magic and places of evil, and were wary of colonizing a galaxy inhabited by the Splugorth and their minion races. As a result, the TGE chose to focus on colonization efforts in the Anvil Galaxy, with only a few TGE outposts established at the ends of the Thundercloud's Arms. Colonization quickly turned into world conquering, and with every world that fell to the Kreeghor, the greater their desire to conquer more. The savvy leaders of the Empire knew that if the Imperial Fleet attacked innocent people, the CCW would come down on them like a ton of bricks, but if they attacked worlds held by the Splugorth, a mutual enemy feared and distrusted by all, the Consortium was likely to turn a blind eye to their campaign of conquest. No, not conquest. A campaign of "liberation." The Transgalactic Empire would engage in a campaign to liberate worlds from the clutches of the Splugorth, a cause nobody in the CCW could challenge or condemn. It was a contrivance that worked better than any Kreeghor had dared to imagine. Slave populations liberated by the Kreeghor embraced the Transgalactic Empire. It seemed that the TGE's harsh totalitarian regime was much better than slavery under the Splugorth. Thus, the Kreeghor found themselves in the unfamiliar role of conquering heroes welcomed and accepted by the people they had saved.

Of course, the real motivation behind the TGE's Campaign of Liberation had nothing to do with helping people, and everything to do with, a) revenge against the hated Splugorth, b) the acquisition of power and planets via conquest, and c) competition with the CCW. The Kreeghor felt they had to do something to gain

a foothold in the Thundercloud Galaxy before the Consortium claimed it all for themselves. By the terms of the *Lanator Accords*, the TGE had given up all claims to its previous colonial worlds, so they turned to attacking the Splugorth held worlds, a known enslaver of planets themselves, and a common enemy of the CCW as well as independent worlds and the TGE. By attacking the **Kingdom of Desslyth**, the Empire stood to gain a significant portion of the Thundercloud Galaxy without coming into direct conflict with the CCW.

Just as the Kreeghor had calculated, the Consortium perceived the Transgalactic Empire as the lesser of two evils, and were happy to see them taking down the feared Splugorth. Due to the nature of Splugorth planets, where the local enslaved inhabitants usually outnumber the Minions by one thousand to one (or more), every time the Kreeghor drove Splugorth forces off of these planets, they found themselves in control of significant populations. Moreover, the infrastructure of these worlds, while damaged, only needed to be repaired, not built up from nothing as the Consortium was doing by colonizing unpopulated planets. The Kreeghor would soon have more possessions and infrastructure in the Thundercloud than the CCW, with many times the manufacturing capabilities, raw resources and loyal population.

This concerned Consortium leaders, who spoke of "blatant Kreeghor land grabbing" and "an unprecedented military buildup right in their own backyard." For the safety of the CCW and its many member worlds, **the Thundercloud Development Company** was given the mandate to dramatically increase the number of new colonies in order to keep pace with the TGE.

The Company wasn't yet able to start settling dozens of new planets per year. It hadn't the resources or, until then, the legal authority to do so. Therefore, as a stopgap measure, it began a program to locate independent colonies as well as indigenous alien civilizations and bring them into the CCW. For the most part, this plan was successful. Still, both the Company and the Fleet Admirals knew that it was only a matter of time before the TGE controlled a greater portion of the Thundercloud than they did. The Kreeghor could simply conquer developed planets faster than the CCW could colonize and buildup the planets from scratch. From a position of power, the TGE was winning the race to colonize the Thundercloud Galaxy.

The Killaryte Rush

The discovery of Killaryte only added to the madness in the Thundercloud. The first discovery of Killaryte thrust Naruni Enterprises (NE) into the scramble to dominate the market for the mineral. Killaryte was found to exist only in the Thundercloud Galaxy, but a galaxy is an impossibly big place. Even a transgalactic juggernaut like Naruni Enterprises doesn't have the manpower to search a galaxy for every deposit.

In a stroke of genius and timing, Naruni Enterprises decided to increase its reach through the Consortium of Civilized Worlds' colonization program via the *Thundercloud Development Company*. Naruni Enterprises approached the Company with an offer it could not refuse: substantial annual contributions supporting the Consortium's efforts to colonize the Thundercloud Galaxy in exchange for the exclusive mining and mineral rights to all Killaryte and related byproducts on Consortium member worlds and colonies. This provided the Company with money to increase its colonization efforts by two-fold, and seeing as how only the Na-

runi had developed a means of refining Killaryte so that it didn't explode with a mere whisper, it was a win-win situation.

For nearly four centuries now, **Naruni Enterprises** has offered enormous cash incentives to anyone willing to go prospecting on unexplored alien worlds across the Thundercloud Galaxy. This has encouraged millions of people from the Anvil and Corkscrew Galaxies to flock to the Thundercloud to find Killaryte and make a fortune. As part of its agreement with the Consortium, any world that is not already part of the CCW's colonization program where Killaryte is discovered and the Naruni establish a mining operation, the Naruni will sponsor a Consortium colony, making it a member of the CCW. Naruni Enterprises has no desire to own the planet provided it can use any means to mine the Killaryte. By starting a CCW colony and turning the world over to the Consortium, the Naruni get Consortium protection by default, and washes their hands of all other responsibility to that world or its people, indigenous or colonists. NE is all about business, the Consortium can have all the rest, the good and the bad.

Under this agreement, Company colonists and prospectors who find Killaryte deposits are to immediately contact Naruni Enterprises, who sends in a team of experts to quickly establish Killaryte mining operations. Anyone who discovers the valuable mineral is paid a fortune as a finder's fee. If it is a lone prospector or prospecting group, they get the money. If it is a member of a Consortium colony, everyone in the colony gets part of the finder's fee (which can be a million credits or more per person!) If a colony has to be relocated, Naruni Enterprise pays the Company for its relocation, and each colonist is paid 250,000 credits for their inconvenience. The colonists are obligated to comply, and those who refuse to leave their homes are forcibly removed. Other than this, however, there are no other restrictions or obligations on the part of Naruni Enterprises, including the environmental impact their mining might have on the colony or even the planet itself. If there were already indigenous people living on a Killaryte world, their rights mean nothing and resistance to the mining, being relocated or being assimilated into the Consortium of Civilized Worlds is dealt with swiftly and often with brutal disregard for their happiness and welfare. At the end of the day, as long as Naruni Enterprises has what it wants, nothing else matters.

When a Killaryte find is substantiated, Naruni Enterprises sweeps in and takes over. Until that happens however, boom planets can be as dangerous as the streets on the lowest levels of Center. Beatings, theft, drunkenness and murder are common. Prostitution, gun running, and illicit drugs also seem to be a fact of life wherever prospectors gather. Sometimes, local people are pressed into service, acting as little more than guides and pack mules. Of course, NE protects its "assets" by any means necessary, and their means are considerable.

The northwestern curve of the Gaelra Arm contains several such worlds, and in recent years has become known as the *Naruni Main*. Since the explosive Killaryte is so unstable and deadly in its natural form, Naruni Enterprises refines it "on site." Huge processing plants are built on the surface of Killaryte worlds, which have an unfortunate tendency to belch out high volumes of radioactive fog into the atmosphere; a side effect of the refining process. Only when the explosive has been properly stabilized is it loaded into transports and sent back to the Corkscrew and Anvil Galaxies to be manufactured into saleable weapons. Pirates have been drawn like flies to honey by both the refineries and the cargo ships as they make the long haul out towards intergalactic

space. The stolen Killaryte is then sold through the black market. In recent years, the Transgalactic Empire has started combing the Thundercloud in search of the coveted crystals. The Empire would love to find a way to refine the mineral for their own use.

The New Colonization Program

In 9602 TE, shortly after the discovery of Killaryte in the Thundercloud Galaxy, Kestrel Hobbs, the head of the Company, died. His successor, *Antonette Mason*, took the opportunity to enact a shift in Company policy, one that was endorsed by the Consortium Authority and backed up by the Thundercloud Fleet Admirals. The Company would establish a greater number of much smaller colonies in an effort to "claim" more worlds for the CCW. Moreover, it was decided by those select few people in charge (the Company CEO, the Grand Admiral of the Thundercloud Task Force, and the heads of the Consortium Authority) that the *Civilization Compact*, as it had been practiced, was insufficient for the current political landscape.

Instead of outright ignoring the Compact, which was unthinkable, it was "reinterpreted." The Freedom from Conquest clause had guaranteed that worlds inhabited by indigenous people would be free from hostile takeover and off the table for colonization or development by the CCW. This rule was created to allow these civilizations to grow and develop on their own. When they became capable of space travel, only then would the CCW invite them to become a member, engage in trade, etc. However, this had limited the colonization of planets to those with no hint of intelligent life – worlds that were uninhabited wildernesses of one sort or another.

Mason and many others argued that the Transgalactic Empire (TGE) was absorbing former Splugorthian slave worlds with established civilizations and industry, and transforming them into staunch TGE supporters. If the CCW did not try to influence the cultural development of people on other planets within the Thundercloud, regardless of whether or not they were ready for alien contact, then the TGE would become the greatest power in the galaxy. Furthermore, what was going to stop the Kreeghor from, eventually, conquering these indigenous people when they were done with Splugorth worlds? Under Kreeghor domination, it was argued, any Thundercloud species would be denied their Second Freedom as outlined in the Compact as well as their Fourth Freedom, freedom from tyranny. Therefore, the Consortium had a *moral duty* to protect the underdeveloped races of the Thundercloud by making first contact, giving them membership in the CCW and developing them into advanced civilizations. So it was decreed, the duty of the CCW to bring their culture and freedom to those people who did not yet have the ability to claim it for themselves. Better that everyone should be gently guided to the thinking of the CCW than be forcibly transformed into TGE underlings. Or so the thinking went.

With this "relaxed" understanding of the Compact, the Thundercloud Development Company and other Chartered Companies gave the next wave of colonists permission to settle on planets inhabited by indigenous people, civilized or not. Almost none of these alien races had achieved a space-faring level of technology, and many were little better than Stone Age primitives. All of this would enable the Consortium to increase its planetary holdings a hundredfold by claiming and placing entire planets under its protection.

This only drove the Kreeghor to conquer more Splugorth star systems. Which in turn, caused the Company to ratchet up its own efforts and take even more shortcuts. A game of one-upmanship between the CCW and TGE had begun that no one knew how to stop. A game which continues to this day, centuries later. Moreover, other galactic powers, independents and galactic corporations, not wanting to be left out, have joined the Scramble.

The Scramble Today

Despite its altruistic intentions, the CCW's plan to create a better, more peaceful and tolerant intergalactic community in the *Three Galaxies* was born in hubris and doomed to failure from the beginning. How could it not fail? Imposing one's own beliefs upon other people is seldom the blueprint for lasting success, and it is certainly not the "enlightened" approach for peace the CCW had envisioned when it started this mess. Still they press forward, feebly trying to impose the culture, ethics and sensibilities of the Consortium of Civilized Worlds (CCW) on new worlds and alien civilizations.

To make matters worse, the broad and vast power provided to **CCW Charter Companies** to explore, colonize and develop the many worlds of the Thundercloud Galaxy on the behalf of the Consortium has only bred even greater hubris in a mad rush to claim worlds and snatch up resources. This has created the domino effect of getting other galactic powers to take notice of the grab for planets, compelling them to make the same dash for power and ownership of the Thundercloud Galaxy before the CCW, TGE and others claim it all for themselves.

As a point of reference, think of the gold rush and land grabs of the *American Old West*, or even more apropos, the *Colonial Imperialism of England* when "colonization" by Britain (as well as France, Belgium, and Germany) laid claim to much of Africa and India in the 17th, 18th and 19th Centuries of Earth's past. The same is happening in the Thundercloud Galaxy. Suddenly, everyone sees the planets and people of the Thundercloud as resources to be claimed and owned without concern for the people who might already inhabit those worlds. The CCW has inadvertently sparked one of the most widespread *invasions* the Three Galaxies have ever seen, and it's a race for power they aren't even winning.

Of course, no one speaks in terms of "invasion" or "owning" the worlds and entire solar systems of the Thundercloud Galaxy – that would be unethical and go against the sensibilities of the Consortium. The CCW has never "invaded or conquered" any civilization or world, and would be offended and outraged to hear anyone suggest otherwise. Their "colonization" in the Thundercloud Galaxy is completely legal and based on good intentions. Ah, but as it is said, "The road to Hell is paved with good intentions." Though the development of the vast and undeveloped Thundercloud Galaxy is not supposed to be about money, conquest, or power, that is exactly what it has become. Lofty ideals about helping alien cultures and securing lasting peace and harmony have given way to the Scramble. A mad dash to claim worlds, resources and people, whether those people and worlds want it or not. Unwilling to see their mistakes, and caught up in the frenzy of the *Scramble*, the most epic planet-grab ever seen remains cloaked in words of "colonization," "lasting peace," "prosperity for all," "unity" and "the advancement of all people."

Even the unexpected eruption of the **Minion War**, and the threat of conquest by the invading Demons of Hades, has not

slowed down the race between the major power blocs of the Three Galaxies to see who can conquer – or rather "colonize" – the majority of the Thundercloud Galaxy. If anything, the power blocs see the *Hades Demons* (and to a much lesser degree the Deevils of Dyval) as new competitors in the "acquisition of planetary assets" as well as a common enemy to all. As a result, laying claim to as much of the Thundercloud Galaxy as possible for its own protection seems all the more imperative, and gives the galactic powers more reason to build and dispatch fleets and armies to protect their "interests" and/or "the people" of the galaxy; namely their own colonies and investments.

Military forces, dispatched to stand guard over a planet to protect a colony or mining expedition, or other "asset" from demonic invasion, are also used to intimidate, crush or obliterate other threats to *the colony*, including any indigenous people who dare challenge the rights of the colonists. Though it was never intended, indigenous people are being forced out of their homelands, tricked into selling land and planetary resources, and, in some cases, are being wiped out or choked out by the colonists or corporations engaged in any number of profitable business enterprises. Likewise, many alien governments and civilizations are being unfairly usurped and cheated by off-world "advisors" and corporations offering to "develop and improve their lives."

The mad grab for planets, people and resources in the Thundercloud is aptly dubbed *the Scramble*, because it seems as if every conceivable player is "scrambling" to get their piece of the galaxy. The blatant planet-grabbing and self-interest practiced in the Thundercloud, even by respected galactic governments and corporations, is unprecedented and appalling, but openly accepted by all. Everyone is so consumed with the scramble for dominance and control that nobody sees or recognizes what they are doing to the galaxy, the indigenous people or their own intergalactic community. It is a crazy, anything goes, *free-for-all* creating *total chaos*. Everything is moving so fast that nobody knows what's happening where, to whom, or who is responsible. It's like the Wild West where "might makes right" and the mighty take what they want right now and worry about the consequences (if any) later.

The people caught in the middle are not just the *native people* of a particular planet, but *the colonists* as well. Idealistic colonists and hardy pioneers are being promised a panacea of hope and posterity. Most dream of making a better life, owning land, starting a business or helping less advanced alien people. Many sincerely want to make the Thundercloud Galaxy a better place. All too often, however, that noble dream descends into a nightmare and a struggle for survival against the elements, monsters, hostile indigenous people, pirates, raiders, claim jumpers and ruthless corporations that see the loss of life as acceptable or even a necessary evil. As more and more worlds are claimed, resources to protect and defend the colonies are spread painfully thin. In many cases, colonists are left to fend for themselves, and some have become forgotten (the colony's paperwork lost or improperly filed, or mired in red tape while the colonists languish). Most colonists are completely cut off from the outside world and need regular delivery of food, medicine and supplies. Without support from their sponsoring organization they are alone and true strangers in a strange land. They are also vulnerable to a host of dangers: the elements, the environment, wild animals, disease, equipment failure, social breakdowns within their own communities, as well as hostile indigenous people, space pirates, raiders, bandits, and claim jumpers. Well equipped mercenaries and scum

bags happy to slaughter the innocent to take what they want are a constant threat. Some colonies are victimized by the very military force sent to protect them, as the people with the weapons and armor make the rules and take charge.

Meanwhile, conglomerates and corrupt officials grow fantastically rich exploiting underdeveloped alien civilizations and idealistic colonists. Military forces, police, hired mercenary companies and corporate managers left without clear instructions or supervision find themselves having to make life and death decisions. Without contact or instruction from their bosses or governments, they are left to do as they deem appropriate. Even well intentioned peacekeeping forces without guidance, support or relief can find themselves in over their heads, or fall to panic or corruption, or just make bad decisions that cost lives. Mercenaries, criminals and opportunists are likely to seize power for themselves, enslave or terrorize people, or become tyrants who force their will upon others. The inexperience of these troops in hostile alien settings, cut off from adept leadership and absence of supervision, has resulted in thousands of desperate and horrific situations, bloodshed and loss of life, even genocide. And things aren't getting any better.

Criminals and cutthroats see the chaos of the Scramble as an opportunity for unfettered plundering and pillaging. On many worlds and space lanes, they rob, kill and do as they please with impunity. There are few laws in place in the Thundercloud Galaxy and even fewer people to enforce them. Piracy, kidnaping and ransoms, as well as raids on colonies and spacecraft are commonplace. Some thugs go so far as to take over colonial settlements for themselves, where they rule with terror and an iron fist like tin-plated gods. The mass confusion of the Scramble makes the majority of the Thundercloud Galaxy a playground for criminals, con artists and power-grabs of every sort imaginable.

Colonists are not always the victims. All too often, colonists become the ruthless and murderous invaders, who view indigenous people as second class citizens or savages to be treated like dogs. When the alien people cry out in protest, violent means are used to quell insurrection. Land is taken by colonists and the native people forced out of their homes, off their lands and forced to serve their new masters. Technological superiority enables a small handful of colonists to deal with and even slaughter hostile people on a massive scale. The most insensitive or greedy colonists may enslave or wipe out the very people they originally came to help. Everything gets turned around when cut off from civilization and left to one's own devices. It is easy for colonists left to fend for themselves to develop a "them and us" attitude toward indigenous people, especially if they are very primitive, savage or monstrous. Once a people is demonized, it is difficult to see them as anything more than monsters or bloodthirsty barbarians. Instead of cultivating and helping the native population, it becomes a battle for survival against two warring people. Everything becomes twisted.

Of course, this is NOT true everywhere, and there are many peaceful and successful colonies. But for every success story, the Scramble has also destroyed the lives of untold millions and disrupted the natural progress of the galaxy. Traditional roles have become twisted, with villains praised as liberators and enlightened peoples engaging in cutthroat tactics and reprehensible actions. Escalating levels of lawlessness, greed and barbarism seem to be everywhere regardless of whether it is a primitive culture, a colony, or an advanced civilization. Chaos spreads as more worlds are gobbled up. The introduction of demons and Deevils to this volatile situation will only create more tragedy.

Consider the following statistics:

- The Thundercloud Galaxy contains approximately **121 billion stars**.
- According to conservative estimates, if only one half of one percent of those stars have planets, and only one tenth of one percent of those planets have life, there are approximately **72,600 possible planets** on which to start a colony without relying on a centuries-long terraforming process.
- The Scramble began 450 years ago.
- Based on the estimate above, the CCW claims almost 20% of the Thundercloud (that's 14,500 worlds) and the TGE claims dominion over nearly 33% of the Thundercloud (or 23,950 worlds), the Free World Council (FWC) holds 10% (7,260 worlds), less than three percent is claimed by the United Worlds of Warlock (2,178 worlds), and less than one percent by independent and unaffiliated colonists. It should be noted that the Splugorth Kingdom of Desslyth predates the Scramble, and the majority of the TGE holdings are worlds conquered and taken from them. The Splugorth's holdings today amount to less than 9% of the galaxy.
- Based on the numbers above, roughly two-thirds of the Thundercloud has been claimed in the span of 450 years, the average rate of colonization by the super powers is an unprecedented **107 new planets a year!** At this rate, it is conceivable the Thundercloud Galaxy will be completely claimed by external powers within the next two or three centuries. By the year 10,250 TE, the Consortium, the Transgalactic Empire, the Splugorth, and others, will have gobbled up an entire galaxy! This also means that *the Scramble* is still in full swing. There is still a lot of open space to claim, and thousands of intelligent species to assimilate, enslave or murder.

Note: This may be a conservative estimate, as some experts contend there are 2-4 times more worlds viable for colonization. However, as more power blocs join the rush to colonize and claim portions of the Thundercloud for themselves, the entire galaxy could still be claimed by outside powers within 800-1,000 years.

Few people outside of the Thundercloud have any clear idea of what is going on so far away. The acquisitions, colonization, conquest, and grabbing of resources is happening at such a frenetic pace that there is an ever-increasing breakdown in reliable communications, legal procedure and chains of command. The sprawling regions of the Thundercloud Galaxy are being gobbled up so fast and recklessly, and the Scramble involves so many people, that those in charge have lost control. Reports and claims are lost or never filed. Supplies are mismanaged, stolen, or sent to the wrong location. Military units and space fleets quite often take matters into their own hands with little fear of reprisal or consequence.

People in the Corkscrew and Anvil Galaxies have become convinced they need their respective power bloc to have a colonial empire. However, there is already so much going on for them at home, what with the *Forge War/Minion War* in the Anvil Galaxy and the *Intruder threat* in the Corkscrew, that the odd report trickling in about trouble and even atrocities taking place 20,000 light-years away in the Thundercloud Galaxy slips by unnoticed or is ignored.

It has been the lack of information coming out of the Thundercloud that finally caught the attention of a select few people. On paper, the Company had become a kind of black hole into which people, money, and materiel were being thrown, never to

be seen again. Forensic accountants working in the office of the newly elected Consortium Prime Minister reported their findings to Voirr Jhawn.

Regardless of what the super powers decide to do when and if their agents' findings ever become known, it is the indigenous people of the Thundercloud who are suffering the most for the entire experience. Forever changed by their contact with outsiders, their natural cultures disrupted and forcibly transformed, it is they who have to struggle to find their own identity in whatever way they can. There is no doubt that this will be a painful process, with uncertain results for the future of the Three Galaxies.

Major Players in the Thundercloud Galaxy

Here then is the story of galactic empires drunk on their own sense of worth. It is a story of corruption, idealism, and opportunity; a land turned upside down, where the villains wear the white hats, and the heroes must work outside of the system in order to change it. Welcome to the Thundercloud Galaxy!

Bushi Federation. Being elitists and isolationists, the Bushi Federation has not played a large role in the colonization of their adopted galaxy. However, they are among the most advanced civilizations in the Thundercloud when it comes to the areas of science and technology. Their advanced weapons, armor, robots and spacecraft are in high demand across the Three Galaxies. The Bushi Federation is a member of the CCW, but they are reluctant partners who find all the CCW's rules and bureaucracy to be cumbersome and annoying.

The Consortium of Civilized Worlds (CCW). The premiere civilization in the Three Galaxies, the CCW is generally regarded as a major force for justice, freedom, and equality. Its capital world is *Terra Prime*, where the incredibly diverse Consortium Congress presides over 231 different member races.

In the Thundercloud Galaxy, the actual government of the Consortium is almost nonexistent, ruling as they do from the far distant Corkscrew Galaxy. Control of the CCW's Thundercloud colonies and holdings is split between the **Thundercloud Development Company** (aka "the Company," a Chartered Company of the Consortium Authority, which in turn is a subsidiary of the Prime Minister's Office), and the Consortium Armed Forces' (CAF) of the **Thundercloud Task Force**. There are a number of other Chartered Companies, but their holdings are so small compared to "the Company," that they are relatively insignificant. As the expansion of the CCW in this galaxy is being fueled by investment capital from conglomerates like *Naruni Enterprises*, special interest groups and private citizens, it is far more open to corruption and exploitation than the Anvil or Corkscrew Galaxies.

The Consortium controls 20% of the Thundercloud Galaxy, but this is largely because of its three substantial allies/members: the Catyr Commonwealth, the Bushi Federation, and the Che-Dive Theocracy.

Catyr Commonwealth. The Catyr are a very human-like race with a high tolerance for radiation. They have been a space-faring people for centuries, but did not discover FTL space travel until recently, which is why most of their worlds are clustered in the southeastern end of Oswoe's Arm. Catyr make up a large portion of CCW worlds in the Oswoe's Arm and they are firm supporters of the CCW and its ideals.

Catyr explorers are paid well to chart space in the Thundercloud and find new prospective colony worlds. Catyr are immune to the effects of M-Rad and many other types of radiation, so when the Consortium begins a push into the forbidding Crèche Clouds, it will be the Catyr who will lead the way. Likewise, whenever a world is found with radiation levels that cannot support human life, the Catyr are given first crack at colonizing it on behalf of their Commonwealth and the CCW. Many Catyr take great pains to respect the rights and customs of other peoples, including primitive civilizations throughout the Thundercloud Galaxy. This has put the Commonwealth in an awkward position regarding the situation with the Denlech Settlers.

Demon Fleets. The Minion War has caused the demons of Hades to make a bid to conquer the Three Galaxies. In the Thundercloud, demon forces ignore everybody's rights, and use whatever planets, resources and colonies they deem fit. For the moment, the Thundercloud Galaxy is being used as a staging ground and place to gather and make repairs before moving off to attack planets in the other two galaxies. Most colonies are ignored unless they have something the demons want. Both demons and Deevils seek magic artifacts and the weaponry of the Elder Races who once called the Thundercloud their home. As a result, they can be found digging through ancient ruins and seizing items from the colonists who discovered them.

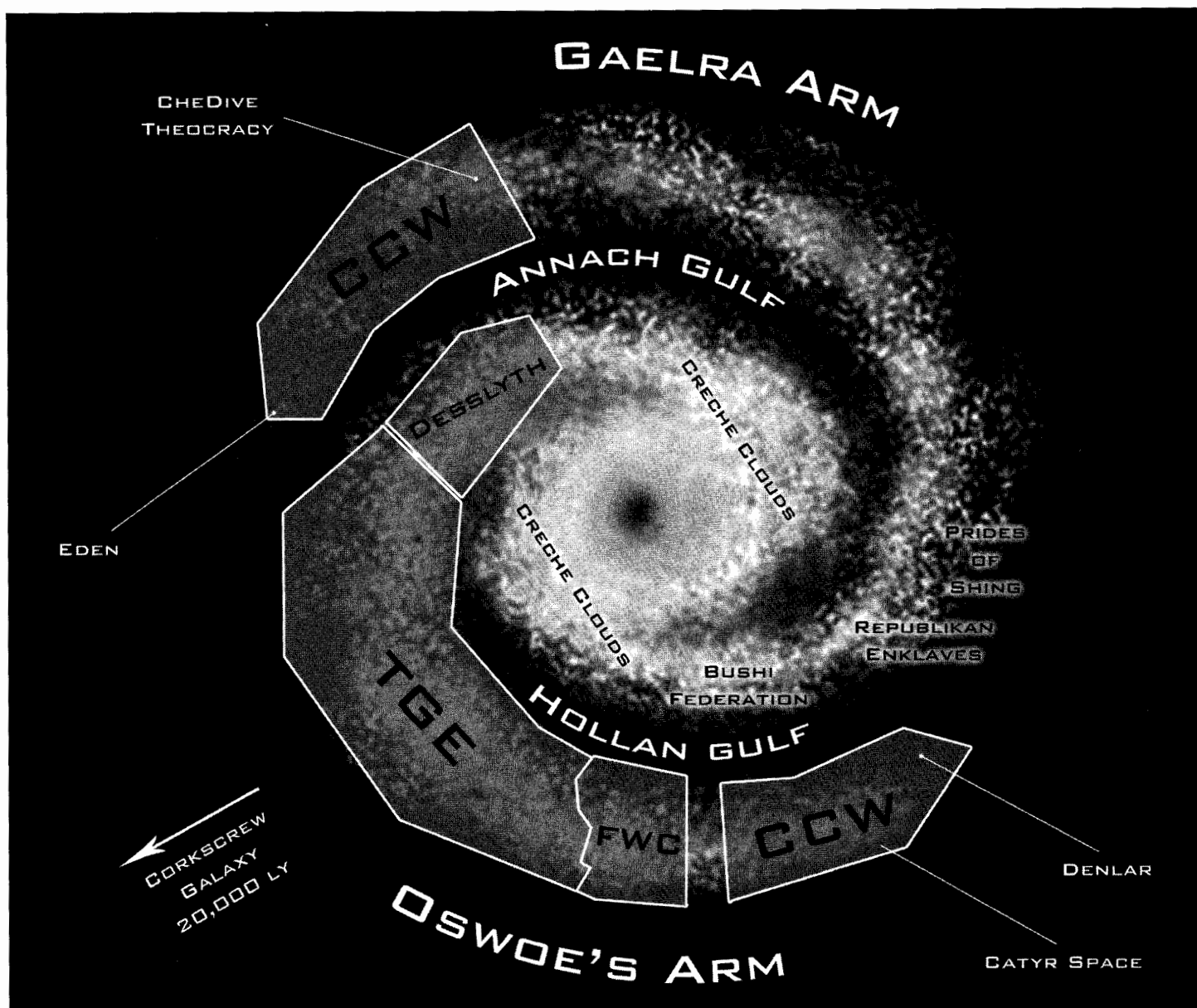
The Denlech Settlers. The Denlech are not so much major players in the Thundercloud Galaxy as a monkey wrench. They are quickly becoming the poster child for what's wrong with the unchecked greed and imperialism of the Scramble. Whether their plight makes a difference in how things are done in the galaxy, or whether their story becomes one more tragedy in the new frontier, is yet to be determined.

The Dominators. Though the reign of these advanced beings ended 50,000 years ago, their legacy still has a hold and influence over the galaxy. The relics, weapons and secrets of the super-science of the Dominators and other Elder Races can be found scattered across the galaxy.

The Prides of Shing. The Prides lie in the unexplored southeastern end of the Gaelra Arm, and are the domain of the felinoid Shing. Apparently evolved from some kind of hunting cat, they have sharp claws and powerful jaws. Contact between the other major powers and the Shing has only taken place within the past few decades, with dreadful consequences for all involved. The Shing are most noted for two things: Their total lack of any unified government, and the fact that they are, at present, the only Thundercloud-indigenous power bloc to actually defeat an outside oppressor in combat.

The Republikan Enklaves. Although native to the Anvil Galaxy, the *Golgan Republik* decided that to become a first-rate power bloc they too must establish a colonial foothold in the Thundercloud Galaxy. Regrettably, not long after they did so, the Enklaves went to war with their new neighbors, the Shing. Meanwhile, back in the Anvil Galaxy, the Republic itself has begun to collapse. Support for its Thundercloud colonies, however, has never wavered, and even as their homelands splinter and fall into decay, the rulers of the Republik refuse to give up control of the Enklaves. Thanks to the superior management skills of the Gulgans, this is one of the strongest and most self-sufficient of all the Thundercloud colonial holdings. The Gulgans "claim" 4.5% of the Thundercloud, though in reality, they have not even explored most of that space, much less colonized it.

The Splugorth Kingdom of Desslyth. Once the undisputed master of the Thundercloud Galaxy, the Kingdom of Desslyth



has fallen on hard times. According to rumors, its founder, Desslyth the Elder, is a Splugorth so ancient that he has to be hooked up to an elaborate life support system. His "son," Desslyth the Younger, rules what's left of the Kingdom of Desslyth as Regent.

Over the past four hundred years, the Splugorth's Kingdom has been whittled away to a shadow of its former glory by the TGE. Though they once spanned more than a third of the galaxy, Splugorth holdings have been reduced to less than 9%. Though Desslyth the Younger still deals in slaves and magic, as do all Splugorth, he has enacted an insidious campaign of revenge by engaging in a vigorous drug trade targeting the holdings stolen from him by the TGE. His Bio-Wizards also sell their weird symbiotes and advanced medical services to any who can afford them.

Some question the veracity of the rumors concerning the apparent collapse of the Splugorth Empire in the Thundercloud, speculating that the cunning Desslyth the Younger is engaged in a diabolical plot not yet revealed. Others wonder if the Younger may be setting the Kreeghor up for a fall.

The Transgalactic Empire (TGE). The evil Kreeghor are the masters of the TGE, aliens who are hell-bent to control the

whole of the Three Galaxies. Theirs is a huge and oppressive government that rivals the Consortium in scope and power, but ruled with an iron fist and military oppression. The TGE currently holds the largest portion of the Thundercloud, estimated at 33%. Their territorial gains have come largely at the expense of the Splugorth. The Kreeghor were once a slave race of the Splugorth who broke free of their ruthless masters. For the last four hundred years, the TGE has delighted in taking worlds away from the Splugorth and adding them to the holdings of the Transgalactic Empire.

In a bizarre twist, the brutal Kreeghor are looked upon as heroes and liberators by many of the former Splugorthian slaves who now find themselves to be citizens of the TGE. It turns out that compared to the Splugorth, the Kreeghor are very much the lesser of two evils. The Empire is pleasantly surprised by this reception, and is doing all it can to foster its new image as liberator and benevolent dictatorship. This includes supplying weapons and combat training to the people they have liberated, so they can take up arms against other enemies of the TGE such as the Consortium, which they claim wants to assimilate all people.

Thundercloud Galaxy Facts

In astronomical terms, the Thundercloud is a barred spiral galaxy; a central oval-shaped structure from which two long arms branch off. It measures 30,000 light-years in length and 2,000 light-years in thickness, making it much smaller than our own Milky Way, but twice as thick. According to the latest estimates, it contains one hundred and twenty-one billion stars.

Since the arms curve, each has a length of about 35,000 light-years, and averages four thousand light-years across. They are generally filled with clusters of medium-type stars, and solitary super-giant suns. However, the latter tend not to develop a stable solar system of planets or intelligent life, because of the stars' short life spans of between one and fifty million years.

The central bar structure is surrounded by a vast bulge called the **Crèche Clouds**. Measuring over 10,000 light-years in diameter and 2,000 light-years in thickness, the interior of the Thundercloud possesses a volume nearly equal to that of the entire Anvil Galaxy. The Crèche Clouds are a gigantic stellar nursery, filled with dust lanes, young stars, nebulae, plasma storms, and expanses. The region also has high levels of a bizarre ambient radiation found nowhere else in the Three Galaxies. This energy has given rise to all manner of mutated and highly resistant strains of viruses and bacteria, and travelers to worlds within the Crèche Clouds must be very careful to avoid contracting an incurable disease.

The center of the Thundercloud is referred to as **the Vortex**: a vast storm with a calm center. This outside observation is misleading, as this region of inactivity is actually a super-massive black hole.

The Arms of the Thundercloud. For many thousands of years, the interior of the Thundercloud Galaxy seemed so uninviting, explorers and colonists from the Anvil and Corkscrew galaxies avoided it. Instead, they went to the periphery of the Thundercloud Galaxy, the two spiral arms. Each of the arms is named after a famous astronomer: a Catyr named *Riard Oswoe* and a Noro known as *Pah Gaelra*. Each Arm contains at least 40 billion stars. Today, it is said that almost all of **Oswoe's Arm** and one-third of the **Gaelra Arm** are considered to have been mapped and "tamed."

Of the 726 intelligent species that call the arms of the Thundercloud Galaxy their home, most are sorely underdeveloped. As a result of their weakened state, many of the indigenous people have been absorbed into or destroyed by one of the power blocs currently colonizing the Thundercloud Galaxy. At this time, the focus of colonization remains in the regions known as the Arms, but there are an increasing number of exploratory ventures deeper into the galaxy.

The Thundercloud Enigma

Compared to its sister galaxies, the Thundercloud seems out of sync and underpopulated. All of the Three Galaxies are approximately the same age. If anything, the Thundercloud is the oldest of the three, and yet it appears to be underdeveloped on some levels and overdeveloped in others. In the latter case, there appears to be many more worlds suitable for human/humanoid habitation than there should be. Planets with breathable atmospheres and ample vegetation and wildlife are statistically higher than what should be expected.

On the other hand, there seems to be many fewer distinct, different species of people. Mathematical projections would suggest there should be 200-300 intelligent races of sentient beings in the Thundercloud Galaxy, but so far, only a few dozen, including humans, have been found. One would imagine many of these people would have advanced civilizations. If not space-faring, at least Industrial Age, but again, many are primitive people with very young civilizations and low-tech or stagnant technology. While a handful have managed space exploration (the Shing and the Caytr, for example), most are on par with Earth's Ancient Egypt or Roman Empire, a few are at Medieval or Renaissance levels, while about half seem to be tribal hunters and gatherers. This is perplexing in and of itself, but even stranger is the fact that many of these beings are found on several planets. If their civilizations have not mastered space travel, how could they have colonized multiple planets? And in some cases it's planets in both arms of the Thundercloud Galaxy thousands of light-years apart. There are several possibilities and one or all of them may apply to the various sentient people of the Thundercloud.

One answer is that they once had an advanced civilization, mastered space travel and went forth to seed other planets. Then something happened that caused their civilization to collapse. Thus, these much less advanced people on various planets are the descendants of ancient space colonists. But if that were true, shouldn't some of the colonies have maintained the advanced science and technology? They wouldn't all devolve. If each and every colony, worlds apart, has devolved into a low-tech civilization, it suggests there must have been a galaxy-wide catastrophe that affected them all. Otherwise, some of the colony planets would be much more advanced than others. Furthermore, as a space-faring people, you'd think the advanced colony worlds would have gone back to rescue and help the people on their home world, yet nothing of the sort is evident. If this were the case with one or even two different alien races, it might be dismissed as a weird fluke, but there are a dozen or more such cases where a particular sentient species incapable of space travel is encountered on numerous different planets. In almost every case, the people have no historical record of a collapse of their own civilization and most are unaware their people inhabit more than one planet. This suggests something more is at work in the Thundercloud.

The next obvious answer is these beings were once slaves or subjects of the *Dominators*, or one of the other forgotten Elder Races. While this is true of a few, it does not seem to be the case for the majority.

Some of these odd beings are undoubtedly the product of genetic experimentation by the Gene-Tech. These enigmatic beings are well known to play with and experiment on animals and "lesser beings," including humans. Gene-Tech are also known to visit the Thundercloud Galaxy with such frequency that it is

one of the few places you can go in search of one and have a real chance for success. This has led some people to wonder if the Thundercloud Galaxy is a giant experiment or sort of laboratory where Gene-Tech dabble with the genetic manipulation of plants, animals and people for their own enjoyment. This is certainly the case for some species, but the entire Thundercloud being a Gene-Tech experiment seems unlikely.

A Galaxy Under Siege

Many scientists and historians suspect the Thundercloud has suffered a number of galaxy-wide disasters. Each cataclysmic event decimating the earlier life forms and civilizations, which has severely set back and stunted the development of intelligent life forms in the Thundercloud Galaxy, at least compared to the rest of the Three Galaxies. Others dismiss this argument, claiming there is no clear evidence of multiple disasters, and the Thundercloud Galaxy is simply developing at a different pace than the rest of the Three Galaxies. While that argument may seem sound, there is concrete evidence of at least one famous galaxy-wide disaster known to have had a profound and debilitating effect on the Thundercloud Galaxy. It involved **the Dominators**, giants with godlike power and super-advanced technology. For reasons never quite understood by anyone then or today, the Dominators relished in destroying civilized people, annihilating some completely and devastating others to force them back into the Stone Age.

The Dominators were such a dangerous force to be reckoned with that other people and powers of that age joined forces to destroy them, and in the process laid waste to a portion of the

galaxy. 50,000 years ago, a *Black Hole Projector* was unleashed at the center of the Thundercloud Galaxy, where the Dominators lived. So terrible were these monsters that destroying a 100 light-year radius of the Thundercloud Galaxy was deemed an acceptable loss of life. The devastating attack was mostly a success, wiping out the Dominator civilization and destroying all but a few hundred Dominators. Regrettably, some had been away from the epicenter of the Black Hole Projector detonation and escaped. So did bits and pieces of their technology, a few secret Dominator bases and a small number of their spacecraft. Though the names of the species are lost to posterity, scores of alien civilizations enslaved by the Dominators were destroyed with them. This alone is a terrible loss, but there's more.

When the Black Hole Projector detonated, it unleashed a shock wave of magic radiation, known as *M-Rads*, that swept across the entire galaxy. The M-Rads touched every single planet and every life form in the galaxy. The radiation killed entire species, caused sickness and pandemics, altered ecosystems and weather patterns, and caused all manner of mutation and destruction. Civilizations collapsed. People unable to adapt to rapidly changing environments, or mutant pathogens, perished. Others survived – barely – and staggered back into a primitive state of existence. Some mutated into something different and new. Indeed, the Thundercloud Galaxy is filled with some of the strangest monsters, animals and sentient beings in the Three Galaxies, presumably the product of mutation caused by the M-Rads. The galaxy is also littered with the ancient bones of crashed starships of Dominators and unknown Elder Races, as well as the ruins of forgotten civilizations, and relics of the Dominators and other



Elder Races. This means there are bits and pieces of ancient, advanced weapons and technology waiting to be discovered on who knows how many unexplored worlds.

As more and more planets in the Thundercloud Galaxy are colonized, fossil records reveal the bones and artifacts of alien people and lost civilizations that collapsed 160,000 to 40,000 years ago. Most were victims of the Dominators or the shock wave from the Black Hole Projector. Some perished immediately, others survived for thousands of years before vanishing, devolving into primitives or being wiped out by mutants. A small percentage of ancient relics date back even farther, all of which supports the theory that two or more galactic-wide environmental disasters have taken place within the Thundercloud Galaxy, destroying budding civilizations and delaying cultural development of the indigenous people. The incident with the Dominators and the Black Hole Projector is simply the most recent cataclysm to sweep the galaxy and happens to be the one known by the current civilizations of the Three Galaxies. Yet even the specifics of this cataclysmic event, and how many civilizations were destroyed or transformed, are unknown.

Some historians and scientists operating on the fringe of science have speculated there is a powerful (Supernatural? Evil? Magical?) force at work in the Thundercloud that *attracts* people to it like moths to a flame. Some think it is the *Cosmic Forge*. Others point to the many *galactic ley lines* and *nexus points* within the Thundercloud. Others reject the notion and point to pure coincidence, while others speak of cosmic curses. However, the premise that people are inexplicably drawn to the Thundercloud Galaxy, where they seem to meet with tragedy, is difficult to entirely dismiss.

Consider the following:

It is undeniable that the *Dominators* made the Thundercloud their home, as did a great many super-advanced and godlike beings collectively known as the "Elder Races." The last of the Dominators still make the Thundercloud Galaxy their home, and there are persistent rumors that the last survivors of other Elder Races also hide upon unexplored planets in the galaxy.

The enigmatic *Gene-Tech* are also attracted to the galaxy, where they have engaged in countless experiments upon the people, fauna and flora of the galaxy for eons.

Why is it the *Exiles* cannot tear themselves away from the galaxy either?

What attracted the *Splugorth* to colonize part of the galaxy after the cataclysm of the Black Hole Projector, but ages before anyone else?

Why is it that *Killaryte* is found exclusively in the Thundercloud Galaxy?

It is said *Cosmo-Knights* come to the Thundercloud to meditate, and it is here they establish secret bases, sanctuaries and training facilities hidden on planets and moons.

A few thousand years ago, the *Goddess Ameratsu* brought the Oni to the Thundercloud Galaxy. Only 1,000 years ago, upon her sudden departure, she put into place the means to advance the Bushi civilization and bid them to go forth into the Thundercloud Galaxy and colonize more worlds.

Eight hundred years ago, the *Denlech* chose to start a new life in the Thundercloud, when they could have more easily sought out habitable planets in the sprawling Corkscrew Galaxy where they originated.

Around the same time, the people of the *Human Alliance/CCW* began to eye the Thundercloud for exploration and colo-

nization. When they started to do so, the *Transgalactic Empire (TGE)* chose to do likewise.

There is no denying the ongoing and escalating *Scramble* is only the latest madness to possess people to flock to the Thundercloud and inhabit the planets nestled within its arms.

Now, with the advent of the *Minion War*, the Thundercloud Galaxy attracts demons and Deevils with their own agenda for conquest and terror.

Could there really be something about the Thundercloud Galaxy, or something within it, that attracts people and calamity? If so, what could it be? Is someone responsible for it, or is it a natural, recurring phenomenon?

To those who believe it is the **Cosmic Forge**, it seems unlikely that the Forge would deliberately cause such chaos, but perhaps the Forge is so powerful that its presence alone draws intelligent beings to it. Or perhaps the Forge is flawed more deeply than anyone realizes. Perhaps that is why it hides itself. Perhaps, just as it had once unleashed its power to destroy, rather than create, its presence has a dark influence on the galaxy that contains it. Then again, isn't the *Scramble*, despite the chaos and rampant injustice, a vehicle for growth and creation? Colonists are flooding the galaxy to populate and transform the galaxy. Isn't that an act of creation? Isn't the act of creation often violent, chaotic and destructive – especially when humans are involved?

Among the more superstitious lot, there are those who have wondered if the Thundercloud Galaxy might be **cursed** by an angry, ancient god. That might explain why the Thundercloud seems so inviting and attractive. Why so many worlds appear to be a paradise and it lures so many people into its arms. Yet, like a poisonous lover, the love affair always seems to result in tragedy. Isn't that the very definition of a curse?

Odds are the answers to these questions will never be found. But does it really matter? People are flocking to the Thundercloud Galaxy for a variety of personal, professional and idealistic reasons. It is enough that they come. What unfolds because of it is yet to be seen.

Catalyst for Adventure

The Thundercloud Galaxy is a catalyst for adventure like no other. It is an entire galaxy of adventure, exploration and mystery. It is an environment that contains a countless number of wild and untamed worlds screaming for adventure. The aliens, monsters and people described in this Dimension Book are just the tip of the iceberg. There are entire worlds calling your character's names. There are lives to be saved, people to be rescued, others to be set free, pirates and raiders to be stopped, tyrants to be taken down, Kreeghor to deal with, Splugorth plots to foil, supplies and medicine to be delivered, demons to be destroyed, secret demon (and Deevil) operations to undermine, Cosmo-Knights and Heroes of the Megaverse to help and fight alongside of, planets to discover, mysteries to unravel, and ancient ruins to explore. The possibilities go on and on.

It is time to cut your imaginations loose. The Thundercloud setting allows your characters to engage in just about any space opera/science fiction story imaginable.

The colonists need help. Help against raiders and pirates, mercs and monsters, the Kreeghor or Splugorth, demons or Deevils, or madmen or indigenous people out for blood. Remember, even colonists who have come against indigenous people are not necessarily bad guys, and even overzealous and brutal colonists

won't see themselves as bad guys or evil invaders. Many may sincerely believe they are helping these aliens or primitive people and don't understand why those people have turned against them and try to kill them. For the colonists who come to settle the Thundercloud, this is the *galactic frontier*. Their home worlds, leaders, and societies are far behind them. Most times, the only law is what you choose to make, and people, human and Kreeghor alike, are left to the mercies of their own inhibitions.

Bold adventurers and heroes wanted. Adventure and opportunity abound for those willing to take the risk. True heroes are not only wanted but needed. Men and women who know right from wrong, and are willing to take a stand and fight to protect the innocent and deal out justice, are in short demand and needed *everywhere*.

Occupations of every stripe are in demand: adventurers, lawmen, gunfighters, soldiers, Cosmo-Knights, explorers, pilots, smugglers, doctors, and all the rest. For the right group of heroes, adventurers or cutthroats, there is a fortune to be had and history to be made.

Players, rise to the challenge.

Game Masters, cut loose.

This is your chance to explore alien worlds, discover ancient alien artifacts and magic, as well as fight demons, Deevils, the Minions of Splugorth, Dominators, and rogue Cosmo-Knights, crush tyranny and engage in a wide range of adventure scenarios. Anything goes. Seize the opportunity.

Of course, off the beaten path of the Thundercloud Galaxy, your heroes are likely to engage in life and death struggles, conspiracies and adventures that the "civilized world" will never hear about, or would never believe if they did. Ah, but isn't that part of the charm for real heroes in a frontier waiting to be tamed?

Some Film References

If you want to get a good feel for this setting, here are a few movies to watch, especially the first three: **The Man Who Would Be King**, **Zulu** (personally, I recommend the original movie introducing actor Michael Caine, but any version does the trick – Kevin Siembieda), **The Mission**, James Cameron's **Avatar**, and **Apocalypto**. The last is not so much about colonization and culture clash, as getting a sense of a beautiful but hostile wilderness environment and fighting for one's survival and the survival of your family. Books about Rourke's Drift, British Imperialism in Africa and India, and Colonial Africa provide excellent reference too, and were a big part of the initial inspiration for this book.

The Mystery of the Elder Races

Stories about the Elder Races are told throughout the Three Galaxies. Though the stuff of legends today, they are known to have really existed. It is said they possessed super-science and/or mystic knowledge so far beyond anything known by current civilizations that the Elder Races bordered on the deific. Sadly, they met an ignoble end at the hands of one of their own, **the Dominators**.

Reacting to what turned out to be a self-fulfilling prophecy, the *Dominators* engaged in a systematic campaign of genocide to annihilate their fellow Elder beings. When an Elder Race civilization fell or their world was wiped of life, the Dominators would continue to hunt down and murder individuals who got away.

The only way to stop the Dominators was for Elders who survived the Dominators' galactic genocide to join forces with Cosmo-Knights and other people of the day in one last, grand war campaign. When they finally managed to force most of the Dominators to the center of the Thundercloud Galaxy, the Elders and Cosmo-Knights set off a device known as a *Black Hole Projector*. The weapon destroyed the Dominators, their home world and everything else within 100 light-years of the cataclysmic epicenter. It was an act of desperation and fear that wiped out everyone in the radius of destruction, including innocent people who never knew what hit them, as well as many of the few remaining Elder Races, along with entire star systems. A wave of radiation swept the rest of the galaxy, causing additional death and mayhem upon other Thundercloud civilizations. Today, the black hole found at the center of the Thundercloud Galaxy is an eternal monument marking the end of the Elder Races.

Or is it?

A few hundred Dominators are known to have survived the devastation of the Black Hole Projector, and they were reputed to have made their *home* in the Thundercloud Galaxy. If some Dominators survived, isn't it likely other members of the Elder Races also survived? After all, they were said to possess powers equal to the gods of myth. Many were immortal, others lived hundreds of thousands of years, and it is said they could travel to other dimensions and warp space and time. Certainly, some individual members of the Elder Races must have escaped the cataclysm or were away when the destruction was unleashed.

The insane Dominators claim this is not the case. That they had destroyed them all before they themselves were struck down by the Black Hole Projector. Yet, if the legends and certain historical texts are believed, several surviving members to the Elder Races participated in the final battle that drove the Dominators to the center of the Thundercloud Galaxy where they were destroyed by the Projector. The device, itself, was the creation of the Elder Races fighting to stop the terror of the Dominators, and while it is said the Elder Races sacrificed much to put an end to the Dominators' insanity, there is no definitive statement that all were annihilated. In fact, there is mention of Elders in legends and rumors long after the incident. As a result, many people believe that members of the Elder Races still walk the Three Galaxies and beyond.

One problem in verifying the continued existence of the Elders is there is no accurate way to identify them. There are no known photographs or art known to have survived that depict the Elder Races. According to what few records exist, and a multitude of legends and stories with questionable accuracy, we know most Elders were humanoid giants standing 15-30 feet (4.6 to 9.1 m) tall. It is said most were beautiful with human-like features, though some had multiple limbs or wings, and some looked less than human. Today, however, except for *the Dominators*, and perhaps the *Prometheans* and *Gene-Tech* (both suspected of being surviving members of the Elder Races, though neither is talking), nobody knows what they looked like. To complicate matters, the insane Dominators continue to hunt and destroy the few surviving Elders wherever they find them, reducing their numbers further.

Relics from the Past

Some members of the Elder Races must have survived. Some may have abandoned the Three Galaxies never to return, but it seems likely others would have remained or return from time to time. Considering the Thundercloud Galaxy was their home

– and supposedly, their birthplace – the galaxy holds a special place in their hearts. If the Elder should want to remain unseen, it is an easy task. The Thundercloud Galaxy is filled with uninhabited and unexplored worlds where Elder survivors could find solitude and remain hidden from the eyes of modern civilizations for as long as they might desire. While some scholars and scientists insist such speculation is nonsense, and there have been no verifiable encounters with members of the Elder Races for tens of thousands of years (other than the Dominators), others point to a mountain of anecdotal evidence to refute them. For instance, many believe that the goddess of the Bushi Federation, *Ameratsu*, and *Serket*, goddess of the CheDive, among others, were very likely to have been one of the Elder Races. There is no question these two beings truly existed, and at least Ameratsu walked among “mortals” as recently as a thousand years ago. Both are reported to be dedicated to protecting their “chosen people” and populating the Thundercloud Galaxy with them.

It is an accepted fact the civilizations of the Elder Races were so advanced in the areas of science, technology and magic, that the line between magic and science had been extinguished. Elder Races were said to work miracles and used their technology and magic to explore other galaxies and alien dimensions. It seems reasonable then, to think the Elder Races could have colonized countless planets in and away from the Thundercloud Galaxy. As colonists swarm to the Thundercloud, the discovery of ruins and artifacts confirms the existence of numerous ancient, space-faring people. In most cases, the artifacts are fossilized tools, weapons and strange machines, or machine parts discovered by farmers, miners and explorers. Such discoveries have been made on at least a hundred different CCW colony planets alone, and in three instances, an entire ancient city has been unearthed. Weird space junk that dates back eons also confirms the existence of many unknown, ancient space-faring people. Not all are as ancient as the Elder Races, but some are. These ruins also support the theory that there have been a number of galaxy-wide cataclysms that may have destroyed modern civilizations and set back technological advancement in the Thundercloud.

Relics that date back to the Elder Races are worth a fortune as historical artifacts. Unfortunately, they are not just sitting out in the open. Most are buried beneath many millennia of earth and debris. A multitude of artifacts, crashed spacecraft, ancient colonies, secret outposts, and city ruins rest in silence, buried under ages of dirt, waiting to be discovered by a new generation of people. Some are the secret lairs, abandoned bases and hidden weapon caches of the Dominators, but others are relics of other civilizations and people long forgotten.

The Elder Races are all presumed to have been giants (which was not always the case), so every time a giant humanoid skeleton is dug up, people are quick to assume it is the remains of a Dominator or one of the other Elder Races. The remains of three giants have been recently reconstructed by CCW scientists. Two of the remains are believed to be previously unknown species of the Elder Races, while the third is the skeleton of a Dominator. The latter and one of the other skeletons date back 170,000 years, but the other unknown skeleton is only 7,000 years old, fueling speculation that the Elder Races still live. Actually, every discovery of a mystery device, ancient computer or ruin of an alien culture sets off new debates about the fate of the Elder Races and the loss of their technology.

The living past. In the last 800 years, there have been many encounters with relics from the past that continue to function de-

spite their great age. Functioning bases, outposts, alien spacecraft, and the occasional robot or mystery device are discovered more often than one might expect. Often referred to as “living artifacts,” many of these devices are artifacts of the Dominators, but others that are just as ancient, or older, are not. Many of the ancient ruins and relics use advanced technologies different from those of the Dominators, and can only be the creations of the Elders or another, unknown sentient species that once thrived in the Thundercloud.

It is an adventurer’s dream to stumble upon ancient alien technology worth millions of credits. However, that dream can turn into a nightmare in the blink of an eye, should the relic or the ruins around it come to life. Some *living artifacts* are protected by automated defense systems, robot defenders, and/or a self-destruct mechanism to prevent their secrets from falling into the wrong hands. Considering that the technology of the Elder Races is so advanced, once a defense system or destruct countdown has begun, it is almost always *impossible to stop it*. The technology is so unlike anything known that even psychics with the abilities of Object Read and powers of Tele-Mechanics cannot understand enough to shut down the machine, call off an attack, or stop a self-destruct sequence once it has engaged. Explorers who stumble across such incomprehensible Elder machines or magical devices must exercise extreme caution or risk unleashing forces (magical or technological) they do not understand, cannot control, and which could inflict serious damage upon those around them.

Only 705 years ago, a military fleet from the *Human Alliance* found an alien base built into an asteroid in Oswoe’s Arm of the Thundercloud Galaxy. It was a functioning base manned by more than 9,000 humanoid robots. Still stinging from the *Automaton War*, the troops overreacted and laid waste to them. Midway through the battle, the asteroid base was obliterated by a series of devastating explosions. It was later determined the explosions were the result of a self-destruct system that left only scrap to be salvaged and studied. Twelve years later, a few bits of machinery recovered from the incident were matched to ancient artifacts dating back 63,000 years that belonged to one of the Elder Races. One can only wonder about what secrets and knowledge might have been rediscovered if the soldiers had not responded in such a paranoid and hostile manner.

There have been similar reports of encounters with alien robots, strange probes, alien bases and derelict spacecraft suddenly coming to life. Such encounters tell how the device tried to chase away or kill “intruders” and either self-destructed at some point in the conflict, Rifted out to an unknown location, or otherwise vanished. Alien “ghost ships” and “living relics” of the Elders are the stuff of legend that Spacers, pirates and adventurers dream about. Finding a functioning, unknown alien spacecraft, cache of weapons or miracle device excites the imagination, but “close encounters” are even more riveting.

There have been thousands of reports from Spacers, colonists and adventurers, as well as CAF and TGE combat personnel, that report of encounters with unidentified spacecraft and strange satellites able to outrun conventional starships or vanish out of sight as if by magic. Though such “encounters” are often written off as hallucinations, hysteria, space delirium, lies and hoaxes, there are hundreds of reports of visitations by strange and exotic (sometimes menacing) god-like beings who appear out of nowhere. Could they be Elders?

There are stacks of reports telling of godlike beings and angels bringing technology and science to nascent civilizations, or who protected them from disaster. Other reports tell of mysterious beings rescuing space travelers, repairing disabled spacecraft, per-

forming miraculous medical procedures, and other benevolent feats that have saved lives. Some people claim to have been contacted by an Elder Race and given advice or guidance, or taken on a sightseeing trip in a different part of the galaxy, or given a tour of the beings' spacecraft. Still others report inspirational visions and warnings they claim were sent to them by the Elders. In some cases, the Elder is said to return over a period of weeks, months or years before vanishing once and for all. Such deific beings may visit one person, a few people, or thousands. It is interesting to note that of 631 incidents of Dominator attacks, 217 make mention of a benevolent giant or angel appearing to warn people of the impending attack or help them flee or fight. Usually, only one such deity makes an appearance, but 26% of the stories speak of two, 8% of three, and 2.5% of six to a dozen.

As further evidence of encounters with the Elder Races, there are incidents in which a colonist, pirate, adventurer or space traveler appears on the scene with a strange alien weapon, suit of power armor, bionic limb, device, or small space vehicle that is beyond current levels of technology and is of unknown origin. Sometimes the item is magical in nature, rather than technology-based. In two-thirds of the cases, the item is something the individual, or someone he traded with, found in the middle of nowhere – in a cave or mine, at an ancient ruin, or something a farmer dug up in his field. Eighty-eight percent of the time, the location of the discovery can *not* be relocated. In the rare event that it can, excavating the site often produces 1D6 additional working items of the same or similar type, along with additional ancient artifacts and/or ruins of a spaceship, a colony or even a city that dates back 50,000-600,000 years. The remaining third of the time, the individual claims the alien artifact was given to him by a benevolent giant alien, angel or god. Other times, the claim is that an ordinary stranger stopped to lend a hand and gave him the item. Only 25% of these “gifts” are ancient. The rest are brand new! Of course, the mysterious benefactor is long gone by the time anyone can launch an investigation. No evidence (or questionable evidence) left behind to verify the story. **Note:** Similar encounters, discoveries and mysteries happen in the Corkscrew and Anvil Galaxies, but they are much less common than the vast number of incidents in the Thundercloud.

As the home of the Elder Races, it makes sense that colony cities, bases, equipment and survivors can still be found within the Thundercloud Galaxy. But recent “live” encounters with mystery men and benevolent gods go well beyond the realm of ancient ruins. It suggests Elder Races and other ancient people live in or visit the Thundercloud on a regular basis. If they still live in the Thundercloud, why do they hide and where do they live? Supporters of such supposition point to the **Creche Clouds** as one of the yet unexplored regions of the galaxy and an ideal place for gods seeking seclusion to live or hide. Others note there are thousands of habitable planets yet to be explored and many times more uninhabitable planets that have been ignored because they are unsuitable for human habitation. Worlds uninhabitable by people may be the perfect place for a “god” who can adapt to or transform his environment. Still others have suggested the survivors of the Elder Races or their descendants might live in other galaxies or other dimensions and come to visit via a portal at one of the galaxy's many space ley line nexus points. Or perhaps they come to watch the next generation of life scrambling to populate their home galaxy.

Another popular question is, why didn't the Elder Races colonize the Corkscrew or Anvil Galaxies, especially if they existed for hundreds of thousands of years? For some the answer is, *they*

did. Just not in the way you might expect. There are indications that the long-lived, Elder Races stopped or severely slowed their own procreation. However, it is known they, like the Dominators and Gene-Tech, played with the DNA of other species. Thus, it is possible the Elders “colonized” worlds by causing sentient life to bloom from the indigenous animal life. That could mean humans, Noro, Wulfen, Kreeghor, Catyr, Whetu and countless other species of intelligent beings are, in effect, the *children* of the Elder Races. Certainly, most civilizations (as in 98.7%) have creation myths with ancient gods credited for creating the world and the people in it, and/or for bringing civilization and knowledge to the people. Do the god myths common to almost all cultures refer to the Elder Races? Perhaps, in some cases, the answer is a resounding yes.

All of this begs the question: What is it about the Thundercloud Galaxy that seems to attract people to it – even those with the powers and technology of a god? Is it natural? Is it a curse? And where does tragedy strike next? The Thundercloud seems to have a long history of tragedy, mystery and galaxy-wide extinctions, giving some reason to believe the galaxy may be cursed.

Game Master Notes

The nature of the Thundercloud Galaxy makes it rich with history, galactic catastrophes, mass extinctions, myths and mysteries. The Elder Races makes the perfect X-Factor, monkey wrench or red herring to throw at your player group. Unknown godlike beings can be used to cause mischief and trouble, help player characters and colonies, send characters on quests, drag or manipulate them into conflicts, provide them with weird weapons or magic, and on and on.

In the alternative, you could have *false gods* (really a Dominator trap, or Greater Demon or Deevil trying to manipulate mortals), god hoaxes, searches for the Cosmic Forge, and searches for and battles over strange magic artifacts (something demons and infernals have both been scouring the Megaverse to get hold of for themselves). Elders may be responsible for dimensional anomalies, portals and visits to strange dimensions or the realm of a god, and their still working ancient technology could include the discovery of doomsday machines, miracle machines, weird experiments, cosmic zoos, research facilities, groups of robots or an A.I. still active and engaged in whatever its last mission was. Not to mention one-of-a-kind spacecraft, or weapons, or armor, or equipment for the player characters.

Unleash your imaginations and have a blast.

Evil Elders. Myths about ancient deities are filled with gods of mischief and wickedness. Most cultures have gods that represent the virtues and vices of men. There are gods of mischief, war, famine, plague and countless other dangers and vices, so it would make sense for *deific villains* to exist among the otherwise virtuous Elder Races. Remember, the Elder Races are supposed to have grown from mortal origins like humans, so even these enlightened and powerful beings and their descendants share our range of emotions and penchant for bad decision making based on feelings and personal bias. In short, they are good and bad just like us. While the majority are believed to have taken the high road and are creators, healers and idealists, there will be those who are cruel, evil and malevolent.

The point is, the Thundercloud Galaxy setting is epic in scope and malleable by design. It allows a Game Master to draw upon a history that goes back a million years and derive inspiration from literally thousands of planets. The Elder Races, the Dominators, the Gene-Tech and the many new aliens and monsters introduced

in this book are all presented to help you weave a tapestry of mystery, secrets and adventure. As always, the range of adventure is limited only by your own imagination. Give it wing in the Thundercloud Galaxy.

Template for Making an Elder Race

NPC Elder Race. NOT available as a player character. Game Masters, if you introduce one or more surviving members of the Elder Races into your campaign, do so with great care. The player group probably should not have their own personal deity (though I have seen it work at least once), and he or she should not intervene on their behalf on a frequent basis. However, having a deific life form make an appearance as an NPC (Non-Player Character) can create some dramatic moments. The Elder can be used to provide the player group with quests and missions, plots against Dominators, plots against other evildoers, rescue missions, and humanitarian efforts to protect innocent people, especially the indigenous races of the Thundercloud Galaxy. In short, use an Elder Race as a foil to create adventures for the player group.

Remember, while god-like beings, the surviving Elder Races are the last of their kind spread across the Megaverse. Like the Dominators, only a few hundred of a few of the Elder Races survived. In some cases, there are fewer than a dozen, in a few other cases there may be as many as a thousand. However, the weight and power of their lost civilizations and full range of their technology or magic are no longer available to them. Still, they are incredibly powerful and intelligent compared to mere mortals.

Also known by many other names. The power and essence of the Elder Races are such that they may be known on many worlds, by many names as different deific manifestations.

Alignment: Remember, during the millions of years the Elder Races dominated the Thundercloud Galaxy and explored the whole of the Three Galaxies and beyond, there was unprecedented peace. Enlightened and kind, most Elder Races are predominantly good alignments: Principled (30%), Scrupulous (40%), Unprincipled (10%), Anarchist (10%), Aberrant (5%), Miscreant (3%) and Diabolic (2%).

Attributes: I.Q. 4D6+12, M.E. 3D6+12, M.A. 3D6+14, P.S. 3D6+12 (Robotic), P.P. 3D6+6, P.E. 3D6+10, P.B. 3D6+12, Spd 3D6+10 (x10 for flying Spd for those that possess the ability of flight).

Size: 2D4+6 feet (2.4 to 4.3 m) tall.

Weight: 100 pounds (45 kg) per foot of height.

M.D.C.: 5D6x100 (In S.D.C. environments the deific being has Hit Points equal to half his M.D.C. and the rest are S.D.C. points; Natural A.R. of 1D6+6.)

Awe/Horror Factor: 1D6+8

P.P.E.: Varies. Tech-oriented Elder Races have 2D6x10 P.P.E. plus P.E. attribute number (use this formula for Dominators as well). Elders who meld magic with tech or use both tech and magic have 2D4x100 P.P.E., and those who rely heavily or entirely on magic have 1D4x1,000 P.P.E.

I.S.P.: Applies only if the character has psionic abilities: M.E. attribute number x50.

Disposition: Most are peaceful and good, but are so removed from humanity and mortality that they have difficulty relating to humans and other mortals. Thus, some may be kind and caring, while others seem aloof and superior. Most carry themselves with an air of royalty or privilege, and are arrogant and condescending toward mortals, treating adults and heroes like ignorant and mischievous children. The worst act as if people are playing pieces in a larger game or talk about people as if they were not in the room. Anarchist and evil members of the Elder Races are always self-obsessed or elitist and see mortals as playthings and pets, or wild animals and curiosities. Most good Elders have high regard for the sanctity of life.

Average Life Span: Unknown, but presumed to be immortal or extremely long lived. Roll on the following table:

01-20% 1D6x10,000 years.

21-40% 4D6x10,000 years.

41-60% 2D6x100,000 years.

61-80% 5D6x100,000 years.

81-100% Immortal.

Experience Level: Average 2D4+8.

Natural Abilities: Mega-Damage bodies and can survive in the vacuum of space, underwater or in toxic environments for one hour per P.E. attribute point. Impervious to most diseases that affect mortals, resistant to poison, cold and heat (one quarter the damage, penalties and duration), and Bio-Regenerate 3D6 M.D.C. per melee round.

Special Physical Abilities:

01-10% Not a carbon based life form. This could be a different life form – an energy being, a living mist, living stone – or a moving statue, robot or android in which the Elder has transferred his life essence. The life essence could even be placed inside a machine, suit of armor, a helmet, medallion, or vehicle. Communication with mortals is done via Telepathy (up to 500 miles/800 km range), as well as dreams, radio transmissions and other means of advanced communication. The Elder is impervious to disease and radiation, can see the invisible, can survive in the vacuum of space, increase M.D.C. by 30% and has Supernatural P.S.

11-25% Elder Power of Flight. Spd attribute x10, can hover, float and walk in the air, glide on air currents/wind, has no limit to altitude and can escape the gravity of any planet to go into space. 75% of those with the power of flight have wings or wings that can appear and disappear at will; any type of wing is possible but angelic, feathered wings seem to be the most common, while 25% fly without wings. Increase speed along ley lines and other dimensional anomalies by 100 times, is not affected by gravity, gravity wells or black holes, can survive in a vacuum, doesn't need air to breathe, +6 to save vs impact, +1 on initiative and +3 on Perception Rolls.

26-40% 1D4 additional limbs. One = Tail. Two = An extra pair of arms (+1 attack per melee, +2 to strike and parry). Three = An extra pair of arms (+1 attack per melee, +2 to strike and parry) plus a tail or other appendage. Four = Two pairs of extra arms or four tentacles (+2 attack per melee, +3 to strike, parry and entangle), or one extra pair of arms and an extra pair of legs (increase speed 30%), or one extra pair of arms or legs and a pair of other appendages such as wings, two tails, etc.; Supernatural P.S. and P.E.

41-45% Magic. Knows all spell invocations, except illusions and dimensional travel magic.

46-50% Magic. Knows all Elemental spells/controls the elements (may substitute with six elemental-based super abilities).

51-55% Magic. Knows all Temporal Magic spells, Ley Line Spells and Space Magic.

56-60% Magic. Techno-Wizardry.

61-65% Psionics. All Healing and Physical Super Psionics.

66-70% Psionics. All Physical and machine based Super Psionics.

71-75% Psionics. All Sensitive and mind based Super Psionics.

76-80% All psionic abilities, including all Super Psionics.

81-85% Shape changer and create avatars. Can transform into any humanoid form from one foot (0.3 m) to 30 feet (9.1 m) tall. Can also create as many as three lesser versions of himself. The splintered life essences are known as *avatars*. An avatar has only 20% of the original's M.D.C., P.P.E., experience, skills and abilities, and each avatar reduces the original by 20% for as long as it is separated from him. The original knows everything the avatar(s) experiences as if the memories and knowledge were his own. If an avatar is destroyed, all its M.D.C. and abilities return to the original. The Elder can discontinue and reabsorb an avatar at will, regardless of distance or location. Thus, as many as four different versions of this Elder can exist at the same time in other places. The powers and abilities of the original Elder are not reduced below 40% of his full capacity, and he can restore himself to full power by reabsorbing the avatars.

86-90% Dimensional Travel. Tech-based Teleportation (self), Teleportation En Masse (lots of other people), and Dimensional Teleportation, as well as the means to travel in a special suit of armor, or a globe or other vehicle, through Rifts, nexus points and wormholes to other dimensions. May be able to perform the equivalent of some or all Temporal Magic spells via technology. Knows other dimensions, including the Astral Plane, Hades and Dyval.

91-00% Superhuman. Possesses the equivalent of 1D6+4 Major Super Abilities, such as Intangibility, Teleport, Fly, Alter Physical Structure, Gravity Control, and so on. Only they are not super abilities at all, but super-science and technology that is the equivalent of magic or super powers.

Attacks per Melee: As per Hand to Hand Combat: Basic. Most Elder Races were peaceful and not warriors or fighters.

Bonuses: +4 on Perception Rolls, +1 on initiative, +4 to pull punch, +2 to disarm, and +6 to save vs Horror Factor and possession; all are in addition to any likely attribute bonuses.

Mega-Damage: As per Supernatural P.S.

Vulnerabilities: None per se, other than personality flaws and possible insanity. Some have lost their sense of connection to mortal beings and may underestimate humans and other mortal life forms. They may also feel alone in the Megaverse.

Available O.C.C.s: Any O.C.C. as one area of the Elder's expertise, with all skills at 90+1D8% skill proficiency.

Magic: See special abilities. Most members of the Elder Races were not practitioners of magic, but possessed technology so advanced that it appeared to be magic.

Psionics: See special abilities.

Equipment, Gear and Money: As deemed fit by the Game Master. Note that the weapons and destructive power of the

Dominators is said to be 3-5 times greater than any other Elder Race.

Cybernetics and Bionics: Varies as the Game Master deems suitable.

Allies: None per se, except others of their kind, which are few. Possibly other god-like beings, intelligent creatures of magic and occasional mortal associates.

Enemies: Dominators, Deevils, demons, rival and evil gods, Alien Intelligences, and other evil supernatural beings. Furthermore, many mortal people fear the Elder Races.

Habitat: Unknown – the Megaverse at large.

The Dominators

As one of the legendary Elder Races, Dominators have a culture and history stretching back tens, if not hundreds of thousands of years. For the sake of everyone alive today, it is fortunate the Dominators' ambition for pan-galactic genocide came to a screeching halt 50,000 years ago, when their home solar system was destroyed by the most powerful weapon ever built: *the Black Hole Projector*. Today, the Dominators are nearly extinct. Even so, they continue to present a real and present danger to all sentient life forms in the Three Galaxies and beyond. A single Dominator Star Fortress, even though it only contains one Dominator, is an engine of destruction 30 miles (48 km) in diameter, capable of devastating entire fleets of spaceships and bombarding the surface of planets.

Encounters with the Dominators are rare, given that there are half a trillion stars in the Three Galaxies and only a few hundred of the monsters. However, there are far more Dominators in the *Thundercloud Galaxy* than there are in the other two or elsewhere. Conjecture and concern as to why this may be run rampant.

It is believed that 50,000-100,000 years ago, the Thundercloud Galaxy was the Dominators' base of operation, and may very well be their birthplace. To this day, there is a greater likelihood of encountering a Dominator in the Thundercloud Galaxy than anywhere else. The reason for this could be as simple as the galaxy is their home, and space-faring visitors are, in effect, tromping through the Dominators' backyard. The Dominator home world was destroyed by the *Black Hole Projector* along with every planet and star within 100,000 light-years of the black hole's epicenter. However, so little is known about the Dominators and the Three Galaxies from so long ago, nobody knows why they still seem drawn to the Thundercloud. Though it is believed their base of operation now lies at the heart of **the Vortex**, that too is not an absolute certainty. It is possible the Dominators have claimed a new world or solar system somewhere in the Thundercloud Galaxy as their "home." Or they may consider the entire galaxy to be theirs, and everyone in it their property. A number of lone Dominators are known to have claimed specific planets and star systems in the galaxy as their personal home base.

Some people speculate Dominators may have preferred the Thundercloud Galaxy because it had few space-faring indigenous people. Until the last few centuries of the Scramble, Dominators could come and go without anyone in the Thundercloud noticing or tracking them. As the civilizations of other neighboring galaxies claim more worlds and establish more colonies, this is



changing, but even now, most colonies are so small and spread out that they are of little consequence to the powerful Dominators. This speculation has led some to worry that Dominators, unhappy with the rush to populate the Thundercloud, could go on a killing spree to wipe out hundreds or thousands of colonies and trespassing space fleets. Right now, most of the small colonies are probably beneath the Dominators' notice, but as they grow and as space traffic increases, who knows how the Dominators may respond? Such fears have done absolutely nothing to slow down the Scramble, leading some to wonder if a tragedy of epic proportions is in the making, especially if even one Dominator takes the battle to the Corkscrew or Anvil Galaxies. After all, the Dominators have a long history of attacking civilizations in the Thundercloud that achieve space travel.

Still others have wondered if the Thundercloud Galaxy is a *playground* for the behemoths, rather than home. The vast majority of indigenous people in the galaxy are low-tech to downright primitive. Presumably, they have never had any means of space travel and yet a handful of intelligent life forms, as well as some animal species and monsters, are found on numerous planets scattered across the Thundercloud Galaxy. This would suggest the people once had an advanced space-faring civilization that later devolved, or someone put them on several different planets. Could the Dominators have left slave races stranded on planets in their past? Could the people and creatures found on numerous planets in the Thundercloud be the descendants of Dominator

slaves or ancient colonists? Or perhaps they are the slaves, colonists or creations of the other Elder Races?

The theory that some of the sentient beings, monsters and animals found in the Thundercloud Galaxy might have once served, or been enslaved by, and even created by the Dominators, seems likely. It might also explain why the surviving Dominators seem to leave primitive people of the Thundercloud Galaxy alone, and blast those who master space travel back into the Stone Age. It is also possible that the life forms of the galaxy are part of a continuing Dominator experiment.

A few have even wondered if the entire Thundercloud Galaxy could be the Dominators' *Zoo*. As crazy as that idea may sound at first blush, the zoo idea may be more valid than you think. First, Dominators look upon lesser life forms, like humans, as vermin. Second, Dominators don't go around destroying every civilization they discover, they have been attacking only *space-faring people*. And when they attack the planets of space-faring civilizations, they seldom obliterate the people, but inflict enough damage to set them back several centuries. Could it be the Thundercloud Galaxy is their "zoo" or a sort of "nature preserve," and the attacks are those of custodians making sure "the animals" aren't escaping from their enclosed habitats? If that is the case, is the Scramble, the colonization and the campaign to advance indigenous people to space-faring tech levels an invitation for destruction? Time will tell.

In any case, the Dominators seem to consider the Thundercloud Galaxy as belonging to them. It is their playground and their home. This means explorers may happen upon a secret Dominator lair, the ruins and artifacts of an ancient Dominator base or an Elder civilization, or come face to face with a Dominator. Finding a base might reveal ancient secrets of technology or magic, or secrets about the Three Galaxies and other worlds or dimensions, provided an individual could figure out how to work any of the Dominators machines or read their language. There is no doubt that there are ancient ruins and secrets to be unearthed in the Thundercloud Galaxy, be they secrets of the Dominators or lost civilizations. It is simply a question of who finds what, where, and can they hang on to what they find?

The Thundercloud is littered with ancient ruins. These include abandoned Dominator bases, hideouts, ancient labs and crashed spaceships to still functioning Dominator base camps, secret lairs, weapon caches, war machines, laboratories and preserves where they experiment upon lesser beings, like humans, Noro, Wulfen and Kreeghor. (Gene-Tech do likewise.) This might explain what attracted the Splugorth to the Thundercloud Galaxy so many millennia ago, for it is known that they covet Dominator artifacts and the secrets of magic once belonging to the Elder Races. The Splugorth learned ages ago that knowledge is power. However, even the Splugorth have been unable to figure out and recreate Dominator or Elder Race technology.

Note: More information regarding the Dominators, including their attribute statistics, can be found in **Rifts® Dimension Book 2: Phase World®**, page 96. More of the Dominators' history and stats for the *Dominator Star Fortress* are presented in **Rifts® Dimension Book 13: Fleets of the Three Galaxies™**, pages 45-50.

Dominator Foreign Relations

None per se. Dominators hate everyone and have little concern for the affairs of mortals other than an unreasoning desire to destroy all space-faring people. As a result, Dominators are considered the enemy of all people, and are attacked on sight by most civilizations and military forces strong enough (and brave enough) to take the fight to them.

Gene-Tech. Old rivals to be tolerated and ignored.

Exiles. A new upstart race to be dealt with.

Demons. Dominators dislike demons and Deevils, and hate that they have invaded "their territory," the Thundercloud Galaxy. While the Dominators would never join forces with any of the lesser civilizations to take the Demon Fleet down, many are taking action on their own, destroying demons and the Demon Fleets wherever they are encountered. For the moment, wiping out the upstart demons in the Thundercloud, if nowhere else, is the Dominators' current priority. Likewise, Dominators work to keep the technology and magic of the Elder Races out of demonic and infernal hands.

Deevils. As far as the Dominators are concerned, the infernals of Dyval are worse than the demons. Deevils are more arrogant, conniving and treacherous, making them less predictable and more dangerous. Thus, they are exterminated wherever they are found in the Thundercloud.

Colonists from elsewhere in the Three Galaxies. Most Dominators have barely noticed the Scramble to claim and colonize the Thundercloud Galaxy. For them, the colonists are an annoyance to be swatted away when they can no longer be tolerated.

Dominator Tech

Salvageable Dominator Spacecraft Technology

Dominator technology is too advanced to be reverse-engineered, copied and manufactured. However, some of it can be adapted or jury-rigged to some of the more advanced spacecraft and technology of the advanced civilizations in the Three Galaxies. **Note:** For some reason, ships equipped with Promethean technology are incompatible. Some have wondered if this means the Dominators and the Prometheans were once ancient enemies, or could it mean nothing at all?

It is also important to note that all Dominator technology has a distinct energy signature that cannot be disguised or concealed. If the energy signature is detected by other space-faring people, the vessel with Dominator tech may be mistaken as a Dominator spacecraft, trap or trick, and either avoided or fired upon. Anyone using Dominator tech is also likely to be viewed with distrust and suspicion.

If the energy signature is detected by a Dominator, he may assume it is a fellow Dominator and avoid contact. However, if the monster realizes the tech has been stolen (which is likely), the following may occur. Roll percentile for random determination or the G.M. may pick one, or decide on a different course of action.

01-05% The Dominator decides to destroy the impudent whelps who dare to defile Dominator technology. Thankfully, the monster is likely to be satisfied with leaving the spacecraft blasted and floating adrift or crash landed on a planet. The Dominator has more important things to do than check to see if they are destroyed. They've been taught their lesson.

06-50% The Dominator goes to investigate, scanning the vessel and the humanoid insects using the stolen technology. He watches them from afar for a while (3D6 days) before moving on. If the Dominator finds them of passing interest, he may have robots capture one, several or all of them, tag them (like Earth scientists do to monitor wildlife) and release them back into the wild for future study.

51-75% The Dominator may decide to use them as bait or pawns in one of his own schemes.

76-90% The Dominator approaches the vessel, captures it in a tractor beam, and then proceeds to explain to the characters how insignificant they are, how he could destroy them like ants, and how they should feel honored that he's decided to let them live because it amuses him to do so. If the people inside the vessel cower in fear or show respect or adoration, he lets them free without further incident. If the Dominator feels insulted or disrespected by any of them, he has robots board the ship, tear out the Dominator tech, probably disabling the vessel (01-75% chance), and punishes the offending insect(s) who insulted him. Then he leaves the spacecraft adrift as the Dominator Star Fortress vanishes in a flash of light.

91-00% The Dominator threatens and bellows, but secretly admires the ingenuity and courage of the little humanoid insects who have incorporated "his" technology. The vessel is held by the Dominator for a few hours and there may be strange noises, the squealing of metal, temporary loss of control over various ship systems, localized power outages, and flickering lights the entire time. Then, without warning, everything returns to normal and the Dominator is gone. For the crew, there is 1D4 hours of lost time they cannot explain and of which they have no memory

(they may have been probed, tagged, DNA samples taken, etc.). A system check shows the vessel has been upgraded. A Dominator Regeneration Node has been installed, the M.D.C. of their outer and interior hulls have been increased by 50%, the spacecraft's engines are improved and rate of travel (speed and distance) increased 20%, any previously installed Dominator tech works smoothly and without any glitches or penalties. Furthermore, any injured or ill characters are healed and restored 100%.

Note: In every case, a Dominator "scan" includes stealing all computer data and information. The Dominator may use that information any way he desires. In some instances, the creature may keep track of the ship and/or the crew, and continue to follow their exploits for months or years. If they should find or encounter something the Dominator wants, he may, again, make an appearance to take powerful artifacts, pillage ancient ruins, or cause trouble. The Dominator may also use the humanoids as bait or pawns to do his dirty work. In other cases, their antics may simply be entertaining.

Dominator Hyper Sensors. Dominators need very sophisticated sensors to operate their quantum wormhole drives and locate the hyper-pipes. The range of these sensors is very impressive and scans out to a 300 light-year wedge (a 5 degree arc) of space. There are limitations when adapting Dominator technology with the lower technology of the current civilizations of the Three Galaxies, making maximum range only 150 light-years and the scan only works in short, 1D6+10 minute bursts. Plus for current ships (Dominator ships don't have this problem), these sensors are pumping out so much power that the sensor beam is like shining a flashing light in a dark room and enabling other ships in the scanning zone to detect and pinpoint the ship doing the scanning. Still, the 150 light-year range of the scan, the level of accuracy and detail make it worth the risk. For example, a Dominator Hyper Scan will indicate not only the number of life forms on another spacecraft, space station or planet with only a .05% margin for error, but also identify all known species, and warning of those it does not recognize. Of course, identification is limited by the database of the vessel to which the Dominator tech has been adapted.

Estimated Value: Most companies would kill to get sensors this sophisticated and will happily pay 35-50 million credits.

Dominator Quantum Singularity Initiator (QSI). This piece of equipment is part of a much larger assembly for the Dominator FTL drives. The equipment is about the size of a microwave oven and there are hundreds in a Star Fortress. The QSIs work in tandem to create and keep open a wormhole through which a Star Fortress can travel. If one were salvaged and hooked into a single spacecraft smaller than a capital battle ship the QSI opens a wormhole that lasts 1D6+4 minutes. During this time a ship can travel or jump up to 50 light-years. The QSI enables spacecraft to travel five light-years per minute for a maximum of ten minutes. Installing this piece of tech is time consuming as it requires configuring and connecting it to an existing FTL drive. If done incorrectly, a spaceship could be hurled into another dimension or worse, crushed to atoms as the wormhole collapsed around the spaceship. There is also a catch. The Quantum Singularity Initiator takes a tremendous amount of power so at the end of the jump, the ship's power levels are temporarily reduced by half and 1D6x10% of the weapon systems will be down for 1D6 hours, until the power supply can recover and get back up to normal levels.

Estimated Value: Many shipbuilders have been working on ways to fold space and create stable wormholes for centuries. This piece of tech would be a huge step in that direction. If this technology could be duplicated on a large scale it could be worth trillions to a manufacturer. As a stand alone unit to be installed in a spacecraft it could fetch 50-80 million credits, possibly more in a bidding war. Of course this technology would need to be demonstrated, and you can expect there to be people who would try to "acquire" it in a less than honest way.

Dominator Regeneration Node. Scattered about Dominator ships are Regeneration Nodes. These nodes are about the size of a refrigerator and are the mechanism by which *Dominator Star Fortresses* repair damage inflicted on the vessel. If one of these nodes is salvaged and installed in a smaller spacecraft (i.e. any ship smaller than a dreadnaught) it will repair damage within minutes after it was inflicted, albeit in a limited capacity. When hooked into a Dominator Star Fortress, the Regeneration Nodes are networked to the entire fortress and repair all damage, internal and external, via an advanced nano-repair system. When adapted to inferior, non-Dominator spacecraft, the Regeneration Node can only repair exterior hull breaches and related external hull damage. Rate of repair is 1D6x10 M.D.C. per melee round. Repairs per node are also limited to a maximum of three repair locations, each no larger than 500 feet (152 m) in diameter. Ships that are larger or desire greater repair capacities need additional Regeneration Nodes. Repairs are done with nano-bots and energy matter conversion, meaning that energy is converted into matter to repair massive damage, while comparatively minor damage is repaired by the nano system which fuses cracks, cuts and crevices back together and melds scrap pieces and debris into patches that are seamless and perfect. When the repairs are finished, you cannot tell there was ever any damage. So long as there is energy, repairs can be conducted.

Estimated Value: This kind of technology is almost unheard of and may require a demonstration to convince a potential buyer. Shipbuilders would pay a few million credits just to examine the Regeneration Node. Selling it could yield 15 to 30 million credits or possibly more in equipment/trade.

Dominator Solar Collector Sail. A solar sail is sometimes used in throwaway satellites and buoys used by Dominators. While they may be simple, low-end tech for the Dominators, they can make for a nice additional power supply system for humanoid spacecraft and space stations. Deployment of a Dominator Solar Sail recharges drained engines and batteries in one quarter the usual time needed, can replenish energy after a wormhole jump and can serve as a substitute, emergency or additional power supply.

Estimated Value: 8-12 million credits.

Dominator Solar Shields. While nowhere as powerful as Dominator temporal shielding, solar shields protect a ship from deadly solar radiation and allow a spacecraft to travel into the corona of a sun. These shields last for 24+4D6 hours or until M.D.C. is depleted. Current shield technology only lasts 1D6x10 minutes before full shield collapse. Solar shields will not enhance the M.D.C. of shields. Modern power systems cannot provide that level of power. Instead, the unique shield matrix can be adapted to current shields to extend duration.

Estimated Value: If sold to the right parties, this technology could sell for four to five million credits.

Dominator Combat Items

The Dominators are a foe to be feared, but like most evil forces, the Dominators did not act alone. During the *Dominator War* they had dozens of slave races to do their bidding. Some of these vassal races were given the "Gift of the Gods" and allowed to use human-sized Dominator weapons, armor, and gear. Since the war ended 50,000 years ago, most of this technology has been lost, but bits and pieces are sometimes found tucked away on a Dominator Star Fortress, among the rubble of ancient ruins, or hidden on a planet or asteroid that once served as a Dominator base, outpost, lair or weapon cache/depot.

The discovery of working Dominator weapons and gear can make a poor man a millionaire, give a mercenary company or group of heroes the edge they need to make a real difference, and save lives or destroy them. In the wrong hands, especially among a primitive culture, just one of these weapons could turn an individual into a tyrant king. Many people who find such items among ancient ruins, or at a trading post or galactic flea market, may not even realize what they are holding.

Like all Dominator technology, these weapons and devices have an energy signature that screams Dominator tech, and which is easy for Dominators to identify and track. With the advanced sensors that Dominators have on their space vessels, they can track these weapons up to 300 light-years away.

Safety Mechanisms. Dominators don't trust anyone. They most certainly never trusted their slaves, and built kill switches into most of the weapons and devices given to slaves and mortal henchmen. This *kill switch* is in all weapons and armor. With a simple voice command, or electronic code, the kill switch is activated. This can be limited to one specific Dominator weapon/item per command or all humanoid-sized weapons and armor within a 4,000 foot (1,219 m) radius. The "kill switch" command *disables* the weapon or device, making it unusable. Body armor, power armor and vehicles see all systems shut down. The pilot inside can get out, but that's it.

Most Dominator weapons and items designed for humanoid slaves also have a *destruct mechanism* that works the same way. Only in this case, activation of the destruct sequence causes the weapon to stop working and visible heat vapors and streams of smoke begin to rise from the device. It turns white hot in a matter of 1D4+2 melee rounds, before imploding and doing 1D6x10 M.D. to everything in a 3 foot (0.9 m) radius. There are ways to jam the kill switch and destruct signals, or disable the kill switch and destruct mechanism, provided one knows they are using a Dominator weapon and can find a weaponsmith with the skill to do so. (Cost to disable these two features ranges from 15,000 to 30,000 credits, and if the merchant is disreputable he might run off with the item, so be wary.)

Reminder, there is no race save for the Dominators themselves (or, perhaps, another high-tech Elder Race) able to reproduce *any* of this technology.

Gravity Wave Weapons

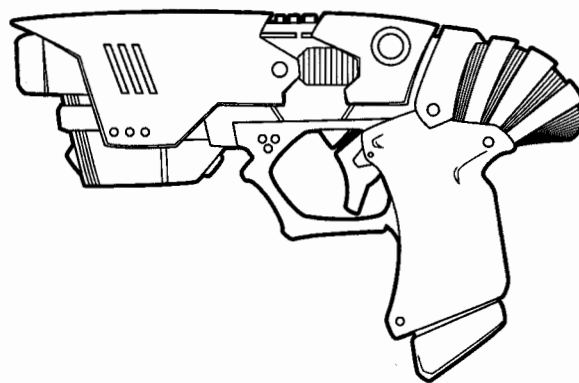
These weapons were developed near the end of the Dominator war, because it was thought they would inflict full damage to the Dominators' most dreaded foe, the Cosmo-Knights, but they did not. Likewise, Gravity Wave Weapons proved ineffective against magical defenses and creatures of magic (dragons, etc.), so the

Dominators abandoned the technology. Gravity Wave Weapons were thought to have all been destroyed or lost 50,000 years ago, but recently, a few have found their way to the open market. This suggests somebody found an old weapon cache somewhere, and is making a fortune.

Gravity Wave beams interact with matter, increasing the attraction between the atoms, causing them to collide and collapse on the atomic level. A concentrated beam can cause the atoms of solid matter to implode! In game terms, that means a Gravity Wave beam has a different effect on the different materials it interacts with. Thus a beam shot at Mega-Damage materials does M.D. while that same beam directed at a Hit Point/S.D.C. target does S.D.C. damage, not M.D.

Magic and Contra-Graviton fields are the two things that defeat Gravity Wave Weapons. CG fields are generated by CG FTL drives and some vehicles that have CG engines. A simple CG belt on a *Grav Pack* can be used to completely deflect the beam (no damage at all). It only takes an Operator to modify a Grav Pack/Belt to create a protective field. However, while turned into an anti-gravity wave deflector, the Grav Pack cannot fly or do anything else. *Grav Packs* are described on page 126 of **Rifts® Dimension Book Two: Phase World®**.

The other defense against Gravity Wave Beams is magic. The beam does one third damage to magic armor, magic force fields and other types of magic barriers. Likewise, creatures of magic only suffer one third damage and supernatural beings, like Devils and demons, suffer half damage from the blast. This is probably why the weapon was abandoned and no longer used by the Dominators.



Gravity Wave Pistol

This pistol is bulky and large for your average humanoid. Characters with a P.S. less than 17 will need two hands to fire the pistol, otherwise they are -2 to strike if holding it one-handed.

Weight: 15 pounds (6.8 kg).

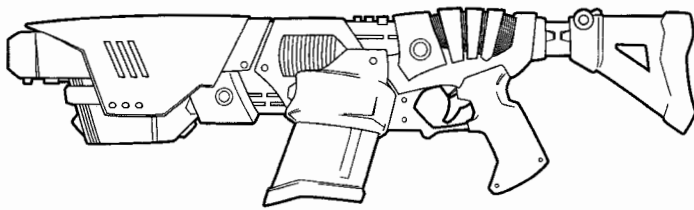
Range: 1,000 feet (304.8 m).

Mega-Damage: 6D6+4 to M.D.C. material and Mega-Damage beings or 6D6+4 S.D.C. to S.D.C. materials and S.D.C. beings. **Note:** When used against Cosmo-Knights, damage is only 1/100th, the same as any energy weapon leveled against these heroes. Against creatures of magic, damage is only one third, and against supernatural beings, damage is half.

Rate of Fire: Single shot only. Each blast counts as one melee attack.

Payload: 15 shots per self-charging E-Clip. Recharges one blast per hour.

Cost: As a rare and powerful weapon, it sells for 2-6 million credits.



Gravity Wave Rifle

This rifle is large and bulky for humanoids. It definitely requires two hands to fire, and comes with a shoulder strap to hold it in place. It requires a P.S. of 24 or higher to fire the weapon, otherwise the shooter is -2 to strike.

Weight: 45 pounds (20.3 kg).

Range: 3,500 feet (1,067 m).

Mega-Damage: 2D4x10 to M.D.C. materials and Mega-Damage beings or 2D4x10 S.D.C. to S.D.C. materials and S.D.C. beings. **Note:** When used against Cosmo-Knights, damage is only 1/100th, against creatures of magic, damage is only one third, and against supernatural beings, damage is half.

Rate of Fire: Single shot only. Each blast counts as one melee attack.

Payload: 15 shots per self-charging E-Clip. Recharges one blast per hour.

Cost: A rare and powerful weapon, it sells for 8-14 million credits.

Nova Plasma Accelerator Weapons

The weapon of choice for the Dominators has always been their Nova Plasma Accelerators. 50,000 years after their fall, the Dominators have taken the development of these weapons as far as they can and they are deadly weapons indeed.

Nova Plasma weapons accelerate bolts of super-heated, ultra-dense metal and fires them as blazing rounds of molten destructive power. The combination of heat and kinetic energy results in a weapon that inflicts tremendous damage. During the Dominator War, the slave races of the Dominators used small versions of these weapons. Some of these weapons are likely to remain in storage on Dominator Star Fortresses and in secret bases. All Dominators use the giant-sized weapons as their primary, personal weapons, and will have a small cache of them (4D6) on their starships and at bases and lairs. Despite the power of these weapons, they still inflict 1/100 damage to Cosmo-Knights. For other beings, damage is the equivalent to plasma, and creatures vulnerable to heat and fire suffer double damage. Energy to matter conversion provides the ammunition and the weapons have self-charging E-Clips.

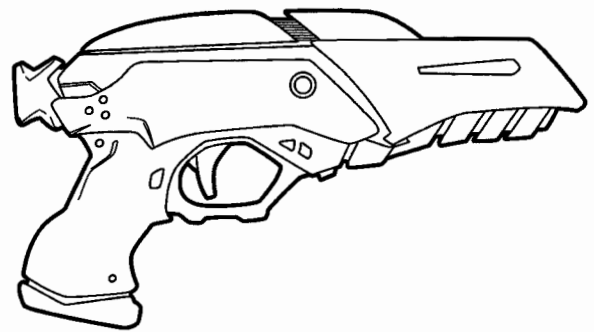
Nova Plasma Accelerator Pistol

– Giant – Dominator Size

This is a weapon actually used by the Dominators themselves. It is so large that it can only be used by beings taller than 25 feet (7.6 m) and with a Robotic P.S. of no less than 44, or Supernatural P.S. no less than 20. With a lot of work, it could be fitted to function as a cannon on a huge combat vehicle or spaceship larger than a space shuttle.

Weight: 400 pounds (180 kg).

Range: 1,500 feet (457.2 m).

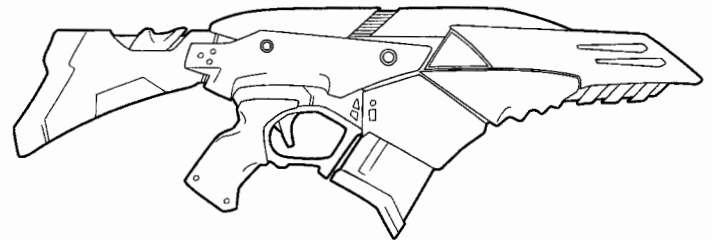


Mega-Damage: 2D6x10 M.D. for a light blast. 1D4x100 M.D. for a heavy blast, but the heavy blast takes a few seconds to power up and as a result it counts as two melee attacks.

Rate of Fire: Single shot only. Each light blast counts as one melee attack, each heavy blast counts as two.

Payload: 36 light blasts or 12 heavy blasts per self-charging E-Clip. Recharges three light blasts (or one heavy) per 30 minutes.

Cost: As a rare and unusual weapon it could sell for 8-12 million credits.



Nova Plasma Accelerator Rifle

– Giant – Dominator Size

This is a weapon actually used by the Dominators themselves. It is so large that it can only be used by beings taller than 25 feet (7.6 m) and with a Robotic P.S. of no less than 44, or Supernatural P.S. no less than 20. With a lot of work, it could be fitted to function as a cannon on a huge combat vehicle or spaceship larger than a space cruiser.

Weight: 800 pounds (360 kg).

Range: 2,500 feet (762 m).

Mega-Damage: 4D6x10 M.D. for a light blast. 1D6x100 M.D. for a heavy blast, but the heavy blast takes a few seconds to power up and as a result it counts as two melee attacks.

Rate of Fire: Single shot only. Each light blast counts as one melee attack, each heavy blast counts as two.

Payload: 108 light blasts or 36 heavy blasts per self-charging E-Clip. Recharges three light blasts (or one heavy) per 30 minutes.

Cost: As a rare and powerful weapon, it sells for 20-40 million credits.

Nova Plasma Accelerator Pistol

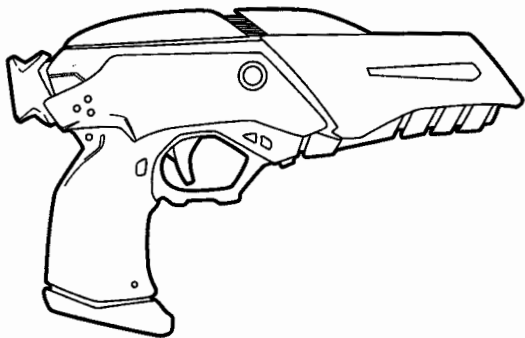
This human-sized pistol packs a wallop normally restricted to cannons, armored vehicles and space fighters!

Weight: 5 pounds (2.25 kg).

Range: 700 feet (213.3 m).

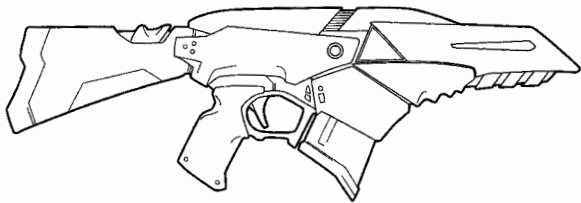
Mega-Damage: 1D4x10 M.D. for a single, light blast. 3D4x10 M.D. for a heavy blast, but the heavy blast takes a few seconds to power up, so it counts as two melee attacks.

Rate of Fire: Single shot only. Each light blast counts as one melee attack, each heavy blast counts as two.



Payload: 18 light blasts or 6 heavy blasts per self-charging E-Clip. Recharges three light blasts (or one heavy) per 30 minutes.

Cost: As a rare and powerful weapon it sells for 1-4 million credits.



Nova Plasma Accelerator Rifle

This human-sized rifle packs a wallop normally restricted to cannons, armored vehicles and space fighters. Characters with a normal P.S. less than 24 are -2 to strike due to the weight and bulk. Characters with greater P.S., Augmented, Robotic or Supernatural P.S. suffer no such penalty.

Weight: 35 pounds (15.8 kg).

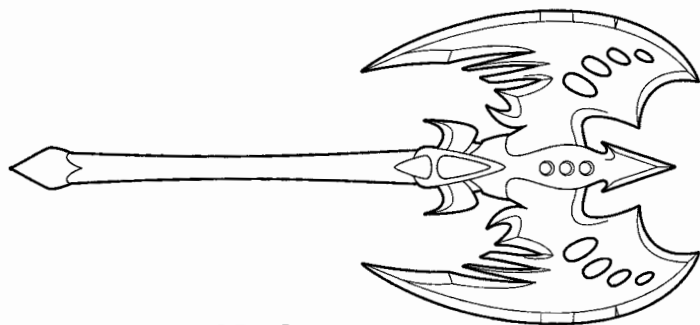
Range: 1,500 feet (457.2 m).

Mega-Damage: 2D4x10 M.D. for a light blast. 3D6x10 M.D. for a heavy blast, but the heavy blast takes a few seconds to power up so it counts as two melee attacks.

Rate of Fire: Single shot only. Each light blast counts as one melee attack, each heavy blast counts as two.

Payload: 36 light blasts or 12 heavy blasts per self-charging E-Clip. Recharges three light blasts (or one heavy) per 30 minutes.

Cost: As a rare and powerful weapon it sells for 4-16 million credits.



Molecular Blades

Dominators created something reminiscent to Vibro-Blades, only better. These blades are super sharp and do not require a high frequency field like Vibro-Blades to operate. It is presumed the blades utilize the same technology that regenerates ship hulls and creates Auto-Armor to make the Molecular Blades M.D.C., and to keep the blades sharp and able to cut through M.D.C. materials.

Range: Melee combat/hand to hand.

Mega-Damage by Blade Type: All blades listed are roughly human-sized.

Molecular Scalpel and Throwing Stars or Spikes – 1D6 M.D.

Molecular Knife/Dagger – 1D6+2 M.D.

Molecular Short Sword or Sickle – 3D6 M.D.

Molecular Large Sword – 5D6 M.D.

Molecular Battle Axe – 6D6 M.D.

Molecular Pole Arm – 6D6 M.D.

Cost & Availability: Rare and coveted by everyone in the Three Galaxies. Cost 1-8 million credits depending on the size and damage the weapon delivers.

Sensor Spoofers

This device resembles a cell phone that can be carried in a pocket or in a pouch on a belt. When activated, the Sensor Spoofers scrambles and negates the combat bonuses of robots, automated weapon systems, combat computers and targeting sensors (even those on power armor or in a vehicle), as well as the targeting system of incoming missiles, directed specifically *at the character* wearing the spoofer. This negates bonuses provided by technology, so that only the enemy's natural ability through physical attributes and training/skills count to strike, parry, disarm, initiative, etc. – *bonuses provided by technology do NOT apply*. This gives the character with the Spoofer an advantage against most technologically advanced enemies. NOT applicable when targeting a vehicle or spacecraft in which the character with the Spoofer is a passenger, as it is the vehicle that is being targeted, not the character.

Range: The wearer.

Mega-Damage: Not applicable. Negates targeting and combat systems.

Cost & Availability: Rare and coveted by everyone in the Three Galaxies. Cost 2-8 million credits.

Dominator Auto-Armor

One of the Dominators' most amazing creations is something known as "Auto-Armor." This armor utilizes nano-technology and the Dominators' near magical process of turning energy into matter. (See the *Regeneration Nodes* for another example of this technology.) The Auto-Armor is carried in a small storage container not much larger than a pack of cigarettes or a large belt buckle (6 inches/15.2 cm) in diameter. In fact, the container is usually worn on the belt, disguised as a belt buckle or worn as a pouch hanging from the belt. Or the armor's container can be strapped to the chest, thigh or upper arm. Inside the buckle or box-like construct (think mobile phone) is a sophisticated set of sensors that monitor the wearer's biological vital signs. When there is a sudden increase in adrenaline, heart rate, and/or respiration, the armor has an automatic response of activating and covering the wearer. Smart metallic fibers the width of fine thread spring out of the storage container as if they had a life of their own and cover the body of the person wearing the armor packet as if to create a thin armature over his frame. Moments later, body armor appears, as if by magic, around the entire body, complete with power source and the usual features common to environmental body armor. The whole process takes one full melee round.

Fifteen seconds after activation, the individual is covered in a full suit of armor. When the armor is no longer needed,

a simple voice command makes the armor dematerialize and the filament fibers retract back into their storage container on the belt. The user may also engage the armor at any time via voice command or the press of a touch point on the container. When engaged, the armor has all the standard features of Mega-Damage body armor, plus the features noted below for the two types of Auto-Armor deployed by the slaves of the Dominators. A different command can make the face plate or helmet seem to melt away to reveal the face of the person inside. The same can be done to reveal one or both hands. Another command puts it all back in place.

By the standard of some civilizations, these two suits of “body armor” would be considered light power armor. By the standard of some people, the armor might be considered magical, but it is not. Auto-Armor cannot be worn over or under other suits of armor.

Light Dominator Auto-Armor

Class: LDAA-1000

Size: One size fits most. The armor is designed to adapt to fit most humanoids from 4 feet (1.2 m) tall to 12 feet (3.6 m) tall.

Weight: 20 pounds (9 kg).

Mobility: Excellent, does not hinder mobility at all. Though a Mega-Damage material, auto-armor has the flexibility of soft leather armor giving it excellent mobility.

M.D.C. by Location:

Head/Helmet – 75

Arms – 50 each

Legs – 100 each

Main Body – 130

Note: If reduced to zero M.D.C., the armor is destroyed. However, if the armor is sent back to its storage container with as few as 10 points of M.D.C. and turned off, it regenerates the armor and M.D.C. the next time it is activated. It must be allowed 12 hours to recharge and reset the armor creation process. Activating it any sooner releases the damaged armor with whatever amount of M.D.C. remained before it was turned off. If turned off with 1-9 M.D.C., it takes 18 hours to recharge and repair the armor to full.

Special Systems or Features: Strength is equal to the user but increased to the Robotic equivalent. The wearer can leap from a standing position one foot (0.3 m) per P.S. attribute point, double with a running start. The armor also doubles the running speed.

Sensor Systems: The suit has a built-in radar that can track and identify 36 targets simultaneously at a range of two miles (3.2 km). The suit also has complete environmental systems, full radio communications and all the basic features of environmental armor.

Combat Features and Bonuses: The suit has a built-in sound dampener to muffle the sounds of explosions and combat for the wearer. It also has a reduced heat signature and does not clank or clunk. Footsteps have the same sound and weight of an ordinary human wearing shoes (see Prowl bonus). +1 on initiative, +1 to strike, parry and dodge, +2 to pull punch and roll with punch impact, +5% to Prowl, Tail and other “stealth” rolls.

Cost & Availability: Rare and coveted by everyone in the Three Galaxies, Light Auto-Armor sells for 8-16 million credits, sometimes more.



Heavy Dominator Auto-Armor

A heavier version of Dominator slave soldier armor. Functions the same as the light armor.

Class: HDAA-9000

Size: One size fits most. The armor is designed to adapt to fit most humanoids from 4 feet (1.2 m) tall to 12 feet (3.6 m) tall.

Weight: 40 pounds (18 kg).

Mobility: Excellent, does not hinder mobility at all. Though a Mega-Damage material, Auto-Armor has the flexibility of soft leather armor giving it excellent mobility.

M.D.C. by Location:

Head/Helmet – 110

Arms – 90 each

Legs – 200 each

Main Body – 250

Note: If reduced to zero M.D.C., the armor is destroyed. However, if the armor is sent back to its storage container with as few as 10 points of M.D.C. and turned off, it regenerates the armor and M.D.C. the next time it is activated. It must be allowed 12 hours to recharge and reset the armor creation process. Activating it any sooner releases the damaged armor with whatever amount of M.D.C. remained before it was turned off. If turned off with 1-9 M.D.C., it takes 18 hours to recharge and repair the armor to full.

Special Systems or Features: Strength is equal to the user's own +10 and is the equivalent of Robotic P.S. (If Supernatural to be-

gin with, it remains unchanged; no bonus to P.S. applies.) The wearer can leap from a standing position 1.5 feet (0.45 m) per P.S. attribute point or triple that with a running start. The armor also doubles the running speed.

Sensor Systems: The suit has a built-in radar that can track and identify 36 targets simultaneously at a range of 4 miles (6.4 km). The suit also has complete environmental systems, full radio communications and all the basic features of environmental armor. Heavy Auto-Armor has Sensors Spoofers that, when activated, negate any bonuses provided by technology, like a missile's guidance system, a combat computer's targeting sensors, and so on. Only an enemy's natural ability to strike, without tech bonuses, applies.

Combat Bonuses: The suit also provides the following bonuses: +3 on initiative, +2 to strike, parry, dodge, +2 to pull punch and roll with punch/fall and +1 additional attack due to the suit's sensors.

Cost & Availability: Rare and coveted by everyone in the Three Galaxies, Heavy Auto-Armor sells for 18-40 million credits, sometimes more.

Weapon Systems:

1. Molecular Blades (2, forearms): These blades are a standard part of the Heavy Armor. They are super sharp and do not require a high frequency field like Vibro-Blades to operate. There is one blade on each forearm which extends and retracts as needed.

Range: Melee combat/hand to hand.

Damage: 3D6 M.D.

Time Dilation Disc

Dominator technology has exceeded many boundaries, and it seems time is one of them. The TDD is a device built into the giant suit of Dominator body armor. With a few simple voice commands, the Time Dilation Disc can create several temporal effects.

Sometimes, this device can be salvaged from a suit of Dominator armor. It is no bigger than a modern-day laptop computer. The trick is finding the device, as it is often imbedded at different locations in the Dominator's armor. The Time Dilation Disc runs on a self-contained power source of temporal energy and will always recharge to full in 24 hours. Each of the effects below can be activated three times per day before the TDD needs time to recharge.

Time Dilation Field: This is a mini-version of the Temporal Shields that are projected around a Dominator Star Fortress. The area of effect is limited to a 10 foot (3 m) radius and can be made to affect everyone around the user, or projected at a specific target/area up to 40 feet (12.2 m) in front of the user; line of sight required. Anyone in the area must make a *saving throw of 17* or higher (use P.E. bonuses to save, the user of the Time Dilation is, himself, +2 to save). Those who fail to save have no perception of time, are tired, confused and disoriented. They are -20% on the performance of skills (-50% if the measurement of time is required), -2 to strike, parry, dodge and lose one melee attack. Those who are affected by the field remain confused and sluggish for the full duration of the effect, which lasts 1D4+3 minutes. Those who make the saving throw are unaffected.

Time Slip: This affects only the user and takes a single action to activate. The effect is the same as the Time Slip spell.

Time Warp Fast Forward: This affects only the user and enables him to jump ahead in time by seven minutes. The character moving forward in time does not physically move, but vanishes from the present and reappears ahead in time by up to seven minutes.

The Gene-Tech

Many believe Gene-Tech are one of the few surviving *Elder Races*. Though they are tall at seven to seven and a half feet (2.1 to 2.2 m), they are not giants, which suggests to some that they are *not* Elders. In fact, there are some who question whether they originate from the Thundercloud Galaxy at all. What many people don't realize is while most of the Elder Races were giants, some were human-size or just a little taller. The Gene-Tech civilization dates back at least several hundred thousand years, perhaps millions, and Dominators dislike and destroy them whenever they are encountered, which suggests Gene-Tech *are*, indeed, Elders. Those who dispute this point to another discrepancy: it is believed Gene-Tech have short lives of 1,200 to 2,200 years. This is contrary to the belief that Elders live for tens of thousands of years and might even be immortal. So if the Gene-Tech are short lived, it seems unlikely they are Elders. Yet there is a possible answer to that conundrum. Some experts have speculated it is only the physical body of the Gene-Tech that lasts for a couple millennia before it must be replaced with a new *clone* body, into which the Gene-Tech transfer their life essence and keep on living. This clone creation and transferal process can be repeated as often as necessary.

The clone-transferal theory is supported by the Bio-Wizards of the Splugorth Kingdom of Desslyth. According to Lord Desslyth's sorcerers, long ago, the Gene-Tech transcended their physical form to become creatures of pure energy and intellect. However, without a physical body to anchor and hold them to our dimension, they slipped into a different realm of existence. To visit and remain in our reality, Gene-Tech must create a physical vessel born in our reality. To do so, they mutate the body of a living being from this dimension, reshape it through advanced genetic engineering to make it look like their bodies of old, and then inhabit it. Advanced Gene-Tech medical sciences and genetic manipulation enable the body to last for 1-2 millennia before it wears out or suffers too much damage to keep going. At that point, the Gene-Tech leaves the current physical body and enters a new one. This can also be done when a Gene-Tech is seriously injured and the body dies. A Gene-Tech without a physical vessel cannot remain in our realm of existence for very long (2D6 days), so as a precautionary measure, Gene-Tech tend to have 50-100 clones of their body stashed away in stasis at two or more locations. Thus, when a new body is needed, one is available. There is no limit to how many times a Gene-Tech changes bodies, provided it is a body specifically designed to hold the being's life essence. A Gene-Tech cannot possess and inhabit another body that is already occupied with a life essence. If a live body without a life essence should happen to be available, a Gene-Tech could inhabit it, but only for 4D4 weeks. That is usually enough time for the Gene-Tech to get to his supply of bodies or transform the genetic structure of the body he is in. However, it is difficult and painful to mutate a body while you occupy it. Plus, the odds of



finding an empty, potential host body are slim to none – hence the reason for ready to go clones. This is the only way they can exist and function in our dimension. The clone-transferal theory comes from the Splugorth Kingdom of Desslyth, so its validity must be held in question. However, Splugorth and their Bio-Wizards know a thing or two about mutating and transforming people. To add further legitimacy, it is said that Desslyth's Bio-Wizards base their theory on a Gene-Tech lair they “acquired”

a few decades ago. Within it, they claim to have found 50 stasis chambers. Eighteen were empty. Thirty-two held identical Gene-Tech clones. Each one an empty shell waiting to be filled.

If the Splugorth's theory is true, some wonder if the Gene-Tech miss their physical bodies and old lives in the Three Galaxies, and so, they return and inhabit flesh and blood automatons that mimic old their physical form. However, the one thing the monsters seem to fear is death, especially when a clone body is not near. This has led some to believe that those who prowl the Megaverse in physical bodies are those too afraid to follow the rest of their people to a new life in a different plane of existence. Instead, they cling to their old bodies and way of life. Either postulation might explain why Gene-Tech are callow and cruel toward other life forms, especially sentient beings, whom they seem to enjoy mutilating and torturing.

Whoever or whatever they are, Gene-Tech can be encountered throughout the Megaverse. They seem most numerous in the Three Galaxies, and in recent years, seem to have taken an interest in the *Anvil Galaxy*. However, the Thundercloud appears to be their primary or favored base of operation. More Gene-Tech can be found here at any given time than in the other two galaxies combined. Likewise, the Thundercloud Galaxy has been the *only location* where full-blown, ancient Gene-Tech lairs and laboratories have been found, some dating back 600,000 years.

The question remains, what are the Gene-Tech up to? As with the Dominators, nobody seems to know much about them. They are masters of genetic engineering and medicine. They seem obsessed with performing transfiguring experimentation on other beings and rearranging the building blocks of life, but to what purpose? From an outsider's perspective, it looks like they do it all for their own enjoyment and sadistic pleasure. Could the answer be as simple as that?

Gene-Tech are also obsessed with secrecy and take great pains to stay out of politics and any sort of limelight. They shun contact with others, except to abduct and experiment on them, and watch the results from afar. Their starship laboratories, though lacking the firepower of even the puniest frigate, can cross vast stellar distances in a matter of seconds, and Gene-Tech stealth and cloaking technologies are unmatched, making it very difficult to find, track or follow them when they don't want to be located. Gene-Tech are solitary beings who often travel and conduct experiments on their own or in pairs and trios, assisted by robots or mutants they've created. To run into a group of 4-6 is rare. To encounter a dozen or more is reason to fear.

Gene-Tech mastery of genetic engineering means they could produce lethal bacteria or viruses that could extinguish life anywhere, yet they choose not to do so. Rather, they seem to enjoy tampering with the genetic matrix of life, paying particular attention to sentient life forms. Gene-Tech are known to abduct people without provocation, alter them in some way, and then return them without so much as a word. As a rule, Gene-Tech “alterations” make the test subject more powerful, even super-human. However, there is always a terrible price to be paid for Gene-Tech augmentation and genetic re-engineering. The subject is almost always turned into a monster. The body changed and deformed. Attractive features erased or marred. It is as if the Gene-Tech believe you can't be both attractive and powerful. For them, power is held in an ugly, warped vessel. Or perhaps the ugliness is intended to be a warning, because Gene-Tech believe that power corrupts and destroys. Which might speak to the fate

of their own civilization. For these reasons, Gene-Tech are also known as *Gene-Demons*. Some in the Three Galaxies whisper that Gene-Tech are descended from *the One* who tried to pervert the *Cosmic Forge* in the First Galactic Era. Which is why they, as a people, pervert and disfigure every creature they touch with their twisted science. Whatever the case may be, it seems clear Gene-Tech have lost their connection to humanity and goodness.

Knowing the Gene-Tech share a demented fondness for, or attraction to, the Thundercloud Galaxy, one cannot help but wonder how many of the galaxy's strange and exotic creatures are the product of deliberate Gene-Tech tampering, experimentation and tomfoolery. The rarer and weirder the creature, the more likely it is to be a Gene-Tech creation. Gene-Tech like variety, so sentient beings with large populations scattered across the galaxy would seem less likely to be their handiwork. But what if the malicious beings were studying how these species responded to different environmental conditions, or their evolution from primitive to advanced civilizations? That *might* explain why you find the same non-space-faring people on a dozen, even hundreds, of different planets with no knowledge the others exist. That would also explain why so many of those same species of people have completely different cultures, beliefs and societies. This might be giving Gene-Tech too much credit, however, as the monsters don't seem to exhibit that level of interest in "lesser beings."

The Gene-Tech presence in the Thundercloud Galaxy is greater than it has been in eons. Is it because the Scramble to colonize the Thundercloud has provided the monsters with new test subjects on thousands of worlds? Could the Gene-Tech be curious about why so many races are coming to the Thundercloud? Or could they be the cause of it? Or are the Gene-Tech just one more participant in the Scramble to the Thundercloud Galaxy?

Note: More information about the Gene-Tech can be found in **Rifts® Dimension Book 5: Anvil Galaxy™**, including the statistics for the Gene-Tech themselves and their Monster-X servants.

Gene-Tech Technology

Gene-Tech Chemical Augmentation

Gene-Tech items are seldom available anywhere in the Three Galaxies. When they are, they cost a fortune. For some reason, however, Gene-Tech augmenting gene-therapy "drugs" have been showing up in unexpected places in and around colonies in the Thundercloud Galaxy. The augmentation drugs described may be found in ruins and, of course, aboard the spacecraft and in the lairs of the Gene-Tech. As of late, however, Gene-Tech drugs have been showing up at trading posts and colonies throughout the Thundercloud, especially among TGE worlds taken from the Splugorth, as well as Splugorth traders and Space Pirates. This suggests either someone has made a big Gene-Tech drug find and is selling it on the open market, or the Gene-Tech are allowing them onto the market, but for what reason? There's a third possibility, as unlikely as it seems, that someone (Lord Desslyth the Younger?) has figured out how to reproduce a number of them.

Addiction: Most Gene-Tech drugs are not addictive in the usual sense, as they do not make the user chemically dependent on them. However, some people become addicted to the sense of power the drugs provide on a temporary basis. This lust for power can lead to a hunger for continued use of the Gene-Tech drugs, or a more permanent means to physical power. This could result

in full bionic conversion, Bio-Wizard or Gene-Tech transmutation, the use of Splugorth symbiotes, pacts with demons and other desperate measures to become *superhuman* no matter the cost. Of course, power addicts are willing to pay many times more for the drugs they desire.

Mind Boost. The chemical booster increases the neural transmitter levels and increases the brain's overall efficiency. The user thinks faster and more clearly, the effects of mental exhaustion are negated and the penalties caused by disease, drugs or mental attacks that cloud the mind are reduced by half. Bonuses include: +1D4+1 to I.Q. attribute number, +2 to Perception Rolls, +1 on initiative, +1 to save vs psionic attacks and all forms of mind control, +2 to save vs possession, and +10% to skill performance, plus mental tasks and skills are done twice as fast as normal, and the character feels confident and sharp. The Mental Boost lasts for 2D6 hours. **Penalties:** At the end of the duration, the user is mentally drained and exhausted for 2D6 hours, during which, skills are performed at -20% and the character is -1 on Perception Rolls. Only I.Q. is boosted and multiple injections have no additional effect, but a subsequent injection after the first dose wears off will continue the "boost" for another 1D6x10 minutes.

Cost: 15,000-30,000 credits per single use.

Psi-Boost. The chemical awakens latent psychic potential and gives the character 1D4+2 Psychic Sensitive or Physical Psionic powers. Player or G.M. may make the selection. The character is also +1 on Perception Rolls and +1 to save vs psionic attack. I.S.P. is M.E. attribute number x2 +6D6 points and recovers as usual for a psychic. Psionic abilities last 3D6 hours. If the drug is used again at another time, the same powers manifest, but the duration is 10% less every time. **Penalties:** The abilities are fun and exciting, there is the nagging headache the entire duration, and the character finds it difficult to focus and concentrate: -2 on initiative and -20% on skill performance. Penalties last for 4D6+12 hours.

Cost: 30,000-40,000 credits per single use.

Minor Healing Booster (MHB). All Healing Boosters are a special concoction of drugs with a minor retro-virus that stimulates the cells to divide faster, accelerating the healing process. Healing Boosters only work on S.D.C. mortal creatures. Each booster has a limited duration and the effects are not cumulative.

The MHB is provided in a small syringe that has four uses. After the initial injection, the recipient heals 1D6 Hit Points and 2D6 S.D.C. within one melee round (15 seconds). For the next 1D6 melee rounds the character continues to heal 1D6 *Hit Points* per round. If Hit Points are fully restored before the duration expires, the character continues to heal 2D6 S.D.C. per melee round. Multiple injections have no cumulative effect; one must wait until the first Healing Booster is finished before taking another one. The shot also provides a +10% bonus to save vs coma/death that lasts 2D6x10 minutes. A character does not have to wait until he is taking Hit Point damage. The serum may be used to heal S.D.C. damage only, and does so automatically if there are no Hit Points that need to be restored. **Note:** When used on Mega-Damage characters, the serum restores 1D4 M.D.C. the first melee round, and nothing more.

Cost: 20,000-35,000 credits per syringe with four uses.

Super Healing Booster (SHB). The Super Healing Booster works just like the minor one, except it is more potent and includes a powerful stimulant and painkiller. It comes in a injectable syringe

with four doses. The initial injection provides an instant restoration of 4D6 Hit Points and 5D6 S.D.C. For the next four minutes (12 melee rounds) the character continues to heal 2D6 *Hit Points* per melee round. If the Hit Points are fully restored before the duration expires, the character continues to heal 4D6 *S.D.C.* per melee round. Multiple injections of the Major Healing Booster do not have a cumulative effect; one must wait until the first Healing Booster is finished before taking another one. The Super Healing Boost provides a +20% bonus to save vs coma/death that lasts for 3D6 hours. **Note:** When used on Mega-Damage characters, the super-serum restores 2D4 M.D.C. the first melee round and an additional 1D4 M.D.C. per melee for 1D4 melee rounds.

Cost: 60,000-100,000 credits for a single syringe with four doses.

Physical Booster Type 1-5. This is a concoction of hormones and genetically engineered super cells. The combination enters the bloodstream and provides an immediate boost to one of the character's physical attributes. P.S., P.P., P.E., P.B. or Spd can be temporarily increased by six points. The physical boost lasts 1D6 hours, after which the rush ends and there is a crash that lasts 2D6 hours.

The crash knocks the wind out of the user and for the duration the boosted attribute(s) are reduced by half. The booster only works on mortal S.D.C. humanoids. There are five types of physical boosters, one type per attribute (P.S., P.P., P.E., P.B. and Spd). Cost: A small syringe that has one dose to increase a single attribute costs 20,000-40,000 credits, and some buyers are willing to pay double for P.S., P.P. and P.E. boosters.

Super-Strength Infuser. This chemical cocktail boosts a mortal's P.S. to Supernatural and turns Hit Points into M.D.C. (2 H.P. = 1 M.D.C.) for 1D4 hours. The physical body can withstand only a small amount of Mega-Damage so additional M.D.C. armor is advised. The damage from punches, kicks and melee weapons is as per the character's infused Supernatural P.S.; the stronger the character, the greater the damage (typically 2D6 M.D.C.)

Cost: 70,000-150,000 credits per dose.

Super-Strength Inhibitor. This chemical cocktail reduces the Supernatural P.S. of Mega-Damage creatures, including supernatural beings, to the equivalent of *Robotic P.S.*, but only reduces the victim's M.D.C. by 10%. Duration is 2D6x10 minutes, half when used on truly powerful Mega-Damage beings such as adult dragons, Dominators/Elder Races, Greater Demons and Demon Lords. Against true deities the duration is a paltry 2D6 melee rounds.

Cost: 200,000-350,000 credits per dose.

Body Booster. This injection temporarily increases a mortal's S.D.C. by 1D4x100 points and Hit Points by 2D4x10. The boost lasts for 1D6 days, after which the person is restored to normal levels. While it is active the temporary S.D.C. and Hit Points heal at a rate of 3D6 points every ten minutes. **Penalties:** At the end of the duration, exhaustion sets in and the user needs 1D6+3 days to recover. During this time reduce S.D.C. and Hit Points by half (cannot recover until the duration ends) and also reduce P.E., Spd, attacks per melee round and combat bonuses by half.

Cost: 75,000-150,000 per dose.

Mega-Body Booster. Any mortal, S.D.C. being injected with this booster becomes a minor Mega-Damage being for 1D6 days. Hit Points and S.D.C. are combined +100 points is added to determine total M.D.C. During this time the body heals damage at a rate of 2D6 M.D.C. per hour. Physical Strength is also boosted

to the Augmented level, but that's all. If the character already had superior strength, keep the greater P.S.

Penalties: At the end of the duration, the user feels weak, exhausted and his whole body aches as if it had been beaten with sticks. It takes 2D6+4 days to recover. During this time, reduce S.D.C. to zero and Hit Points by half. Hit Points and S.D.C. cannot recover until the penalty period ends. Also reduce P.P., P.E., Spd, attacks per melee round and combat bonuses by half. Surviving coma/death during this period is -20%.

Cost: 350,000-600,000 per dose.

Gene-Tech Devices

A variety of unique devices can be found in the active lairs, secret laboratories and spacecraft of Gene-Tech. Likewise, sometimes ancient ruins and space junk and flea markets have a working Gene-Tech device or two. As is the case of the technology of all Elder Races, the science and construction behind these devices are beyond the comprehension of the most advanced civilizations of the Three Galaxies, and they cannot be reverse engineered or reproduced. Furthermore, once taken apart, there is only a 2% chance the item can be properly reassembled to working order. Worst, in most cases (98%), tampering with the device and opening it up causes a unique form of self-destruction: the internal workings turn to dust or fine metal filings.

Gene-Tech Anti-Gravity Flight Vest

This is a simple plated harness slipped over the head to hang over the shoulders and chest. It looks somewhat like high-tech, football shoulder pads with attachments and plug-ins for portable computers, scanners, and other modular features and additions. (The device is depicted on the cover of **Rifts® Dimension Book™ 5: Anvil Galaxy™**.)

The vest is lightweight (five pounds/2.2 kg), provides 30 points of M.D.C. protection to the upper body, has a built-in personal force field generator (150 M.D.C. for the entire body), and enables the wearer to float above the ground. The vest responds to the wearer's thoughts and can hover a few centimeters above the ground or enable the wearer to walk and float in the air. There is no altitude limit and the wearer can even escape the bonds of gravity to rise into outer space, though he'll need an environmental suit to survive the conditions of space. Maximum speed is 50 mph (80 km).

Estimated Value: 1 million credits.

Gene-Tech Auxiliary External Lung

A small, flat backpack with three hoses on each side. When the backpack is hung over the back, the six hoses unfold, wrap halfway around the body, attach themselves and enter the body along and under the rib cage. Once attached, the Auxiliary External Lung does the breathing. It cleans and purifies the air taken in by the body, making the character impervious to toxins, pollution and gas attacks. It also provides enriched oxygen into the blood. This enables the wearer to function in toxic and low quality air environments for an indefinite time period (months). It also enables the wearer to breathe underwater at depths of up to one mile (1.6 km) and in the vacuum of space for up to 18 hours. While worn, the device cleans and purifies the lungs and the blood of the wearer. The device has an M.D.C. of 40 and each tube/hose (6 total) has 8 M.D.C.

Estimated Value: 150,000-300,000 credits.

Gene-Tech Floating Light Sphere

An orb that radiates light from a dim, one candle luminescence to 2,000 candles. Furthermore, touching the Light Sphere with one's bare hand temporarily links it to that individual and the sphere follows the person, hovering at shoulder height or a yard/meter above him. Simple voice commands (lower, higher, left, right) make the Light Sphere readjust its position. Similar commands to increase or decrease the brightness work to modify the intensity of light. While this may appear to be a simple, utilitarian device, when you stop to think about it, the sphere is amazing. It seems to understand all languages, floats silently via what can only be presumed to be some form of anti-gravity (or magic?), it follows simple commands, it follows specific individuals, and the brightness of the light can be adjusted as desired. The size of Floating Light Spheres vary from grapefruit-size to the size of a soccer ball.

Trying to take the mechanism apart for analysis destroys the Light Sphere, leaving some bits of metal and plastic and a small pile of metal filings.

Speed of the Sphere: Hovers stationary and keeps pace with the person using it. Maximum speed is 30 mph (48 km) and can break the bonds of gravity and fly in space.

M.D.C. of the Sphere: 2D6+22 M.D.C.

Estimated Value: 10,000-30,000 credits. **Note:** Some people refuse to use the spheres for fear they have homing devices within them, which they might.

Gene-Tech Secret: Unknown to anyone but the Gene-Tech, the mysterious beings can place their life essence inside a Floating Light Sphere, where it can be kept safe for up to 50 years. This is sometimes done to trick enemies into believing the Gene-Tech is dead. After the enemy has left, the sphere floats over to the hidden cache of clone bodies and the monster enters one to live again (or he may reenter the previous one if it is still viable and was left behind by the enemy). A Gene-Tech may also hide inside a Light Sphere to observe mortals from within one, hearing and seeing everything within a 50 foot (15.2 m) radius of the orb.

Gene-Tech Pacifier (Stun Gun)

A blast from this stun pistol short-circuits the nervous system to stun victims. Humans and most mortal S.D.C. beings need to roll a 16 or higher to save vs stun.

Primary Purpose: Capture and pacification of test subjects.

Weight: 4 pounds (1.8 kg).

Range: 200 feet (61 m).

M.D.C. of the Stun Gun: 40 M.D.C.

Damage, Non-Lethal: A character who does NOT save vs stun has a 01-50% chance of being rendered unconscious for 1D4+4 melee rounds. Victims who maintain consciousness are stunned and suffer the following penalties: Reduce the character's speed and number of attacks per melee round by half, skill performance is -50%, -4 to initiative and Perception Rolls, -8 to strike, parry, and dodge. The accumulative effect on the nervous system of the body being repeatedly stunned extends the duration of the penalties and may lead to unconsciousness; roll for each blast.

Duration of Stun Effects: 2D6+1 melee rounds. The duration of the impairment is increased 2D6+1 melee rounds for every zap from the Pacifier for which the character does not save.

Save vs Stun: 16 or higher; the same as saving against non-lethal poison. The character must save each time he is shot.

A successful save means the character loses initiative and one melee attack/action that round but is otherwise okay.

Note: Gene-Tech stun guns are effective against Mega-Damage beings and people in armor, but they get a bonus to save.

Light Mega-Damage Creatures (under 120 M.D.C.): +1 to save.

Heavy Mega-Damage Creatures (121-800 M.D.C.): +2 to save.

Powerful Mega-Damage Creatures (801-2000 M.D.C.): +3 to save. Not effective against Mega-Damage beings with more than 2000 M.D.C.

Environmental M.D.C. Body Armor: +1 to save.

Light-Medium Power Armor: +2 to save.

Heavy Power Armor and Full Conversion 'Borgs: +3 to save.

Pilot inside a vehicle or protected by a force field: +4 to save.

Rate of Fire: Single shot. Each blast counts as one melee attack.

Payload: 15 shots per self-charging E-Clip. Recharges at a rate of one blast every 10 minutes.

Estimated Value: 80,000-120,000 credits.

Gene-Tech Restoration Machine

The Gene-Tech Restoration Machine is a large device resembling a full body scanner like a CT scanner. The patient lays down on a bed that slides into the machine with the patient onboard. The machine hums and lights start to blink inside as well as across the exterior of the machine. Once inside, the patient hears calming music and remembers seeing a bright, warm light. What seems like a minute later, the patient is released, new and improved. To those waiting outside the machine, even complex surgery, like replacing a heart, takes only 1D6x10 minutes. Simple tasks like removing an arrow and stitching a wound take 1D6 minutes. Huge tasks like growing and attaching a whole new hand or arm take 1D4 hours.

Sound amazing? It is. But remember, this is a Gene-Tech device, which means there is much more going on than meets the eye. The Regenerator Machine maps and records the subject's entire genetic structure and keeps several DNA samples which can be used in future experiments to make clones, body parts and monstrosities. All patients are test subjects to Gene-Tech, so each one is given a genetic marker that the Gene-Tech and others of his kind can recognize later. This is known as being "tagged." The patient's aura may also be slightly (sometimes drastically) altered, and the machine always does something a *little extra* to "tweak" and change the subject. While that "something" is always beneficial and permanent, it changes the character in a fundamental way. (Only intervention by a Gene-Tech can change the character back to the way he or she was.) The change may be physical and disfiguring or not apparent on the surface, but it's there.

G.M. Note: If the medical procedure is minor, you, the Game Master, may elect that nothing happened to change the character, other than his being scanned, sampled, and tagged.

It is also important to note that once the initial "alteration" has been made, subsequent use of a Restoration Machine by the same character does NOT result in more changes or powers. The machine keeps and supports the initial alteration. Even if a different Restoration Machine is used, the "tag" (imprinted on the test subject's DNA) tells any Gene-Tech machine that the character has already undergone an experimental adjustment and to maintain the alteration as set in the previous procedure.

Estimated Value: 50-100 million credits.

Roll on the following table for likely changes, augmentation and penalties, or the G.M. may pick one.

01-05% Enlarged or Strangely Shaped Cranium. Penalties: Reduce P.P., P.B. and Spd attributes by 10%. Abilities: The character is either smarter and more aware (+1D4+3 to I.Q., +1D4 to M.E., +2 to Perception Rolls, and apply any skill bonuses for increased intelligence) or roll for one of the ranges of psychic abilities below.

01-20% Empath: Detect Psionics (6), Empathy (4), Empathic Transmission (6), Meditation (0), Mind Block (4), Presence Sense (4), Sense Evil (2), Sense Magic (3), and Sense Time (2). I.S.P. is M.E. attribute x5.

21-40% Telepath: Clairvoyance (4), Hypnotic Suggestion (6), Meditation (0), Mind Block (4), Mind Block Auto-Defense (special), Mind Bond (10), Telemechanics (10), and Telepathy (4). I.S.P. is M.E. attribute x5.

41-60% Healer: Bio-Manipulation (10), Bio-Regeneration (self; 6), and six Healing powers of choice. I.S.P. is M.E. attribute x6.

61-80% Physical Psychic: Meditation (0) and Telekinetic Force Field (10) or Psychic Body Field (30), plus six Physical powers of choice. I.S.P. is M.E. attribute x5.

81-100% Sensitive Psychic: Mind Bolt (varies), Mind Block (4) and six Sensitive powers of choice. I.S.P. is M.E. attribute x5.

06-10% Strange Hands Type One. They may now be scaly or glow as if there was a light source inside glowing through their skin, or hands might be a different color than the rest of the body or have a strange texture or lumps or barbs, and so on. Reduce P.B. by 10%.

Energy Expulsion: The character can now generate and shoot tongues of flame, heat waves, or some sort of energy beam (the exact type can vary a great deal, from laser beams to plasma). **Range:** 2D6x10 feet (6.1 to 36.6 m) per each subsequent level of experience. Roll the 2D6x10 only one time to determine range. Each new level of experience, increase range the same distance every time. So if 6 was rolled, the character can fire energy 60 feet (18.2 m) per each subsequent level of experience. **Mega-Damage:** 2D6 M.D. to start, +1D6 M.D. per each subsequent level of experience. **Rate of Fire:** Each blast counts as one melee attack. **Penalty:** -5% to skills that require a sensitive touch and dexterity. Furthermore, the hands feel hot to the touch and others touching them feel uncomfortable, hot and sweaty within a minute or two, ice cream and other cold food melt in a fraction of the time, and unless shielded/covered, the hands show up on thermal scans and infrared optics.

11-15% Strange Hands Type Two. Same as above, except these are natural weapon hands like a cat. Again, the hands have a strange appearance, and may look more like the talons of bird, or have an outer shell or exoskeleton on the top of the hand and fingers, while the bottoms feel like leather.

M.D. Weapon Hand: Each hand has 2D6+10 M.D.C. and can be used to parry and grab Mega-Damage weapons. Plus the individual either has small, knife-like claws or sharp spikes that extend and retract at will from the fingertips or from the knuckles (not both). A stabbing or slashing attack does 2D6 M.D. in addition to any applicable punch damage from Robot or Supernatural P.S. **Bonuses:** +1 to parry, +2 to disarm and pull punch. **Penalty:** -10% to skills that require a sensitive touch and dexterity. Furthermore, the hands feel hard and rough, like a piece of tree bark.

16-20% Strange Hands Type Three. The hands and forearms are semi-transparent like the body of a jellyfish. They are cool to the touch and feel disturbingly soft. The strange, translucent hands can touch spirits and ethereal beings, including Astral

Travelers in our physical plane. This enables the character to grab and strike them as if they had physical bodies. The character also has the following psychic abilities, but must make physical contact, touching the person or object, to use his psi-powers on them. **Psychic Powers By Touch:** Bio-Manipulation (10), Commune with Spirits (6), Deaden Pain (4), Deaden Senses (4), Detect Psionics (6), Electrokinetics (varies), Empathy (4), Object Read (6), Restore P.P.E. (4+), See Aura (6), Sense Evil (2), Sense Magic (3), Telepathy (4), Stop Bleeding (4), Telemechanics (10), and Telemechanic Paralysis (20).

21-25% Strange Eyes, Avian. The eyes are a golden color, but large and round and resemble those of a predatory bird.

Keen Eyesight: Can see a rabbit or read a sign from two miles (3.2 km) away, 180 degree peripheral vision, +1 on initiative and +2 to automatic dodge (the act of dodging does not use up a melee attack). Penalties: Reduce M.A. one point, reduce P.B. 20% and -25% to Disguise and undercover skills.

26-30% Strange Eyes, Dead. The eyes are either solid black with a gray or milky white pupil, or white with a grey pupil as if the eyes were covered in cataracts.

See the Unseen: See the Invisible (including spirits, Entities and Astral Travelers), Nightvision 500 feet (152 m), see in the ultra-violet spectrum of light, +1 on Perception Rolls. Penalties: Reduce M.A. two points, reduce P.B. 20% and -10% to disguise and undercover skills.

31-35% Strange Eyes, Feline. The eyes look like those of a cat – almond shaped, green, and with the slit-like pupil of a cat.

Cat Eyes: Nightvision 2,000 feet (610 m) and +1 on Perception Rolls. Penalties: Eyes are sensitive to sunlight; sunglasses or tinted goggles required otherwise reduce attacks per melee by one, initiative to zero, and all other combat bonuses are reduced by half in sunlight or bright lights. -5% to disguise and undercover skills.

36-40% Strange Eyes, Glow. The eyes are one solid color with an energy swirl where the pupil should be. In darkness the eyes glow and they crackle with energy whenever the character is angry or upset. He is not bothered by glare or bright light and can look at the sun without squinting or requiring protection for the eyes.

Energy Expulsion from the Eyes: The character can fire heat waves or some sort of energy beam (the exact type can vary a great deal, from laser beams to plasma) from his eyes. **Range:** 2D6x100+30 feet (70 to 375 m) +50 feet (15.2 m) per each subsequent level of experience. **Mega-Damage:** 2D6 M.D. to start, +1 M.D. per each subsequent level of experience. **Rate of Fire:** Each blast counts as one melee attack. Penalties: Has trouble seeing in dim light and suffers from night blindness in the dark (-10 on all combat rolls) in darkness and can barely see. If he drops his keys or weapon outside at night, he can NOT see it on the ground unless he has some form of luminescence to light the area.

41-45% Extra Pair of Arms and Hands: +1 attack per melee round, +1 on initiative, +2 to parry, entangle and disarm. Penalties: Reduce P.B. by 30%, disguise and undercover skills are -40%, Palming and other skills that require dexterity and where a pair of extra hands come in handy receive a +10% skill bonus.

46-50% Ape Features: The face strongly resembles that of an ape or neanderthal. Ambidextrous (can use both hands with equal skill), +5% skill bonus to skills that require dexterity and climbing, natural acrobat (gets that skill +10%) and an ordinary human P.S. is increased to Augmented. Penalties: Reduce height and P.B. attribute by 20%, increase length of arms by 20%, disguise and undercover skills are -15%.

51-55% Canine Features: The face and eyes strongly resemble that of a dog, the legs are muscular. +1 to Perception Rolls, +2 to M.A. and +2D4 to Spd attributes. Penalty: Disguise and undercover skills are -10%.

56-60% Feline Features: The face and eyes strongly resemble those of a cat, the ears are pointed, body is thin and muscular. Nightvision 100 feet (30.5 m), +1 to P.B., +1D4 to P.P. and Spd attributes. Penalty: Disguise and undercover skills are -10%.

61-65% Mega-Damage Being with Fine, Scaly Skin. 1D6x10+50 M.D.C. Looks normal from a distance, but up close the skin can be seen to be fine scales and no body hair, except for on the head; the character resembles a humanoid lizard. Penalties: Reduce P.B. by 20%, -1 on M.A., and disguise and undercover skills are -20%.

66-70% Mega-Damage Being with Thick, Rhinoceros-like Hide. The character's skin is thick with hard leather-like plates covering all the key locations of the body – forearms, shoulders, chest, stomach, thighs, lower legs, the back of the neck, 2D6x10+70 M.D.C. Penalties: Increase weight 30% and the bulk/thickness of the body by 20%. Reduce P.B. by 20%, and disguise and undercover skills are -40%.

71-75% Mega-Damage Being with Form Fitting Armor. 2D6x10+110 M.D.C. The character looks like a cyborg, with metal skin. Skin color can be a metallic copper, gold, silver or dark grey. Only the bottoms of hands, feet and the face and a few other locations remain the character's natural flesh. Penalties: Increase weight 30%, reduce P.B. and Spd by 10%, -5% on skills that require a delicate touch, and disguise and undercover skills are -40%. **Note:** In the alternative to metal skin, the character may appear to be made of stone or stone-like skin.

76-80% Mega-Damage Being with Insect-Like Exoskeleton. 3D6x10+130 M.D.C. The character's body is covered in a lightweight but hard, smooth, glossy exoskeleton like that of an insect. The color of the exoskeleton can be light to dark green, light to dark blue, red, yellow or light to dark brown. Only the bottoms of hands, feet and the face and a few other locations remain the character's natural flesh. Penalties: Reduce P.B. by 20%, -2 to M.A., -5% on skills that require a delicate touch, and disguise and undercover skills are -70%.

81-85% Looks Fine, but is a Mortal Vampire who Hungers for Blood. The character is a vampire in the sense that he has a taste and desire for humanoid blood and gets a boost whenever he feeds on fresh blood. All physical attributes increase 30% and +1 to attack per melee round whenever the character feeds on two or more pints of *fresh*, warm blood. The "blood boost" lasts for 1D6+2 hours after feeding. Penalties: Tends to be more aggressive and prone to violence all the time. Defensive about his lust for blood and is likely to at least try to keep it a secret from his friends and associates. Fasting from blood is possible, but after three weeks of abstinence, reduce all combat bonuses by half, and they remain at half until the vampire feeds. Blood that has been removed from a body, via any method, for more than one hour loses all value to this vampire. It does not taste good and it does not provide a power boost.

86-90% Looks Fine, but is Mr. Hyde. This character has dual and opposite personalities. Under calm, happy and friendly conditions he is his normal self. Under stressful, tense and combat conditions the character become Mr. Hyde – a personality that is more predatory, aggressive and bloodthirsty. Mr. Hyde is loud, arrogant and highly competitive. He responds to threats and insults with violence. Trick, cheat or embarrass him, and he'll seek

to get even. In combat, Mr. Hyde is ruthless and without mercy (+1 attack per melee, +1 on initiative and +1 to strike); he enjoys fighting and killing. **Note:** If the character was Mr. Hyde-like and aggressive or evil to begin with, his response is the opposite. When under pressure or in combat he is cool, calm and collected, helps others, watches his teammates' backs, and shows mercy to his enemies (+1 attack/action per melee round, +1 on Perception Rolls, +2 to disarm and +3 to pull punch).

91-95% Looks Fine, but is Aquatic in Nature. The eyes are darker with large pupils which make the eyes sensitive to light. The character's fingers and toes have a fine webbed membrane between each, and he finds himself attracted to water. Sailing, swimming and water sports are, all of a sudden, fun and desirable, and being by the water is calming and pleasant. Swimming speed is Spd attribute x4, has gills (as well as lungs). The gills are located in his neck, chest or on the side of the rib cage. The character can breathe underwater indefinitely, survive depths up to two miles (3.2 km), is resistant to cold (half damage), sees clearly in dim light, and has nightvision 300 feet (91.5 m). Penalties: Eyes are sensitive to sunlight; sunglasses or tinted goggles are required, otherwise reduce attacks per melee by one, initiative to zero, and all other combat bonuses are reduced by half in sunlight or bright lights.

96-00% Wings: Roll again to determine type: 01-25% Insect, like a beetle. 26-50% Feathered. 51-75% Thick leather like a dragon. 76-00% Thin, almost transparent leather membrane. +1 to M.A., Spd attribute x12 when flying, +2 to automatic dodge when flying and +1 to strike. Each wing has 1D6x10+60 S.D.C. (M.D.C. if a Mega-Damage creature).

Penalties: Increase weight 30% and reduce running Spd by 50% (takes flight when the character wants to move fast). Disguise and undercover skills are -80%.

Gene-Tech Sleep or Sedation Inducer

A flexible metal headband with three metal studs and a clear gemstone in the front. Eight thick wires that resemble wrapped lengths of hair or dreadlocks one foot (0.3 m) in length, drape down from the back. Place it on the patient's head and it induces sleep within one melee round (15 seconds). More than a relaxed sleep, it induces a state identical to being put under by anesthesia for surgery, but without the use of chemicals.

Estimated Value: 40,000 to 50,000 credits.

Gene-Tech Spectral Monocle

An optical device attached to a headband that is placed around the head, behind the ears with an eyepiece that goes over one eye. The eyepiece automatically adjusts to what the eye is looking at to magnify small details 10x and adjusts to see in a wide spectrum of light, including infrared, ultraviolet, and heat radiation, as well as magic energy and the aura of living beings. Used in surgery, biological studies, repairs and looking for structural flaws in materials and structures.

Estimated Value: 20,000 to 30,000 credits.

Gene-Tech Surgical Gauntlet

A gauntlet style glove that resembles a bionic hand and forearm. The gauntlet fits over the hand and extends two-thirds of the way up the arm. The gauntlet automatically adjusts to the size and shape of the wearer. A wide range of surgical tools and features rise out of the glove as needed.

Estimated Value: 500,000 to one million credits.

Standard features of the Surgical Gauntlet are as follows:

Air Hose: A small hose that fires bursts of air to clean and dry. It is on a thin, folding appendage that has a one foot (0.3 m) reach.

Anesthetizing Touch: An area of the body can be numbed as if a local anesthetic has been applied to feel no pain. This is accomplished by rubbing the area, organ or appendage with the pinky finger in a clockwise, circular motion. The motion starts at the center point and moves out in an expanding circular spiral as indicated by touch (whatever size is required from tiny to large).

Bonuses: The Surgical Gauntlet provides the user with the following bonuses: +5 to Medical Doctor and Paramedic skills, +15% to all Surgery skills and medicine involving surgery. Also adds a +5% bonus to Demolition skills.

Bio-Comp Monitor (2): A pair of contacts can be removed from the bottom of the gauntlet. One looks like a thimble that is placed on the patient's finger, the other looks like a large coin or poker chip that adheres to the skin and is placed on the side of the neck or rib cage. The two contacts transmit all of the patient's vital signs and biological information into the gauntlet, which relays the information simultaneously to any computers within a 100 foot (30.5 m) radius, to a Heads Up Display (HUD) of a Spectral Monocle, or directly to the Gene-Tech's retina.

Camera Appendages (2): For filming and recording surgery and patients' responses.

Cauterization Tool: For sealing wounds and burning off parasites and diseased flesh. Damage: 1 S.D.C. point to 1D4 M.D.

Defibrillator System: A mild electric shock can be induced with the palm of the hand or the two first fingers for the purpose of getting a stopped heart to start beating again. The user of the gauntlet can control the intensity of the jolt with his thoughts. 24 charges are possible before needing a half hour to recharge.

A *stun blast* can also be performed twice per hour. Range: Touch. Damage: Same as the Pacifier stun gun described earlier.

Extendible and Retractable Surgical Scissors: One pair of tiny scissors on a folding appendage that has a one foot (0.3 m) reach. Range: Touch. Damage: 2D4 S.D.C.

Light Appendages (3): There are three small light units on thin, folding appendages. Each has a one foot (0.3 m) reach.

S.D.C. Scalpel Blades (3): Three different sizes and shapes. Suitable for cutting flesh and bone. Range: Touch. Damage: 1D4 to 2D4 S.D.C.

M.D. Scalpel Blades (2): Two different sizes and shapes. Suitable for cutting flesh and bone. Range: Touch. Mega-Damage: 1D4 or 1D6 M.D.

M.D. Scalpel Lasers (2): Two pair, each on a thin, folding appendage that has a one foot (0.3 m) reach. Range: Designed for close surgery, but has a maximum range of 30 feet (9.1 m). Mega-Damage: 1 M.D. point to 2D6 M.D.

M.D. Scraping Fingernail: A long, narrow spoon-like nail, sharp along all edges and used for scraping. The nail can also part down the middle to open and cut like a pair of scissors. Range: Touch. Mega-Damage: 1 M.D. point. Less pressure does S.D.C.

Self-Cleaning and Sanitizing: Can be performed as often as needed. Takes one full melee round (15 seconds).

Suction Tube: On a thin, folding appendage that has a two foot (0.6 m) reach. Blood and fluid suctioned away are atomized when they hit a vaporizing laser unit at the base of the suction on the top of the hand.

M.D. Surgical Drill: A tiny, precision drill on a folding appendage that has a one foot (0.3 m) reach. May be used for dentistry. Range: Touch. Mega-Damage: 1 M.D. point to 1D6 M.D. Can be adjusted to do S.D.C. drilling.

Surgical Forceps/Pliers: A tiny pair of pliers on a folding appendage that has a one foot (0.3 m) reach. May be used for dentistry. Range: Touch.

Zap Rod

A simple wand that resembles a medium-sized flashlight. It is used as a cattle prod to induce test subjects (animal and humanoid) to cooperate, behave and move along.

Weight: One pound (0.45 kg).

Range: Touch.

Mega-Damage and S.D.C. Settings: 1 point to 1D6 points of S.D.C. or M.D. can be delivered to the subject.

Rate of Fire: Each zap counts as one melee attack.

Payload: 90 zaps whether they are S.D.C. or M.D. Self-charging battery that recharges at a rate of one per minute.

Estimated Value: 2,000-4,000 credits.

Bushi Federation

Population in the Thundercloud Galaxy: 3 billion. These numbers have already been included in the Consortium population totals.

Demographics: 92% Oni, 8% Others.

The Bushi Federation is located at the base of the Gaelra Arm, sandwiched between the *Crèche Clouds*, the *Republikan Enklaves*, and the *Hollan Gulf*. It is the home of the Oni – large, red-skinned humanoids renowned for both their martial prowess and astounding advances in the fields of miniaturization and nanotechnology. If they had their way, the Oni would also be a race of isolationists. They believe their culture to be superior to all others in the Three Galaxies, and even though they elected to join the Consortium of Civilized Worlds (CCW), it did not stem from any sense of camaraderie or kinship. Getting the Bushi Federation to become a member of the Consortium of Civilized Worlds (CCW) was a political coup for the Consortium, but for the Oni, it was more of a painful compromise.

Oni History

The story of the Oni people begins many thousands of years ago. In those days, a deific being known as *Ameratsu*, the Goddess of the Sun, arrived on Hoshino, the fifth of six planets orbiting a blue dwarf star in the Thundercloud Galaxy. The Goddess brought the people known as the Oni with her, guiding them through a massive dimensional Rift to their new home. With the protection of their divine patron, the Oni tribes and clans settled down, tamed their new home world, and made successful lives for themselves. It is unknown whether or not the Oni had any kind of culture before the Sun Goddess took them into her care or why she patterned it on the Japanese culture of Earth. (It is quite possible that *Ameratsu* influenced both cultures.)

From the moment of their first arrival in the Thundercloud, the Oni were a feudal society with a rigid caste system, because that was exactly how *Ameratsu* molded them to be. The feudal Japanese



style caste has warriors at the top, craftsmen in the middle, and peasant workers on the bottom. Technology was also at the medieval level, with handcrafted melee weapons and samurai armor. Since their society had been dictated to them by a supreme being, the Oni followed it without question, especially since Ameratsu continued to live on Hoshino and often walked among them. These were simpler times with a medieval level of technology and culture, because that was exactly how Ameratsu molded them to be.

Things might have gone on like that, complacent and unchanging, were it not for the arrival of the *Minions of Splugorth*. Sometime around the year 9000 of the Third Era, an invasion force from the *Kingdom of Desslyth* opened dimensional portals to various locations on Hoshino in an attempt to capture Oni as slaves. The Kingdom of Desslyth, at that time, was near its height, and the Oni were simply the next planet in line to be plundered. The minions expected to find another underdeveloped civilization to overrun, just as they had elsewhere across Oswoe's Arm of the Thundercloud Galaxy. They were in no way prepared to fight a Sun goddess. Ameratsu destroyed the invaders, first blinding them with her countenance and then burning them to ashes with the heat of the sun fired from her hands and eyes as focused beams of destruction. When it was over, the Oni rejoiced, but Ameratsu did not. It is possible the effort of battling the Desslyth invasion force drained her somehow. Or perhaps, she felt it was time for her chosen Oni to stand on their own. Or perhaps she was called to some other, more pressing celestial matter. Regardless of her reasons, Ameratsu made a decision that would impact the lives of the Oni forever: She would leave them.

One must understand the Oni had lived in the presence of their divine mistress for so long that life without her was inconceivable. Everything they had, they owed to her. Everything they knew was because she had taught it to them. Fearing they might turn upon one

another or commit mass suicide, Ameratsu addressed her adopted children, telling them to remain united, grow strong and make her proud. She also elevated their strongest, wisest and most respected warrior and leader, **Kihira**, into a demigod, and anointed him with the title of "Bushi Emperor." Then, she imparted to him her final instructions, and left Hoshino, apparently forever.

As the clans and nations of the Oni watched their deity streak away into the heavens on a wave of solar plasma, Emperor Kihira gathered his five most trusted friends, each a samurai warrior of renown. He prepared an elaborate tea ceremony for them, and served each of them himself. When he had finished, he told them that Ameratsu had given him a gift. In his mind were now stored a thousand years worth of scientific and technological innovation and knowledge, far beyond anything that the Oni could have imagined. Emperor Kihira was to use this knowledge to forge a new era for the Oni, and he asked his samurai friends to help him. The Oni people had to be kept unified under the power of the Emperor, lest they splinter into lesser factions. It was the only way, Ameratsu had said, that they would be safe from future threats from "gaijin."

The names of those five Daimyo are synonymous with Oni history and the founding of the **Bushi Federation**. They were *Yinshazi the Secretive*, *Tokuken the Outspoken*, *Wamori the Pious*, *Nishisa the Fearless*, and *Zawamori the Invincible*. Thanks to secrets given to Kihira by Ameratsu, they too would enjoy extended lives, though nowhere as long as the Emperor. Together they kept their people unified, introduced science and technology, and began to build an empire. The introduction of science created a new caste in the Bushi civilization, that of the *Tsukurite*, or "builder," a position second only to the warrior. In a remark-

ably short period of time, the Oni learned and mastered biology, chemistry, physics, and engineering, among other sciences.

When their technology enabled them to extend their reach to the stars, the Emperor ordered the construction of massive spacecraft with suspended animation chambers and a space fleet. When the ships and fleet were ready, Emperor Kihira called forth his five Daimyo to reveal yet another stage in the grand plan of Ameratsu: It was time to go out into the cosmos just as Ameratsu had done, and bring the Bushi civilization to new worlds. As instructed by Ameratsu to Kihira, Zawamori would stay behind to serve as Shogun and Protector of the Oni home world, Hoshino. The other four generals, placed in special “coffins” (suspended animation chambers), would each take 1,000 chosen men and women and head for the stars. All would sleep for years until their starships arrived at new habitable worlds within the Thundercloud Galaxy. On that fateful day, each of the four Daimyos would establish his own planetary kingdom and rule that world as he saw fit as part of a larger Bushi empire. Yinshazi, Tokuken, Wamori, and Nishisa each took their one thousand and traveled out into deep space. After a century, they each discovered a habitable planet within a radius of twenty light-years, and the *Bushi Federation* was born.

Gaijin and Hyu-man

There are two very important words in the Oni language: *gaijin* and *hyu-man*. Each of these words has, in one way or another, shaped their culture, as they reflect the Oni’s sense of racial superiority and instill in them an apprehension and disdain for outsiders in general, and humans in particular.

Gaijin means “foreigner” – “barbarian foreigner” to be more exact. Until the arrival of the Splugorth Minions from the Kingdom of Desslyth, the word did not exist in the Oni vocabulary. It was Ameratsu who first used it to describe the Minions of Splugorth invading Hoshino as she incinerated them. While the translation of *gaijin* means “foreigner,” it has come to have the broader meanings of “barbarian outsider” and “anyone not Oni.” To be called a *gaijin* is an insult and often used as a curse word as there is nothing lower and less honorable than a *gaijin* – except, perhaps, a *hyu-man*.

Hyu-man is the collective name for the Goblins of Oni folklore. According to legend and fairy tales, the *hyu-man* (Goblins) are nefarious, clumsy and ugly, demonic creatures with a crafty intelligence and knack for causing trouble. *Hyu-mans* can not find a way to live in harmony with nature, so they are constantly at odds with it, and fight to dominate and control it. *Hyu-mans* are said to bring bad luck and strife wherever they go, thus, once a year the Oni hold an elaborate cleansing festival designed to drive any *hyu-man* spirits out of their homes and communities. Unusual weather and natural disasters are still blamed on the Goblins to this day, and when Oni children play tag, the one who is “it” is called the “*hyu-man*.” When translated into Trade Four, this word becomes “humans” and with it comes the stigma of the Goblin legends.

Close Encounters

Over time, rumors about an advanced civilization on the edge of Oswoe’s Arm of the Thundercloud Galaxy began to surface. According to stories told by Spacers and Pirates, these people wanted only to be left alone. Approach one of their wedge-shaped spacecraft, and the pilot would either take evasive action, outpace the approaching vessel and vanish, or he’d fire on the vessel, crippling

it. For centuries the exact identity of this civilization was unknown, and even after the names *Bushi Federation* and *Oni* were learned, the locations of the worlds in the Federation remained a secret.

The Noro were the first to locate and make contact with Hoshino, the home world of the Bushi Federation. Three centuries after the Splugorth attack and Ameratsu’s departure, a *Noro delegation* managed to get permission to land and have an audience with the Federation’s Shogun. It was in the early decades of the Great War, and the delegation was one among hundreds of diplomatic teams combining the Three Galaxies in search of allies to stand against the Kreeghor’s Transgalactic Empire (TGE). The Noro diplomats had reached an agreement with the Catyr Commonwealth, and it was from the Catyr they learned about the mysterious and reclusive **Bushi Federation**. Among the stories about the Bushi were tales of advanced technology, space fighters, and the combat prowess of their warriors. All would be welcomed assets in the war with the TGE.

The Noro leading the diplomatic team was an accomplished ambassador, and knew when to speak passionately, when to flatter, and when to shut up. In this case, he had to juggle all three. The Oni, he soon discovered, were indeed fine warriors, perhaps more skilled than the notorious Wulfen, but they were also xenophobes and isolationists. They treated him and his team in a snide, condescending manner that smacked of Oni superiority and contempt for “*gaijin*,” as they called him and his teammates. He hoped their attitude was a defense mechanism to conceal their own fear and insecurity toward outsiders.

Since the Emperor was considered divine, the ambassador wasn’t allowed to see him. Instead, he presented his case to the Shogun of Hoshino. The diplomat described the Kreeghor and their past as Minions of Splugorth. He told the Shogun about the Kreeghor’s desire to conquer and dominate the Three Galaxies, and he subtly implied that if the Oni did not join the newly formed Consortium of Civilized Worlds, that they might one day find themselves under attack by the Transgalactic Empire (TGE). By joining the CCW, he explained, the Bushi Federation would have powerful allies to stand with against the monstrous invaders. He also told the Shogun that without the great warriors of the Oni on their side, the Consortium’s cause might be doomed to failure and the TGE could become unstoppable.

The Shogun listened in silence, and then replied that if the *gaijin* wanted to destroy themselves, who was he to stop them? The Noro ambassador returned to his starship, and flew back towards Oswoe’s Arm, feeling that his argument had made no impact at all. He was correct. The Oni would maintain their self-imposed isolation from the rest of the universe for hundreds of years. The Bushi Federation would remain free of *gaijin* entanglement. That meant no trade, no alliances, and no conflicts.

As they had promised to the Shogun of Hoshino, the Noro did not disclose the location of the Bushi Federation’s home world, and for a time, the Oni were forgotten by the people of the Three Galaxies, preoccupied with the Great War and the restructuring of the political landscape that followed. The TGE and the Great War never reached the Bushi Federation, and the Oni continued to live a happy life of quiet isolation.

Then came the Scramble. As more and more explorers mapped the Thundercloud Galaxy and settlers and space-faring civilizations rushed to claim as many worlds and resources as they could, the stories about the Oni began to circulate. It had been centuries since anyone had even flown a ship into Oni space, let alone walked on one of their five worlds or spoken with one, so for a long

time, stories about a secret alien civilization were little more than rumors and conjecture. Some people even began to fancy the Bushi Federation as a kind of lost civilization filled with riches and ultra-technology they wished they could get their hands on.

In 9574 TE, a Noro delegation representing the CCW arrived in six starships on the outskirts of the Bushi Federation and asked to engage in trade talks. They were refused. Years later, several Iborian missionaries were arrested and detained by the Oni before being sent on their way. The Kreeghor first tried to make contact with the Oni in 9640 TE. Their offers were declined, as were all others to follow.

Someone, somewhere, should have taken the hint, but the more the Bushi Federation resisted contact with the outside world, the more desperate the outside world grew to get the Federation to join them. By now, the super powers were obsessed with the Bushi Federation, mostly because they couldn't have it. The CCW became convinced that disaster was sure to follow should the Federation's super-technology fall into the TGE's possession. As a result, CCW representatives made one overture after another to win their allegiance, but to no avail. The TGE made a few efforts as well, but never take rejection well, and quickly decided they didn't need the Oni and went back to conquering worlds held by the Splugorth Kingdom of Desslyth.

Though isolationists by choice, the Oni were not blind to, nor ignorant of, the goings-on of other civilizations around them. From afar, they studied the humans, Noro and other members of the CCW, as well as the Transgalactic Empire and other galactic powers. Studied them and learned about their cultures, at least on a fundamental level. The Bushi Federation was not happy about the Scramble and hated that so many gaijin were invading their once quiet corner of the universe. The Goddess Ameratsu had foreseen and warned of such a day, saying to the Immortal Emperor Kihira that a day would come when a gathering darkness would threaten the Three Galaxies, and the Oni could no longer hide from the universe. When that time came, the Oni would have to make a choice between two opposing sides, both of whom coveted them as their ally.

One might think a race of beings such as the Kreeghor, who managed to break free from Splugorth slavery and become a galactic power liberating worlds from their evil masters, would appeal to the Oni. On the contrary, the Oni look upon the Kreeghor as a pale and dangerous reflection of the Splugorth. The Oni recognize the Kreeghor's appetite, and know it is only a matter of time before the TGE looks to civilizations other than those of the Splugorth to conquer. This makes the TGE's acquisition of so many worlds in the Thundercloud a reason for concern. The Oni also realize that the aggressive Kreeghor could never accept them as equals, let alone as their superiors – and the Oni see themselves as superior to the Kreeghor in every way.

That makes the CCW the lesser of two evils.

In 9970 TE, the Bushi Federation joined the Consortium. The reasons were simple. The CCW would accept the Oni, more or less, for who they were. They would not force the Bushi Federation to change its ways (at least mostly), and the Bushi would be a shining star among the lesser civilizations of the Consortium. (Which, to their thinking, is all of them.) Besides, the Oni find it amusing that “hyu-mans” have come to them on their knees begging for their help and association. The arrogant people that they are, the Bushi Federation intends to profit greatly from this “alliance.” As a civilization that prides itself as a feudal-style military deploying some of the greatest warriors, weapons and

spacecraft in the Three Galaxies, the Oni rather enjoy proving themselves superior combatants against all comers, especially when these conflicts all take place far from the Bushi Federation. Though the Oni had anticipated the next big conflict to be with the Kreeghor of the TGE, they now recognize the *Demon Stars* and *demon invasion fleet* as the immediate threat, and the darkness foretold by Ameratsu.

Bushi Technology

For a race whose technological advancement is only a millennium old, the Oni have an astounding level of technology, and are far ahead the tri-galactic curve in many areas. Foremost is their mastery of nanotech: the construction of machines from the atomic level up. As a result, the technology of the Bushi Federation is arguably the best in the Three Galaxies, only Naruni Enterprises and a couple others come close, and only the tech of the Prometheans on Phase World may surpass them. Bushi Industries offers some of the most coveted bionics, power armor, weapons, force fields, and spaceships on the market.

For all their success in nanotech (which powers their advanced weaponry, cybernetics, bionics, and everyday manufacturing), the Oni are completely ignorant in two major fields: those of genetics and gravitonics. Perhaps because they believe that they are the pinnacle of intelligence in the Three Galaxies, the Oni never delved into the secrets of cellular structure. Why fix what isn't broken, after all? Until they became Consortium members, they couldn't even conceive of the structure of DNA, let alone the deliberate altering of it. Likewise, they had no idea that by manipulating gravitonic wavelengths, vessels could get around the speed of light barrier. The Oni had settled their four extra-solar worlds the hard way, by sending thousands of hibernating colonists on one-way, sub-light journeys. This has limited both their influence and territory, as well as their ability to strike out against other civilizations.

Today, the Oni now plan to smother their competitors and dominate the weapons market. To that end, Bushi Industries offers products that are better, smaller, faster, and cheaper than those made by infamous conglomerates like Naruni Enterprises, Wolfpack Weapons, and Galactic Armory. In time, the Bushi Federation expects to secure a monopoly in military hardware as well as other vital markets. When that happens, the Consortium will be utterly dependant on Oni technology to keep it running, and the Bushi Federation will have quietly and methodically conquered the CCW without firing a shot.

Bushi Home World & Notes

Hoshino, the Celestial Home World. From its lapis lazuli seas, to its mauve skies, Hoshino is a world of fierce beauty (much like its inhabitants). Churning oceans cover two-thirds of its surface. Seven mountainous continents take up the rest. Hoshino has one season, a kind of eternal autumn. Snow covers large parts of the mountains all year round and the poles are choked with ice. The planet has one moon, Koto, a lifeless ball of rock 1,100 miles (1,760 km) in diameter. Ten billion Oni live on the Celestial Home World, and the majority of them live in and around *Nakazen*, the capital. This is the center of the Bushi Federation and one of the most densely populated cities in the Thundercloud Galaxy. It is filled with skyscrapers, gigantic factories, even a space elevator! It is a high-tech urban center much like

many others. What sets Nakazen apart is that it is surrounded by acres of pristine farmland in which toil millions of peasants. The caste system of the Bushi Federation has created a distinct split between the haves, who live in an ultra-modern fashion, and the have-nots, who still have a largely medieval level of existence.

South of the capital, on the **Island of Iwahon**, the Imperial Palace is under renovation. The entire city-sized building is being refurbished and expanded by peasant workers using traditional methods. From the air, the construction site looks like a small mountain of bamboo scaffolding over which millions of Oni workers scramble. It is scheduled for completion sometime within the next decade. Even under renovation, it is the home of the *Immortal Emperor Kihira*. Yes, this is the same man empowered by Ameratsu centuries ago. While the five Daimyo of today are the descendants of his original five generals, the Emperor, himself, is the same man turned into demigod. While he is referred as the "Immortal" Emperor, it is unlikely he is truly immortal. Though a little over 1,000 years old, Kihira looks to be a healthy man in his seventies or eighties (it is rumored in some circles that the Emperor ages the equivalent of 10 years for every passing century). These days he is more of a living god and religious icon that unites and inspires the people than an actual global leader. All the day-to-day matters of business, economy and politics are left to the Bushi Federation Shogun and the four Daimyo of the five main worlds.

The entire planet of Hoshino is considered *sacred ground*, and the people are loath to have gaijin or hyu-mans walk upon it. Therefore, most trade and other business is conducted in an orbiting asteroid, which was dragged in from the outer system, hollowed out and turned into a space station and visitors' port of call. The asteroid station can accommodate ten million people at a time and has 80 active docking ports. The space elevator connects the asteroid to the major manufacturing complexes in Nakazen, so those who come to buy Bushido Industries products directly from the source have no need to actually set foot on Hoshino. Only very special, invited guests are ever allowed more than an orbital view of the *Celestial Home World*.

Yinshazi System. The Bushi Federation has five main worlds: the home world and the four worlds founded by the four Daimyo. Each of the five worlds is fully developed and populated by the Oni. In addition, the Bushi Federation has other holdings claimed by the five primary worlds. The entire Yinshazi solar system was originally claimed and developed by Daimyo Yinshazi the Secretive. It contains several monasteries for the training of Cyberai and ninja, a small colony, a combat training planet and a mining facility. The entire system is monitored by an extensive web of sensor pods, to the point that no uninvited vessel has a prayer of entering the solar system without being noticed and observed. A full breakdown of the Yinshazi system can be found in **Rifts® Dimension Book Six: Three Galaxies**, page 50.

Bushi Foreign Affairs

The Consortium of Civilized Worlds. All members of the CCW are inferior to the Oni, but an alliance with them seemed like the smart thing to do.

The Oni remain xenophobic and prefer to limit their direct contact with the rest of the people of the Three Galaxies. They joined the CCW for three main reasons: **1)** To protect the Federation in order to keep their people safe. **2)** To keep the Scramble out of what the Bushi Federation considers the sectors of space

that belong to it. **3)** To, over time, become the dominant power in the CCW.

It didn't hurt that the CCW strokes the Oni ego by acknowledging them for having superior technology and wanting the Bushi Federation to supply them with that coveted tech. This reinforces the Oni's overblown sense of importance and superiority over all others. As a strategically important member of the CCW, the Bushi Federation carries more weight than some civilizations that have been members of the Consortium for hundreds of years. For now, the Bushi Federation is the darling of the CCW and can throw its weight around to get almost anything it wants. And that's the way the Oni like it. What the Oni are not anticipating is that things change.

Transgalactic Empire. The Bushi Federation is not impressed by these "gaijin" and wants nothing to do with them. The Oni hope that joining the CCW will keep the TGE from causing any trouble in Bushi space.

Kingdom of Desslyth. The Bushi Federation sees them as the fading power they are, but also has a lingering animosity for the Kingdom. It was the Kingdom of Desslyth who invaded the Oni home world 1,000 years ago, and it was after that attack that the sun goddess left the Oni. Thus, most Oni blame the Splugorth (all Splugorth and their Minions) for the loss of Ameratsu. While the Oni do not personally seek the Kingdom's destruction, they are happy to see it happening. If given the chance to destroy Lord Desslyth the Elder or the Younger, the Oni Shogun and Daimyo would be hard-pressed to resist the urge to do so.

Prides of Shing. The Bushi have heard of rumors of the feline magic users, but have never had any encounter with them.

The Republikan Enklaves. No diplomatic relations. As far as the Bushi Federation is concerned, the Gulgans are brutish wannabes who may need to be shown their place. They are the epitome of the word "gaijin."

Denlech Settlers. The Bushi have no contact with the Denlech and consider them weirdos. As for the whole squabble over the right to the Killaryte on the Denlech's colony world, the matter seems pretty cut and dried to the Oni. Either leave these hyu-mans alone and find Killaryte elsewhere, or take it from the Denlech. They are a primitive people who can't fight back, so what's the problem? Just like gaijin to make a simple matter into something ridiculous and complex.

Exiles. These mysterious aliens are a new, unknown quantity in the Thundercloud to be watched with great concern.

Trensik Mercenaries. More gaijin not to be trusted.

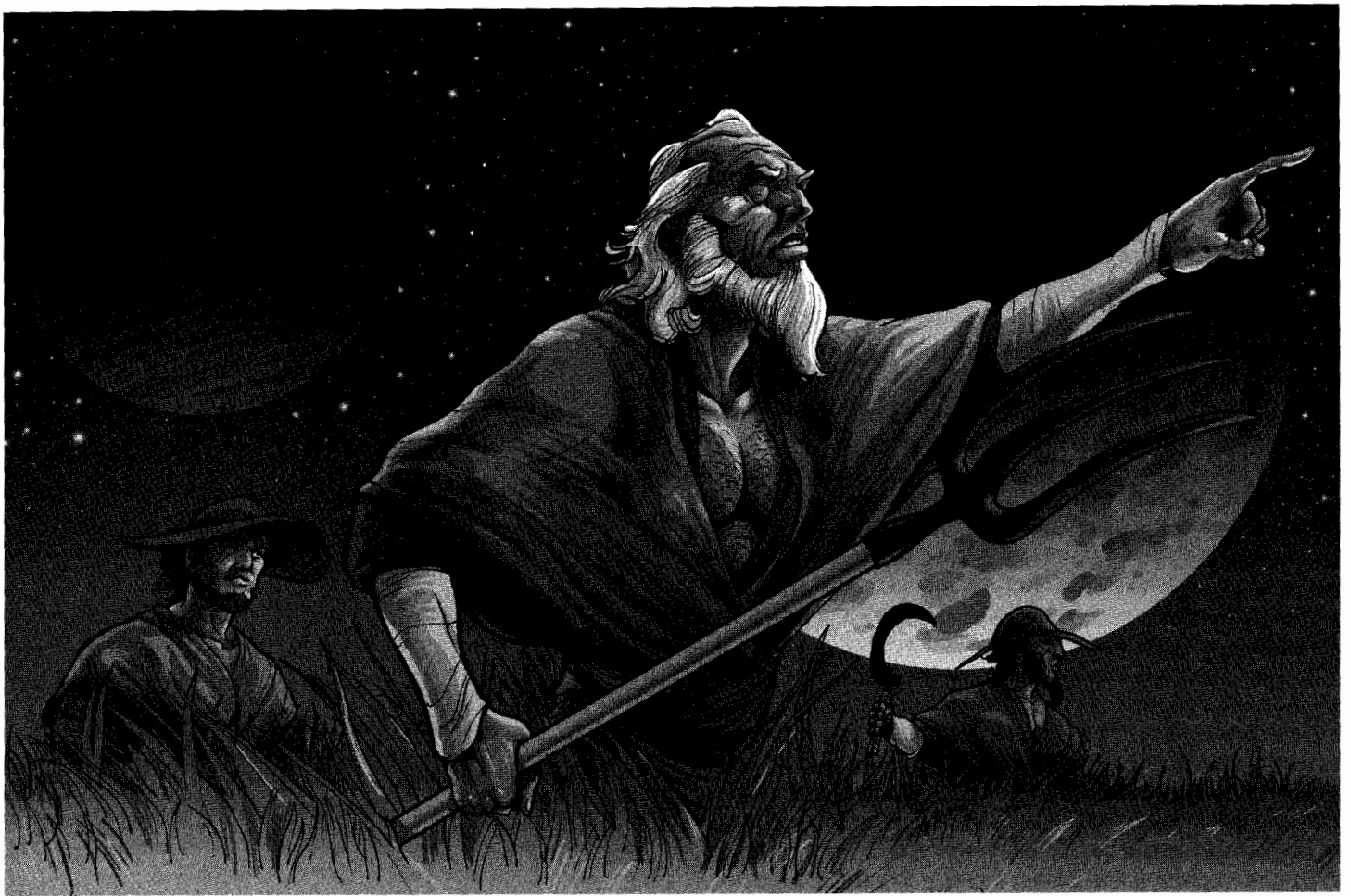
UWW Thundercloud Possessions. A potential client for Bushi Industries, nothing more.

Denlech Settlers

Population in the Thundercloud Galaxy: Unknown. 20 million Denlech are known to exist on the planet Denlar. The other five groups of settlers remain "lost," whereabouts and population numbers unknown.

Demographics: 100% Denlech humans.

Denlar Overview: The Denlech's adopted world is called *Denlar*. It is rather small, about the size of Terra Prime. Half of its surface is covered by deep, cold oceans. The remainder is taken up by one central landmass and some scattered groupings of islands. The



main continent, which has never been named, is roughly 22 million square miles in size (56 million square kilometers). The inhabited areas of the planet have a temperate climate, with terrain that ranges from forest to grassy plains to scrublands and mountains. The far northern reaches are cold, snow and ice covered deserts.

The Denlech have located their communities where the soil is fertile for a wide range of crops, and neighboring fauna offers excellent fishing and game hunting. A local species of tree called the Madaza can be found all across the planet, even on the plains. The large leaves of the Madaza can be used as vegetables, and its fruit, which grows as large as a grapefruit, is extremely nutritious.

A tale of individuality

The Denlech's story begins one thousand years ago with the **Automaton War** – a historic conflict in which a runaway artificial intelligence and legions of robots conquered Terra Prime and seemed on the verge of enslaving all of humankind within the *Human Alliance*. It was a fight that spanned two centuries and ravaged many worlds and colonies.

When the A.I. and robots were defeated, it was not a surprise that a huge percentage of people in the Human Alliance suffered from anxiety and a deep-seated distrust of machines, particularly robots and artificial intelligences. With time, therapy and new safeguards put into place to prevent something like the Automaton Wars from ever happening again, most people returned to their old way of life. Though leery of them, most accepted the use of basic computers, the datasphere and high-technology. A small percentage, however, continued to fear and loathe machines.

They lobbied to dismantle human civilization and re-design it without such reliance upon machines.

They called themselves the *Denlech Movement*, named after Doctor Derek Denlech, a man who had warned the Human Alliance about flaws and disturbing behavioral patterns in the super-computer that would, a decade later, go wild and start the Automaton War. Doctor Denlech also spoke out about humanity's over-dependence on machines and about ways to "soften" that dependency. He and others like him worried that humankind was becoming fat, lazy, and crippled by technology. He pointed out that every world in the Human Alliance was surrounded by a swirling bubble of information called a datasphere, and all the dataspheres were connected to each other through a tachyon network. Implanted headjacks and cerebral microprocessors had long ago replaced actual books and most other forms of communication. Basic skills such as writing by hand, doing long division, designing and building objects from scratch, making clothing, building a fire, and many other fundamental abilities had been lost. Physical labor and difficult tasks were taken care of by robots and managed by artificial intelligence, leaving the people with nothing to do but make babies and entertain themselves. The technology that had helped to build and advance human society now dominated it.

The Denlech Movement advocated a "return to basics." To re-discover oneself, nature and the world around them. The hardcore of the movement was five million passionate supporters, but their words and fears appealed to hundreds of millions of people who held on to a fear and apprehension about artificial intelligence, robots and unchecked advances in technology. They lobbied for sweeping reforms, mandatory safeguards, and a return to lower

levels of technology for the welfare of humanity. To the Denlech, the Automaton War was a wake-up call. A call to return to a simpler and safer way of life.

At first, the movement had tremendous support, and it was instrumental in passing a number of important laws and protocols to protect humanity in the areas of artificial intelligence, robots and advanced technologies. Though pleased by these laws, the people in the Denlech Movement saw them as only the beginning – baby steps to protect and reinvent human civilization. As the Denlech Movement radicalized and began demanding sweeping changes, they lobbied the legislature and launched media campaigns to educate the public about the “evils of technology.” The Denlech couldn’t believe how fast people were willing to forgive past mistakes and return to their lives and technology that had carried them to the brink of destruction. With each subsequent legislative defeat or the passage of laws without teeth, the Denlech became frustrated, then angry. The angrier the Denlech became, the louder and more extreme they got. This extremism cost them the sympathy of the hundreds of millions of fringe supporters, and before long, members of the entire Denlech Movement were labeled fanatics and techno-phobes. Such harsh labels were hurtful to the Denlech, but not an unfair characterization.

Some of their ideas were good, such as many advanced ideas for minimizing pollution and developing power systems and machinery that had little to no carbon emissions. The Denlech presented amazing plans for building communities that conformed to nature and became part of a living environment, and they spoke of a utopian society. The Denlech Movement imagined advanced hydroponic gardens to produce high-yield crops, and living in sprawling rural communities. They encouraged getting back in touch with nature, the use of riding animals, bicycles and walking as primary modes of transportation, clean magnetic rail systems for mass transportation, solar power and other “natural” methods of producing energy. This alone, the Denlech Movement insisted, showed they were not anti-technology, but against thoughtless industry and the reckless advancement of tech. The members were, of course, completely opposed to computers and robots, but they argued their absence would provide work and purpose for humans.

A growing number of Denlech talked about taking civilization back to the pre-Industrial era. They advocated completely forsaking advanced computers, space travel, life in mega-cities, and the tachyon network. Their plan was to use their current heavy manufacturing to create space arks to carry people to new worlds to be colonized with low-tech communities. Back on the old worlds, as the population became smaller due to the colonization of other planets, they suggested abandoning and tearing down the mega-cities and making them into agrarian communities. The Denlech insisted returning to a simpler, “more natural” life as farmers and craftsmen, and giving up high-technology and dependence on machines was the only way to insure human survival and spiritual rebirth.

There was just one little problem with the Denlech Utopia, nobody wanted it. Few wanted to give up their cozy, data-filled technological lives. The majority of people would rather live with technology that scared them than give up the easy and comfortable life they enjoyed. They didn’t mind the idea of walking, exercise or living in harmony with nature, but they didn’t want to give up city life, robot labor, computers, the datasphere, the tachyon network or space travel. In short order, the Denlech Movement found itself alone and rejected.

After a few decades of futile politics, the members of the movement realized nothing was going to change unless they led the way. Thus was born the **Denlech Paradise Reclamation Project**: An ambitious plan to carry 4.4 million Denlech to the stars, where they would start new utopian colonies on alien worlds within the Thundercloud Galaxy. The main reasons the Thundercloud was chosen were: **1.** Nobody, at the time, was colonizing it. The Thundercloud Galaxy had a long history of violence, destruction, and weird phenomena that made it an ominous and frightening place people avoided. **2.** It was truly a new, unexplored frontier (at least for the people of the Human Alliance). **3.** The Denlech wanted to get as far away from the corrupting influence of technology as they could.

Though many scoffed at the notion, a few years later, the Denlech were heading for the stars to colonize brave new worlds in the name of humanity. Their departure was considered pure folly, and covered with great media fanfare. To most people’s surprise, the Denlech followed the beat of their own drummer and were determined to realize their dream of a better life without reliance on robots, dataspheres or the burden of overwhelming technology.

The 4.4 million Denlech had targeted a half dozen worlds to settle. They would divide their forces into several groups, each to settle a different world. Once the Denlech settlers reached their destination, they all had the same protocols and procedures. The Denlech were not techno-phobic as many believed, and the first thing they did upon entering the orbit of a chosen planet was to place a number of multi-purpose satellites in orbit. The satellites would be used to maintain communications between each of the colonies on the planet as well as provide data to predict the weather, monitor storms, provide basic global positioning information, and other peaceful uses for satellites. No satellite had any weapon systems and there was no datasphere. Furthermore, only select members of the Denlech were required to access the satellites and their data.

Before landing, the small armada of spacecraft divided into six designated groups of settlers. Each group had the task of starting a colony on the same world in hopes of increasing the overall odds for success. The idea was, if one or two colonies failed or met with destruction, hopefully the others would survive.

Upon landing, the Denlech would establish a base colony, build habitats for the colonists, establish solar power systems and a defensive perimeter. Using satellite images and information combined with on the ground exploration, a permanent colony site would be selected and construction of the permanent site begun immediately. All this happened very quickly, in a matter of months.

The initial landing zone became a community known as **Home Field**, and was turned into the manufacturing center of the new colonies. Half the spaceships the Denlech settlers arrived on were turned into mini-high-tech centers of communication and manufacturing. The other half of the spacecraft were camouflaged and kept for future space operations, such as maintenance and repair of satellites, rescue operations, travel to other colonies in case of emergency, and, if necessary, to engage space travelers. Manufacturing capabilities of Home Field were limited to the construction of building materials, tools, containers, and resources such as laboratories, medical facilities, water purification, and similar.

As the colony grew and expanded, the vast majority of Denlech lived simple lives as farmers, craftsmen and naturalists. They use hydroponics and other advanced farming techniques, raised animals, and lived in homes and built communities that conformed to

and complimented their environment. As a result, different Denlech communities may look very different from each other, as each utilized the resources and environment available to them. At one point, the Denlech had planned on bringing livestock and cattle with them to their new paradise, but decided against it because the ecological impact could be disastrous to the indigenous flora and fauna, as well as the environment. Though it was a risky proposition, the Denlech decided they would be able to find and cultivate native animals for livestock, pets and beasts of burden. And they did. The settlers drew the line at crops, however, and though they planned to incorporate the edible vegetation and wildlife of their new home into their diet, they brought seeds for a wide range of food staples, from grains and vegetables to fruits and nuts.

The only world *known* to be inhabited by the Denlech is the planet **Denlar**, located in the tip of Oswoe's Arm. Life on the frontier world would be hard. Their low-tech society and hard work in the fields meant a much higher mortality rate and a shorter life span than the advanced civilization they had left behind. All that, however, was to be expected. All that mattered was the Denlech were living their dream and life was good. If there was any sorrow among these stalwart people, it was that once landed, the settlers would have no means of tracking or staying in contact with the other Denlech colonization groups. Thus, they would never know if the other groups reached their colony planets or whether they lived or died.

From the landing point, the Denlech settlers slowly but surely spread out across the land and prospered. They maintained a simple life built largely around farming. They used select bits of "safe" technology to make their lives a bit better, and built their vision of a perfect, low-tech society.

For the next four centuries, the Denlech lived in complete isolation, cut off from the advanced civilization they had known in the Human Alliance. While the first generation or two spoke of their home world, their past, the Human Alliance and the Automaton War, future generations of Denlech lost any real sense of connection to humanity in the Human Alliance (later to become the CCW). They were quite happy and content with their lives, and considered Denlar their home. Big on education, knowledge and responsibility, all Denlech can read and write, and know about their origin and heritage, but know it on an intellectual level; there is no sense of kinship or sentimentality about the civilization they left behind. The settlers even call themselves "Denlech" rather than humans, and consider themselves to be a people apart from the humans of the Human Alliance/CCW. They all share a common view of life, believe themselves enlightened and are at home with nature. They make and use simple tools and clothing, build homes, ride animals, use advanced methods of irrigation, hydroponics and farming, and utilize solar and wind power. They know about computers, robots, space travel and high technology, but most Denlech (as in 99%) have little use for such things, and all have been indoctrinated to believe them to be dangerous, evil and undesirable. By association, off-worlders, such as the people of the CCW, TGE and other advanced civilizations, are also considered to be dangerous, evil and undesirable due to their use of high technology and lack of respect for nature and life. Such pitiful beings are to be avoided and feared as if they carried a plague. To many of the settlers such a representation is not an exaggeration, they do carry a plague: the plague of advanced technology.

Among the Denlech, only the **Keepers of the Forbidden** are trained in the use of technology, manufacturing, satellite commu-

nication, energy weapons and flying spacecraft. It is the Keepers who run *Home Field*, do the light manufacturing to make clothing, simple tools and building materials, and maintain the satellites in orbit. One percent of the Denlech are *Keepers of the Forbidden*, a position of honor that is regarded as a sacred duty passed on from generation to generation of Keepers. However, even the Keepers consider their duty to be a burden and a curse as much as it is an honor. Those assigned to the position try to live a simple life free of machine dependence, ever aware that the machines and technology they use are "tools," nothing more. Maintaining some measure of technology was deemed a necessary evil. The Denlech desired isolation and simplicity, but they were smart, and realized that sooner or later, the outside world would find them, and they might need the meager remnants of technology they had left, and/or space flight capabilities. Thus, the role of the Keepers of the Forbidden is seen as a sacrifice for the greater good. Still, most Keepers fear they are somehow corrupted by science and tainted by the machines and bits of technology they maintain. Though the position of a Keeper is an exalted one, the rest of the Denlech also wonder if Keepers of the Forbidden are corrupted by technology, and they are regarded them with a touch of fear and kept at arm's length from the rest of the population.

Until a Catyr exploration vessel happened upon Denlar, the Denlech had no contact whatsoever with the outside world. They knew nothing about the Human Alliance becoming the Consortium of Civilized Worlds or what had ever become of their civilization of origin. The Denlech knew alien races must exist in the Thundercloud Galaxy, but until that day, they had never met one. Thus, it was an event met with a mixture of excitement and trepidation. Elder Denlech feared contamination from the outside world, while younger Denlech worried about the danger a technological people might bring to their planet. The Caytr were on a mining expedition in search of valuable minerals. When they realized Denlar was inhabited, they suspended their search and made first contact. They told the Denlar about the CCW and other alien people, and offered to establish trade and bring them the latest technology. The Denlech politely declined and explained they had come to Denlar to escape technology. The Denlech Movement's reach for the stars had become something of legend, so the Caytr were thrilled and surprised to realize these were the descendants of the fabled Denlech settlers from so long ago. The Caytr assured the Denlech they would respect their desire to remain independent and isolated, and left the planet without incident.

Word about the discovery of a lost Denlech colony spread like wildfire across the CCW. Their quest for independence and a simple, utopian lifestyle was, indeed, a thing of legend. Every once in a while a curious space traveler or trader would visit the planet and try to wheel and deal with the Denlech, but all were sent away empty-handed. The Denlech didn't mind the occasional visitor, but politely rebuffed all offers of trade or regular contact. Things would go on like this for another few hundred years, until the discovery of Killaryte on Denlar.

Discovery of Killaryte

The discovery of Killaryte deposits in the Thundercloud Galaxy had set off one gold-rush style push into the galaxy after another. The discovery that started the Killaryte madness in the Three Galaxies was on a planet called Kazematt, located in the Thundercloud Galaxy. It was soon realized that the coveted ex-

plosive mineral was only found in the Thundercloud Galaxy. The rush was on. Naruni Enterprises was the only one able to mine and process the mineral for use in its weapon systems, but they were willing to pay top dollar for it.

Kazematt was the largest Killaryte find in history and was excavated for two hundred years before the mineral was depleted. Killaryte proved to be exceedingly rare, and worse, it was very difficult to identify and locate. It seemed a single Killaryte deposit would be discovered every 20-30 years, but it was always small. Still, every time it was located on a planet, moon or asteroid in the Thundercloud, it touched off a new Killaryte Rush and madness would ensue. Killaryte-fever caused sane men to give up everything for the promise of wealth beyond imagination. Godfearing people would fight, lie, steal and kill to get their hands on the valuable mineral. Stories of lucky prospectors who struck it rich overnight with a Killaryte mine are the stuff of modern legend. Consequently, excitement ran high when a breakthrough in technology made it easier to find and accurately identify Killaryte deposits. A few years after the tech was released, two dozen new claims for Killaryte mines were filed and sold to Naruni Enterprises. All were small deposits, but each made its founder wealthy beyond his dreams.

Then one day in 9987, a Catyr mining expedition returned to Denlar to discover what appears to be the largest Killaryte deposit since Kazematt. Maybe the biggest ever. The Catyr returned a few months later to establish a colony, claimed the planet in the name of the CCW, and sold its planet-wide Killaryte rights to Naruni Enterprises. The Catyr who found the massive deposit made a fortune, the CCW got a new colony world, and Naruni Enterprises (NE) was thrilled beyond belief. With this deposit, it could now mass market its famed K-Hex rounds as well as a wider range of Killaryte-based explosives for war and demolitions. NE immediately dispatched a fleet of ships and workers to establish several mining operations. With them came other settlers, space pirates, carpetbaggers and trouble. The biggest Killaryte Rush in history was underway, and everyone got something out of it. Everyone except the Denlech.

All of this was done without the permission of the Denlech. The Naruni, the Catyr, and the other settlers all just came to take what they wanted, starting with the Killaryte. Under the old interpretation of the Compact and the Four Freedoms, this could never have happened, but under the new interpretation, Denlar was free for the taking because the Denlech inhabited less than 40% of the planet. It didn't matter that they had lived there for nearly 800 years.

Their planet was being raped and plundered for its resources right before their eyes. For a second time in history, the Denlech were being victimized by technology and greed. And just as before, they would fight back.

The Battle for Independence

Naruni Enterprises' first reaction was to ignore the "Denlech natives." After all, what could these primitive human throwbacks do to the mighty NE? As it turned out, they could do much more than the Naruni had bargained for. The Denlech have used their superior knowledge of the environment to wage a guerilla war that continues to this day, 13 years after it began. The Denlech war is a constant pain in NE's neck, as their harassment is relentless and involves sabotaging mining operations, knocking out communications, creating work stoppages and blowing up mines, refineries, supply lines and transport vessels. Killaryte is highly

explosive, so it is a simple matter to make it go boom. Since most (95%) of the mining and refinement is handled by robots and machines with computer brains and artificial intelligence, the loss of life is minimal, but the cost in machines and lost revenues is high. The robot workforce means the Denlech can fight no-holds-barred with little worry about taking life. Much the same holds true when fighting the Repo-Bots Naruni Enterprises uses against them. Thus, only a few hundred people have been injured or killed by the Denlech.

Naruni Enterprises has no such compunction, and have used deadly force against the Denlech, slaughtering tens of thousands. Of course, Naruni Enterprises, the miners and the new colonists have spun the Denlech attacks to make it look as if NE is the innocent party and simply trying to defend themselves against crazy, anti-technology zealots. This has only worked to a small degree for NE, as the story of the Denlech is well known. As the battle for Denlar spreads across the dataspheres of every planet in the CCW, TGE and other civilizations, the Denlech are winning the sympathy of many while the CCW is getting a black eye for it, and the Naruni are painted as the wicked villain. It is a story that enemies of the CCW, like the Transgalactic Empire (TGE) and Golgan Republic, are happy to make certain finds its way into the dataspheres and gets wide distribution. Thus, despite NE's attempts to spin events to look like they are the ones under attack, and the CCW government trying to avoid getting directly involved, the stories and images coming from Denlar accurately present the Denlech as the underdog and the victim of unchecked corporate greed. It is the Denlech who are seen as heroes fighting for their homes against impossible odds, and it has enflamed the imaginations of people everywhere. Though the Naruni mining operation is sanctioned by the CCW as a Chartered Company, it appears that humans (the Denlech) are being "invaded" by heartless, mega-powerful aliens (the Naruni and their henchmen). The Catyr's reputation is taking a hit from this as well, even though the Catyr government and civilization have nothing to do with this debacle; it was a private mining company that discovered Killaryte and set everything in motion. NE doesn't care about the negative publicity, but it does worry about the politics involved and how a public outcry might damage their bottom line to make a fortune.

Things are further complicated by the fact that the Denlech are **a)** human, and **b)** arguably citizens of the Human Alliance/Consortium of Civilized Worlds. Some people even consider the Denlech the first human colonists to hail from the CCW/Human Alliance, making Denlar the historic site of the first CCW colony in the Thundercloud Galaxy. This muddies the political waters considerably, and raises the question of whether or not the Battle for Denlar is a *civil war*. It also ties the hands of Naruni Enterprises, who would like to send in an army of Repo-Bots and wipe out the pesky Denlech, but can not due to the potentially damaging political fallout. For the Naruni, it's all about business and money, so they don't want to jeopardize a fortune in Killaryte.

For now, Naruni Enterprises, the Catyr colonists, and others coming to Denlar press forward with their own agendas and operations. They have taken a "soft" approach to dealing with the Denlech, fighting the upstarts in "self-defense" only when the "natives" initiate an attack against them. It's the only way NE can avoid looking like the aggressor and the bad guy. However, there are rumors that NE is hiring Space Pirates, mercenaries and thugs to attack Denlech villages, cause trouble and hurt people in the hope of leveraging them to leave the planet.

As for the Denlech, they continue to issue protests, engage in acts of sabotage, blow up Killaryte supplies (and acres of machinery with them), attack Naruni robots and machines, and do everything they can to drive the “invaders” from their adopted home world. Meanwhile, some **Keepers of the Forbidden** are going to Eden and the Corkscrew Galaxy to get their story in the media, win public sympathy, and petition the government of the CCW to intercede on their behalf. Naruni Enterprises doesn’t want these diplomatic missions to succeed, so they engage in a secret cat and mouse game to find and destroy them before they even reach the CCW or a sympathetic media outlet. To that end, Denlech diplomats and representatives are systematically hunted down and “eliminated” by Repo-Bots, Space Pirates, assassins and other “agents.” In many cases, the crafty Naruni work through third parties, so the agents hired to kill a Denlech rep or destroy a Denlech ship never know the true purpose of their mission. The attack *appears* to be random and unrelated. (“It was claim jumpers, Space Pirates, Kreeghor, two-bit thugs,” or any number of hostile forces in the galaxy, “that attacked and killed the Denlech ambassador. How can you suggest NE was involved?”)

Naruni Enterprises is quick to point out that they have an open offer to relocate the Denlech to a nice, new planet at the company’s own expense. And it is a considerable expense to move approximately 20 million humans. The problem is, the Denlech don’t want to move or compromise their society. They want Naruni Enterprises and all the rest of the invaders to leave *their* world. The Denlech found the planet first, colonized it and lived in quiet peace for close to eight centuries. They came to Denlar to escape civilization and outsiders, and it is their home. They don’t see why *they* should have to move, and refuse to do so. Nor do they see why they should have to endure invasion and damage to their ecosystem by outside forces that only care about Killaryte and the money they can make from it.

Naruni Enterprises will not relent either, because the planet Denlar holds the *Killaryte motherload* worth a fortune that even the greedy Naruni find hard to imagine. There is so much of it on Denlar that they can mine it for centuries before running out. They can’t (or more to the point, won’t) give it up. This is a more volatile situation than many realize, because the mineral is so valuable to NE, there is no telling what they might do to keep it.

Denlech Acts of Terror

In recent months, matters have taken an unfortunate turn for public sympathy and support for the Denlech. A tiny percentage of Denlech seek revenge and are using terror to force the enemy (which are all non-Denlech) into submission via acts of terror. These terrorists are Denlech with superhuman abilities and a few Keepers of the Forbidden enabled by outsiders to form what can only be described as extremist groups and terrorist cells. Most of these terrorist organizations, are not located on Denlar, and the vast majority of Denlech (78%) condemn their actions. The terrorists have taken the battle off-world to strike at Naruni Enterprises, in particular, but they also attack other “invaders” and “Naruni puppets” – which pretty much includes the entire CCW. The actions of such terrorist groups have included kidnappings with demands for Naruni Enterprises and all outsiders to relinquish their claims on Denlar and vacate the planet, raids on any vessel carrying Killaryte, bombings of NE business holdings and CCW consulates and similar acts of terrorism. The fact the

CCW seem to be turning a blind eye to the events taking place on Denlar makes them their enemy as well, and there have been an increasing number of terrorist attacks on CCW space stations, against CAF partols, commercial space lanes, supply lines and colonies located in the Thundercloud Galaxy, especially Eden, but also within the Corkscrew Galaxy.

The Power of the Denlech

There is nothing usual or ordinary about the events surrounding the Denlech, and that includes the Denlech themselves. Prolonged exposure to M-Rads is known to cause mutation, transmutation and other weird effects. Since the use of the *Black Hole Projector* 50,000 years ago, the level of Magic Radiation (M-Rad) is considered to have subsided to safe levels at most places throughout the Thundercloud Galaxy. There are exceptions, however, and one of them is Denlar. Killaryte, it turns out, holds M-Rads and has, over the generations, subtly mutated the Denlech. They are still humans, but humans with unique traits and abilities. Many of these “abilities” are subtle, because until the invasion by Naruni Enterprises, most Denlech didn’t know they had any special abilities. Yes, there had been some evidence of mutation over the years, but debilitating mutation often resulted in mercy killings or a shortened natural life. Spectacular mutations, such as Denlech with the ability to fire energy bolts from their hands or alter their physical structure, were rare and generally kept quiet. But there were mutations and “powers” the Denlech took for granted and never thought of as unusual. For example, Denlech don’t realize it, but many have extraordinary physical endurance, great strength, immunity to disease and heal faster than normal humans. These and other, more spectacular abilities have helped them in the fields for generations.

About half the Denlech have abilities that might be considered “superhuman.” One such power is the ability to paralyze and disrupt the operation of machines, even advanced machines and cyborgs like *Repo-Bots*. The pressure of being under attack and fighting for their lives has revealed 15% of the Denlech have some sort of physical transformation power. None of these abilities had manifested prior to the Naruni invasion, but must have been lying dormant, appearing only every once in a while. Similarly, 5% of the Denlech can fire energy blasts from their hands or eyes. All these abilities have given the Denlech an unexpected edge against an otherwise superior, high-tech opponent like Naruni Enterprises and their legion of robots. When special powers are combined with the Denlech’s intimate knowledge of their environment in a campaign of guerilla warfare, the “primitive natives” become an effective fighting force. As evidence of this, the Denlech settlers’ constant attacks on the Naruni mining operations have reduced productivity to an unacceptable 59%. Hitting the Naruni where it counts, in the bank.

There are a few theories about why the Denlech “humans” have unusual powers. The most common belief is that since M-Rad is Magic Radiation, somehow the Denlech’s zealous views of a simple life have given them some enhanced physical abilities suitable for such a lifestyle, while the fierce distrust, fear and loathing toward machines and technology of many Denlech has given them powers to neutralize machines. They never realized they even possessed the machine power, because the average Denlech is seldom near machines that could be affected. Only

Keepers of the Forbidden work with computers and high-tech machines, and Keepers don't have these powers.

See **Special Abilities of the Denlech Settler** under the Denlech Settler O.C.C.

Denlech Foreign Relations

Denlech Society. Living in a universe of faster-than-light travel, intelligent robots, and exotic alien species, they choose to ignore it all. A person visiting them who didn't know any better might think he had stepped back in time. The Denlech strongly believe that most modern machines and conveniences are actually a detriment to human development. This philosophy has only grown stronger over time. As a result, they live in sprawling farm communities, build homes out of natural materials, use simple tools and weapons, and us Earthlings might think of them as something akin to "Space Amish."

Some outsiders speaking in ignorance have suggested the Denlech are human supremacists, but that's not true. The Denlech started out exclusively human, and until the appearance of the Caytr, had never met an intelligent, alien life form. They would consider accepting other people into their community, but only if they completely accepted their way of life and abandoned the use of machines. It is machines and technology that the Denlech fear and loathe, not other people. That does mean they will not accept people who are part, mostly or entirely machines themselves, but other than that, other people are welcomed. It's just that most members of advanced civilizations aren't willing to accept a life without modern machines and conveniences. In fact, it is often the people from advanced civilizations who look down upon the Denlech, as they cannot comprehend why someone would walk away from motor vehicles, air conditioning, electronic communications and everything else that comes with technology. While outsiders see the Denlech's chosen life to be one of hardship and adversity, the Denlech see it as good, simple and pure. Life by its very nature has its share of hardship, it is what one makes of his life and the joy and peace he finds in it that makes the difference, and Denlech love their life free of all but a few machines.

Denlech society is democratic and communal, with neighbor helping neighbor. Communities are small, all people get a vote in all matters, and they are led by an elected council of leaders advised by appointed elders. Trade and barter is common, though there is a set currency, banks, lenders, and stores. Entertainment is found in song, dance and hobbies at home and at various festivals and community events. Denlech enjoy the arts and there are many who draw, paint, sculpt and create crafts for trade, sale and community beautification. All Denlech have a basic to excellent education and are able to read, write, perform basic math, have a good sense of personal history (as the Denlech know it on their world and in the Human Alliance centuries ago), and enjoy philosophy and life's simple pleasures. The typical rural community has a population of a few thousand, and there are no big cities. Even Home Field, with its limited manufacturing and spaceships in mothballs, is barely what most people would consider a town, has no places of entertainment or hotels, and is just one more understated resource. All Denlech believe in the purity of the body and spirit, so few drink alcohol or use drugs for recreation.

Until the Denlar Killaryte Rush and the arrival of Naruni Enterprises, the Denlech had no regular contact with the outside world. They came to the far side of the Thundercloud Galaxy

to get away from civilization and escape high technology. Their isolation was deliberate and that's the way they wanted to keep it. Denlech are reaching out and even leaving their planet to visit other civilized worlds only in the hope of saving their world and culture from being torn apart. If NE and other colonists left Denlar, the people would be happy to return to their quiet lives in blissful isolation.

Consortium of Civilized Worlds. For the Denlech, this is a bittersweet reunion with the civilization they left behind almost 800 years ago. They are happy the CCW has not suffered another tragedy like the Automaton War and wish them well, but they also want no part or membership in the CCW. With the invasion of Denlar by CCW associated planets and Naruni Enterprises, a CCW trade partner, Denlech feel the CCW are responsible for their invasion, and the lives lost in the conflict, and need to step in and put a stop to it all. While modern Denlech have difficulty understanding the level of greed and lack of humanity over Killaryte, they get the general idea, but don't care. The planet is theirs, they don't want mining or outsiders on it, and they are willing to fight and die to protect their home world. A "civilized" people, Denlech are also willing to go through legal and political channels to resolve their issues with the CCW. So far, thanks to lobbying, roadblocks and interference by Naruni Enterprises, the Denlech have been buried in red tape.

The CCW is only now realizing the severity of the conflict on Denlar and is just starting to look into the matter. Which bureaucrat takes charge of the matter will dictate how things shake out, the level of bloodshed, and who wins or loses. For the Denlech, any compromise and continuance of mining is a loss. A select number of Denlech diplomats are trying to get to the CCW congress on Terra Prime to make their case, but the Denlech are also in the public media. For the most part, the Denlech delegation is so small and quite honestly so brash that no one is likely to pay much attention to it. It is the powerful and influential mega-corp, Naruni Enterprises, that has all the clout. Still, a steady stream of media coverage is slowly changing the political landscape.

Denlech terrorist cells attacking innocent CCW citizens and businesses have not helped the Denlech's cause, but have done little to hurt it. The CCW and most civilians believe these rebels and extremists are rogues acting independent of the Denlech government and do not represent the will of the people. Indeed, most seek revenge in blood, and not justice.

Transgalactic Empire. The TGE finds the entire affair to be wonderful. Though unwilling to help the Denlech or liberate them from the Naruni (they have considered it just to get their hands on the Killaryte, but have thought better of it), the TGE has been very active in propagandizing the "civil war" throughout the Empire and making sure reports, stories and video footage find their way to the dataspheres of the CCW and other intergalactic nations. The Denlech know very little about the TGE as they are playing catch-up in learning about the galactic community, but from what little they do know, they want nothing to do with the fascist regime.

Kingdom of Desslyth. The Splugorth have no interest in the Denlar Affair, unless, of course, the TGE gets involved. They are not about to let the Empire get its hands on the largest supply of Killaryte ever found.

Prides of Shing. No contact exists between the two groups. The incident has, however, made the Shing wonder about the integrity of the Consortium of Civilized Worlds.

The Republikan Enklaves. No contact exists between these two groups, but the Republikan Enklaves would love to get their paws on that Killaryte. To do just that, the Enklaves have been sending out small fleets *disguised* as unaffiliated Space Pirates and raiders to waylay and steal shipments of refined Killaryte as well as any other cargo coming and going from Denlar. These Enklave sponsored buccaneers seldom limit their attacks to the Naruni, but rather plunder any spacecraft they think they can get away with attacking. The Enklaves are also trading with Space Pirates and adventurers with no questions asked, as well as providing them protection in Enklave space. An even darker game of intergalactic intrigue has the Enklaves establishing a number of terrorist cells of its own to strike at the CCW and other rivals in the name of the Denlech. The poor Denlech have no clue what's going on.

UWW Thundercloud Possessions. No contact exists between these two groups.

Trensik Mercenaries. In a move that has surprised everyone, the Trensik Mercenaries have offered their support to the people of Denlar – free of charge. No one is sure exactly why they'd make such a generous offer, but they suspect it has to do with the Killaryte and a scheme to acquire it for themselves. The leaders of the Denlech have, for the moment, politely declined the Trensik's offer for fear it would escalate the war, and because the mercs are high-tech aliens they know nothing about. Nobody's fool, the Denlech realize the Trensik want to win their favor to get at the coveted mineral on their planet. However, if things change, there's no telling what might happen. The Trensik have made it clear their offer is a standing one. Moreover, a fleet of Trensik Mercenaries is in orbit around one of Denlech's two moons keeping a watchful eye on the war.

The potential involvement of the Trensik Mercenaries has everyone from the Bushi Federation and Republikan Enklaves to the CCW, TGE and NE concerned. Nobody wants to see escalation.

The Exiles. As the self-appointed protectors of the indigenous people of the Thundercloud Galaxy, the Exiles are trying to decide whether or not they should get involved at Denlar. First, the Denlech are not indigenous to the galaxy, but they have adopted it as their home and are suffering greatly at the hands of outsiders. Second, the escalating situation at Denlar might be more than the Exiles can handle. So far, they've battled against isolated fleets and smaller enemies, not someone with the resources of Naruni Enterprises and the CCW combined. While the Exiles dislike what the CCW is allowing to happen in the Thundercloud, they don't necessarily want to become their sworn enemy. The Denlech know nothing about the Exiles and would see them as one more high-tech civilization to be feared, interfering in their lives.

Denlech Settler O.C.C.

Independent & Non-Aligned People

Eight centuries of living on the plains and working their fields have made the Denlech strong of mind, will and body. Although they are still human, the Denlech now see their civilization as separate and independent of the Human Alliance civilization, they left behind. Furthermore, Denlech are slightly mutated with most possessing enhanced physical or psionic abilities (see **The Power of the Denlech** described earlier). As a culture, they are wary of using high technology and fearful of robots, artificial intelligences and magic. Tend to be suspicious of all non-Denlech.

Denlech Settler O.C.C. [pronounced: DEN-leck]

Race: Human.

Alignment: Any, but lean toward good and selfish.

Appearance: Completely human.

Attributes (Human): I.Q. 3D6, M.E. 3D6, M.A. 3D6, P.S. 3D6, P.P. 3D6, P.E. 3D6, P.B. 3D6, Spd 3D6.

Size & Weight: Standard for humans.

Hit Points: P.E. attribute number +1D6 per level.

S.D.C.: 3D6+12, plus any gained from Physical skills.

M.D.C.: By armor or special Alter Physical Structure ability.

Horror Factor: None.

P.P.E.: 2D6 for adults, 6D6 for children under the age of twelve.

Average Life Span: 60 +2D4 years. The Denlech do not have access to the same super-science, medicine and surgical procedures of the advanced civilizations. Years of hard work in the fields and under the sun tends to make life short.

Natural Abilities: Same as humans, but they also have some special abilities. See the *Special Abilities table* presented at the end of this stat block.

O.C.C. Bonuses: +1 to disarm, +1 to strike with a long rifle, +1 to save vs disease and +1 to save vs Horror Factor.

O.C.C. Skills:

Language and Literacy: Native: Trade Four at 90%.

Animal Husbandry or Brewing: Medicinal (+20%; pick one)

Basic Math (+15%)

Cook or Dance (+15%; pick one).

Gardening (+20%)

Holistic Medicine or Veterinary Science (+10%; pick one).

Horsemanship: General (+10%; can be upgraded to Cowboy for the cost of one O.C.C. Related Skill).

Identify Plants & Fruit (+20%)

Land Navigation (+30%)

Lore: Cattle and Animals (+15%)

Play Musical Instrument or Sing (+15%; pick one)

Wilderness Survival (+15%)

W.P. Rifles

W.P. Ancient: One of choice.

Hand to Hand: Basic (can not be upgraded or changed).

O.C.C. Related Skills: Select five other skills at level one, +1 additional skill at levels 3, 7, 11 and 15. All new skills start at first level proficiency.

Communications: Barter, Performance, Public Speaking and Sing only (+5%).

Cowboy: Any (+10%).

Domestic: Any (+10%).

Electrical: None.

Espionage: None.

Horsemanship: Exotic (+5%) only.

Mechanical: Basic Mechanics only.

Medical: Animal Husbandry, Brewing, First Aid, and Holistic Medicine (+10%) only.

Military: None.

Physical: Any, except Acrobatics, Fencing, Kick Boxing and SCUBA.

Pilot: Bicycling and Boat: Paddle Types, Sail Types and Ships only

Pilot Related: Navigation and Sensory Equipment only.

Rogue: None.

Science: Astronomy & Navigation, Biology, Botany, Math skills and Zoology only (+10%).

Technical: Any, except Computer skills, Cybernetics, Salvage, and any other obvious high-tech skills.

W.P. Ancient: Any.

W.P. Modern: Shotgun only.

Wilderness: Any (+10%).

Secondary Skills: Select four Secondary Skills from the list found on page 300 of *Rifts Ultimate Edition*. Select two additional Secondary Skills at levels 4, 8 and 12.

Other Available O.C.C.s: Cowboy, Preacher, Body Fixer (low-tech or Holistic Doctor), Scholar, Vagabond, and Wilderness Scout. Details on these occupations can be found in *Rifts® Ultimate Edition* and *Rifts® New West™*.

Equipment: A good quality riding animal, a couple sets of loose work clothes (a pair of pants, shirt and tunic is the traditional garb), a pair of boots, work gloves, a wide, brimmed hat, a set or two of dress clothes (may be dark or bright colors), saddle, saddlebags, rifle scabbard, belt, waterskin, a blanket or two, old-style box of stick matches, hair brush, comb, if a musical instrument is played the character will have one, and some personal items.

Weapons: A small knife (1D4 S.D.C.) and scabbard usually carried on one's person at all times, sickle (2D4 S.D.C.) or hand axe (1D6 S.D.C.), pitchfork (3D6 S.D.C.), shovel (2D4 S.D.C.) or wooden staff (2D6 S.D.C.). Clubs and other blunt weapons (typically 2D6 S.D.C. damage) may also be used.

All Denlech males and half the females own a Denlech Long Rifle (5D6 S.D.C. damage, 3,600 foot/1,097 m range and can load and fire ramjet and K-Hex rounds, two round payload, but Denlech can reload two shells in one melee action). Since the invasion and War of Independence, about 20% have energy weapons and Vibro-Blades they've stolen from the Naruni and other invaders, or won in combat.

Bionics & Cybernetics: None, and avoid them.

Money: Starts with 1D4x100 in credits and 3D6x100 in tradable items.

Allies: None to speak of, at least not yet; self-reliant.

Enemies: Naruni Enterprises is Enemy Number One, followed by the CCW, Catyr and pretty much every outsider trying to invade their world.

Habitat: Planet Denlar, an Earth-like planet.

Special Abilities of the Denlech Settlers

When creating a Denlech player character or NPC (Non-Player Character) other than a *Keeper of the Forbidden*, roll on the following random table to determine the character's special power, or pick one. **Note:** A Denlech Settler can only have ONE of the following powers or power sets. *Keepers of the Forbidden* do not have any of the powers below, but many possess an affinity for machines, electronics and mechanics, and others have psionic abilities.

01-05% Natural Hunter. In addition to the usual Denlech Settler O.C.C. skills, the Natural Hunter knows these specialized skills: Camouflage (+25%), Detect Ambush (+15%), Hunting, Prowl (+15%), Sniper, Tailing (+20%), Tracking (+15%), and Track & Trap Animals (+25%). These replace beginning Secondary Skills.

06-15% Enhanced Awareness. +2 on Perception Rolls, +1 on initiative and +1 to parry, dodge and roll with impact.

16-30% Perfect Health. This character has a high P.E. (+1D4+1 to P.E. attribute and fatigues at one tenth the usual rate),

is impervious to disease, heals twice as fast as a normal human, and gets a bonus of 2D6 Hit Points.

31-40% Superior Physical Strength. The Denlech gets a P.S. bonus of 1D4+2 and his P.S. is the equivalent of Robot Strength.

41-50% Extreme Fitness. This Denlech is an example of physical refinement and enjoys the following bonuses: +2D6+6 S.D.C., +1D4 to P.P. and P.E., and +1D6 to P.S., P.B. and Spd.

51-80% Denlech Disruptor. This Denlech has two powers that undermine machines.

Telemechanic Disruption Field (special). This field affects electronics and machines more complex than a flashlight, including vehicles, energy weapons, power armor, robots, A.I.s, cybernetics, bionics and Repo-Bots. The field diminishes function of the machine by 50% and scrambles computing capabilities and artificial intelligence. Repo-Bots and other robots, will behave as if they were damaged or drunk. Reaction time, speed, strength, damage from physical attacks and energy weapons, the number of attacks per melee, combat bonuses, weapon and sensor range, skill performance, and similar abilities are *all reduced by half*. This includes the responsiveness of vehicles and other devices, which suddenly act as if they are at half power, move at half speed, etc. Computers are sluggish, taking two or three times as long to respond with a larger margin for error (50% computing capacity and half its normal skill performance). The effect lasts as long as the Disruptor Denlech remains in range, but the Disruption Field does no permanent damage. **Note:** This psionic ability is NOT available to any other known psychic character class or life form, *only Denlech*. **I.S.P.:** Not applicable. The power is always "on" and the Denlech must concentrate to turn it off or to affect only 1-4 specific machines/robots within his line of sight and range of effect. When concentrating to turn it off or direct it toward specific targets, the Denlech suffers the following penalties: No Perception Roll bonus, -1 attack per melee round, -1 on all combat maneuvers/bonuses, and -10% on skill performance. **Range:** 50 foot (15.2 m) radius or line of sight up to 50 feet (15.2 m). **Damage:** Disorientation, sluggish behavior and penalties as described above. **Saving Throw:** None, not even for A.I.s or bionics. **Limitation:** This power is not on when a character is sleeping or rendered unconscious as it is a manifestation of his hate and fear of robots and machines. The only exception is if the character is having a nightmare about machines, in which case his power might instinctively activate.

Denlech Telemechanic Paralysis (special). As per the psionic power, but with a few differences. **1)** Duration is three minutes per level of experience not one. **2)** Range is 60 feet (18.3 m). **3)** Saving throw: None for non-intelligent machines, computers and simple robots. 10 to save vs Telemechanic Paralysis for A.I.s (Artificial Intelligences), cyborgs and bionic components attached to a living creature. A successful save means the intended target is not paralyzed, but suffers all the same disorientation and penalties as the *Denlech Disruption Field* described above (essentially functions at half capacity). Failing to save means paralysis. **4)** I.S.P. cost is not applicable, but each use of Telemechanic Paralysis can only be directed at one target per level of the character's experience, the penalties for the Denlech to function are cumulative as per each machine, and each use of the Machine Paralysis power counts as one of the character's melee attacks.

81-85% Energy Expulsion: Each blast counts as one melee attack. **Range:** 100 feet (30.5 m) per level of experience. **Damage:** 3D6 S.D.C. damage against mortal opponents, 3D6 M.D. against

M.D.C. machines and Mega-Damage opponents (the transition from one power level to the other is automatic and instinctive).

86-90% Alter Physical Structure: Mega-Damage Skin. In combat, when under attack, or when in danger, or when angry and on the attack himself, the character's skin becomes Mega-Damage. Nothing else changes, other than a bonus of +4 to (S.D.C.) melee damage. M.D.C. is P.E. attribute number +3D6+4 M.D.C. for base, +1D6 M.D.C. per level of experience. Bio-Regenerates lost M.D.C. at a rate of 1D6 per melee round.

91-95% Alter Physical Structure: Mega-Damage Stone. In combat, when under attack or when in danger, or when angry and on the attack himself, the character's skin turns into Mega-Damage stone. The character appears to be a living stone statue, weight is tripled, and the character's P.S. becomes the equivalent of *Robot Strength*. M.D.C. is P.E. attribute number +1D6x10 M.D.C. for base, +1D6+4 M.D.C. per level of experience. Bio-Regenerates lost M.D.C. at a rate of 2D4 per melee round and in stone form has a Horror/Awe Factor of 12.

96-00% Alter Physical Structure: Chameleon. In combat, when under attack or in danger, or when deliberately trying to hide, the character seems to vanish, blending in with his surrounding. This power works very much like the Chameleon spell invocation, only it unlimited no duration. As long as the character wants to hide and stays motionless or moves very, very slowly, he is likely to be unnoticed. Quick movement, even of a single limb, breaks the spell and reveals the character in all his glory. Likewise, though the Chameleon character may be difficult to see, he is NOT invisible nor ethereal, so if someone bumps into the character or happens upon him, the character is revealed. The Denlech Chameleon must also make an effort to hide. He cannot stand out in an open field and expect to go unseen. But if lying down in the grass or hiding behind a log or pressed against the opposite side of a tree, and similar attempts to hide, he'll be concealed.

Keeper of the Forbidden O.C.C.

The Keepers of the Forbidden are that small minority assigned to maintain and operate what little technology the Denlech have. Keepers also pilot spacecraft and can use computers and energy weapons. Keepers are free to associate with Denlech Settlers, but they tend to live in or near Home Field, the Denlech tech and light manufacturing center. Keepers are regarded as both exalted and cursed because of their inherited position to control the machines and understand technology. They are completely loyal to their low-tech brethren and hold them in high esteem.

Since the War for Independence has begun, the role of the Keepers has become all the more important, as they are able to use energy weapons, hijack NE vehicles, handle communications and pilot spacecraft to take diplomatic envoys to the CCW to fight on their people's behalf.

Denlech Keeper of the Forbidden O.C.C.

Race: Human.

Alignment: Any, but tend to be good or selfish.

Appearance: Completely human.

Attributes (Human): I.Q. 3D6+1, M.E. 3D6, M.A. 3D6, P.S. 3D6, P.P. 3D6, P.E. 3D6, P.B. 3D6, Spd 3D6.

Size & Weight: Standard for humans.

Hit Points: P.E. attribute number +1D6 per level.

S.D.C.: 2D6+10, plus any gained from Physical skills.

M.D.C.: By armor, power armor or stolen Naruni force fields.

Horror Factor: None.

P.P.E.: 2D6 for adults, 6D6 for children under the age of twelve.

Average Life Span: 60 +2D4 years.

Disposition: Honest, loyal and dedicated to their position and their people.

Natural Abilities: Same as humans, but they also have some special abilities. *Keepers* have been mutated by M-Rads in a different way from their fellow Denlech. Many possess an affinity for machines, electronics and mechanics, and others have psionic abilities. Roll on the random table below or pick one set of special abilities.

01-10% Natural Builder: Field Armorer & Munitions Expert (+20%), Jury-Rig (+20%), Salvage (+30%), Vehicle Armorer (+20%) and one Mechanical or Electrical skill of choice (+15%). These replace beginning Secondary Skills.

11-20% Weapons Specialist: All Demolitions skills (+30%), Safecracking (+20%), Weapon Systems (+20%), and Trap/Mine Detection (+30%). These replace beginning Secondary Skills.

21-30% Natural Pilot: Has all Navigation skills (+30%), Pilot Spacefighters (+20%), and gets to select 1D4 additional Piloting skills of choice (each gets a +20% bonus). These replace beginning Secondary Skills.

31-40% Psionic Machine Abilities: Object Read (6), Sense Time (2), Telemechanics (10), Telemechanic Mental Operation (12), and Telemechanic Possession (50). Base I.S.P. is M.E. attribute number x4, +1D8 I.S.P. per level of experience.

41-50% Psionic Insight: Presence Sense (4), Psychic Omni-Sight (15), Remote Viewing (10), Sixth Sense (2) and two Sensitive powers of choice. Base I.S.P. is M.E. attribute number x3, +1D6 I.S.P. per level of experience.

51-60% Psionic Physical Abilities: Electrokinesis (varies), Meditation, Psi-Shield (30) and four Physical powers of choice. Base I.S.P. is M.E. attribute number x4, +1D6 I.S.P. per level of experience.

61-70% Psionic Mind Communication: Group Trance (15), Mind Block Auto-Defense (special), Telepathy (4), Telepathy (Super, 10), and three powers of choice from one of the following psionic categories: Healing or Sensitive. Base I.S.P. is M.E. attribute number x3, +1D6 I.S.P. per level of experience.

71-80% Psionic Physical Abilities: Meditation and 1D4+5 Physical powers of choice. Base I.S.P. is M.E. attribute number x4, +1D6 I.S.P. per level of experience.

81-90% Psionic Sensitive Abilities: Meditation and 1D4+5 Sensitive powers of choice. Base I.S.P. is M.E. attribute number x4, +1D6 I.S.P. per level of experience.

91-00% Psionic Telekinesis Abilities: All powers of Telekinesis, including Super, +2 Physical powers of choice. Base I.S.P. is M.E. attribute number x4, +2D4 I.S.P. per level of experience.

O.C.C. Bonuses: +1 on initiative and +1 to save vs Horror Factor.

O.C.C. Skills:

Language and Literacy: Native: Trade Four at 98%.

Computer Operation (+25%)

Computer Programming or Computer Repair (+15%)

Electrical Engineer (+20%)

Horsemanship: General
 Land Navigation (+10%)
 Laser Communications (+15%)
 Mathematics: Advanced (+20%)
 Mathematics: Basic (+25%)
 Mechanical Engineer (+20%)
 Navigation (+20%)
 Pilot: Truck (+20%)
 Pilot: Small Spacecraft (+16%)
 Pilot: Starship (+12%)
 Radio: Basic (+30%)
 Sensory Equipment (+20%)
 Starship Mechanics (+20%)
 W.P. Energy Pistol
 W.P. Energy Rifle
 W.P. Heavy M.D. Weapons
 Hand to Hand: Basic (can not be upgraded or changed).

R.C.C. Related Skills: Select four other skills at level one, +1 additional skill at levels 4, 8 and 12. All new skills start at first level proficiency.

Communications: Any (+15%).
 Cowboy: None.
 Domestic: Any.
 Electrical: Any (+10%).
 Espionage: None.
 Horsemanship: General only.
 Mechanical: Any (+10%).
 Medical: First Aid only.
 Military: Recognize Weapon Quality and Trap/Mine Detection only (+5%).
 Physical: Any, except Acrobatics, Fencing and Kick Boxing.
 Pilot: Any (+10%).
 Pilot Related: Any (+15%).
 Rogue: Computer Hacking (+5%) only.
 Science: Any (+5%).
 Technical: Any (+15%).
 W.P. Ancient: Any.
 W.P. Modern: Any.
 Wilderness: Any.

Secondary Skills: Select four Secondary Skills from the list found on page 300 of **Rifts® Ultimate Edition**. Select one additional Secondary Skill at levels 3, 7, 9 and 13.

Other Available O.C.C.s: Operator, Freedom Fighter, Robot Pilot, Spacer, Space Pirate, Runner and Vagabond. Details on these occupations can be found in **Rifts® Ultimate Edition** and **Phase World®**.

Equipment: Portable tool kit, a couple sets of loose work clothes, jumpsuit, EVA spacesuit (for piloting spacecraft), boots, work gloves, a baseball cap, a set or two of dress clothes (military uniform style), utility belt, canteen or waterskin, workstation computer, handheld computer, handheld communicator, long-range field radio, laser distancer, laser torch, goggles, old style box of stick matches, hair brush, comb, and some personal items.

Has access to whatever ground vehicles and spaceships are available to the Home Field community, but such irreplaceable vessels are used with great care and only in emergencies.

Note: Since the War for Independence has begun, additional weapons, gear, equipment and vehicles have been acquired from the enemy and helpful outsiders.

Weapons: A small knife (1D4 S.D.C.) and scabbard, Vibro-Knife or Vibro-Sword, and one energy weapon and 1D6+2 E-Clips for each Modern W.P. known to the character. These days, the most available energy weapons are those made and used by Naruni Enterprises and the Catyr.

Bionics & Cybernetics: None, and avoids them.

Money: Starts with 1D4x100 in credits and 3D6x1,000 in tradable items.

Allies: None to speak of, at least not yet; self-reliant.

Enemies: Naruni Enterprises, the CCW, Catyr and pretty much every outsider trying to invade their world.

Habitat: Planet Denlar, an Earth-like planet.



Denlech Avenger O.C.C.

The planet Denlar is being invaded and hijacked by Naruni Enterprises (NE) and, by association, the CCW who is allowing it as part of their colony program. NE has simply waltzed in, set up shop to mine Killaryte, and do as it pleases without regard for the 20 million Denlech inhabitants. People whose ancestors came to colonize the world 800 years before them. The problem is, the Denlech colonized the planet as *independents* long before the CCW was formed, and are not recognized as an independent and sovereign nation. With the carelessness of the Scramble and the motivation of NE to get its hands on the massive Killaryte deposits, the Denlech are being overrun and their rights ignored. In fairness to Naruni Enterprises, they have not tried to destroy or forcibly remove the Denlech, but are, in effect, usurping control of the planet and engaging in mining operations without regard for the environment or the Denlech people.

Outmatched and overpowered, the Denlech have engaged the Naruni in guerilla warfare and sabotage, using hit and run tactics, and targeting mining robots and equipment to harass the enemy and interfere with business. While there has been loss of life on the part of Naruni Enterprises – mostly the Repo-Bot cyborgs (Repo-Bots have organic brains inside robotic bodies) – NE has responded with controlled displays of power that have slaughtered tens of thousands of Denlech who are no match for their superior firepower and technology.

Incensed by the injustice and horror of it all, a small percentage have resorted to extreme measures. They call themselves “Avengers,” and see themselves as super-patriots defending their people and homes from murderous “invaders” raping their planet. Many would agree, but while most Denlech continue their campaign of harassment and sabotage while Denlech leaders are seeking relief through diplomatic channels, Avengers engage in “eye for an eye” retribution. Denlech Avengers use commando style tactics to hit the enemy hard, killing Naruni executives and leaders without mercy. Anyone – and we mean “anyone” – who gets in their way, gets hurt or killed. Worse, Denlech Avengers engage in acts of outright terrorism, kidnaping and holding not only NE and CCW leaders hostage, but their families as well. These hostages are often put on public display via the datasphere and executed with much fanfare. Recently, Avengers have taken to blowing up Naruni spacecraft, space stations, and offices back in the Corkscrew Galaxy. Such attacks inevitably kill and/or injure hundreds of innocent civilians. Avengers rationalize their deaths as collateral damage that can come to an end as soon as Naruni Enterprises withdraws all mining operations and colonists from their world.

The Denlech leaders condemn such ugly behavior, as do the majority of the Denlech people. However, at least 20% see Avengers as heroic champions whom they secretly hide and support. Ever happy to hurt the Consortium of Civilized Worlds, both the Transgalactic Empire and Gorgan Republikan Enklaves quietly support Denlech Avengers, provide them safe harbor and help to equip them with pirated weapons and equipment from other worlds.

Denlech Avengers who have remained on Denlar engage in assassination of “live” enemy targets (i.e. living personnel, not Repo-Bots or robots) and try to specifically assassinate managers and leaders on the planet, but any off-worlder is a potential target. Avengers operating in space and away from Denlar may recruit Space Pirates and other cutthroats with an axe to grind in their campaigns of terrorism. Some join because they believe in the Denlech’s cause, but most join because the Denlech Avengers provide them the opportunity to kill and get a fair cut of the loot. A prime target for attack are Naruni supply ships and cargo transports coming and going from Denlar.

Denlech Avenger O.C.C.

Race: Human.

Alignment: Any, but tend to be good or selfish.

Appearance: Completely human.

Attributes (Human): I.Q. 3D6+1, M.E. 3D6, M.A. 3D6, P.S. 3D6, P.P. 3D6, P.E. 3D6, P.B. 3D6, Spd 3D6.

Size & Weight: Standard for humans.

Hit Points: P.E. attribute number +1D6 per level.

S.D.C.: 2D6+10, plus any gained from Physical skills.

M.D.C.: By armor, power armor, special ability or stolen Naruni force fields.

Horror Factor: None.

P.P.E.: 2D6 for adults, 6D6 for children under the age of twelve.

Average Life Span: 60 +2D4 years.

Disposition: Tough, bitter, and angry fighters, they are determined to punish the people, businesses and governments responsible for the invasion of Denlar and the murder of its people. Avengers are filled with hate and obsessed with revenge. A common battle cry is, “for every Denlech life lost, the enemy (NE and CCW) shall lose one hundred.” Considering more than 10,000 Denlech have perished thus far, the Avengers have a lot of bloodshed ahead of them.

Natural Abilities: Roll on the same Special Abilities Table as Denlech Settlers.

O.C.C. Bonuses: +1 on initiative, +2D6 to S.D.C. and +2 to save vs Horror Factor.

O.C.C. Skills:

Language and Literacy: Native: Trade Four at 98%.

Basic Electronics (+5%)

Computer Operation (+10%)

Horsemanship: General

Land Navigation (+15%)

Mathematics: Basic (+15%)

Navigation (+15%)

Pilot: Two of choice (+20%).

Pilot: Small Spacecraft/Fighter (+26%)

Radio: Basic (+20%)

Sensory Equipment (+15%)

W.P. Ancient: Two of choice.

W.P. Energy Pistol

W.P. Energy Rifle

W.P. Heavy M.D. Weapons

Hand to Hand: Assassin

R.C.C. Related Skills: Select seven other skills at level one, +1 additional skill at levels 2, 5, 8 and 12. All new skills start at first level proficiency.

Communications: Any (+10%).

Cowboy: None.

Domestic: Any.

Electrical: Any.

Espionage: Any (+20%).

Horsemanship: General only.

Mechanical: Any.

Medical: First Aid only.

Military: Any (+15%).

Physical: Any, except Acrobatics.

Pilot: Any (+10%)

Pilot Related: Any.

Rogue: Any (+10%).

Science: None.

Technical: Any (+5%).

W.P. Ancient: Any.

W.P. Modern: Any.

Wilderness: Any (+5%).

Secondary Skills: Select four Secondary Skills from the list found on page 300 of *Rifts Ultimate Edition* at level one. Select one additional Secondary Skills at levels 3, 7, 9 and 13.

Equipment: Combat fatigues and/or dark jumpsuit for espionage work, EVA spacesuit (for piloting spacecraft), boots, surgical gloves, a variety of other clothes to blend in with the public (steal whatever they might need for a specific job), handheld computer, handheld communicator, pocket tool kit, laser dis-

tancer, passive nightvision goggles, binoculars, goggles, sunglasses, cigarette lighter, and some personal items.

Weapons: Survival knife (2D4 S.D.C.), Vibro-Knife or Vibro-Sword, 1D4+1 explosives (typically hand grenades, but may include one Fusion Block or other type of explosive), and one weapon for every W.P. plus 1D4+4 additional ammo clips for Modern W.P.s known to the character. **Note:** Most are weapons of Naruni Enterprises and the CCW as Avengers find it fitting that the enemy die by their own weapons.

Also has access to whatever ground vehicles, spaceships and gear are available to that particular terrorist cell or which can be stolen or taken by force.

Bionics & Cybernetics: None to start, and tends to avoid them.

Money: Starts with 1D6x1,000 in credits and 3D6x1,000 in stolen goods, including Killaryte, weapons, ammo, and gear taken from the enemy.

Allies: Anyone who hates the CCW, the Catyr and Naruni Enterprises, as well as Space Pirates, figures of the criminal underworld and other evil and murderous beings willing to fight at their side to exact revenge or for money and personal gain. **Note:** A handful of Keepers of the Forbidden are part of Avenger terrorist cells. A typical Denlech Avengers assault team or assassination squad is 5-10. A cell can be as small as 5-6 Avengers or as many as 32, seldom larger. However, a cell of any size may have a wide array of "associates" and "contacts."

Enemies: Naruni Enterprises, the CCW, Catyr and pretty much every outsider trying to invade their world.

Habitat: Planet Denlar, but can be found anywhere they can hurt Naruni Enterprises or the CCW.

People of the Thundercloud

The presumably indigenous people who already inhabit the Thundercloud Galaxy are among the most unusual and unique of the Three Galaxies. Few know their people's origin, and even the beings who are found to inhabit a number of planets, sometimes in entirely different star systems, have no idea their species exists on other worlds. They are shocked by such revelations and are without an explanation. In most cases, even their creation myths do not account for their existence on more than one planet. Furthermore, the cultures of these identical species are often completely different from one planet to the next, as if there was never any common starting point between them. On one world, they may be peaceful, on another warlike. On one they may be a tribal people with low technology, on another they may be much more advanced. Again, this smacks of Gene-Tech experiments or lost space colonies that, once they became isolated, devolved into very different types of cultures based on environment, leadership and an array of other variables.

A few of the most notable inhabitants of the Thundercloud Galaxy are described in the pages that follow. **Note:** Game Masters, feel free to come up with your own species of intelligent life forms. To help you on that front, see the **Alien Creation Tables** found on page 104 of **Rifts® Dimension Book Two: Phase World®**. Unless noted otherwise, it is assumed that all civilizations speak, read, and write some kind of native language at 90% or better.

Notable People of the Thundercloud Galaxy – Listed in Alphabetical Order

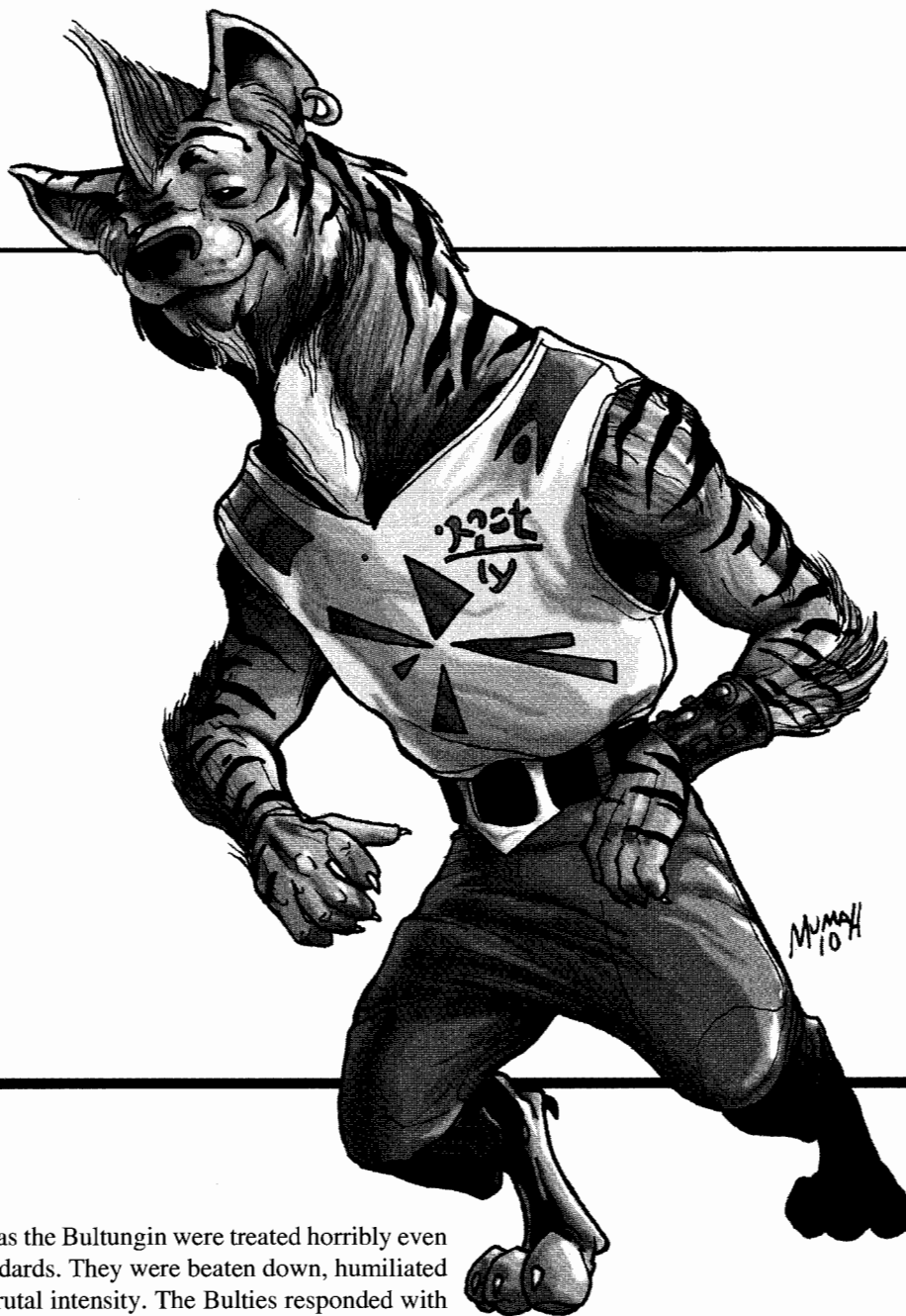
Bultungin	Mariman
CheDive	Rompo
Denlech (Described elsewhere)	Shakdan
Dominators (Described elsewhere)	Shing
Elder Races (Described elsewhere)	Trensik
Exiles, The	Tsongkuba
Gene-Tech (Described elsewhere)	Whetu
Kasaro	Zuwadza
Kujamoya	

Bultungin – Transgalactic Empire

The Bultungin are indigenous to the Thundercloud Galaxy, but their natural home world is long forgotten. Bulties, as they are often called, are one of the slave races that have been liberated by the Transgalactic Empire's campaign of conquest against the Splugorth. They are werebeasts with two forms. Their animal form is almost identical to an Earth hyena, except much larger. Their most familiar form among other bipeds is that of a *humanoid hyena* with short, stocky legs, thin waist, broad shoulders, long thick neck, and a hyena-like head. In this humanoid form, they are bipedal, walk upright, and though their heads and faces are more animal than human, they have the full range of human expression and speak in a clear, human sounding voice (which can be a bit eerie). Their arms are noticeably longer than their legs, and Bultungin fingers are short and tipped with sharp claws. They have large ears, small eyes, and a body covered in light brown or tan fur with various white and black markings that can range from spots to stripes. Males have a mane of longer fur around their necks and on the top of their head; the mane bristles when angry or scared.

Bultungin were discovered and enslaved by the Splugorth tens of thousands of years ago. Back then, they were aggressive hunters and carrion feeders that would steal food from other, larger predators, as well as hunt and kill their own food. They traveled in packs and were quite the savage, primitive hunters. Desslyth the Elder decided these creatures, with their dual body forms, near invulnerability to damage, and their Supernatural Strength and Endurance, would make excellent warrior slaves and workers. As a result, they were captured and ripped from their native planet, bred in slave pens and scattered across the Kingdom of Desslyth. Though the Bultungin had their moments in combat and made better bushwhackers and assassins than warriors, it took several millennia to beat their vicious, predatory nature out of them and domesticate the beasts.

What the Splugorth didn't expect is that Bultungin can be stubborn, slothful and conniving when they want to be. Thus, they were somewhat unpredictable, dangerous and always irreverent, none of which were appreciated or tolerated by the Minions



of Splugorth. So it was the Bultungin were treated horribly even by Splugorthian standards. They were beaten down, humiliated and punished with brutal intensity. The Bulties responded with easygoing indifference, passive-aggressive retaliation, and, when the opportunity presented itself, lashed out with a ferocity that could be unexpected and deadly. Hyena-Men can seem easygoing, docile and obedient one minute and attack or make an escape the next. Over time, Bulties were domesticated and made subservient – to a point. Even the most submissive Bultungin still exhibits a certain arrogance and disdain for his master (or teammates, as the case may be), and they have a nasty habit of stealing a little bit more than their rightful share, dodging work, and seeking revenge whenever they can. Thus, even a Bultie of a good alignment can have a mean or spiteful streak in him.

Whatever their culture might have once been, it is long forgotten. All Bultungin know is the brutal hand of servitude under the Splugorth and now the Kreeghor. Too lazy to learn complicated or demanding skills like mechanics, medicine, electronics, or science, Bulties prefer work and occupations that provide freedom, flexibility and a chance to use their sly wit and cunning. This makes them ideal for any number of criminal occupations, spy work, assassination, enforcement, mercenary work, adventuring,

big game hunting, wilderness scouting, and similar. They love to gamble, but never know when to quit. They also love to drink, eat and party. Thus, many are thugs, thieves, bushwhackers, drifters and vagabonds. Some people are quick to label Bulties as nothing more than galactic trash. That's a mistake, because they are quite intelligent and given the right motivation, can be productive workers, outstanding fighters, good spies (especially good at following people without being noticed), and even a loyal friend or employee. In fact, win a Bultie's true friendship, and there is nothing he won't do for you, including risking his own life or fortune.

Bultungin [pronounced: bul-TUN-gin]

Also known as Bulties and Hyena-Men.

Race: Werebeast, which is a supernatural being linked to the mortal world. The creature has a limited life span, grows old and dies.

Alignment: Any, but leans toward Anarchist (30%), Aberrant (20%), Miscreant (25%) and Diabolic (10%).

Attributes: I.Q. 2D6+5, M.E. 2D6+2, M.A. 2D6+1, P.S. 3D6+12 (Supernatural), P.P. 3D6+4, P.E. 3D6+5, P.B. 2D6+2, Spd 3D6+3 in their hybrid humanoid form, but Spd 50 (35 mph/56 km) in their animal form.

Size: 5-6 feet tall (1.5 to 1.8 m) in their humanoid form. Four feet (1.2 m) at the shoulders in animal form.

Weight: 130 to 200 lbs (58.5 to 90 kg); all muscle.

Hit Points (Special): 1D6x10 Hit Points +P.E. attribute number to start. The character gets an additional 1D6+2 Hit Points per each level of experience starting with level two. Also see *Natural Armor Rating*.

S.D.C.: Not applicable to werebeasts.

Natural Armor Rating (A.R.)/Limited Invulnerability: Special! The Bultungin are a type of werebeast, making them invulnerable to most weapons, including Mega-Damage energy blasts, M.D. explosives, rail gun rounds, bullets, fire, heat, cold, poison and disease. Deadly radiation only inflicts 10% its normal damage. They can even survive in the vacuum of space for a short time. However, where most other werebeasts are harmed by silver weapons, the Bultungin are not. Instead, their supernatural weaknesses are wood and steel. A weapon fashioned from either of these two sources inflicts, double damage directly to the Bultungin's Hit Points.

M.D.C. (Special): See Hit Points.

P.P.E.: 2D4x10 base.

Disposition: Varies with each individual, but in general, Bultungin tend to be lazy opportunists who get aggressive and proactive when there is opportunity before them and when they feel cornered or threatened. Though Bulties can seem to be the embodiment of laid back, when cornered, angry and in combat, they fight like mad dogs. Once they chase away or defeat their opponent, or get what they want, most Bulties are happy to get back to more pleasurable activities. They tend to rely on their natural abilities, but like Vibro-Blades, energy weapons and creature comforts. They love food and drink, recover from alcohol in a quarter the time of a human, and can out-eat and drink a human by three times.

Average Life Span: Short for a lycanthrope species; average 75 +2D6 years.

Experience Level: 1D6, or as set by the Game Master for NPCs. Player characters should start at level one. **Note:** Use the same experience table as the Galactic Tracer to determine level advancement.

Natural Abilities: Can speak while in animal form, Prowl 80%, Swim 50%, track by smell 70%, Nightvision 300 feet (91.5 m), Bio-Regenerate Hit Points at a rate of 1D6 per melee round.

Shape-Change: Hyena (Special). The Bultungin can transform from their hybrid humanoid-hyena form into their pure animal shape in 15 seconds (one melee round), and there is no limit to the number of times they transform. They can maintain either shape indefinitely, except during a full moon, during which the character must assume and maintain his animal form from sunset to sunrise. While in this primordial, full moon state of mind, reduce the character's mental attributes by half, he is highly aggressive (+1 attack per melee round, +1 on initiative and +2 to strike), has a hunger for raw meat, and in a fight during a full moon, there is a chance he'll kill and eat part of his opponent, even if that person was a friend or acquaintance. (**Note:** 01-60% Maintains control and can stop any time. 61-80% Beats his opponent into unconsciousness or down to 2D6

Hit Points/M.D.C.; smart opponents will play dead. 81-00% *Loss of control*; Fights until he is restrained, rendered unconscious or killed, or until his opponent is slain, at which point he proceeds to eat 1D4x10% of his victim, savoring every bite.)

Animal Bonuses: +1 on initiative, +1 attack per melee round, and a bite attack does damage per Supernatural P.S. +1D6 damage (can be an S.D.C. nip or an M.D. attack), leap 7 feet (2.1 m) high and 15 feet (4.6 m) across, track by smell 55% (+20% to follow the scent of blood or decaying food). The size of the werebeast hyena is about that of a Saint Bernard, which is larger than the normal animal. The Bultungin retains his ability to speak, as well as his memories and skills even in animal form, though skill performance is limited by the character's animal body. A hyena's paw cannot hold or fire a gun nor open a door. Skills like driving or working a keyboard that require human fingers and dexterity are -70% in animal form. **Walking Garbage Disposals (Special):** Bultungin can eat and survive on almost anything, including rotting, maggot covered garbage, spoiled meat, skin, fur, bone, horns, teeth, old shoes and furniture cushions. A Bultungin can digest almost anything except wood, rocks and steel. Though vulnerable to wood, they can eat fruit, nuts and vegetables, and have no qualms about eating carrion or rooting through a garbage heap in order to find a meal. Thus, many are surprised that these walking garbage disposals have a keen appreciation for fine food, wine and drink. (**Note:** Impervious to poison and disease.)

Limited Invulnerability (Special): See Natural Armor Rating for more details.

Vulnerabilities: Bultungin are vulnerable to magic, psionic attacks, and weapons made from steel or wood. Powerful Mega-Damage explosions may knock them down or stun them (use the same table as found for vampires).

Attacks per Melee: As per Hand to Hand Combat skill, +1 in animal form.

Bonuses: +3 on Perception Rolls, +1 on initiative, +2 to strike and parry, +3 to dodge and pull punch, +1 to disarm, and +2 to save vs Horror Factor; all are in addition to any likely attribute bonuses.

Mega-Damage: Bite and claw attacks do damage as per Supernatural Strength, +1D6 M.D. for a bite attack. The Bultungin have a powerful bite, but also have incredible control over it and can inflict S.D.C. or Mega-Damage as they see fit.

R.C.C. Skills: Limited. Speak their native language, Trade Four, and Dragonese at 98%, Computer Operation (+10%), Hand to Hand (roll percentile: 01-25% Basic. 26-50% Expert. 51-75% Assassin. 76-00% Martial Arts), Land Navigation (+16%), Tracking (+15%), Track Animals (+30%), Tailing (+30%), and three Rogue skills of choice (+10%), plus a total of six additional Secondary Skills at first level. Pick two more Secondary Skills at levels 4, 7, 9 and 12. Select Secondary Skills from the list found on page 300 of *Rifts® Ultimate Edition*.

Occupations: Do not select an O.C.C., only the R.C.C. Skills, above, apply. Now that the Bultungin are a free people, they often find work as hired thugs, adventurers, assassins, bartenders, bouncers, guards, mercenaries, scavengers, snitches, tails (i.e. someone who follows a specified target and reports where he goes, who he meets with, etc.), thieves, Runners, Space Pirates, vagabond workers, and Wilderness Scouts. Many can be found in the ranks of the TGE's Army of the Thundercloud.



Equipment, Gear and Money: As per their work and whatever they can scrounge.

Cybernetics and Bionics: None. Avoids them, plus the regenerative abilities of their bodies reject bionics.

Allies: Other Bultungin mainly, but they also enjoy the company of humans, Wulfen and other canine humanoids, Kreeghor (who they consider to be their liberators and great, if scary, warriors), and Noro. They feel most comfortable around humans, Noro and canine humanoids, but tolerate most sentient species, the more human-looking the better. It is the nature of Bultungin to be wary of everyone, and tend to be a bit skittish and cautious around people other than their own kind.

Enemies: The Splugorth and their minions are the most hated and Lord Desslyth still has several million Bultungin slaves. Bulties hate Ratanoids and the two competitive scavengers always clash. Hyena-Men have an instinctive distrust and fear of felines, be they sentient beings or wild beasts, as they are regarded as natural enemies and rivals (they even hate house cats).

Habitat: The largest populations are found on the planets the TGE has liberated from Lord Desslyth as well as what remains of the Kingdom of Desslyth. However, in recent decades, they have begun showing up on space stations and among space communities, as well as among Space Pirates, Spacers, Runners, mercenaries and adventurer groups throughout the Thundercloud as well as some of the outer rim worlds of the Corkscrew Galaxy and even Phase World. Of course, there are those who have drifted with the tide of opportunity to be found almost anywhere in the Three Galaxies.

CheDive

Consortium of Civilized Worlds

If any indigenous people of the Thundercloud Galaxy screams of genetic manipulation and experimentation, it is the CheDive (pronounced She-DEEVE), who appear to be a human-scorpion hybrid. The CheDive have a humanoid shape with two arms and two legs, but also a large, segmented, prehensile scorpion's tail. The tail ends in a wicked, hooked stinger that resembles the beak of predatory bird. It is their natural defense and can be used in a fight to punch, swat, stab, slice or poison an opponent. The scorpion tail can be curled tight behind the CheDive to fit as a ball against the small of their back. At a quick glance, the curled tail may appear to be a backpack, bedroll or protrusion from their armor. When agitated, angry, frightened or preparing for combat, the tail uncurls to swing loose and strike. The tail also provides extra balance and a fifth limb to help them climb. Though their face and head is completely human-looking, their body more resembles that of a giant insect or arachnid. The CheDive's natural body armor is a shiny gray or jet black exoskeleton that provides them with natural Mega-Damage protection. Damage inflicted to their carapace heals quickly, and once healed, you cannot tell it was ever damaged. Young CheDive molt, shedding their old armor as they grow and mature in a similar way as some Earth spiders and crustaceans. This happens over a 24 hour period leaving behind what is, in effect, a full body cast. The shed armor is thin and hard, but is used by the CheDive to make simple tools, utensils, weapons and shields. The young shed their armor twice

a year until the age of 20. Adults also shed their old hide, but only once every 1D6+4 years.

CheDive hands have two large fingers and a thumb; each curved and vaguely claw-like. The feet have two toes and a similar clawed appearance. The hands and feet are adapted for scaling the low mountains and rock formations of their native planet, which resembles Earth's own Nevada and Utah with bluffs, buttes and mountains. The heavy armor of the hands and fingers means they can parry blades and other weapons, and punch with the weight and power of a ball-peen hammer. (A punch or swat from the tail is like getting hit by a sledgehammer.) The shape of the fingers are such that they are excellent at snagging and holding onto weapons enabling the CheDive warrior to twist and pull to disarm an opponent.

The CheDive's unarmored, human head may seem terribly vulnerable to attack, but this is not true. What looks like long, spiked hair on the head (black or dark blue for males, red or blond for females) is actually hard, quill-like M.D.C. bristles that protect the top, sides and neck. Furthermore, the head sits low on the body and is protected by their plates on their shoulders. When both of the large hands are cupped over the face it is 100% protected without the slightest gap, while covering the face with one hand affords 70% protection. The scorpion tail can also block and parry attacks directed at the head.

The CheDive originate from a planet in the Gaelra Arm of the Thundercloud named after their god, Serket, the All-Mother. Serket is a planet of extremes. The lowlands are rocky deserts and scrublands scarred with deep canyons and plateaus and dotted with buttes and towers of stone. The highlands are rocky hills that turn into low mountains. It is up in the mountains and mountain valleys that visitors find lush alpine forests, rivers and an abundance of wildlife. Supremely adapted to their environment, the CheDive are natural acrobats and climbers. Though they have no insect ability to cling to walls, you'd never know it by how fast they run along mountain cliffs or how well they scale the walls of sheer cliffs.

CheDive may look like monsters and when on the attack, create a terrifying visage, however, they are intelligent and compassionate people who care and love deeply, work together as a community, and never attack outsiders without good cause. They live in small to moderate family clans that number from 20-400. Though a tribal society, each clan claims an area of land for themselves, grows crops and raises livestock as well as hunt, fish and gather fruits and nuts. Other clans are not usually hostile and are allowed to travel through areas claimed by other tribes. Out of respect for the people of that area, the outsiders make no attempt to hunt or take anything from the people until they are in an uninhabited zone. Presumably, the CheDive's own bodies limit their technology, as their hands are not well suited for fine work or great dexterity.

The CheDive are known to inhabit nine different worlds. Their creation myth tells of how their goddess, Serket, used magic to open portals in the sky to carry them to 32 worlds. If there are more worlds inhabited by the Scorpion People, they have yet to be found. Of the nine, all were only mildly surprised to learn of each other's existence as all share the same goddess and creation myth. All nine have joined the CCW, have allowed human colonists to create small communities on their worlds, and are letting the CCW help advance their civilization. A number of CheDive have joined CCW exploration programs as well as the CAF (Consortium Armed Forces) to see more of the Three Galaxies. As a low-tech civilization without the knowledge or use of magic, until approached by the CCW, the CheDive had never met any alien

beings. Since humans of the CCW and Scorpion People have the same facial features, the CheDive have accepted them as "Little Brothers and Sisters."

CheDive [pronounced: She-DEEVE]

Also known as: Scorpion People.

Alignment: Any, but lean toward Principled (20%), Scrupulous (35%), Unprincipled (20%) and Aberrant (10%).

Attributes: I.Q. 2D6+6, M.E. 2D6+5, M.A. 2D6+4, P.S. 4D6+4 (Robot), P.P. 3D6+5, P.E. 3D6+4, P.B. 1D6+4, Spd 3D6+16 (running and climbing).

Size: 6-7 feet tall (1.6 to 2.1 m), though they tend to slouch and crouch, making them appear to be a head or two shorter and roughly human in size.

Weight: 180-250 pounds (81 to 112.5 kg); the tail alone adds 50 lbs (22.5 kg).

Hit Points and S.D.C.: See M.D.C.

M.D.C. by Location:

Head – 35

Hands (2) – 55 each

Arms (2) – 100 each

Legs (2) – 190 each

Feet (2) – 100 each

Tail – 200

* Main Body – 3D4x10+90

* Add 2D6 M.D.C. to the Main Body for each new level of experience, starting at level two. CheDive Bio-Regenerate 4D6 M.D.C. per hour, see *Natural Abilities* for complete details. (In an S.D.C. environment, M.D.C. of appendages become S.D.C. and half the Main Body M.D.C. becomes Hit Points and half S.D.C. CheDive have a Natural A.R. of 14.)

Horror Factor: 12

P.P.E.: 3D6 base.

Disposition: CheDive have excellent memories, curious and clever minds, and love to play, perform, tell stories, sing and dance. Though superb warriors and capable scouts, the CheDive try to avoid violence and war, and never engage in brutality or torture. That having been said, they will not hesitate to fight to protect themselves or their loved ones, and will fight to help others or champion a good cause.

Average Life Span: 40 +3D6 years.

Experience Level: As per O.C.C.

Natural Abilities: Mega-Damage exoskeleton, resistant to heat, fire and cold (half damage), resistant to poison (half damage and half penalties for half the usual duration), superior balance, acrobatic, excellent climbers, and capable fighters, plus the following:

Bio-Regeneration (Special): Recovers lost M.D.C. at a rate of 4D6 points per hour. Regenerates a lost finger or two in 48 hours; a lost hand or foot in 72 hours; a lost arm, leg, tongue, nose or ear in 1D4+1 weeks and a lost tail in 1D6+2 weeks. Cannot regenerate eyes or internal organs, though the latter heal four times faster than humans.

Natural Acrobats and Climbers (Special): CheDive can leap and scurry along mountain trails like mountain goats and climb sheer walls of stone at full speed without fear of losing balance, slipping or falling. Their tails help with both balance and climbing, they can leap 10 feet (3 m) high and 20 feet (6.1 m) across, are +4 to roll with impact (half damage from falls with a successful roll of 12 or higher), and get the Climb-

ing and Acrobatics skills, both with a +30% bonus. This gives CheDive a tremendous advantage in mountain and urban (tall buildings) combat environments.

Poison Stinger (Special): See Mega-Damage for details.

Also see Psionics.

Attacks per Melee: As per Hand to Hand Combat skill, +2 attacks per melee for males and +1 attack per melee for females and juveniles.

Bonuses: +3 on Perception Rolls, +1 on initiative, +2 to strike and parry, +3 to dodge and pull punch, +1 to disarm, and +2 to save vs Horror Factor; all are in addition to any likely attribute bonuses.

Mega-Damage: As per Robot equivalent strength, +1D6 from punches, +2D4 from kicks, and +3D6 M.D. from a blunt tail strike. A stabbing or slicing tail strike inflicts damage per Robot P.S. +4D6 M.D.

A *poison stinger attack* does a maximum damage of 2D6 M.D. from the physical attack and as little as 1D4 S.D.C., but even a deliberate poisoned "scratch" results in paralysis unless the victim saves vs nonlethal poison; must roll a 16 or higher to save. The sting must penetrate the skin to poison. The first melee round after being poisoned, the victim feels as if fire runs through his veins; reduce Spd and all combat bonuses by half. The next melee round also reduce attacks per melee to two, the character loses initiative (if he had it), loses all combat bonuses, -30% to skill performance, and the victim has trouble speaking (spell casters can only cast one spell that melee round). At the beginning of the third melee round (30 seconds after being stung), the victim drops to his knees and falls flat, paralyzed, unable to speak or move for 1D4 melee rounds. Multiple stings do NOT have an accumulated effect and do not add to the duration of paralysis.

After the victim recovers (presuming he is not immediately bound and taken captive or slain), subsequent stings do damage and inflict movement and combat penalties, but do not cause paralysis. Instead reduce Spd, the number of attacks (and number of spells one can cast per melee), and combat bonuses by half. Duration of the penalties is 1D6+1 melee round per each failed save vs poisonous sting. Note, however, that after the poison has left the victim's system 1D6+6 hours later, he is again susceptible to the paralyzing toxin.

Vulnerabilities: None per se, though their large, clumsy hands limit what they use as well as their technological advancement, and their appearance and nature is close to impossible to disguise. To say a CheDive stands out in a crowd is an understatement.

Available O.C.C.s: Priest (of Serket), Scholar, Wilderness Scout, Vagabond, Spacer, Space Pirate, CAF Trooper, Colonial Soldier, Mercenary Soldier, and Explorer are some of the more common ones, though CheDive are also attracted to all manner of occupations involving entertainment, storytelling, and scholastic pursuits; most CheDive women and a third of the males have remarkable, professional quality singing voices. The CheDive have no aversion to space travel and their inquisitive minds make space exploration very appealing. **Magic:** By O.C.C. only, but the use of magic is truly rare among the CheDive as somehow it seems too alien and unnatural to them.

Psionics: All CheDive have a few psionic abilities.

Male CheDive: Empathy (4), Intuitive Combat (10), Mind Block (4), Sixth Sense (2), Speed Reading (2) and Total Re-

call (2). Base I.S.P. is M.E. attribute number x2, +1D6 I.S.P. per level of experience.

Female CheDive: Detect Psionics (6), Exorcism (10), Healing Touch (10), Mind Block (4), Psychic Diagnosis (4), Stop Bleeding (4), and Telepathy (4). Base I.S.P. is M.E. attribute number x3, +1D6 I.S.P. per level of experience.

Equipment, Gear and Money: As per O.C.C. CheDive have adapted to civilization quickly and comfortably. **Note:** Weapons, tools and equipment must be customized to accommodate the CheDive's oversized and three-appendage hands

Cybernetics and Bionics: None. Avoids them, plus the regenerative abilities of their bodies reject most bionic systems.

Allies: Humans, Noro, and Wulfen. Some CheDive dislike the Seljuk while others get along with them quite well. CheDive who wish to embrace and emulate humanity often become quite chummy with Whetu Servitors, hoping to pick up a few tips.

Enemies: As allies of the Consortium, its enemies are the CheDive's enemies. Thus, the Kreeghor and TGE affiliate races are enemies, as are the Minions of Splugorth, demons and Deevils. In many ways, the CheDive are creatures of nature, place great emphasis on freedom, and take an instant dislike to any beings who would enslave or torment others. In this regard, the CheDive are conflicted about what's going on with the Denlech and are not fond of Naruni Enterprises.

Habitat: So far, they have been found only in the Gaelra Arm of the Thundercloud.

Note: Many xenobiologists are convinced the CheDive are an engineered life form. It is interesting to note that depictions of the goddess Serket bear a strong resemblance to a Gene-Tech.

Denlech Settlers

Independent – Ancient Human Colonists

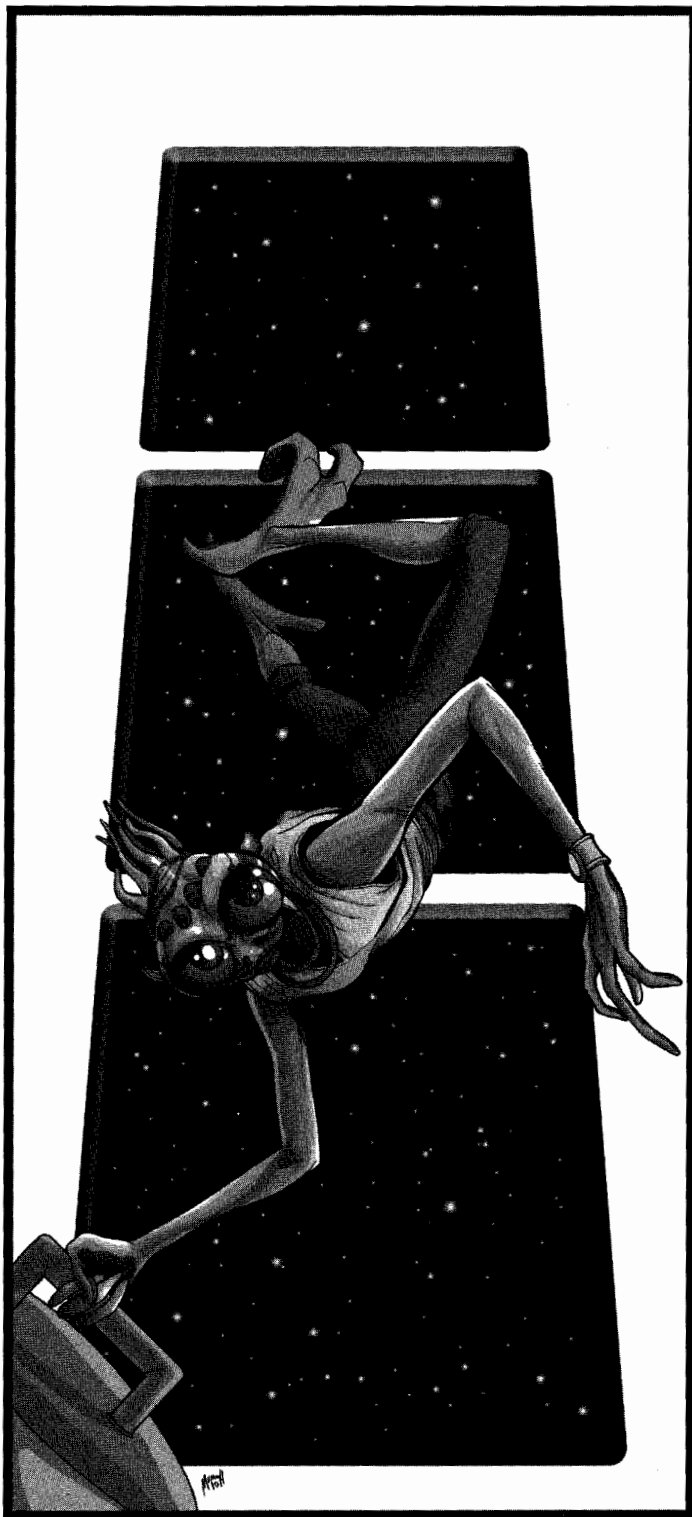
The Denlech are human colonists descended from the old *Human Alliance* before it formed part of the CCW. Denlech Settlers are covered in detail in the section about notable political powers in the Thundercloud Galaxy. See page 42.

As for humans in general, other sentient beings tend to think of *humans* and their many variations and mutations as "rats." Like rats, humans seem to be found everywhere, especially at space stations, cities and anywhere one finds the trappings of civilization. If they aren't indigenous to a planet or colonists spreading their influence across the Megaverse, they are traders, trappers, mercenaries, pirates, explorers or adventurers. Humans represent 12% of the recorded population of the Three Galaxies, making them one of the most prodigious and common sentient species.

The Exiles

Independent – New Enemy or Roguish Player Character

The Exiles are an enigma. Ask one person about them and you might be told they are heroes and champions of the downtrodden. Ask another and you might hear they are liars and thieves. Someone else might tell you they are space gypsies or pirates, while another might tell you they are well meaning waifs wandering the galaxy in search of acceptance by others. Still others might



warn you they are madmen and cutthroats. In truth, they are all these things and more. Exiles are habitual liars, hot-tempered and unpredictable. They are part con-artist, part thief, part raider, part alien invader, part insane and all trouble.

Exiles, with their big eyes, round features and thin bodies, look sweet and innocent. They play that impression like a maestro violinist to win sympathy, trust and favor. They bat their big green or warm amber eyes and feign innocence with consummate skill. All the while the Exile is taking in his or her surroundings, assessing the situation, making mental note of locks and security systems, valuables and opportunity, while they are reading the facial expressions and body language of those around them. Like a fly to honey,

an Exile zooms in on the most heroic, compassionate, and gullible person (or persons) in a group, turns on the "Ah shucks" charm, and slides into the role of kind, innocent stranger, or kind and caring stranger who wants to help any way he can. Part of this role is pretending to be the humble and suffering hero who will give you the shirt off his back or his own meal even though he hasn't eaten in days. That's just how good, kind and caring the noble Exiles are. Bat an eyelash and flash a sincere smile.

Many use the name *Exile* to win over a person and tell a sad story of the noble refugee, fighting against all odds to survive in a cruel universe while helping other people in greater need.

"Oh, you might know my people as the Exiles," the story begins, "but please, do not judge me by the harsh stories you may have heard about us." The Exiles paint a tale of tragedy, survival and heroic spirit. According to them, they were once the second-class citizens of an advanced civilization. After generations of mistreatment, their people, the Justicene, rose up to demand equality and fair treatment. They rebelled without violence by refusing to work under the yoke of tyranny. Their superiors were not so kind. First, the Justicene were beaten. When that failed to stop the rebellion, hundreds of millions of them were gathered up, placed on old cargo spacecraft, space arks and floating platforms all strung together, and taken to deep space. It was there, their fate was revealed. Since they were not happy with their lives, they were forever *exiled* from their home world, and cast adrift without any means of propulsion, and abandoned. Though they had been left with some provisions and manufacturing capabilities, there was not enough and millions perished as they scrambled to provide for everyone.

15 years later, as they drifted outside the Thundercloud Galaxy, the Exiles saw the shock wave caused by the Black Hole Projector that destroyed the Dominators. Their home world, located in Dominator space, perished along with the monsters. Though a fitting end to an unjust people, the Justicene mourned the loss of their planet and civilization – just one of many caught in the fall-out of the war as collateral damage. Of course, they would not learn the full details of all this until many millennia later when they returned to the Thundercloud Galaxy. For much of the next 50,000 years, the Justicene drifted across space. Over time, they were able to incorporate space junk and alien technology into their floating artificial world. They developed their technology and were able to design spacecraft of their own.

Where their sea of spacecraft are now is a secret, for the Justicene have suffered at the hands of many other civilizations since their initial exile. It seems no civilization has been willing to accept billions of space nomads without a world of their own. And so the Justicene have been rejected, exiled and persecuted many times. Thus, even they call themselves "Exiles." A name they wear like a badge of honor. This rejection has, supposedly, made the Exiles compassionate for other people who are bullied, dominated or manipulated by more advanced and powerful civilizations. Now, the long suffering Exiles are champions of the underdog. They are intolerant of injustice and stand with the little guy, and indigenous people being run over roughshod by invading colonists with superior technology. Exiles fight tyranny and inequality wherever they find it.

Or so their battle cry goes. Whether any of this is true is anyone's guess.

While Exiles often try to play the role of hero, it is not one that fits them well. Nor is it an identity that can be maintained for long. Their true nature of scalawag and miscreant comes out all

too easily. Exiles are opportunists who profit from the misfortune of others and are masterful instigators and rabble-rousers. They love nothing more than to stir up trouble, create dissension and distrust, and fan the flames of anger and rebellion. Insurrection and conflict are like sweet nectar to the Exiles, for in the chaos it is they who raid the coffers of all parties and loot the dead. Exiles care only about themselves and their fellow Justicene. Anyone else is a sucker and mark to be conned, cheated, robbed and taken advantage. If the mark wises up too soon, an Exile tries to turn his comrades against him, frame him for crimes he didn't commit, or bop him on the head and get out while the going is good.

The Scramble in the Thundercloud Galaxy, with all its confusion, lack of communication and injustice, is a breeding ground for chaos and insurrection, making it an Exile's paradise. World after world, colony after colony, is ripe for the picking.

Here is the scam: One set of Exiles sweeps in and instigates trouble among the indigenous population. They whisper in the people's ear as concerned, "impartial" observers. They empathize and sympathize with the people, and commiserate with their situation. The Exiles quietly point out injustices, real and imagined, bring tempers to a boil, and speak of the people taking a stand against the "alien invaders." Then, they sit back and wait. Stirring the pot to keep hostilities simmering. Every new injustice is exaggerated. Every attempt by the other party to make peace is sabotage. When tempers boil over and violence erupts, another set of Exiles seizes the moment to swoop in like avenging angels. With their superior space fighters and weapons, they push the "alien invaders" (i.e. the colonists) back and give the indigenous people a taste of victory. The Exiles, sabers rattling, speak of how they'll stand with the people until they have won their freedom.

It is all a ruse, of course. One that paints the Exiles as heroes (something they seem to aspire toward but have no idea what the word or concept means), and gives them just cause – in the name of the people – to attack, raid and loot the colonists, their supply lines, cargo ships and the space fleets who defend them. They have no fear of the CCW, TGE, Naruni Enterprises or the Splugorh, and seem to take delight in rattling their cages. Making the fight a political issue, and championing a downtrodden people who have asked for their help amid claims of injustice, prevents the Exiles from being branded common brigands and Space Pirates. Instead they paint themselves as heroic champions or some sort of vigilante force that has appointed itself the "protectors of those who cannot stand against tyranny themselves."

Since nobody knows what's going on most of the time, and so much injustice abounds in the Thundercloud, nobody can outright refute their claims. Thus, the Exiles wander the galaxy talking trash about the big corporations and intergalactic power blocs, stir up trouble at colonies, instigate revolts and conflict among indigenous people, and seem entertained by the conflict and angst of other people. When nobody is looking they rob and steal, cheat, lie and try to profit from the misfortune of all parties involved. All of this gives them carte blanche to raid, rob and cheat everyone. When one side or the other seems to be a decisive winner, or peace is managed despite the Exiles efforts to prevent it, or the two warring sides realize they've been set up by the Exiles, the villains vanish, moving on to find a new sucker to scam.

When not causing insurrection and war, Exiles scatter into small groups, pairs and lone individuals who go around conning, robbing and engaging in criminal activity, including piracy and hit and run raids. Again, because they pretend to be innocent, weak and help-

less, many people are caught off guard by how well they fight, especially when clad in power armor or sitting in the seat of an Exile fighter or other warship. Exile technology is comparable to anything the CCW, TGE, Bushi Federation and Naruni Enterprises has to offer. That means cutting edge, fast and deadly. In fact, though NE and the rest would hate to admit it, Exile technology is more advanced than their own. This high-tech edge and surprising combat prowess of the Exiles often catches victims off-guard and results in an Exile victory. To make matters worse, Exiles don't fear any of the galactic powers, so nobody is off limits. A band of Exile Space Pirates will consider raiding, robbing or conning the Minions of Splugorh, the Kreeghor, the CCW, the UWW, Dominators, Deevils, demons, mercenaries, adventurers, colonists and primitive natives alike. Sometimes it almost seems as if they take pleasure from getting the upper hand over everyone. This makes them true exiles disliked and unwanted by everyone.

The only good thing can one say about the Exiles is they are not cold-blooded killers. Most are satisfied with, and even prefer, defeating, besting and embarrassing an opponent rather than killing him. If they can cripple a spacecraft rather than destroy it, they will. People may die as a result, especially when left adrift and on their own after an Exile attack and their cargo being plundered, but Exiles won't destroy the ship nor kill the crew. And Exiles absolutely NEVER engage in the slave trade, and have been known to rescue slaves they find as cargo being taken to market. It is rare for an Exile to take a life even when he has the justification to do so, and rarer still for one to kill out of revenge or anger. Don't start thinking the Exiles might be crooks with a heart of gold. They aren't. With few exceptions, Exiles are self-serving and cold-hearted con-artists and brigands always playing an angle. They are skilled at figuring out and telling people what they want to hear, as well as masters of misdirection and appearing innocent when they are the true villain behind the scenes. An Exile is your friend until he doesn't need you anymore, and then he betrays and robs you, and probably leaves you holding the bag for crimes he committed. Exiles love to plant false evidence and lead authorities on a wild goose chase (misdirection) to give themselves a chance to escape or make one more score before they disappear. It is said an Exile would betray his father to save his own skin, and sell his own mother if the profit was substantial enough.

When backed into a corner or directly confronted, however, an Exile can go off like a powder keg and behave like a crazy man. As noted prior, Exiles are excellent fighters who battle to win, which means they fight dirty and cheat. Again, because they are so good at playing the bumpkin, their combat skills and ferocity catch people off-guard. Even so, a fight is to be expected. Here is where the real craziness happens: Exiles are so committed to the "innocence" routine that the accused will deny his crimes even if there is a mountain of evidence and 20 eyewitnesses standing right in front of him. "Who are you going to believe? Me or your own eyes? Huh? Huh!?" "Lies! All lies. I've been framed." "How can you believe I'd ever do such a thing? I'm your friend." The Exile will spin all kinds of yarns to cover himself or make it sound like he could be innocent. He may insist he has an alibi or witnesses who can prove his innocence when he knows darn well there are none. He'll accuse others or point out others involved in other crimes or secret activity. This is all a stalling tactic and misdirection in the hopes it will buy him enough time or create enough confusion that he can make a break for it. If that doesn't work, the accused or challenged Exile lashes out with a ferocity

that is startling, fighting like a tiger until he can make good his escape. However, the battle doesn't end there. An Exile's twisted sense of justice and deluded image of hero, or at least swashbuckling rogue, is such that ruinous accusations – even if true – let alone being found guilty or being sentenced to prison, is enough to send the weird alien on a mission of revenge. It is one thing to sentence an Exile to prison and quite another to keep him behind bars. The accused is not alone on this front. Exiles tend to rally around each other in times of need, and even a complete stranger will help a fellow Exile escape the clutches of the authorities. Once freed, the “wronged” villain seeks revenge on those who accused him or took away his ill-gotten gains. This may include death threats, kidnaping of loved ones, extortion, frame-jobs, vandalism, public scandal and a campaign of harassment that is torture to endure. The vindictive monster may also join forces with his accusers' enemies so he may get his revenge. Though the Exile is not likely to kill anyone with his own hands, he may very well cause their death at the hands of others.

“Beware the Exiles” is the growing refrain heard throughout the Thundercloud Galaxy.

Exiles

Also known as Justicene.

Alignment: Anarchist (50%), Aberrant (30%), Miscreant (10%), Diabolic (3%), and others (7%).

Attributes: I.Q. 2D6+5, M.E. 2D6+4, M.A. 3D6+10, P.S. 2D6+3, P.P. 2D6+10, P.E. 3D6, P.B. 2D6, Spd 1D6+3.

Size: 5-6 feet tall (1.5 to 1.8 m).

Weight: 100-160 lbs (45 to 72 kg).

Hit Points: P.E. attribute number +1D6 per level of experience.

S.D.C.: 1D4x10 in addition to any bonuses from skills or O.C.C. selection.

M.D.C.: By armor or force field.

P.P.E.: 2D6

Disposition: As a rule, Exiles appear non-threatening, innocent, cheerful, kind, and in need of help or ready to give help. In reality, they are backstabbing cheats, crooks and con-artists always ready to rob or take advantage of someone else's true kindness and naivete.

Average Life Span: 2D6x10+80 years.

Experience Level: 2D4 for NPC or as set by the Game Master. Player characters should start at level one.

Natural Abilities: All Exiles have the Zero Gravity Movement & Combat skill at 98%, Nightvision 1,000 feet (305 m), natural cuteness and charisma (see M.A. attribute), extreme agility, +2 to Perception Rolls, and +1 to dodge in zero gravity.

Ambidextrous (special): Can use both hands with equal skill, +5% skill bonus to skills that require dexterity, including Climbing, Mechanics, Palming, Pick Pockets, Safecracking, and so on.

Double-Jointed (special): All joints in the legs, feet, hands and arms are double-jointed; +5% bonus to skills such as Escape Artist, where such flexibility is handy.

Prehensile Feet (special): Exiles have feet reminiscent of a bird, with two large toes in front and a third behind the heel. Both are ambidextrous and though not quite as agile as the hands, can be used to climb, swing from tree branches, grab and grasp objects, and even operate machinery and perform skills like palming and pick pocket. However, skill performance using the feet suffers a -20% skill penalty, a gun cannot

be fired with the feet, but they can easily push buttons, pull levers, and untie ropes. When barefoot, which is almost always, an Exile is +10% to all Climbing, Acrobatics and Gymnastics skill rolls, and is +1 to entangle.

Available O.C.C.s: The vast majority of Exiles are Space Pirates, Runners and other criminal occupations (Professional Thief, Smuggler, etc.). Those who are combat oriented are likely to be Robot Pilots (Power Armor), Turbo Jockeys and combat pilots. A small percentage are Body Fixers, Operators, Scholars, Scientists, Spacers, and Vagabonds, or just about any other common tech-based O.C.C.

Alternative “Exile” O.C.C.: Select the Spacer O.C.C. and use it for initial skills and equipment, but instead of selecting the usual *O.C.C. Related Skills* available at level one, select one of the following MOS-style skill sets that represent an area of specialty typical of an Exile. Use the Spacer experience table.

Con-Artist MOS

Begging (+15%)
Impersonation (+20%)
Performance (+30%)
Public Speaking (+30%)
Undercover Ops (+25%)
Seduction (+26%)
Streetwise (+30%)
Wardrobe & Grooming (+15%)

Escape Artist MOS

Acrobatics
Climbing (+10%)
Concealment (+20%)
Escape Artist (30%)
Palming (+20%)
Pick Locks (+20%)
Rope Works (+10%)

Gambler MOS

Cardsharp (+26%)
Concealment (+10%)
Gambling (+20%)
Gambling: Dirty Tricks (+30%)
Mathematics: Advanced (+30%)
Palming (+15%)
Performance (+15%)

Smuggler MOS

Barter (+30%)
Camouflage (+30%)
Electronic Countermeasures (+15%)
Find Contraband (+30%)
Forgery (+30%)
Gemology (+15%)
Recognize Weapon Quality (+25%)
W.P. Energy Pistol

Thief MOS

Find Contraband (+14%)
Concealment (+16%)
Palming (+30%)
Pick Lock (+20%)

Breaking and Entry MOS

Basic Mechanics (+15%)
Climb (+10%)
Pick Locks (+15%)
Prowl (+20%)
Running
Photography (+20%)
W.P. Blunt

Fence MOS

Appraise Goods (+30%)
Art (+15%)
Barter (+30%)
Cardsharp (+20%)
Gemology (+25%)
Optic Systems (+10%)
Research (+15%)
W.P. Energy Pistol

Safecracker MOS

Basic Electronics (+20%)
Basic Mechanics (+15%)
Demolitions (+20%)
Demolitions Disposal (+20%)
Jury-Rig (+15%)
Locksmith (+25%)
Safecracking (+32%)
W.P. Heavy M.D. Weapons

Snoop MOS

ID Undercover Agent (+20%)
Intelligence (+20%)
Land Navigation (+10%)
Palming (+15%)
Surveillance (+20%)
Tracking (people) (+10%)
Pilot: One skill of choice (+20%).

Pick Pockets (+20%)
Prowl (+15%)
Tailing (+30%)



Attacks per Melee: As per O.C.C. and combat skills.

Bonuses: See Natural Abilities.

Magic: None.

Psionics: Standard, same as humans.

Equipment and Money: As per O.C.C. Also see Equipment section in this book for Exile power armor and spacecraft.

Cybernetics and Bionics: As per O.C.C.

Habitat: Unknown. Though they claim to be refugees from deep space who once lived in the Thundercloud Galaxy, many suspect they are an alien life form from an unknown galaxy or other dimension.

Allies: Only fellow Exiles. Any other alliance or friendship is likely to be a scam, or a means to an end. When someone wins the true friendship of an Exile, they are treated like an adopted Exile and the friendship is real.

Enemies: Everyone. They are disliked by the Company, Naruni Enterprises, most authorities and other heroes, and hated by the TGE, Trensik Mercenaries, the Gulgans and demons. They are grudgingly admired and respected by the Splugorth Kingdom of Desslyth and Deevils, but considered rivals and troublemakers to be dealt with severely.

Kasaro

Independent Race

The Kasaro are believed to have existed in Gaelra Arm of the Thundercloud Galaxy for 30,000 years. Based on the vast number of ruins found on the worlds they inhabit, it is believed the Kasaro were once an advanced, space-faring people who had a small interstellar empire. If true, the Kasaro's origins appear to start somewhere in the Zuluda star cluster, a neighbor of the Heoda

cluster. Ancient ruins of the Kasaro are found on all eight of the planets in the Zuluda system, and Kasaro myth speaks of "voyages to the seven sisters and beyond." Indeed, the planet Acrh (pronounced "ack-ruh") is littered with ruins and is likely to have been the Kasaro's home world. No one knows what happened to the civilization or its people, though the Splugorth of the Kingdom of Desslyth smile when they claim knowledge of these beings. Many suspect Lord Desslyth the Elder played a role in the decimation of Kasaro civilization. They point to the vast number of tech-trained Kasaro warriors among the Minions of Desslyth as well as the many Kasaro gladiators who thrill the audience, not only with their devilish appearance and fierce combat skills, but also their tradition of feasting on those they defeat.

Kasaro are cannibals. Even those among the tech-trained Minions of Desslyth who might be considered "civilized," devour at least the hearts and brains of those they slay on the field of battle. This is said to be a long standing tradition that goes back to before the rise of Kasaro civilization and its subsequent fall. Eating the heart and the brain honors the fallen and empowers the living. For the Kasaro, this is more than superstitious tradition. The horrid little cannibals not only derive pleasure and nourishment from eating their fellow Kasaro and other humanoids, but they are a sort of P.P.E. vampire who is able to channel the P.P.E. of their victims to make themselves more powerful. Eating the heart, which tradition demands be done first, increases the Kasaro's M.D.C. Eating the brain increases the cannibal's cunning and energy to fight (does not fatigue). At least half of each organ must be eaten and only the one who can claim the kill is empowered, though others may share in the meat. The more foes a Kasaro devours, the more powerful and energized he becomes. (See Natural Abilities for complete details.)

In the wild, the Kasaro live in nomadic tribes of hunters and gatherers – their primary prey being other Kasaro. The only time this changes is when there are other humanoids to prey upon. This is worse than it sounds, because when there are other humanoids, all Kasaro, even the longest of rival tribes, stop fighting one another to prey upon the others, and breed like rabbits. Without them hunting and killing each other, the Kasaro population explodes. As the population increases, the rival clans merge to form large tribes that can range into the thousands. The coming of colonists, explorers and adventurers has been a boon to Kasaro and rather like sending sheep into a forest filled with ravenous wolves. The cannibals are clever too, hiding their true and growing numbers, and controlling their urge to attack and gorge themselves upon the newcomers. Instead, they keep their kills to a comparative minimum. At first, the Kasaro hide their presence and lurk in the shadows, picking people off here and there. Any remains that might be found look like they were slain and eaten by a wild animal. Likewise, teams of excavators, scouts and explorers go missing, never to be seen again. Then, a small band of colonists or a tiny satellite colony are wiped out. Again, any remains appear to have been ripped to shreds by wild animals. Odds are the Kasaro have yet to even be seen by the colonists. There are likely to be periods of months between the attacks and disappearances, further suggesting the incidents were random animal attacks. Within three years, the Kasaro population should have increased by 100 fold. Now the Kasaro become bolder, attacking larger outposts and settlements, but they still make a point of killing everyone, leaving no witnesses, and devouring every last morsel. When the Kasaro outnumber the colonists by two or three to one, they may make their presence known as warriors, but it is not until they outnumber them by 20 to one, or more, that they attack in swarms. Fallen Kasaro are always taken from the field of battle so their family members can mourn before they are eaten by the tribe.

Though low-tech savages clad in loincloths or running around buck naked, Kasaro exhibit a cunning, resourcefulness and the natural hunting skills of an intelligent predator. Whether it is instinct or training, Kasaro have a keen understanding of stealth tactics, hit and run combat methods and guerilla warfare. Bold and fearless, one to a hundred, or even a thousand, Kasaro may creep into a human colony or city and stalk humanoid prey silently like a panther. When the alarm is sounded, they may run off into the night (especially if outnumbered or outmatched), or they may stand and fight. However, it is important to never forget that Kasaro see colonists and other people as prey. And though they are a primitive society, they *manage* their food stock, seldom killing more than necessary, with each Kasaro running off with one or two corpses to feed the rest of their tribe. Thus, humanoid settlements are hunting grounds for the cannibals.

Kasaro also have an innate understanding of both primitive and modern weapons. They are quick to recognize and evaluate modern weapons, figuring out and memorizing their range, payload and damage capacity. While only a few Kasaro native warriors are likely to take up the use of guns, they immediately desire M.D. melee weapons, particularly swords and other blade weapons. Warriors forced into captivity can be trained to wear armor, use energy weapons and fight like more civilized men. However, even “domesticated” Kasaro fight like crazed ninjas on speed, leaping, stabbing, kicking, clawing, head butting, and biting their opponents, as well as blasting away with energy weapons.

Kasaro are low Mega-Damage humanoids who more closely resemble Deevils than humans. One of their many distinctive features is a pair of thick, black or dark gray horns that curl up from the forehead. These massive horns are often 50% bigger than the cannibal’s head, and are used to attack, parry weapons and take damage from incoming attacks. As natural weapons, they are used to head butt and ram opponents like a bull. The Kasaro’s neck is short and thick, and designed like a spring to withstand punishing impacts. From toe to top of the head, Kasaro stand only five feet (1.5 m) tall, but their horns add 1-2 feet (0.3 to 0.6 m) to their overall height. Kasaro tend to crouch, like a panther ready to pounce, and seem always ready for combat. Their bodies are stout with thick muscles. Skin color is bronze with dark brown, red or green spots covering their back, shoulders, and tops of the forearms and thighs. Their hands have three fingers and an opposable thumb, each tipped with a sharp, hooked claw. Their large, wide feet end in large claws that can be used to rake an opponent with a savage kick. They are also used to rip apart slain prey and help with climbing. The Kasaro’s mouth is reminiscent of a leech with a tripartite-jaw filled with hundreds of sharp teeth. This gives them a wicked bite, able to rip out hunks of flesh and saw through bone. The Kasaro have no taboo about nudity, and wear little to no clothing. As minor Mega-Damage beings, their tough hide protects them from the elements and attacks.

Kasaro [pronounced: kuh-SAR-oh]

Also known as Devil Cannibals.

Alignment: Unprincipled (12%), Anarchist (40%), Aberrant (30%), Miscreant (10%), Diabolic (3%), and others (5%). A player character can be any.

Attributes: I.Q. 2D6+4, M.E. 2D6+6, M.A. 2D6, P.S. 3D6+4 (Supernatural), P.P. 2D6+13, P.E. 2D6+11 (Supernatural), P.B. 2D4, Spd 4D6+13.

Size: Five feet tall (1.5 m) to the top of their bald heads, but their horns add 2D6+10 inches (0.3 to 0.6 m) for a total height closer to 6-7 feet (1.8 to 2.1 m).

Weight: 170-220 pounds (76.5 to 99 kg), all muscle and horn.

Hit Points and S.D.C.: See M.D.C.

M.D.C.: Kasaro are minor, mortal Mega-Damage beings. P.E. attribute number x2 +1D6 M.D.C. per level of experience for main body. The large curled horns have an M.D.C. of 1D6x10+P.E. attribute number, and grow back in 1D4+4 months if broken or cut off.

Horror Factor: 13

P.P.E.: Base is 5D6.

Average Life Span: 2D6+60 years.

Experience Level: 1D6 for most primitive NPC warriors, 1D4+5 for leaders and experienced warriors, or as set by the Game Master. Player characters should start at level one. Use the experience table for Wilderness Scout or Spacer.

Natural Abilities: The senses of the Kasaro are similar to humans, but any similarities end there. Kasaro have M.D.C. hides and recover lost M.D.C. at a rate of 2D6 per 24 hours; lost claws and teeth regrow in 1D4 weeks, lost horns regrow in 1D4+4 months. Also see R.C.C. Skills.

Athletic and Agile (special): The cannibals are incredibly nimble and agile, can leap 12 feet (3.6 m) high and 18 feet (5.5 m) across from a standing position; increase by 50% with a running start. Also see P.P. and Spd attributes for possible other prowess related bonuses as well as R.C.C. Bonuses below.

Cannibal Powers of the Dead (special): Heart. When a Kasaro slays an enemy, he absorbs *half the escaping P.P.E.* released at the time of death. When he eats at least half of his victim's heart (must be done within 20 minutes of death), the cannibal increases his own M.D.C. point for point. So if his victim had 6 P.P.E. before it is doubled at the moment of death, the Kasaro absorbs those 6 P.P.E. (the rest fade away). The focused *ritual* act of eating (half or more of) the heart turns those (in this example, 6) P.P.E. into M.D.C. points added to his own. The more P.P.E. an opponent has, the more M.D.C. the Kasaro gains. P.P.E. gained in this fashion remains for 72 hours, though any lost in combat are *gone*; only the cannibal's natural M.D.C. can be recovered through rest and healing. Subtract damage from these temporary M.D.C. first and his own M.D.C. last. **Note:** The heart is always eaten first, then the brain. It takes a Kasaro 30 seconds to eat half a heart and another 30 seconds to eat half a brain; one minute to eat the entire organ.

Cannibal Powers of the Dead (special): Brain. Same concept and conditions as eating the heart apply to the brain with different results. Eating the brain energizes the Kasaro so he does not suffer the effects of fatigue. Each heart eaten stems off fatigue for 24 hours without any penalties or ill-effect after that period. Fatigue is simply erased. This enables the Kasaro to fight, work or travel for days at a time without having to rest.

It also adds a bonus of +1 to Perception Rolls and +2% to the following Espionage and Wilderness skills: Detect Ambush, Concealment, Intelligence, Land Navigation, Tracking and Wilderness Survival. Duration is 24 hours per brain of a fallen opponent eaten.

Chameleonic Skin (special): The Kasaro can alter their skin tones to blend into the background environment. For example, at night their skin darkens by 60%, and their skin can change to match the color of leaves, dry grass, colonial concrete, and other colors to help them go unnoticed. +10% to Prowl skill when moving slower than a Spd of 6. When concealed and motionless, there is only a 5% chance of someone spotting them. Of course, they must be naked to do so and most modern scanners and sensors can pick up their body heat and movement.

Superior Digestive System (special): The cannibals can eat raw and rotting meat, internal organs, blood, skin, and bone without ill-effect. If the being fails to save against poison/toxins/drugs any lingering penalties or effects last half as long and are half as debilitating. Though their main prey are humanoids and their own kind, Kasaro can eat the flesh of animals, but it tastes awful and is half as nutritious. Greens and vegetables make the meat-eaters ill, as if they have a case of nonlethal food poisoning.

Furthermore, the Kasaro's digestive system can extract water from bone marrow. A second stomach then stores water, enabling the cannibals to go without drinking water for 1D4 weeks at a time.

Reproduction, Offspring and Maturity (special): A female Kasaro bears 1D4 young and can give birth as often as once every seven months. Young reach full physical maturity in only three years, but tend to be slow in mental development, not reaching second level experience for another 1D4+1 years. Still, even an inexperienced Kasaro warrior is deadly and all are instinctive hunters and cannibals.

R.C.C. Skills of Tribal Kasaro Cannibal Hunters/Warriors:

Camouflage (+20%)
Detect Ambush (+20%)
Detect Concealment (+10%)
Dance (+10%)
Dowsing (+10%)
Fasting (+30% at x3 the normal duration)
Forced March
Hunting
Intelligence (+16%)
Land Navigation (+20%)
Prowl (+20%)
Sing (+10%)
Tailing (+15%)
Tracking (people; +20%)
Wilderness Survival (+30%)
W.P. Sword
Hand to Hand: Martial Arts

R.C.C. Related Skills: None.

Secondary Skills: Select 1D4+2 skills from the Secondary Skill List on page 300 of **Rifts® Ultimate Edition**, +1 additional Secondary Skill at levels 3, 6, 8, 10 and 12.

Attacks per Melee: As per Hand to Hand: Martial Arts (or at least the Kasaro's version of it) +1 additional melee attack at levels 2, 5, 9 and 13. These are in addition to those provided by the Martial Arts combat skill.

Mega-Damage: Punches and kicks as per Supernatural P.S., +2D6 M.D. from head butt with horns, +2D4 M.D. from a claw strike with the hands, +3D6 M.D. from a claw strike with the feet, and +1D6 M.D. from bite attacks. Kasaro may also use weapons and are fond of blade weapons, especially swords and spears.

Bonuses: +2 on Perception Rolls, +2 on initiative, +1 to strike, +4 to automatic dodge (the act of dodging does not use up a melee attack), and +4 to save vs Horror Factor.

Available O.C.C.s for Domesticated Kasaro and Minions of Splugorth: Any Men-at-Arms O.C.C., Wilderness Scout, or Vagabond, but avoid bionics and piloting power armor or robots, and have no interest in learning magic, though they enjoy magic weapons and armor. In addition to being the slaves and soldiers of the Kingdom of Desslyth, Kasaro may be found serving as scouts, adventurers, mercenaries, Galactic Tracers and Space Pirates.

Magic: None, other than the occasional magic weapon or item.

Psionics: Standard, same as humans.

Standard Equipment for Tribes: Kasaro are tribal nomads who live off the land, thus most have little need for much in the way of possessions. Since they have Supernatural P.S. and claws, they don't even have a need for making weapons and tools, or wearing clothes. Possessions tend to be M.D. melee weapons stolen from outsiders or won in combat, carrying cases such as backpacks, sacks, baskets, etc. and some personal items. Kasaro may also make jewelry from teeth, bones, and scrap. They don't ride animals, but take an instant liking to fast moving hover cycles and rocket bikes.

Standard Equipment for Civilized Kasaro: As per O.C.C.

Habitat: Kasaro cannibals are found on numerous planets across the *Gaelra Arm*, usually starting off as small clans. They were once found on half of the same worlds as the CheDive in the Heoda System, but the cannibals were wiped out by them. The

largest tribes are found on the eight worlds of the Zuluda Cluster. Remember, they are also Minions of Desslyth and found on worlds and holdings of the Kingdom of Desslyth as well as a few of the Splugorth worlds “liberated” by the TGE. There have been rumors of cannibals matching the description of the Kasaro on a few planets in Oswoe’s Arm, but in each case they are said to have been wiped out by Space Pirates, adventurers and colonists, so these “rumors” and the existence of Kasaro outside the Gaelra Arm and Splugorth space have never been substantiated. It is doubtful, and if they were, they were probably runaway Splugorth slaves.

Allies: Kasaro tend to rely only on the members of their own clan. Though a rarity, an individual Kasaro or small group (less than 30), may accept other skilled warriors and powerful beings as a friend or ally. Large groups see non-Kasaro species only as prey and rivals. When no outside humanoid species are present, Kasaro divide into family clans and tribes and prey upon each other. Kasaro also serve as the slaves, gladiators and Minions of Desslyth, though most have been forced into these roles and have no love for the Splugorth (nor Kreehgor).

Enemies: All non-Kasaro are prey to be hunted and eaten. At some point, Kasaro and CheDive have clashed, probably because the two star systems are neighbors, and both hate each other with a passion.

Note: Why the Kasaro on all planets have devolved to their tribal state after having been a space-faring people remains a mystery, possibly known only to the Splugorth and they aren’t talking.

Kujamoya

Consortium of Civilized Worlds

The Kujamoya are just one of a hundred-plus Associate (non-space-faring) races taken under the Thundercloud Development Company’s guidance and protection. Hailing from the planet of *Teaca Majoris*, the Kujamoya are a primitive yet industrious people. They resemble large hedgehogs, with bodies covered in quills. Their eyes are small and the creatures are nearsighted, but this is compensated for by an acute sense of smell. Like most other life forms on their world, the Kujamoya are hexapods – they have a total of six limbs. When digging or flat-out speed is called for, they drop to all sixes. However, the Kujamoya have also learned to stand upright, and with four legs to walk on they are very sure-footed.

In comparison to the Consortium colonists who have moved onto their world, the Kujamoya are terribly primitive. They have an early Metal Age level of technology similar to that of the ancient Greeks and Romans of Earth. They make simple tools and weapons, have mastered metal-smithing, have a language, art and culture, but don’t have a written language or any war technology. Kujamoya are herbivores, and with no need to hunt, skin animals, or prepare meat, they have had no need for weapons and armor. The closest thing they have are knives and hand tools for cutting and carving wood and working with fabric. Some colonists see them as little more than talking animals, but the Kujamoya are intelligent and have certain highly developed skills. They are excellent weavers for example, using grass, leaves, animal hair (wool), cotton and other soft plants. So skilled are they at weaving, they can make watertight thatch the equivalent of any tarpaulin and Kujamoya rope is as strong as iron chain. Though the Kujamoya have

little use for clothing (big floppy hats, scarves, armbands, hooded cloaks, ponchos and open shirts are worn more for style than function), they also produce a very soft fabric called *shayald*, which has become all the rage at Eden and other Consortium colony worlds in the Thundercloud. The fabric is about to be introduced to the CCW in the Corkscrew Galaxy, where it is expected to explode onto the market as an exotic import for high-end fashion.

Instead of building houses, they burrow underground, living in a network of shallow tunnels and chambers just a few yards/meters underground or in sprawling, dug out towns and cities that resemble a rock quarry or archeological dig covered with thatched roofs. A Kujamoya settlement is seldom more than two feet (0.6 m) above ground, with just their roofs and the occasional flag, ribbon or weathervane showing.

Their affinity for digging has also affected their religious beliefs. The Kujamoya worship their planet as a deity, which they call the Good Mother. In their creation myths, the hedgehog people are said to have sprung from the ground, and it is from the Good Mother that all living things come. Dead things, especially Kujamoya who have passed on to the next life, are abhorrent to the Good Mother, and must never be put back inside of her. The Kujamoya do not bury their dead, but elevate them instead, placing the body atop a tall wooden tower which is set aflame.

Kujamoya are 4-5 feet (1.2 to 1.5 m) tall standing on all fours. Their front two “legs” have evolved into thick, stocky arms and hands. Their hands have three, short, thick fingers and an opposable thumb. The feet of the Kujamoya have three flexible toes and a fourth that works almost as well as a thumb. Though not as articulated as the hands, the feet can grab, pick up, and carry objects and are well suited for climbing rocks and ledges. The hands and feet are strong, and capable of digging at a good pace and with considerable control. For a long time, the hedgehog people were hunters and gatherers, but in the last 2,500 years have begun to grow and farm crops, plant orchards, make juice and wine, as well as build marvelous irrigation systems.

Peaceful and kind, Kujamoya welcomed CCW colonists without incident, and don’t mind sharing their world with outsiders. Few Kujamoya are interested in space travel or advanced machines, and most hope to keep their agrarian society and simple way of life. However, some are interested in seeing other worlds and meeting new life forms. This intrepid minority are the people who may join adventurers and mercenaries to see the universe.

Kujamoya [pronounced: KOO-juh-MOY-uh]

Alignment: Any, but most are Principled (30%), Scrupulous (40%), Unprincipled (15%) or Anarchist (10%).

Attributes: I.Q. 1D6+5, M.E. 3D6, M.A. 1D6+5, P.S. 2D6+6, P.P. 2D6+9, P.E. 2D6+4, P.B. 2D6+3, Spd 3D6+2 running or digging.

Size: 4-5 feet (1.2 to 1.5 m) tall, double when standing on all fours, and 5-6 feet (1.5 to 1.8 m) long. The average quill is one foot (0.3 m) long and as sharp and strong as a sewing needle.

Weight: Between 140 and 180 pounds (63 to 81 kg).

Hit Points: P.E. attribute number +1D6 per level of experience.

S.D.C.: Base is 1D6x10. Additional S.D.C. may be gained from Physical skills.

M.D.C. via Natural Quill Armor: The quills are M.D.C. structures that provide a sort of M.D.C. armor that covers their back from the top of their head to the end of their rump. The face, underbelly and hands and arms are covered in a silky soft fur, not



quills, but like a real hedgehog, Kujamoya can curl up in a tight, spiky ball with only the quills vulnerable to attack. The quills provide 1D4x100+210 M.D.C. While curled into a defensive ball, the Kujamoya cannot run, but when they do run away their back side is protected by their M.D.C. quills. The quills cannot be launched at an enemy, and plucking one out hurts, doing 1D4 S.D.C. damage. A plucked quill can be used as a weapon (can do as little as 2D6 S.D.C. or one M.D.), but can also be used to parry incoming attacks. Damaged or lost quills regrow at a rate of 3D6 M.D.C. per day. Trying to touch or move a curled up little fella inflicts 2D4 M.D. per attempt. Hitting the living pin cushion causes 3D6 M.D. to the foolish attacker.

Horror Factor: None.

P.P.E.: 2D6

Disposition: As a rule, gentle, kind and friendly. Most Kujamoya are easygoing, pragmatic people who enjoy nature, beauty and the simple things life has to offer.

Average Life Span: 2D6+30 years normally. Can be twice that much with modern Consortium medicine.

Experience Level: 1D6 on average, 1D6+3 for leaders, or as set by the Game Master. Player characters should start at level one. Use the experience table for the Wilderness Scout or Spacer.

Natural Abilities: Protective quills (see M.D.C. above), can dig/burrow at a rate of four feet (1.2 m) per melee round through even the toughest clay and gravel, track by smell at 50% (+20% to locate roots, herbs, vegetables, fruit, edible plants and fresh water). They are also good at playing dead; see Psionics and Death Trance.

R.C.C. Skills of the Kujamoya:

Botany (+20%)
Brewing (+20%)

Cook (vegetarian dishes, +20%)

Dowsing (+15%)

Excavation (+20%)

Gardening (+20%)

Identify Fruit and Plants (+25%)

Intelligence (+16%)

Land Navigation (+20%, above and underground)

Play Musical Instrument: One of choice (+10%).

Preserve Food (+10%)

Sewing (+30%)

Rope Works (+30%)

Whittling and Sculpting (+10%)

W.P. Knife

Hand to Hand: Basic (cannot be upgraded beyond Expert and that only applies to Worldly Kujamoya).

R.C.C. Related Skills: Select a total of two skills from Domestic or Wilderness at levels 2, 6 and 10.

Secondary Skills: Select 1D4+1 skills from the Secondary Skill List on page 300 of **Rifts® Ultimate Edition**, +1 additional Secondary Skills at levels 3, 5, 9 and 11.

Available O.C.C.s for Worldly Kujamoya (Optional): Wilderness Scout, Vagabond, Rogue Scholar, African Medicine Man (or equivalent; see **Rifts® Africa**), Herbologist (or equivalent; see **Rifts® England**) or the Mystic O.C.C., but avoid bionics and piloting power armor or robots, and have no interest in studying magic, though they find the concept of magic and magic items to be fascinating.

Attacks per Melee: As per Hand to Hand: Basic.

Mega-Damage: By weapon or quill only.

Bonuses: +1 on Perception Rolls, +1 to save vs mind control and possession.

Magic: None.

Psionics: I.S.P. is M.E. attribute x3 +1D4 per level of experience.

All Kujamoya have the following psionic abilities: Death Trance (1), Impervious to Cold (2), Meditation (0), Mind Block (4), Sense Time (2) and two psionic abilities of choice selected from Healing or Physical.

Standard Equipment for Tribes: A floppy hat, silk scarf, poncho, 30 feet (9.1 m) of rope, small hatchet (1D6 S.D.C.), small knife (1D4 S.D.C.), whittling knife and woodworking tool kit, belt, shoulder bag, water skin, a pair of eyeglasses or contact lenses, a brush to comb their fur, and some personal items. They may also wear jewelry made of gems, gold and silver. They don't ride animals and enjoy long, leisurely walks. Worldly travelers may become accustomed to using a communicator, language translator, flashlight, Vibro-Blades, radio, cigarette lighter, and other modern tools and conveniences.

Standard Equipment for Worldly Kujamoya: As per O.C.C. **Cybernetics and Bionics:** Avoids them.

Habitat: Kujamoya live on their home world. However, they have proven themselves such hardy little workers that 60,000 of them have been transplanted to other Consortium planets in the Gaelra Arm, and 20,000 or so have gone off to explore the Three Galaxies.

Allies: The easygoing Kujamoya treat everyone with kindness and respect. They consider humans and Noro as their friends and allies, but look upon most other races with a touch of uncertainty and wariness. They've heard about the Denlech and think they sound like fine people.

Enemies: None per se. The universe and its many people are all new and unknown for them.

Mariman

Members of the Golgan Republikan Enklaves

The Mariman are a conquered people.

Long ago, the Mariman roamed the grasslands of their home world in vast herds. They lived in relative harmony with their ecosystem, and knew very little of war or violence. When a wave of destructive energy from the Black Hole Projector washed over them 43,000 years ago, everything on their home world, Oumeam, suffered from it. Entire species died, while others underwent mutation. Even the weather patterns, which had been warm and windy, changed with devastating effect. Their lush green planet-covered in grassy plains and forest, became hot, dry, and filled with blood-thirsty predators. Only the hardiest grasses survived. Many of the forests shriveled up and deserts claimed a quarter of the planet.

The Mariman were changed, too. Their intelligence raised, they began to use strategies, traps, fortifications, better weapons and group tactics to survive amongst the large and aggressive predators. They were already humanoids when the M-Rads struck, but the magic radiation devolved them to more resemble the equine beings from which they had arisen. The head, face and legs all took on a more animal appearance, but their minds were expanded. They soon realized that to survive in a hostile environment without forests, caves and hiding places, they had to build walls and better weapons. They also learned that superior numbers could fend off and slay small packs and lone predators regardless of size. This turned them into warriors, and with a dwindling

food supply, the hunted became the hunters. Over time, Mariman became experts in trap-laying and coordinated ambushes, because such tactics were necessary take down the many monsters that now threatened them. Their warriors focused on lightning-quick strikes, in large numbers, to overwhelm and destroy the enemy. As odd as it may seem, these horse- or zebra-looking humanoids are fierce and deadly warriors who kill, cook and eat the very monsters and predators who would prey upon them.

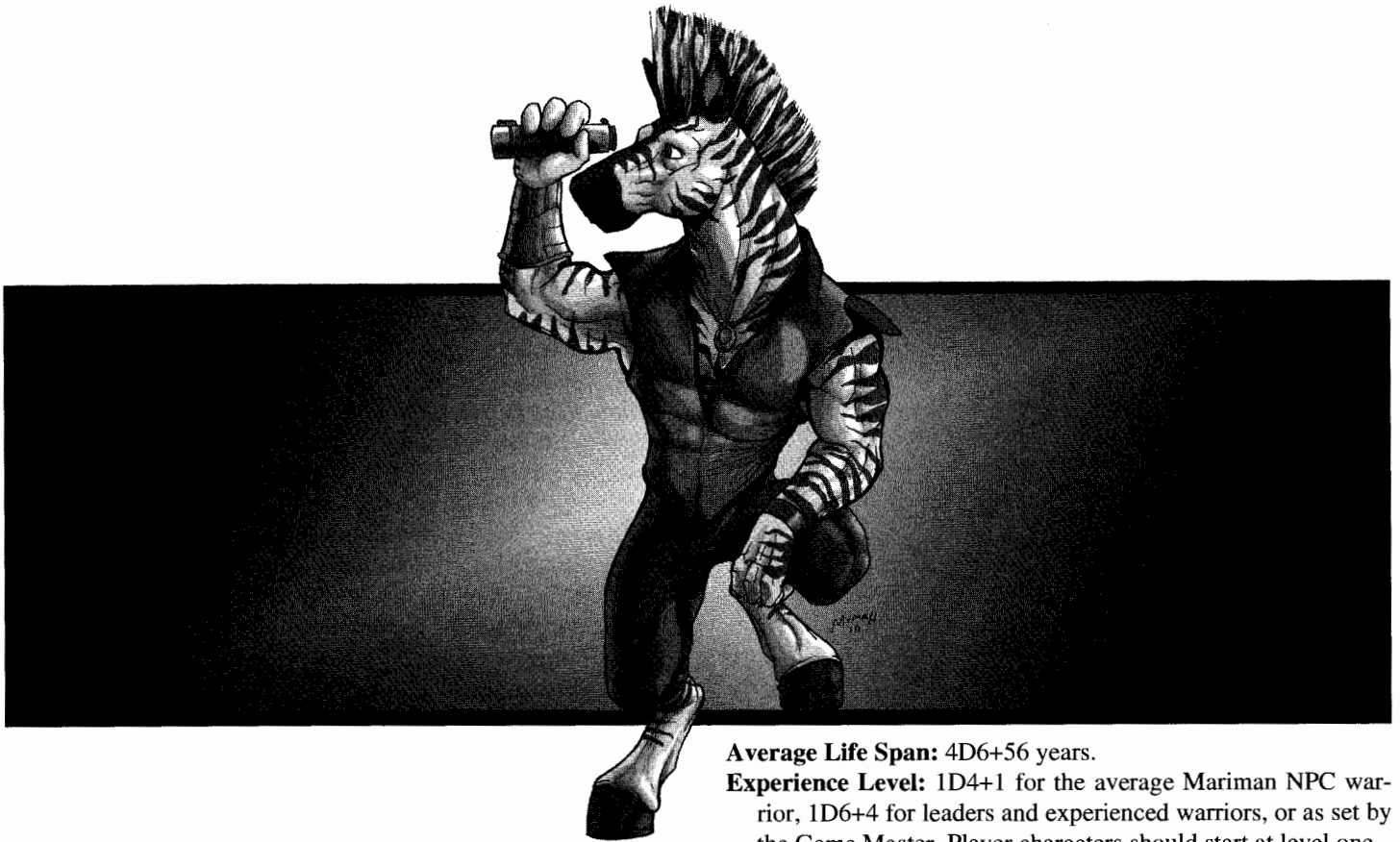
The constant struggle against monsters and predators has kept the Mariman civilization from making great strides. Still, it had reached a level similar to Earth's own Middle Ages when a new threat arose. This one came from the stars – the Golgan Republikan Enklaves.

No match for the Golgans' superior technology, one Mariman kingdom fell to them after another. In a surprising and astute strategy to integrate the equine humanoids, the Golgans praised their fighting skills and invited – not mandated – them to join the Enklaves' military to make them even mightier. This appealed to the warlike Mariman, who have thrived as soldiers of the Enklaves. For years the Golgans used Mariman as a colonial army of auxiliaries and frontline infantry to take the brunt of destruction rather than Golgan soldiers. Time and again, the Mariman shocked their Golgan superiors with victories in situations that the (less combat capable) Golgans thought were unwinnable. Despite this, Mariman are still treated as inferior, second-class citizens, reserve warriors and cannon fodder – mainly because Golgans cannot accept these “horse-headed primitives” could be better (much better) warriors than they.

Recently, the Republik back in the Anvil Galaxy has undergone something of a bloodless military coup. The Enklaves now have a new leader, one who sees the value in using the Mariman to their full potential. In a break with tradition, there is a brewing plan to send these colonial conscripts into the Shing Pride Worlds *alongside* the Republikan Guard, where the Mariman would serve as forward scouts and assault troops. Past attempts to conquer the Lion People using the Golgan regular army and a tiny force of Mariman have been complete disasters. These defeats at the paws of the Shing gall the Golgans to no end. As time passes, the sting of these resounding and embarrassing defeats makes them want revenge all the more. As a result, military leaders of the Republikan Enklaves are considering sending the Mariman against the Prides of Shing in a new campaign of conquest. They are also considering hiring Kasaro mercenaries to send against the Shing along with the Mariman and Republikan Guard. Warriors through and through, the Mariman are chomping at the bit to prove themselves against what they see as the most deadly of enemies.

Pitting Mariman against the Shing is a good match. To these bold warriors, the Shing are just “another monster” to be conquered. Furthermore, some of the Mariman's own magic based abilities will come in handy in this fight, as will their large size, brutal strength and skill at figuring out ways to counter an adversary.

The Enklaves are again increasing their holdings and the fallen empire longs to be restored as a transgalactic power. Taking down the Shing seems like a good first step toward showing the people of the Three Galaxies that the Republikan Enklaves are back, and to be feared. Many of the older Enclave Golgans, whose racial bigotry runs deep, take great offense at having to share the theater of conflict with a bunch of savage primitives. Only time will tell what becomes of this.



The Mariman are a humanoid race that evolved from a plains equine species. Their bodies are covered in silver hair like that of a horse. Their heads, arms, and upper bodies are covered in a striking array of dark brown or black stripes. Though Mariman are bipeds who stand and walk on two legs, they more resemble the legs of a horse than a human. Their feet are hooves. Mariman are tall and powerfully built, and the striped Mohawks they grow on the tops of their heads only add to their imposing size.

Mariman [pronounced: Ma-REE-muhn]

Also known as Horse Warriors and Battle Horses.

Attributes: Any, but tend to be Unprincipled (40%) and Anarchist (30%) more than anything else.

Attributes: I.Q. 2D6+4, M.E. 3D6, M.A. 3D6, P.S. 3D6+20 (Robot equivalent), P.P. 2D6+8, P.E. 2D6+12, P.B. 3D6, Spd 3D6+19.

Size: 9-11 feet (2.7 to 3.3 m) for both males and females.

Weight: 900-1,200 pounds (405 to 540 kg). Males tend to weigh about 10% more than females.

Hit Points: P.E. attribute number x2 as a base. Gain an additional 1D8 Hit Points per level of experience.

S.D.C.: Base is 1D6x10. Additional S.D.C. may be gained from O.C.C. bonuses and Physical skills.

M.D.C.: Via body armor or force fields.

Horror Factor: 11 when facing them in combat.

P.P.E.: 6D6 base.

Disposition: Mariman are born fighters and love physical contests. They are brave, bold and always ready for combat. Steady even when under fire. They admire other strong and brave warriors, but believe most "civilized" people are soft and weak, especially the Gulgans. They like using technology and advanced weapons and armor, but wouldn't want to do the designing or manufacturing of them.

Average Life Span: 4D6+56 years.

Experience Level: 1D4+1 for the average Mariman NPC warrior, 1D6+4 for leaders and experienced warriors, or as set by the Game Master. Player characters should start at level one.

Natural Abilities: The Mariman can run at their top speed for an hour +1 minute per P.E. attribute point before tiring. Nightvision for 30 feet (9.1 m). Excellent hearing and normal eyesight. Endurance is extraordinary and the beings can lift and pull their P.S. attribute number x100 pounds (x45 kg) in weight. Equal to Supernatural when it comes to lifting and pulling weight. Can leap 15 feet (4.6 m) high and 25 feet (7.6 m) across.

Ley Line Healing (special): When directly on a ley line, a Mariman recovers 4D6 S.D.C. or Hit Points for every 20 minutes of meditation; +10 at a nexus point.

Ley Line M.D.C. Transformation (special): When on or near a ley line, the Mariman's S.D.C. (only) turns into M.D.C. (On S.D.C. worlds, double the S.D.C. only.) Hit Points are not affected.

Ley Line P.S. Boost (special): When fighting on or near a ley line or nexus point, Mariman P.S. increases to Supernatural. Adjust damage accordingly.

Ley Line Running (Special): When fighting or traveling along a ley line or near a nexus point, triple the Mariman's running speed, double the height and length they can jump/leap, and they can run and hover in the air up to 20 feet (6.1 m) above the ground!

Available O.C.C.s: Any Men-at-Arms, including the equivalent to CAF Trooper, CAF Fleet Officer, Freedom Fighter, Imperial Security, Galactic Tracer and Space Pirate, as well as Wilderness Scout and Vagabond. Tend to avoid occupations that involve magic, science, medicine and hard labor. The culture of the Mariman, even after generations under the thumb of the Gulgans, is that of the skilled and ferocious warrior. **Note:** In addition to the usual skills of the respective O.C.C.s, Mariman also know Boxing or Kick Boxing, and W.P. Blunt, W.P.

Shield, W.P. Sword, and W.P. Paired Weapons, as they are all traditional among the male and female equines.

Attacks per Melee: As per O.C.C. and Hand to Hand combat skills.

Mega-Damage: As per equivalent Robot P.S. (or Supernatural when boosted by a ley line). Stomp and kick attacks add 1D6 points of damage. Melee weapons are large and usually do an extra die of damage.

Bonuses: +1 to Perception Rolls, +1 to initiative, +2 to pull punch, and +3 to save vs Horror Factor.

Magic: Rare among the Mariman; it is not the way of the Mariman warrior, and even females tend to be warriors. See Natural Abilities, however, for magic boosts.

Psionics: Standard percentage chance of developing psionic powers.

Standard Equipment: As per O.C.C., though weapons will have to be modified and armor custom made for these giant equine warriors.

Bionics & Cybernetics: None to start. Tend to think they are for weaker races, but don't mind getting a few cybernetic implants.

Habitat: Found throughout the Republikan Enklaves, though none are known to have traveled to the main Republik in the Anvil Galaxy. Their home world, Oumeam, is in the Gaelra Arm near the other Republikan Enclave colony worlds and only a few star systems away from the Shing.

Allies: Other members of the Republikan Enklaves.

Enemies: The enemies of the Enklaves are their enemies.

Rompo

Also known as Thundercloud Dead Eater

Nearly every culture in the Three Galaxies has at least one legend concerning monsters that eat the flesh of the dead. A common one across the Thundercloud, and one that has unfortunately proven to be quite real, is that of the Rompo. The beast has a head that is reminiscent of a rodent and ape combined, with large, watery brown eyes, small sharp teeth, and ears like an ape. It has a barrel chest and ape- or humanoid-like upper body and arms, but the arms and hands are covered in shaggy fur, and the hands are shaped like those of a badger or sloth, ending in massive, hooked claws designed for slashing, tearing flesh and bones, and digging. The legs are short and stocky like those of an ape, but more resemble the short, heavy legs of a bear, though the Rompo usually walks on all fours in a loping manner like a gorilla or chimpanzee when it runs. However, the animal shows remarkable cunning and intelligence, seems to communicate with other members of its species and uses simple tools.

This is another one of those creatures found on at least a dozen or two worlds in both the Gaelra and Oswoe's Arms of the galaxy. While many would like to believe the ghoulish creature is another nightmarish creation of the Gene-Tech, archeological evidence suggests the Rompo are an ancient, space-faring people that have devolved into monsters. The reason for this speculation is that almost all (but not all) of the planets where Rompo have been discovered contain ruins of similar design and characteristic, and all dating back 44,000-46,000 years ago. This suggests the Rompo were victims of the M-Rads unleashed by the Black

Hole Projector and something in their genetic makeup made them subject to severe mutation. Thus, the people of each Rompo colony or world devolved into the semi-intelligent, animal-like predators we know today.

The Rompo are known as carrion eaters, meaning they do not hunt or kill prey, but instead eat the dead. This includes the carcasses of whatever remains predators leave behind, road kill and the bodies of humanoids recently buried or left laying in their bed unattended. While this may sound benign, recent studies and observations from colonists have shown the clever Rompo to be very aggressive in getting food. First, they often operate in small family clans of 1D6+2 and may travel in groups that range from 2D6+6 to 6D6+6 members. The larger the group, the more aggressive they become. Like the hyenas of Earth's Africa, Rompo don't just eat whatever scraps are left behind by a predator, but will engage in strategies and tactics designed to scare and chase away the predator (especially lone predators) and steal the animal's meal. If the predator puts up a fight, but is outnumbered, the Rompo may kill it and eat him too, though if the predator is too large, too powerful or refuses to give up its kill, the Rompo retreat.

On planets where new indigenous people or colonists have appeared, Rompo have taken to making meals of their recently deceased, stealing bodies out of beds, from hospitals and morgues, and digging them up from the grave within 96 hours after burial. Sometimes that includes people in comas or who are very ill or dying. Clever scavengers, the creatures know not to eat the dead where they find them, but snatch and run, taking the body(s) someplace they feel is secluded and safe (behind a warehouse, under a bridge, inside an abandoned building or cave, behind a cluster of trees, etc.). The Rompo's aggressive nature surfaces again if humanoids try to take their "food" away from them. The males immediately step forward, grunting and growling. If the intruders come closer or make a move to get the body, the males begin to hoot and holler, raising their fists and slapping the ground with their hands or weapons. This is punctuated by bloodcurdling shrieks and menacing gestures. These theatrics are intended to scare the intruders away and let them eat in peace. However, as with taking carrion from animal predators, Rompo usually back off and retreat when the intruder seems too powerful or large in numbers, but not before taking a few swipes with their Mega-Damage claws. If the intruders seem uncertain or someone they can successfully fight and kill, the Rompo will not relent. Killing 3-4 Rompo or inflicting significant damage to half or more will finally send the monsters into retreat. When cornered or protecting a mate or young, the Rompo fight to the death.

Rompo love caves and underground dwellings, which means they are often encountered among ancient ruins and in cave networks. They also dig tunnels and are decent swimmers and climbers. A Rompo den is always underground, and this is where adventurers are likely to encounter children and females.

In spite of their size and bulk, Rompo move in silence and are skilled at tailing people, predators and animals without being seen. Though they look and behave like animals/apes, they are much smarter. Many make and use simple tools, cover their young in stolen blankets or vegetation, and exhibit understanding and comprehension far beyond a mere animal. Through observation and deductive reasoning, Rompo can figure out how to open and close doors and windows, turn on lights, or activate a machine, and some will even wear articles of clothing taken from the dead or stolen from a campsite. They are particularly fond of taking blankets, bedding, capes, cloaks, loose fitting jackets, and



hats, as well as food, candy, and booze. Though they prefer to eat carrion, Rompo will pick through garbage and eat processed foods – meats of all kind in particular, but also bread, pies, cookies, candy, honey, jams, and other things. They tend to leave raw grains and fresh fruit and vegetables alone, but may kill and eat chickens, eggs, small animals, and old and ailing livestock. Since colonies have all these things, they attract Rompo.

Rompo are curious about everything and everyone, and often tail travelers to watch what they do, as well as observe colony sites. To many people's surprise, Rompo take a protective and parental attitude over children of all species. They have been known to lead lost children back home and rescue them from predators, bandits and other hostile forces that mean them harm. Colony children have even reported making friends with young and adult Rompo, and tell of traveling with them, wrestling and playing games. If an adventurer can get a Rompo out of his defensive posture, the creature exhibits sharp awareness and alertness, is gentle and caring. Rompo around outsiders try to mimic their behavior, understand the language (66% is the maximum to understand a language; cannot learn to read) and can learn to say a dozen very simple words – “no,” “yes,” “stop,” “go,” “come,” “good,” “bad,” “many,” “sad,” “happy,” and so on. However, nothing can break them from eating the dead, and most Rompo become bored, unhappy and destructive when trapped in a civilized environment for too long (1D4+2 days). In the wild, a Rompo can make a good friend and outstanding scout.

Rompo [pronounced: ROM poh]

Also known as Dead Eaters, Shaggy Ghouls, Forest People, Sloth People and Shovel Hands.

Character Note: In most cases, the Rompo are likely to be played as an NPC (Non-Player Character) or monster, however, there is enough depth to them to be allowed as a player character, provided the G.M. approves it. Though playing a Rompo can be challenging and requires excellent role-playing skills, they can be fun, innocent and inquisitive characters suitable to wilderness campaigns. Play them like a brave, caring, and curious 10 year old with Supernatural P.S. and claws for hands and you are set to go.

Alignment: Any, but lean toward Scrupulous (25%), Unprincipled (35%), and Anarchist (30%).

Attributes: I.Q. 1D6+6, M.E. 1D6+9, M.A. 1D6+5, P.S. 2D6+15 (Supernatural), P.P. 2D6+9, P.E. 2D6+11, P.B. 1D6+3, Spd 2D6+7. All attributes are considered to be Supernatural.

Size: 1D4+4 feet (1.2 to 2.4 m) tall standing erect, but their normal stance is walking on all fours, giving them a typical height of four feet (1.2 m).

Weight: 150-300 pounds (67.5 to 135 kg).

M.D.C.: 1D6x10 +P.E. attribute number and 1D6 M.D.C. per level of experience.

Horror Factor: 9 when just seen at a distance or out in the open, 12 when acting aggressive or found eating the dead.

P.P.E.: 4D6+P.E. attribute number.

Disposition: Curious regarding new and unusual things. Wary of strangers, secretive and a bit skittish, but not cowardly. Loyal to family and friends, protective of all children, and brave when fighting to protect children, family or friends.

Average Life Span: 3D6x10 years.

Experience Level: 2D4 on average, 2D4+3 for leaders, or as set by the Game Master. Player characters should start at level one. Use the experience table for the Wilderness Scout or Spacer.

Natural Abilities: Tend to be nocturnal creatures, Nightvision 2,000 feet (610 m). Day vision is 300 feet (91.5 m), but are blinded by strong daylight and bright artificial light in their eyes (-10 to strike, parry, and dodge). Bio-Regenerates lost M.D.C. at a rate of 1D6 an hour and regrows any lost claws, fingers or toes within 1D4+2 weeks.

Digging & Tunneling (special): Rompo can dig through dirt and clay at a rate of ten feet (3 m) per minute and are good at digging shallow burrows and short tunnel systems 6-12 feet (1.8 to 3.6 m) under the surface.

Impervious (special): Impervious to cold, spoiled food, poisons, drugs, gases, and S.D.C. weaponry.

Smell Blood, Death and Decay (special): Rompo can smell blood, death and decay up to six miles (9.6 km) away, and track it to its source. **Base Skill:** 70% +2% per level of experience.

Vulnerabilities: Fire inflicts one M.D. for every S.D.C. point of damage, while magical and M.D. fires inflict double damage.

R.C.C. Skills of the Rompo:

Climbing (+10%)
Dance (+5%)

Dowsing (+10%)
 Escape Artist (+20%)
 Excavation (+20%)
 Land Navigation (+25%, above and underground)
 Prowl (+20%)
 Swimming (+5%)
 Tailing (+20%)
 Wilderness Survival (+15%)
 W.P. Blunt
 W.P. Spear
 Hand to Hand: Basic; can be upgraded to Expert for the cost of two Secondary Skills.

R.C.C. Related Skills: None.

Secondary Skills: Select 1D4+1 skills from the Secondary Skill List on page 300 of *Rifts® Ultimate Edition*, +1 additional Secondary Skill at levels 3, 6, 10 and 15. **Skill Penalty:** Skills that require fingers and human dexterity with hands are -20% for the Rompo, whose large claws make his hands clumsy.

Attacks per Melee: As per Hand to Hand combat skill.

Mega-Damage: As per Supernatural Strength for punches and head butts, Supernatural P.S. damage +2D6 M.D. for claw strikes. Bite attack does only one M.D. Or by weapon, but those are usually S.D.C. or simple M.D. melee weapons.

Bonuses: +2 on Perception Rolls, +2 to parry (can parry with claws), +2 to dodge, +3 to disarm, +6 to save versus Horror Factor, and is +1 to all saving throws.

Magic: None.

Psionics: None.

Standard Equipment: Very little, perhaps a wooden spear and water skin, or pouch or bag with a few items stolen from colonists, like a pocket mirror, flashlight, knife, comb or brush, etc. Likes technology and will steal and use simple tools and equipment. Also finds magic fascinating and will use magic items and weapons.

Habitat: Found throughout the Thundercloud Galaxy, especially on the more populous worlds.

Market Value: Minimal: 1D6x100 for gladiatorial games or as a zoo animal. Some colonies are so plagued by the things that they offer a bounty for every Rompo killed, paying 3D6x10 credits per head.

Allies: Fellow Rompo. Wary of everyone else, but once a friendship is established, the creature is a stalwart friend.

Enemies: Predators, slavers and big game hunters. Wary of all people. It is sad, but many civilized people unfamiliar with Rompo, which are most, assume they are disgusting monsters or wild ape-like animals and kill them without conscience or regret.

Shakdan

Minion of Splugorth

The Shakdan hold a very specific place in the Splugorthian hierarchy. They are a slave race that have, over the millennia, been elevated to doctors and interrogators, trained for decades in healing and the bizarre art of Bio-Wizardry. Their job is to help gather and cultivate alien life forms, and then devise ways to surgically implant them into recipients (both willing and not). The Shakdan are also the ones who operate the transmutation

chambers, heal both slaves and Minions, and concoct potent new chemicals and drugs for their masters to use or sell. They are not prejudiced towards any particular race, though it is their job to torture prisoners for their masters. To a Shakdan, there is no difference between performing a beneficial surgery and inflicting hellish agony; it's all just a part of their job.

Unlike most other Splugorth minions, the Shakdan are extremely well educated. They are also a curious people who love those rare times when they are allowed to escape the confines of the laboratory and see the world outside. Methodical scientists, they will never dismiss anything as being trivial or unworthy. They explore every possibility, test every theory, and follow every protocol to the letter.

There are more Shakdan in the Thundercloud Galaxy than among any other Splugorth Kingdom, suggesting that they originate someplace in the galaxy and were enslaved long ago by Lord Desslyth the Elder. For example, there are fewer than one thousand Shakdan in Atlantis, while the Kingdom of Desslyth has over two hundred million. Those who have had close and lengthy dealings with the Splugorth Kingdoms throughout the Megaverse believe that the Shakdan were once exclusive to Desslyth the Elder, and that they have been traded in small numbers over the millennia. This makes a certain kind of sense, since the elderly Splugorth lord has needed constant medical care for at least the past 30,000 years.

Shakdan are one of many enigmatic Splugorth servant races; bizarre, floating insects covered in long, hooded robes and tall hats. They can be seen in the various dimensional markets, gathered together in small groups, clicking and chattering to one another, their arms folded into their sleeves. This leaves many outsiders with the wrong impression they are monks or dark priests of some kind, not healers, mages and torturers.

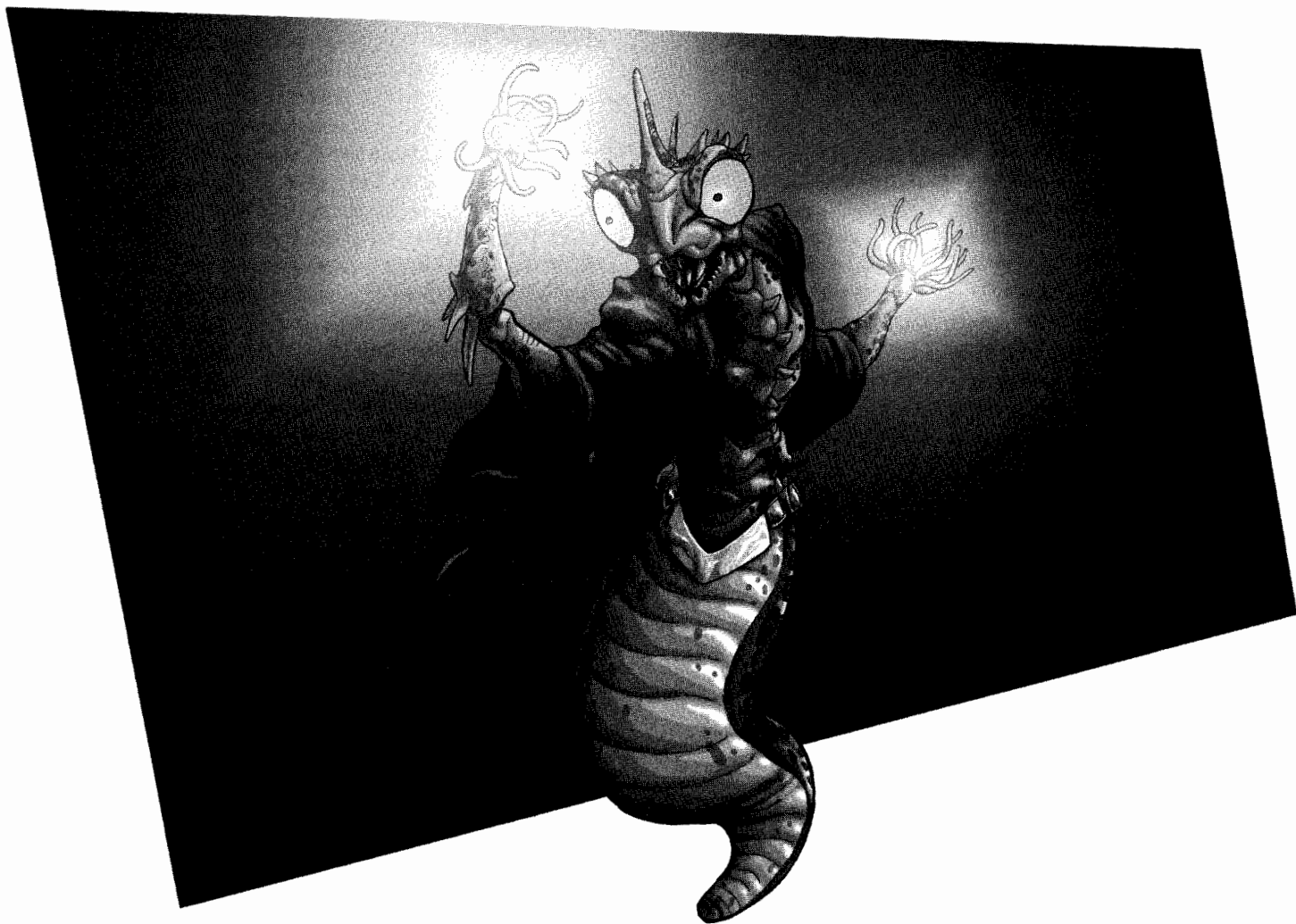
Without their trademark robes, the Shakdan are a sickening cross between a praying mantis-like insectoid and a slug. Their upper body is thin and covered with a greenish exoskeleton, but below their waist there is nothing but a fleshy, squirming, legless stump with a pale, pink underbelly and a green backside with dark green or brown blotches. Their mouths resemble the mantis, but also have several dagger-like teeth beyond the mandibles. Their large, bulbous eyes are yellow or light orange with a small black dot for a pupil. Spikes and spines crown the top of the head. A Shakdan's arms actually have two elbow joints and each hand has ten thin, prehensile fingers about the size and thickness of a pencil. Though they can crawl on the ground like a slug or a worm, Shakdan have the natural ability to hover and float above the ground. This limited flight is believed to be a psionic power unique to their species.

Shakdan [pronounced: SHAK-dan]

Also known as Minions of Splugorth and Worm Doctors.

Player Note: As a Minion of Splugorth, the Shakdan are NPC villains and monsters who specialize in torture, interrogation and mutilation of prisoners. Though doctors with the ability to heal via magic and symbiotic organisms, they are more likely to use captives as test subjects for Bio-Wizard experiments.

As a player character, the Shakdan is a slave who has managed to escape the service of the Splugorth to live free. He may be any alignment, including good (which might explain why the character felt he must escape his evil masters), and can be any O.C.C., but tends to be a magic, medical or science O.C.C. Also see the Splugorth Doctor/Interrogator O.C.C. **Note:** All Shakdan are in the service of the Splugorth, so any "independ-



dent" Shakdan is a spy or assassin of the Splugorth, or a runaway. When a runaway Shakdan is encountered by the Minions of Splugorth, they will insist on taking him into custody where he'll be taken back to the Kingdom of Desslyth, interrogated and put into the gladiatorial arena to meet his doom. Resisting arrest is met with deadly force, as is running away or any form of resistance by the Shakdan and any of his allies.

Alignment: Any, but most are Anarchist (50%), Aberrant (25%) and Miscreant (10%).

Attributes: I.Q. 2D6+19, M.E. 2D6+15, M.A. 2D6+7, P.S. 2D6+9, P.P. 2D6+10, P.E. 2D6+5, P.B. 1D4+1, Spd 1D6+9 floating, 1D6 crawling.

Size: 6 feet (1.8 m).

Weight: 150-200 lbs (68 to 90 kg).

M.D.C.: P.E. attribute number x2, +2D6 M.D.C. per level. Additional M.D.C. protection may be provided by armor, force field, magic talismans or spell magic.

Horror Factor: 12

P.P.E.: 6D6 even for those who do not pursue a career in magic.

Average Life Span: 1D6x10+250 years.

Natural Abilities: Keen color vision, Nightvision 200 feet (61 m).

Shakdan Hive Mind (special): Although each of them is capable of being a fully-functioning individual, they still find great comfort in the company of other Shakdan. Whenever three or more are within 140 feet (42.6 m) of each other, they instinctively pool their thoughts and combine brain power.

This temporarily boosts the I.Q. attribute of each Shakdan in the group by 5 points.

Shakdan Communion (special): Shakdan communicate with one another through a combination of ultrasonic clicking, body language and Telepathy. They can speak Trade Tongues Two and Five with little trouble, but most other languages are simply not possible for them. Certain methods, such as language translators and the Tongues spell, can help to overcome this limitation. Among themselves, Shakdan can communicate via Telepathy, but only among members of their own species. Range is 140 feet (42.6 m). No I.S.P. cost.

Floating (special): The natural state of the Shakdan is floating 1-3 feet (0.3 to 0.9 m) above the ground, and they even meditate and sleep floating. Speed of travel is comparable to a human walking, with a maximum speed of 10 mph (16 km). Maximum height is 20 feet (6.1 m) +1 foot (0.3 m) per level of experience.

Also see Psionics (and Magic) under the O.C.C. that follows.

O.C.C.s for Rogues and Runaway Shakdan: A runaway slave can be any O.C.C., however, even renegades tend to be Magic O.C.C.s, medicine or science related O.C.C.s. Vagabond and Spacer are also more likely than others. Ill-suited for Men-at-Arms O.C.C.s.

A player character may also be a *Shakdan Doctor/Interrogator*, but his training is incomplete which means skill penalties and a smaller range of abilities.

Attacks per Melee: As per Hand to Hand combat skill.

Bonuses: +6 to save versus Horror Factor, +1 to save against poisons and disease, +2 to save vs parasites and symbiotes, and resistant to interrogation (the interrogator suffers a -25% skill penalty).

Magic: 01-60% Same as listed Shakdan Doctor O.C.C. 61-00% As per other chosen O.C.C.; if not a magic O.C.C. the runaway has no magic knowledge. However, if the Shakdan is a doctor or any sort of healer, he'll know at least half, perhaps all, of the magic spells listed under the Shakdan Doctor/Interrogator O.C.C., and have half the amount of P.P.E. as that O.C.C.

Psionics: Same as listed under the Shakdan Doctor O.C.C.

Habitat: The Kingdom of Desslyth. Shakdan can also be found in any and all other Splugorth holdings throughout the Megaverse, although in much lower numbers. It is *rumored* that a tiny handful of Shakdan are kept in isolation deep within the Transgalactic Empire, where they are forced to create the Invincible Guardsmen.

Allies: Work well with High Lords and Conservators, whom they greatly respect.

Enemies: Feel superior to the warrior minions, whom they see as being under-educated and good for little more than war.

Shakdan Doctor/Interrogator O.C.C.

Bio-Wizardry is the Splugorth art of merging one life form to another via magic. The Shakdan Doctors and Assistant Bio-Wizards are some of the best and most knowledgeable in the Megaverse when it comes to healing and torture via the use of parasites and symbiotes. The entire race is dedicated to medicine and science, particularly biological studies. Almost all Shakdan spend their lives in a lab or operating theater, but some occasionally accompany a Slaver or Warrior Squad (1D6+2 Conservators, Kittani warriors, Blind Warrior Women, and other Minions) on the hunt to capture new symbiotic organisms. Many such teams search the depths of the Thundercloud for new symbiotes, parasites, and rare herbs. **Note:** Shakdan are not given any training in the creation of Bio-Wizard weapons. That is the strict domain of the High Lords, though the Shakdan may provide the necessary components and assist them.

Natural Abilities: Same as described earlier.

O.C.C. Special Abilities:

1. Parasite/Symbiote Husbandry: This is a veterinary science that focuses on the care, feeding, breeding, and reproduction of Bio-Wizard implants. **Base Skill:** 55% +5% per level. **Note:** The Base Skill of a runaway is 20% +3% per level of experience.

2. Implant Parasites and Symbiotes: The Shakdan can install and remove all manner of Bio-Wizard life forms and technologies, provided he has at least an operating room and the creatures necessary. Parasites, whose very nature after all is to latch onto another being, are easy to attach. Symbiotic organisms, on the other hand, are a bit more tricky and must be carefully monitored and sometimes adjusted during implantation in order to minimize the risk of tissue rejection (kills both the symbiote and the recipient). **Base Skill:** 70% +2% per level of experience. New and unknown alien life forms inflict a -30% penalty. Cannot work on supernatural beings such as demons or Devils. **Penalties:** -10% to Medical Doctor rolls if symbiotic surgery (installation or removal) is taking place in poor conditions, another -5% if it is being done without the proper instruments, and -20% when working with extremely alien and/or brand new symbiotes and

parasites. All penalties are accumulative. **Note:** The Base Skill of a runaway is 30% +3% per level of experience.

3. Extensive Xenological Training: Through their own schooling and from racially shared memories, the Shakdan have a working knowledge of the anatomy of over 3,000 species common throughout the Megaverse. They are at no skill penalty when performing medicine on these races (includes all Splugorth slave races and those known in the Thundercloud Galaxy). **Base Skill:** 78% +2% per level of experience. New and unknown alien life forms inflict a -30% penalty. Cannot work on supernatural beings such as demons or Devils. **Note:** The Base Skill of a runaway is 40% +3% per level of experience.

4. Operate Transmutation Chambers: The specialized knowledge of how to transform beings within a mystic mutation chamber. The character must successfully roll against this skill for each and every procedure, whether it be augmentation, healing, or torture. A failed roll means that something has gone wrong. Of course, only the Splugorth have such Transmutation Chambers. (Roll on the Transmutation Mutation Table in **Rifts® World Book Two: Atlantis**, page 107.) **Base Skill:** 40% +5% per level. **Note:** Runaways do not have this skill.

5. Shakdan Spell Magic: Even rogue and runaway Shakdan are likely to have undergone training in the medical and magical arts to prepare them as healers and interrogators. Thus most Shakdan possess a vast range of magic knowledge even before becoming full-fledged Doctors/Interrogators.

Agony (20), Armor of Ithan (10), Befuddle (6), Blind (6), Breathe Without Air (15), Calling (8), Charm (12), Charismatic Aura (10), Cure Minor Disorder (10), Death Trance (1), Detect Concealment (6), Domination (10), Featherlight (10), Globe of Daylight (2), Heal Wounds (10), Impervious to Poison (5), Invisibility Simple (6), Lantern Light (1), Life Source (2+), Manipulate Objects (2+), Negate Poison (5), Paralysis: Lesser (5), See Aura (6), See the Invisible (4), Tongues (12), Trance (10), and Words of Truth (12). May learn additional magic the same as any practitioner of magic, but not until reaching level three, and spells continue to focus on healing, torture and manipulation of others.

P.P.E.: 6D6x10 P.P.E. +2D6+4 additional P.P.E. per level of experience. **Note:** Runaways have not completed their training and only have 3D6x10 P.P.E. and get 1D6+2 P.P.E. per level of experience. They cannot learn new magic until they reach their sixth level of experience. Furthermore, remove 1D4+4 spells that have a P.P.E. cost of 6 points or more.

6. Shakdan Psionics: Considered a Minor Psychic with M.E. attribute number for base I.S.P., the special Floating and Shakdan Telepathy (both require no I.S.P.), plus Meditation (0), Mind Block (4), and two Healing or Sensitive psionic abilities of choice. All Shakdan have these abilities.

Shakdan Minion of Splugorth Doctor/Interrogator O.C.C. Skills:

Language: Trade Two and Trade Five at 98%.

Biology (+30%)

Brewing: Medicinal (+10%)

Chemistry (+15%)

Entomological Medicine (+20%)

Find Contraband (+10%)

Holistic Medicine (+20%)

Interrogation (+20%)

Lore: Galactic (+15%)

Lore: Magic (+20%)

Medical Doctor (+30%)

Pathology (+20%)

Sensory Equipment (+20% if medical in nature, +5% otherwise).

W.P. Knife

Hand to Hand: Basic. Can be upgraded to Expert for the cost of two O.C.C. Related Skills.

O.C.C. Related Skills: Select three additional skills from the Medical and/or Science categories, and four other skills from the skill categories below. One additional skill may be taken at levels 3, 6, 9 and 12. All new skills start at first level proficiency. Communications: Any (+5%).

Cowboy: None.

Domestic: Any (+10%).

Electrical: Basic only (+5%).

Espionage: Wilderness Survival only (+10%).

Horsemanship: Exotic only.

Mechanical: Basic or Automotive only.

Medical: Any (+15%).

Military: None.

Physical: Any, excluding Boxing, Acrobatics, and Gymnastics.

Pilot: Any (+5%).

Pilot Related: Any.

Rogue: Streetwise and Streetwise Drugs only (+5%).

Science: Any (+10%).

Technical: Any (+10%).

W.P.: Any, except Heavy Military Weapons and Heavy M.D. Weapons.

Wilderness: None.

Secondary Skills: Select four skills as found on page 300 of **Rifts® Ultimate Edition**. One additional skill may be taken at levels 3, 6, 9, 12 and 15. All new skills start at first level proficiency.

Standard Equipment: The Shakdan are given long, enchanted robes by their Splugorth masters that provide the wearer with 150 M.D.C., and have dimensional pockets built into the voluminous sleeves. In these pockets they store a surgical kit (scalpels, clamps, sutures, etc.), a medical kit (bandages, blood and tissue builders, universal anti-toxins, protein salves, etc), several unbreakable specimen containers, the equivalent of a PSE-8000 medical scanner, one Pathic Healer symbiote, three vials of Clotrobes, and three vials of Purirobes. Also receives one weapon for every W.P. taken; these can include Bio-Wizard and TW weapons, but never Rune items.

Cybernetics and Bionics: Incompatible with their physiology.

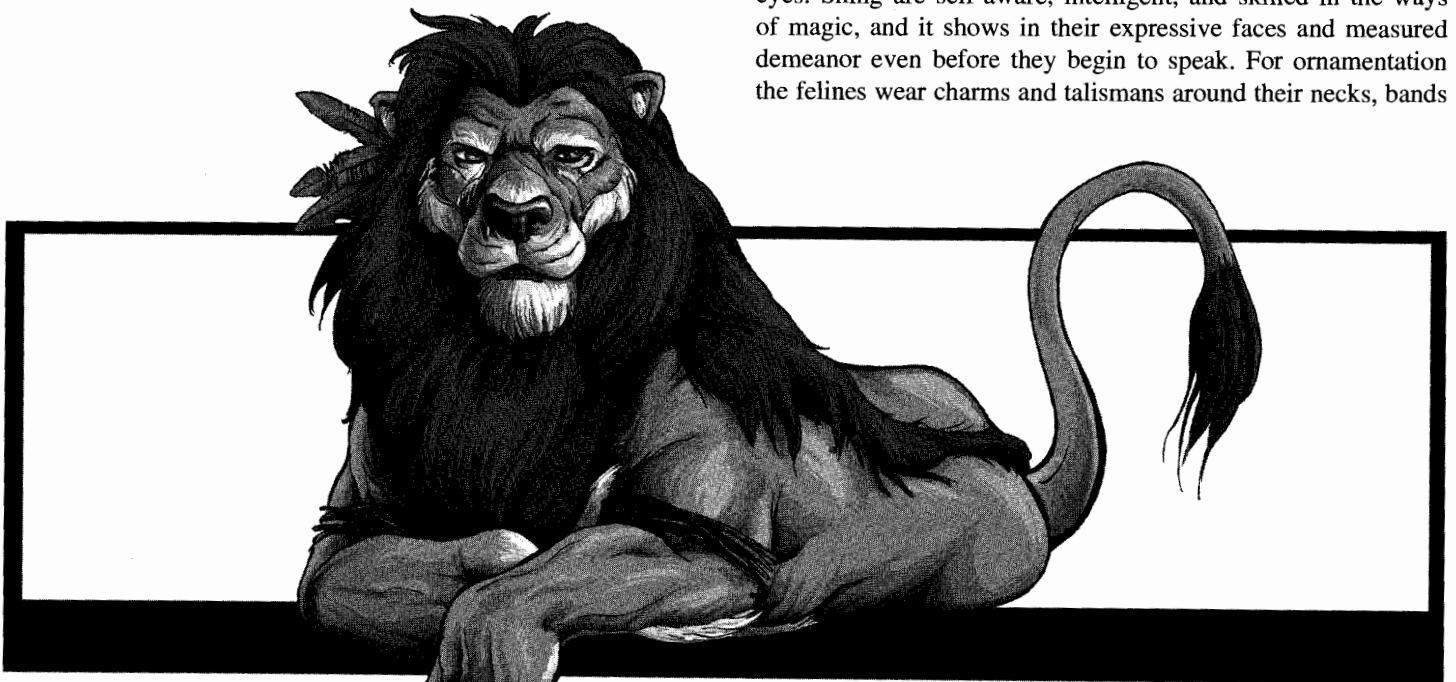
Parasites and Symbiotes: Oddly enough, the Shakdan are forbidden to augment themselves through Bio-Wizardry. Could it be the Splugorth fear losing control over their little doctors?

Money: 4D6x1,000 in *Splugorthian* credits, and another 2D6x1,000 in saleable items.

Shing

Independent & Non-Aligned People

“Imagine African lions that talk.” That’s how most people would describe these beings. The Shing look very much like massive lions. They walk on all fours, and a male Shing is a half ton of muscle and teeth, his head and shoulders crowned by a thick, dark brown or black mane. A Shing’s short fur is a mustard yellow. Males grow an impressive mane of hair that frames their faces, runs halfway down their spine, and in some cases covers their bellies. Females are 10% smaller, do not grow manes, and tend to be leaner and lighter colored, but are just as deadly. In fact, it is the females who take the role of the huntress, hunting and bringing food for their pride. However, the instant anyone looks into the face of a Shing, they immediately recognize sentience in their eyes. Shing are self-aware, intelligent, and skilled in the ways of magic, and it shows in their expressive faces and measured demeanor even before they begin to speak. For ornamentation the felines wear charms and talismans around their necks, bands



around their arms, or painted markings on their hind flanks. Such items are attached via magic or psionic manipulation.

Sometime after the War against the Dominators, a Gene-Tech discovered the Shing. He found the giant cats intriguing. Though barely more than wild animals, they had a highly developed intelligence and social structure. After weeks of observation, he decided the creatures had great potential. All that was lacking was an elevated intelligence. So he gave it to them and left, checking back periodically to see what kind of society they might eventually make for themselves. Thirty-two thousand years later, the end results are the Pride Worlds.

Since they were granted intelligence and voices, but not hands, the Shing could not evolve into tool users in the traditional sense. Instead, their connection to the natural world took them down the path of magic. Today, their entire species practices magic and pursues many specific disciplines. Who taught the Shing the ways of magic is not clear. According to the felines, they encountered practitioners of magic in their journeys to other worlds and dimensions, brought the magic they liked back to their people and developed a society of mages. That may be true, but it is clear the Shing have always had a natural aptitude for magic and dimensional travel. Whether this is something the Gene-Tech deliberately built into them or a natural affinity, no one will ever know. Nature seems likely, as the Shing home world and the worlds they've since "colonized" all have ample ley lines and natural sources of magic energy.

Shing society is rather simple. In many ways it is an extension of their lives as predatory animals. Shing live in large prides out in the open, under the stars. Each pride claims a particular territory and lives off the land. They hunt wild animals to survive, which is considered an art as much as a necessity. Intelligent beings, Shing have a strong culture and a number of practices in place to regulate and maintain the environment they live in. They also regulate the large herd animals they prey upon. They have no written language (though many can read other languages) and commit everything to their keen memories. Males defend the pride and hunt when necessary, but females do the majority of the hunting. Both care for children and the elderly. All enjoy a life outdoors, hunting, playing and roaming the land. Shing love nature and embrace what they consider to be a pure and humble society. Even as animals, the lions gathered and hunted in groups known as prides. This made them communal beings given to working together, especially to hunt and defend the pride. The sense of community, cooperation and teamwork became stronger as their society developed, which gives all Shing a powerful sense of unity. The fact that all Shing came from the First Pride, and the predators never had another sentient rival to face, has preserved the social and cultural sense of family and oneness. It has also made them supremely confident as they have always been at the top of the food chain. Shing are truly the kings of their domain.

At some point in their lives, almost all Shing are struck by wanderlust – a need to leave their pride and travel alone or in pairs to find new experiences and explore new lands. This wanderlust usually strikes around the age of 17-19 and lasts for 3D6+12 years. Sometime later, the wanderer may return to his or her family, but the majority settle down at a new location and start a new pride. In eons past, this is how they came to dominate their home world. In recent generations, it has helped them to explore and colonize new worlds in the Thundercloud Galaxy.

These nomadic journeys shaped their magic abilities as well, leading the Shing to develop and learn magic that enables them to travel across space and time to visit other worlds around them. By the time the Scramble reached the Shing, the cat-people had already claimed and populated a tight cluster of 16 worlds in three solar systems within the Gaelra Arm. Shing also like to explore other worlds and experience other people, cultures and settings. Their favorites are natural environments, but they find even the sterile walls of space stations and modern cities interesting. Until the Scramble, all their contact had been with only a few people in the Thundercloud Galaxy. They are only now going farther into the Thundercloud and beginning to visit the Corkscrew and Anvil Galaxies.

Though evolved from predatory lions, the Shing are not warlike, nor overtly aggressive. They fight only to defend themselves and their pride, and hunt animals to feed upon. This may be due to their size and natural weapons (teeth and claws), as well as their brute strength and magical prowess. In any case, Shing are open to outsiders and confident without being condescending. This is due, in part, to their deep rooted curiosity of all things. They are especially taken with the idea of the endless Megaverse and wish to see as much of it as they can during their wanderlust periods.

The CCW recognizes Shing sovereignty as a legitimate space civilization to be left alone, but the Gorgan Republik does not. They see the big cats as dumb animals or weird semi-intelligent savages to be captured and tamed. Ever the bullheaded thugs, Gorgans have invaded and tried to colonize several of the Shing planets on more than a few occasions. Each time, they have been torn to pieces. The Gorgans have a decent level of technology, but they have never dealt with a society in which each person wields magic, nor fought an enemy with such mastery of the mystic arts. Combine that with the predatory instincts of a lion and a people who stick together and fight as well organized combat units, and the Gorgans have a recipe for disaster. Armies of Shing spell casters teleport into the middle of an unsuspecting Gorgan camp, attack using the element of surprise, scatter them into smaller, more manageable groups, and rip them apart both physically and with magic. When the battle starts to turn against them, Shing vanish into thin air or through a Rift. Shing dimensional magic enables them to breach any defense the Gorgans can put into place. The cat-people have even appeared aboard spacecraft to attack from within the vessel and decimate the crew or cripple the vessel from the inside. Since Shing live in harmony with nature and have no traditional "cities" to attack, Enclave soldiers familiar with modern bombing raids, strafing attacks and armored ground assaults do not have identifiable targets to strike. While there are Shing communities, pride territories, hunting grounds and breeding areas that could be targeted, the dimension-spanning Shing simply open dimensional portals and step into Pocket Dimensions or Time Holes to elude the attackers, wait awhile and reappear elsewhere.

Unable to even get a handle on how to deal with such an unconventional foe, Enclave soldiers are stymied at every turn. Unconfirmed reports state that for every one Shing casualty, the Republik suffered 100. In a stand-up war with the Shing, the Gorgans just can't compete. Unwilling to give up, the Gorgans are considering trying again, only this time using Mariman troops combined with Kasaro and Trensik mercenaries to invade the Shing worlds. If the Republikan Enclaves decide to move forward with this combination of forces, they should fare much

better than previous invasions. The Shing could find themselves with a serious fight on their hands.

Shing [pronounced: SHing]

Also known as Lion People, Cat-People and Dimensional Lions.

Alignment: Any, but tend to be Principled (20%), Scrupulous (25%), Unprincipled (18%), Anarchist (10%), Aberrant (12%) and others.

Attributes of Male Shing: I.Q. 2D6+6, M.E. 2D6+4, M.A. 2D6+10, P.S. 4D6+22 (Robot equivalent), P.P. 2D6+3, P.E. 2D6+10, P.B. 3D6+8, Spd 3D6+18. **Note:** P.S. is equal to Robot P.S.

Attributes of Female Shing: I.Q. 2D6+8, M.E. 2D6+6, M.A. 2D6+5, P.S. 4D6+15 (Robot equivalent), P.P. 2D6+9, P.E. 2D6+11, P.B. 3D6+4, Spd 4D6+26. **Note:** P.S. is equal to Robot P.S.

Size: 4-5 feet (1.2 to 1.5 m) tall at the shoulders and 8-10 feet (2.4 to 3 m) long from snout to rump. The tail is another 4-5 feet (1.2 to 1.5 m). Females are 10% smaller.

Weight: 800-1,000 pounds (360 to 450 kg). Females are 10-20% smaller in weight.

Hit Points: 1D6x10 base, plus 2D6 per level of experience.

S.D.C.: 1D6x10 S.D.C., plus those gained from O.C.C. and skill bonuses.

M.D.C.: By magic or force fields only.

Horror/Awe Factor: 12 +4 when the Shing lets loose with their loud and frightening roar, which they only do when angry, about to attack or to intimidate others.

P.P.E.: P.E. attribute x15 +2D6+2 per level of experience.

Disposition: Confident, curious, calm and noble. Shing walk with their heads held high and find life to be a joy, and the Megaverse a place of wonder. Those of a good and even Unprincipled and Aberrant alignment can be as heroic as a Cosmo-Knight.

Average Life Span: 5D6+60 years.

Experience Level: 1D6 on average, 1D6+4 for leaders and the most experienced mages, or as set by the Game Master. Player characters should start at level one. Use the experience table for the Ley Line Walker or Noro Mystic.

Natural Abilities: Leap 20 feet (6.1 m) high and 30 feet (9.1 m) across from a standing position; increase by 20% with a running start. Track by scent 50% (+10% to track people, +20% to follow a blood scent). Roar can be heard for five miles (8 km), singing for one mile (1.6 km). Only the young purr. All Shing can speak, but males are also excellent singers.

Speed Sprint (special): Male and Female can run with a burst of speed that increases Spd +10 for 1D4 minutes at a time. Can be performed twice per hour.

Also see Magic, as all Shing (with rare exception) can cast magic, and Psionics.

R.C.C. Skills of Male Shing:

Appraise Goods (+10%)
Barter (+20%)
Detect Ambush (+10%)
Herding (+20%)
Interrogation (+15%)
Land Navigation (+20%)
Lore: Two of choice (+10%).
Prowl (+10%)
Public Speaking (+15%)

Sing (+20%)

Swimming (+5%)

Track Animals (+10%)

Tracking (People) (+15%)

Tailing (+20%)

Wilderness Survival (+20%)

Wrestling

R.C.C. Skills of Female Shing:

Climbing (+5%)

Detect Ambush (+30%)

Detect Concealment (+10%)

Dance (+15%)

Dowsing (+10%)

Gymnastics (+10%)

Herding (+30%)

Holistic Medicine (+10%)

Hunting

Identify Plants & Fruits (+15%)

Intelligence (+18%)

Land Navigation (+30%)

Prowl (+20%)

Swimming

Track Animals (+20%)

Tracking (People) (+25%)

Tailing (+20%)

Wilderness Survival (+30%)

R.C.C. Related Skills: None.

Secondary Skills: Select 1D4 skills from the Secondary Skill List on page 300 of **Rifts® Ultimate Edition**, +1 additional Secondary Skill at levels 4, 8 and 12.

Attacks per Melee: Males: Three. Females: Five. Both get +1 additional melee attack at levels 2, 5, 7 and 11.

Mega-Damage: Robotic P.S. means Shing inflict light M.D. unless they use a power punch/power from claw strike or power bite attack.

Males: Punches, head butts, pounce attacks as per Robot equivalent P.S., +2D6 S.D.C./M.D. from claw strikes and +3D6 S.D.C./M.D. from bite attacks. Or via magic.

Females: Punches, head butts, pounce attacks as per Robot equivalent P.S., +3D6 S.D.C./M.D. claw strikes and +2D4 S.D.C./M.D. from bite attack. Or via magic.

Bonuses: **Males:** +1 on Perception Rolls and initiative, +4 to strike with claws, bite and pounce attack, +4 to parry and dodge (does not have automatic dodge), +2 to disarm, +6 to pull punch, +2 to entangle, and +6 to save vs Horror Factor.

Females: +3 on Perception Rolls, +3 on initiative, +6 to strike with claws, bite and pounce attack, and parry, +4 to disarm, +3 to automatic dodge (the act of dodging does not use up a melee attack), +5 to pull punch, +4 to entangle, and +4 to save vs Horror Factor.

Note: A successful roll to pull punch for males and females can reduce damage as the being desires and do S.D.C. damage instead of M.D. if that is the Shing's intention.

Penalties: Have a genetic disposition towards bouts of wanderlust. Become bored and may fall asleep if not mentally engaged, and can sleep for up to 20 hours at a time.

Alternative Magic O.C.C.s: Instead of using the R.C.C. Skills listed above and R.C.C. Magic below, the Shing may choose one of the following alternative O.C.C.s: Ley Line Walker,

Shifter, Temporal Wizard or Temporal Warrior, and wield the magic of those O.C.C.s. Shing can also become Mystics without losing their natural psionic abilities.

R.C.C. Magic: Unless the Shing has chosen another O.C.C., pick one of the following areas of magic for the character. It is helpful if the Game Master and/or player has a copy of **Rifts® Book of Magic**, where most forms of magic are broken down by type/category and spells are all gathered in an easy to use reference book. Percentile numbers are presented for random determination. Note that two categories are limited to males or females only.

01-20% Dimension Magic: Specializes in dimensional travel and bending space and time. Close Rift (200+), Dimensional Portal (1,000), Dimensional Teleport (800), Open Rift (600), Re-Open Gateway (180), Rift Teleportation (200), Swallowing Rift (300), Teleport: Lesser (15), Teleportation: Superior (600), Time Slip (20), Tongues (12), and all Temporal Magic spells levels 7-10. **Note:** Shing who specialize in this area of magic can perform Teleport: Superior, Dimensional Portal, Dimensional Teleport, Open Rift, Close Rift and Re-Open Portal at *half* the listed P.P.E.

Select two additional spells from Temporal Magic levels 11-14 or two Ley Line Magic Invocations (any) for each new level of experience starting at level two.

21-30% Earth Magic: Starts with all *Earth Warlock* spells levels 1-3. Select two additional Earth Warlock spells from levels 4-8 for each new level of experience starting at level two.

31-50% Huntress Invocations (Females only): This is a spell caster who specializes in hunting and taking down prey to feed her pride. *Exclusive to female Shing.* Starts with all level one Invocations plus Breathe Without Air (5), Carpet of Adhesion (10), Chameleon (6), Charm (12), Cleanse (6), Cloak of Darkness (6), Concealment (6), Electric Arc (8), Energy Bolt (5), Fireblast (8), Fire Bolt (7), Invisibility: Simple (6), Invisibility: Superior (20), Levitation (5), Magic Net (7), Manipulate Objects (2+), Paralysis: Lesser (5), Reduce Self (20), Shadow Meld (10), Superhuman Speed (10), Telekinesis (8), Teleport: Lesser (15), and Tongues (12).

Three additional spells are selected for each subsequent level of experience. Spell choices are limited to Invocations from levels 2-10.

51-70% Combat Invocations (Males only): This is a spell caster who specializes in combat related spells for the defense of his pride. *Exclusive to male Shing.* Starts with all level one Invocations plus Armor of Ithan (10), Calling (8), Call Lightning (15), Crushing Fist (12), Chromatic Protection (10), Deflect (10), Energy Bolt (5), Energy Disruption (12), Energy Field (10), Extinguish Fire (4), Fear (5), Fire Ball (10), Fist of Fury (10 or 50; applicable to claw strikes), Frequency Jamming (15), Heal Wound (10), Ice (15), Implosion Neutralizer (12), Levitation (5), Multiple Image (7), Mystic Alarm (5), Sonic Blast (25), Reflection (7), Repel Animals (7), Tongues (12), Turn Dead (6), Watchguard (10), and Weight of Duty (10).

Select two additional spell that relate to combat and defense each subsequent level of experience. Spell choices are limited to Invocations from levels 3-11.

71-80% Ley Line Magic: All Ley Line Invocations to start, plus a total of 1D6+4 spells selected from Invocations levels 1-4.

Select two additional spells of choice each subsequent level of experience. Spell choices are limited to Invocations from levels 1-9.

81-00% Travel Magic: Specializes in spells used for "traveling," including a few that are not a mode of travel themselves, but helpful to a traveler (such as Purification, Sheltering Force, and Tongues). Includes some dimensional magic as they relate to travel.

Starts with: Close Rift (200+), Create Water (15), Distant Voice (10), Escape (8), Float in Air (5), Fly (15), Fly as the Eagle (25), Fortify Against Disease (15), Ley Line Transmission (30), Magic Pigeon (20), Purification (Food/Water; 20), Sheltering Force (20), Superhuman Endurance (12), Superhuman Speed (10), Sustain (12), Swim as a Fish (6), Swim as a Fish: Superior (12), Teleport: Lesser (15), Time Slip (20), Tongues (12), Dispel Magic Barriers (20), and Rift Teleportation (200).

Select one additional "Travel" related spell from the following list for each new level of experience. Astral Projection (10), D-Step (50), Dimensional Portal (1,000), Dimensional Teleport (800), Influence the Beast (12), Ley Line Fade (20), Locate (30), Mystic Portal (60), Negate Magic (30), Plane Skip (65), Realm of Chaos (70), Re-Open Gateway (180), Rift to Limbo (160), Speed of the Snail (50), Swap Places (300), Tame Beast (60), Teleport: Superior (600), Time Hole (210), Transferral (50), Water to Wine (40), and Winged Flight (35).

Psionics: I.S.P. is M.E. attribute number x3 +1D6 I.S.P. per level of experience. All Shing possess the following psionic abilities: Death Trance (1), Meditation (0), Mind Block (4), Read Dimensional Portal (6), See the Invisible (4), Sense Dimensional Anomaly (4), Sense Evil (2), Sense Magic (3), and Sense Time (2). In addition, they automatically sense supernatural (good and evil), 600 foot (183 m) radius, at no I.S.P. cost.

Habitat: Found primarily on worlds in the eastern end of the Gaelra Arm. A few have traveled to Center and Lirtasa via dimensional Rifts, where they are often mistaken for Sphinxes by those who don't know any better.

Allies: As a nation, few. It is interesting to realize that individual Shing have encountered a wide range of people from humans and Noro to the Gulgans and Minions of Splugorth, but they have done so on a one on one basis. Shing are completely unfamiliar with the concepts of politics, business, commerce, trade, corporations and war. This makes them rather naive and vulnerable. How this might play out on the intergalactic stage is yet to be seen, and the noble and compassionate Shing may be another Thundercloud tragedy yet to unfold. If things start to get nasty, it will be interesting to see if other magic using civilizations and people might intervene on their behalf or come to their defense.

Enemies: The Shing judge all races by their encounters and experiences with them. So far, the Shing consider Gulgans, Kasaro, Mariman, Deevils and demons to be dangerous and sworn enemies. They've heard about Dominators, but have never met one. Oddly enough, they've not had a problem with the Minions of Splugorth or the Transgalactic Empire.



Trensik

Famous Independent Mercenaries

Trensik are stocky humanoids with thick muscles. Their pale orange skin is tough and leathery to the touch and covered with small bumps. They have a pronounced jaw, no body hair, tiny ears and nose, thin lips, enlarged craniums and watery-blue eyes. Hands have four fingers and a thumb. Skin is the texture of sandy paint. A thick ridge of bone runs both under and above their eyes, and their lower jaw juts out noticeably. The Trensik are all vegetarians, and have large, flat teeth which gives them a distinctive accent when speaking any of the Trade Tongues.

The Trensik herald from their home world, Trennis, located deep inside the Crèche Clouds. The planet is barren and dry by galactic standards, with scathing winds and an under-abundance of natural resources. Having little to offer the Three Galaxies in terms of trade, the Trensik decided to tender themselves, renting their people out as soldiers for hire to any who will pay them. The Trensik are a race ideally made for warfare. While their mental capacity is below average, physically they are one of the toughest, non-M.D.C. races alive. The Trensik are silicon-based life forms, and are thus more resistant to physical damage than humans or Wulfen. Many are quick to dismiss the Trensik as being stupid or slow. However, prior to the founding of the Trensik Corps, they apparently mastered the science of gravitonics. They seem to favor rail guns, explosives, and kinetic weapons over lasers and particle beams. They also readily upgrade themselves with cybernetics purchased from off-world, or received as payment for military services rendered.

The Trensik are unique, because they have looked at themselves in harsh terms to determine their place in the Three Galaxies. The facts are, they are not pretty nor do they possess brilliant minds. They are a gruff, practical people with powerful bodies and low intelligence compared to many other races in the Three

Galaxies. Trensik aren't stupid, mind you, but they are not geniuses either. Their technology isn't bad, but it borrows from others and is nothing special compared to the TGE, CCW, and Naruni Enterprises (from all of whom they get surplus weapons and gear). Knowing they have a diminished intellectual capacity, and that it keeps them from competing on a level playing field, the Trensik decided to market their strengths: Brute strength, military discipline, and bravery. And what better way to do so than as soldiers for hire? Trensik live in a Spartan society so once the decision was made, it was easy to implement.

Trensik mercenaries are skilled and disciplined soldiers. They are not brutish like the Kreeghor, nor are they vainglorious as the Wulfen can be. What defines the Trensik heart is a deep sense of commitment, hard practiced skill, a pragmatic outlook, and family. It is, in large part, their commitment and sense of responsibility to their family and their people, that drives the Trensik. That, and a genuine goodness that makes them want to make a difference and help others. Truth be known, the Trensik despise war in all its forms. The only reason that they travel light-years away from home, for decades at a time, to fight in other people's battles, is because they are certain it is their only hope to be a force in the changing galaxy. They genuinely see themselves as good for little else and believe this is the only way they can earn a living. Their entire civilization has evolved around this paradigm.

Their demeanor is generally severe, their faces unreadable. Almost no one can ever recall seeing one of them laugh, or cry for that matter. Empathic and telepathic scans reveal little about them other than feelings of devotion, discipline, and stern commitment. Therefore, it is easy to label them as being just another dour species, or to lump them in with a myriad of grim warrior races. However, the truth is Trensik are far more passionate than anyone knows. Though many believe otherwise, Trensik do, indeed, laugh, cry, sing songs, and tell jokes. They love writing poetry and songs (many of which are surprisingly moving), as well as reading novels. However, few ever see this side of their culture because the

Trensik make a point of not showing it when they are on duty in the Corps or around outsiders. They want people to see only their game face, and think of them as stern and fierce warriors.

Perhaps because it is the one place where the Trensik allow their true natures to shine, the planet Trennis is absolutely off-limits to all off-worlders and alien species. If you want to hire some Trensik mercenaries, then you go to one of their two company offices. In fact, the exact location of Trennis is a bit of a mystery, and some people are not entirely certain the Trensik originate in the Thundercloud. All of this is just fine by them. The Trensik add to this confusion by having the bulk of the Mercenary Corps stay in places where many people and races constantly come and go, such as Phase World and the Kingdom of Desslyth. That way, no one ever sees them go home.

The Trensik are often hired by the major power blocs for use in proxy wars. They have absolutely no political allegiance and will fight for anyone. As a matter of fact, there have been a few occasions when opposing sides in a conflict have each fielded Trensik units against each other. When the Trensik Corps are hired by outside parties, the first month's rental must be paid in full, directly deposited into a branch of the Royal Bank of Dracul, located in the city of *Center* on Phase World. This account is then used by the Trensik veterans to buy food, water, and other necessities of life from the trading ports in Center and Lirtassa. Thus, as long as the Corps keep fighting out there among the stars, the people on the Trensik home world will have enough to get by.

Trensik [pronounced: TREN-sick]

Also known as Trensik Mercenaries and Orange Crush.

Attributes: Any, but most are Scrupulous (25%), Unprincipled (25%) Anarchist (25%) or Aberrant (10%).

Attributes: I.Q. 2D4+5, M.E. 2D4+14, M.A. 2D4, P.S. 3D6+10 (Supernatural), P.P. 2D6+6, P.E. 2D6+5, P.B. 2D6, Spd 3D6+6.

Size: 5 and a half to 6 feet tall (1.67 to 1.8 m).

Weight: Average is 200 to 400 lbs (90-180 kg). They are very heavy for their size.

M.D.C.: 4D6 M.D.C. base, +P.E. attribute number and +1D8 M.D.C. per level of experience. Physical skills that normally impart S.D.C. bonuses provide half that number as additional M.D.C. Additional M.D.C. is supplied by body armor, power armor, bionics, force fields or magic.

Horror Factor: 10; the Trensik have a reputation of being tough ground fighters.

P.P.E.: 2D4

Disposition: Stern, yet paternal, caring, and passionate. At the same time they are pragmatic, fiercely disciplined, self-controlled and practical. Trensik are loyal to their friends, family and race.

Average Life Span: 3D6+50 years, short by galactic standards.

Experience Level: 2D4 on average, 1D6+6 for leaders and the most experienced warriors, or as set by the Game Master. Player characters should start at level one. Use the experience table for the character's chosen O.C.C.

Natural Abilities: Very tough skin, Supernatural P.S., resistance to high winds (10% damage), immune to the effects of M-Rads, and Bio-Regenerates 2D6 M.D.C. per 12 hours. The tough hides of the Trensik make them light M.D.C. beings, so even without additional body armor, they are a dangerous opponent.

R.C.C. Skills: Cardsharp, Computer Operation, Detect Ambush, Detect Concealment, Electronic Countermeasures, Lore: Galactic, Pilot: Tanks & APCs, and Pilot: Space Fighters, all with a +20% skill bonus, plus Hand to Hand: Commando (See **Rifts® Ultimate Edition**, page 348). These are all in addition to the usual skills of a chosen Men-at-Arms O.C.C. Additional O.C.C. Related Skills and Secondary Skills tend to focus on Military, Physical, Piloting, and W.P. skills to make them the best warrior possible.

Available O.C.C.s: Any Men-at-Arms O.C.C., including CAF equivalent O.C.C.s and Galactic Tracer. With their M.D.C. bodies and enhanced healing, most avoid full bionic conversion, but it can happen. As mercenaries they may sell their services to function as sheriff or other lawmen, gunfighters, guard/escort, protector of colonies, mining and industrial sites, or to explore alien ruins, exterminate monsters, fight Space Pirates and battle hostile indigenous people.

Attacks per Melee: As per Hand to Hand: Commando and any applicable bonuses.

R.C.C. Bonuses: +1 attack per melee round, +2 to Perception Rolls, +1 on initiative, +1 to strike, parry and dodge, +2 to disarm and entangle, +3 to pull punch, +1 to save vs Horror Factor at levels 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 9, 11, 13 and 15, and +12% to save versus coma/death.

Vulnerabilities: Below average intelligence, and not particularly charming either, which frequently causes those who hire them to underestimate their abilities and not use them to their full potential.

Magic: None.

Psionics: None. Not in their genetics.

Weapons & Equipment: As per O.C.C., plus a standard suit of Trensik EBA body armor, Contra-Gravitonic assault rifle and heavy pistol (equal to the CG-15AR and GR-45HP "Jackhammer"), six clips for each weapon, one additional weapon for each W.P. and three reloads per each, plus a Vibro-Knife (1D6 M.D.), 1D6 explosive hand grenades, 1D4 smoke grenades, a canteen, 1D4 week supply of rations, cigarette lighter, and some personal items. **Note:** Love all Naruni and Bushi weapons and combat gear.

Bionics & Cybernetics: None to start. Combat veterans of 5th level and higher may consider a few. It is not uncommon to see vets with 1D4+1 assorted cybernetic implants and one bionic limb with two weapons or other bionic features for it. These must all be purchased from a third party, since the Trensik have no cybernetic technology of their own. Note that because of their silicon-based physiology, Trensik need specially adapted implants, which are uncommon and cost 50% to 200% more.

Money: Almost every credit a Trensik mercenary makes is sent back home to provide for his loved ones. Most Trensik mercs seldom have more than 100 credits on them at any give time.

Habitat: Home world is Trennis. Encountered throughout the Thundercloud Galaxy, and mercenary companies may also be encountered in the other two galaxies, Phase World in particular.

Allies: Anyone with money and a contract of employment. As typical of the pragmatic Trensik, they try to see everyone as a potential client if not an ally, and try not to burn bridges with civilizations with whom they might personally disagree.

Enemies: None. They dislike the TGE, who have used hired Trensik mercenaries as cannon fodder with little regard for the soldiers' lives, and are untrusting of the Splugorth and try to avoid contracts with them. Likewise, the Trensik do not trust or like any evil supernatural force and only evil or desperate Trensik will allow themselves to be hired by demons or Deevils.

Tsongkuba

Warriors of the Transgalactic Empire

There are several hominine (very ape-like) species across the Three Galaxies, but the Tsongkuba are one of the most well-known. They are massive, hunched over humanoids whose arms are twice the length of their legs and resemble hairless gorillas with pale to dark gray skin. They have a smooth, but thick, rhinoceros-like hide. Hands are oversized, but have four fingers and an opposable thumb. The feet have three toes and their own opposable thumbs. Tsongkuba walk upright, but run in a loping manner on all fours, and tend to knuckle-walk on all fours when bored and waiting around. Since their scent organs are located in the roof of the mouth, the Tsongkuba have no noses, and many mistake their constant panting for a shortness of breath when it is simply their way of smelling things. Eyes are recessed and protected by a thick brow ridge.

The Tsongkuba originate from a large and verdant world in the center of Oswoe's Arm, and these hairless gorilla people have known nothing but cruelty and oppression for as long as they can remember. Since the dawn of the Third Galactic Era, they were an indentured race, conquered by the minions of Desslyth

the Elder. Whereas once the Tsongkuba were gentle and almost painfully shy, under Splugorthian rule they were transformed into savage fighters and brawny workers. No magic or Bio-Wizardry was used to this end, but rather their society was altered the long, hard way: through 10,000 years of gladiatorial combat and demeaning, back-breaking labor. Once the Splugorth felt they had toughened the Tsongkuba up enough, they trained them to be deadly warriors. When their home world was liberated by the Transgalactic Empire, all passivity had long since been bred out of them. They were now a desperate, savage people who knew only obedience and bloodshed.

The Tsongkuba's tendency to gather in extended families had been crushed, but not extinguished. Now that they are free, those sentiments have begun to creep back. The TGE has seized on this and encouraged them to take out their feelings on their former oppressors and help them conquer other worlds in the Kingdom of Desslyth – if for no other reason than to keep their families safe. Today, Tsongkuba warriors are the Terrors of Oswoe's Arm, fighting right beside the Imperial Legions as they battle the Kingdom of Desslyth, reveling in the murder and maiming. Freelance Tsongkuba warriors have taken to a life as mercenaries and Galactic Tracers, while others are lawmen for hire, while still others are raiders, bandits and Space Pirates.

Tsongkuba [pronounced: SONG-ku-ba]

Also known as Gorilla People and Gorilla Warriors.

Alignment: Any, but tend to be Anarchist (30%), Aberrant (30%) and Miscreant (20%).

Attributes: I.Q. 2D4+3, M.E. 2D4+3, M.A. 2D4, P.S. 3D6+22 (Supernatural), P.P. 2D6+8, P.E. 2D6+8, P.B. 2D6, Spd 3D6+4.



Size: 7-10 feet (2.1 to 3 m) tall when standing fully erect, though their bent over stance and running on all fours makes them appear 5-6 feet tall (1.5 to 1.8 m).

Weight: Average is 200 to 400 lbs (90-180 kg).

M.D.C.: 6D6+16 M.D.C. base, +P.E. attribute number and +2D6 M.D.C. per level of experience. Physical skills that normally impart S.D.C. bonuses provide half that number as additional M.D.C. Additional M.D.C. can be provided by body armor, force fields or magic. Like the Blind Warrior Women, most Tsongkuba Splugorth warriors are given a magic talisman that provides 150 M.D.C.

Horror Factor: 10, under the best of circumstances. 15 when angry, standing erect, charging, roaring or threatening.

P.P.E.: 3D6 base.

Disposition: Warlike and aggressive, they tend to solve their problems through violence and intimidation. Savage combatants that they are, the Tsongkuba see themselves as one huge, extended family. Even the most evil one of them will be loath to hurt or kill another Tsongkuba.

Average Life Span: 3D6+54 years; short by galactic standards.

Experience Level: 1D4 on average, 1D6+2 for leaders and the most experienced warriors, or as set by the Game Master. Player characters should start at level one. Use the experience table for the character's chosen O.C.C.

Natural Abilities: The equivalent of Supernatural P.S., Mega-Damage hide, and Bio-Regenerates 2D6 M.D. per 12 hours.

Long Reach (special): The apish Tsongkuba warriors have a reach equal to their height, which often catches opponents off guard (see initiative, entangle and pin combat bonuses). They are also ambidextrous and can use both hands with equal skill.

Mega-Damage Beings (special): The tough M.D.C. hide makes them light M.D.C. beings that are dangerous without additional body armor.

Superior Sense of Smell & Track by Smell (special): Can track a particular smell or scent to its location and track people by smell like a bloodhound. **Base Skill:** 45 +5% per level of experience.

R.C.C. Skills: Fasting (+10%), Palming (+15%), Paired Weapons, Wrestling and Zero Gravity Movement & Combat (+10%). These are all in addition to the usual skills of a chosen Men-at-Arms O.C.C. Additional O.C.C. Related Skills and Secondary Skills tend to focus on Military, Physical, Piloting, and W.P. skills to make them the best warrior possible.

Available O.C.C.s: Any Men-at-Arms O.C.C., including TGE equivalent combat O.C.C.s, Galactic Tracer, Runner, Space Pirate and similar. A few have become Invincible Guardsmen, and damned scary ones at that!

Attacks per Melee: As per Hand to Hand skill and any applicable bonuses.

R.C.C. Bonuses: +3 on initiative, +1 to strike and parry, +3 to entangle and pin an opponent, +2 to pull punch, +1 to save vs Horror Factor at levels 2, 4, 6, 8, 10 and 14, and +6% to save versus coma/death.

Vulnerabilities: -2 to save vs gas attacks, -10% Climbing penalty, and their below average intelligence, lack of patience, and hyper-aggression can get them in trouble.

Magic: None. The Tsongkuba know all about magic from their long years with the Splugorth, but because of their limited intellect and lack of patience, they do not practice magic.

Psionics: Automatically have the power of Empathy with double range and duration, but only in relation to others of their race. I.S.P. is equal to the Tsongkuba's M.E. +1D6 per level. They are considered to be Minor Psychics for saving throw purposes.

Habitat: Found all throughout TGE and Desslyth space in the Thundercloud Galaxy as well as other parts of the Thundercloud. Rare in the other two galaxies. Those in the Kingdom of Desslyth remain warrior slaves and Minions of Splugorth.

Allies: The Kreeghor and TGE allied races. The vast majority of Tsongkuba are model citizens of the TGE. They see the Kreeghor as their saviors and the only people who ever showed them any form of kindness. As a result, their dedication to the Kreeghor is fanatical and they fight the enemies of the Empire without mercy – especially the Splugorth, although if told to do so, they will fight anyone the Kreeghor target.

Enemies: The Splugorth and their minions. The Tsongkuba hate the TGE's human populations and would eventually like to usurp their position within the Empire. Not too fond of the Monro either, and because the TGE considers the CCW their enemy, the Gorilla People tend to think the same.

Whetu

Consortium of Civilized Worlds

Orbiting close to a blue dwarf star in the Gaelra Arm, the Whetu home world is one that most other species would consider to be uninhabitable. Its surface temperature is so hot that water exists only as steam. The air pressure at ground level is equal to three atmospheres. Still, life somehow managed to take root here, mostly in the miles-deep canyons and sunken lava plains that cover most of the planet. Eventually, a technologically-oriented humanoid species rose to dominance.

Unlike most races in the Three Galaxies, the Whetu's biology seems to be based on the number three. They have three eyes, three arms, three legs and each of their limbs possesses three joints. They even have three sexes; male, female, and hermaphrodite. Their arms sprout from the middle of their backs, and can wrap around themselves entirely. They have three large eyes, one in the middle of the head, and one on each sides. The mouth is located in the middle of the chests.

From very early on in their development, the Whetu knew that the higher in altitude they went, the more the temperature dropped. For these thermal aliens, that meant suffering and death. Even climbing a tall mountain could be incredibly dangerous without extensive protection. When they looked out into the universe, the Whetu saw an impossibly cold place where they were certain nothing else could live. Having no reason to go out into space, they neither developed rocketry nor any other kind of space technology. Furthermore, the Whetu built a world underground with labyrinths of tunnels and chambers and drew upon thermal energy as their primary source of power and heat. For a Whetu, a cool temperature is 90 degrees Fahrenheit (32 C), and 100–200 degrees (37.8 to 93 C) is comfortable. When discovered by a CCW exploratory team, the human representatives recognized the Whetu civilization as a sovereign people. The Whetu have since become friends and supporters of the CCW and their explorers and scientists have begun to venture out, into the uni-



verse. Whetu have never engaged in war, and find the idea both exciting and frightening. Ever curious, Whetu desire to learn more about other people, other worlds, magic, space travel and even war. The entire concept of magic is alien to them but they are enthralled with the idea of it, as well as dragons and other creatures of magic and supernatural beings.

Humans of the CCW have helped design an environmental suit for the Whetu to enable them to visit and explore alien worlds, and are working on a non-combat power armor suit for the strange beings.

Whetu [pronounced: Wheh-TOO]

Alignment: Any, but lean toward Principled (15%), Scrupulous (30%), Unprincipled (20%) and Anarchist (20%).

Attributes: I.Q. 2D6+9, M.E. 2D6+9, M.A. 2D6+7, P.S. 2D6+7, P.P. 2D6+9, P.E. 2D6+7, P.B. 1D6, Spd 2D6+9.

Size: 5-6 feet (1.5 to 1.8 m) tall.

Weight: 100 to 200 lbs (45 to 90 kg).

M.D.C.: Base of 30 M.D.C. to start, plus their P.E. (plus O.C.C. and skill bonuses). Add 1D6 M.D.C. per level.

Horror Factor: 9

P.P.E.: 2D6

Average Life Span: 1D4x10+100 years.

Experience Level: 1D6 on average, 2D4+2 for leaders, or as set by the Game Master. Player characters should start at level one. Use the experience table for the character's chosen O.C.C.

Natural Abilities: Triple jointed, impervious to heat and fire, can swim in lava, Nightvision 2,000 feet (610 m), can see 360 degrees and have an on the sides of their head so they cannot be attacked from behind or easily surprised, see infrared and ultraviolet spectrums of light, and see the heat spectrum like a thermal imager. Is not blinded or harmed by smoke, sulfur and

most other noxious gases, can see through smoke, and in the dimmest of light. Poor daylight/sunlight vision; bright lights hurt the Whetu's eyes (1,000 foot/305 m range, maximum). Cold based attacks inflict double damage. Bio-Regenerates lost M.D.C. at a rate of 3D6 points per every eight hours.

R.C.C. Skills: Acrobatics (+10% as applicable), Climbing (+25%), Escape Artist (+15%), Excavation (20%), Firefighting (+20%), Gemology (+25%), Mining (+20%) and Spelunking (20%). These are all in addition to the usual skills of a chosen O.C.C.

Available O.C.C.s: Any O.C.C., except Men-at-Arms and Practitioners of Magic. Mainly scholars, scientists, engineers, explorers and adventurer types.

Attacks per Melee: As per Hand to Hand skill and any applicable bonuses.

R.C.C. Bonuses: +6 on Perception Rolls, +3 on initiative, +3 to parry and disarm, +3 to entangle, +1 to pull punch, and impervious to smoke, sulfur and most gases.

Vulnerabilities: Unable to survive temperatures below 76 degrees Fahrenheit (24.4 C). If exposed to what is the equivalent of freezing temperatures to the Whetu, reduce attacks per melee, combat bonuses and speed by half, -2 to P.S. and P.P. attributes. These effects and penalties are cumulative for every five hours of exposure. The freezing Whetu also suffers Mega-Damage at a rate of 2D4 points per hours of exposure; cannot Bio-Regenerate at temperatures colder than 76 degrees Fahrenheit (24.4 C). When all M.D.C. has been depleted, the Whetu lapses into a coma. The coma lasts one hour per P.E. point. If warmed to a temperature above 90 degrees Fahrenheit (32 C) the character's regenerative ability kicks in and he may recover. If not, he dies. Must wear special environmental suits or armor to associate with most other races.

Magic: None.

Psionics: M.E. attribute x4, +2D4 per level of experience. Considered Major Psychics. All Whetu have the following abilities: Telekinesis (varies), Telekinetic Leap (8), Telekinetic Lift (6), Telekinetic Punch (6), and Telekinetic Push (4), plus Telekinetic Force Field (20) or Pyrokinesis (varies).

Weapons and Equipment: As per O.C.C. plus two protective environmental suits with padding, helmet and light protection (35 M.D.C., helmet also has 35 M.D.C. by itself), two suits of environmental body armor (120 M.D.C. Main Body, 90 for helmet, 60 for each arm and leg), a multi-tool, personal computer loaded with all available information pertaining to humanity, and a few personal items.

Bionics & Cybernetics: None to start. Most systems are incompatible with the Whetu's body and thermal physiology.

Money: Most Whetu are well educated and have 2D6x100 in credits, and 3D6x10,000 credits worth of additional items, probably gemstones.

Habitat: The majority of Whetu remain isolated on their home world, but Whetu are beginning to spread across the Thundercloud Galaxy, not as colonists, but as explorers, scientists and adventurers. They are also starting to make their way into the other galaxies as merchants, diplomatic liaisons and tourists; particularly in Consortium space. Furthermore, the Whetu, in conjunction with CCW advisors, are building a space port and visitors' city on the surface of their planet as well as a space station and CAF space station and dock orbiting their planet. The latter is a strategic military maneuver on the part of the CCW, the others are to develop a merchant and tourist trade. As it turns out, the Whetu have a wealth of gemstones and mineral resources that have much more value to the outside world than to the Whetu, and they are happy to trade them.

Whetu are enthusiastic travelers thrilled to discover the universe around them. A few have already relocated themselves to Phase World, while a few have opened up shops at the Center and the Utopia Planets where they find ample employment from wealthy humans. Unlike everyone else in the Scramble over the Thundercloud, the Whetu have no desire, at present, to colonize other worlds. However, the CCW has pointed them toward a couple of other hot and presumably uninhabited worlds for them to consider colonizing and bringing into the fold of the CCW.

Allies: Humans of the CCW, in particular, but also strive for friendly relations with all full members of the Consortium of Civilized Worlds (of which the Whetu are the newest members). Reactions towards Associate Races can run the gamut from indifference to friendship.

Enemies: In principle, they see everyone in the Transgalactic Empire as their foe, although they have conflicting feelings towards the Human population of the TGE.



shock. Still, they had fared better than many of their interstellar neighbors, partly due to their supernaturally tough bodies. The Zuwadza were also practitioners of a specialized type of magic which may or may not have helped them survive the shock wave and their millennia of enslavement by the Splugorth.

The Zuwadza called them the *Shausa-raheem*, "the Death Makers." These were the blacksmiths of their race, and although they could forge common, everyday items like pots and horse-shoes, they were most known for their skill at crafting knives and other bladed weapons. Somehow, through secrets passed on from master to apprentice, they were able to imbue their creations with powerful magic capabilities. A knife of simple iron, if forged by a Shausa-raheem, could easily cut through stone. Before the arrival of the Splugorth, the wars between the Zuwadza tribes were many and bloody.

When the forces of Desslyth the Elder arrived and began their regular routine of enslavement, the tribes of the Zuwadza united to fight a common foe. The weapons of the Shausa-raheem could even combat the magicks and technologies of the Kydian hordes. The High Lords in charge of the invasion were oddly impressed with the metal crafters and decided they could be useful. The lives of the smiths were spared in deference to their skills. The remainder of their race was exterminated.

Over the next several thousand years, the Zuwadza blacksmiths were put to work throughout the growing Kingdom. Many were told to produce magical weapons or die, but they were also used in construction projects and as general repairmen. As Desslyth's holdings spread along Oswoe's Arm, and more and more races were absorbed into the slave pool, the reputation of the Zuwadza

Zuwadza

Death Makers – Transgalactic Empire

The Zuwadza were one of the first peoples to be conquered by Desslyth the Elder following his big move to the Thundercloud. As had happened time and again across the galaxy, their planet, their culture, and their bodies had been ravaged and set back millennia by the passing of the Black Hole Projector's after-

took on a life of its own. Since they were among the more skilled and favored of the Splugorth's servants, the other slaves began to fear them. It was said they were all spies and informants out for themselves. It was said they were a race of murderers who could transform simple objects into lethal weapons. That the Zuwadza were incapable of compassion and ruthless in combat. In a way, many of these rumors had an element of truth to them. The Zuwadza had become an emotionally detached race because they had long ago learned that they could best avoid abuse at the hands of their enslavers by keeping quiet, and by doing what was asked of them. Sometimes they did act as informants, warning the Minions of an impending uprising, because it won them greater favor. Snitching was just another self-preservation tactic to the ruthless Zuwadza.

Zuwadza look like muscular humans. They are tall and broad-shouldered, with dark brown skin. As a species, they have little body fat, so even the weakest among them has the defined muscles and chiseled features of someone who works out daily. Both males and females grow a thick mass of dreadlock hair on their heads. Their eyes are solid orbs of green with no discernable pupil or iris. Traditionally, the Zuwadza people wear very little clothing, but frequently adorn themselves with golden necklaces and bracelets. As warriors, they wear body armor and use both melee weapons and modern guns and energy weapons, vehicles and spacecraft.

Zuwadza [pronounced: zoo-WAHD-za]

Alignment: Any, but most are Unprincipled (10%), Anarchist (55%), and Miscreant (20%).

Attributes: I.Q. 2D6+8, M.E. 2D6+4, M.A. 2D6, P.S. 2D6+12 (Supernatural), P.P. 2D6+8, P.E. 2D6+10, P.B. 3D6, Spd 3D6.

Size: 6-7 feet (1.8 to 2.1 m).

Weight: 200-250 pounds on average (90 to 113 kg).

M.D.C.: 1D6x10 M.D.C. +P.E. attribute number as the base, plus 2D4 for every level of experience gained. Physical skills that normally impart S.D.C. bonuses provide half that number as additional M.D.C. Additional M.D.C. can be provided by body armor, force fields or magic. And in the case of the Zuwadza, armor that they adhere to their bodies.

Horror Factor: 13

P.P.E.: 2D6x10 plus P.E. attribute number as initial base. Add 1D6+15 P.P.E. per level of experience. Note that the Zuwadza can also take full advantage of P.P.E. provided by ley lines, nexus points, and any personal P.P.E. willingly offered to them.

Disposition: Cold, dispassionate and hostile. Most seem stern or angry, or driven by some inner demon and keep their true emotions, thoughts and secrets to themselves. Loyal and compassionate to their families and friends who earn their trust and respect.

Average Life Span: Most Zuwadza who once served the Splugorth have been given an Absurr Life Node which boosts their lifespan to 450 years or more! This made them more productive to the Splugorth. Their normal life span is 1D6x10+100 years.

Experience Level: 1D4+4 on average, 1D6+6 for leaders and master weaponsmiths, or as set by the Game Master. Player characters should start at level one. Use the same experience table as the Noro Mystic Warrior.

Natural Abilities: Expert gemologists, they can easily appraise the quality of valuable metals and stones (50%+5 per level). Supernatural Strength and Endurance, Bio-Regenerates 2D6 M.D.C. every 8 hours, and requires half the daily caloric intake of most humanoid races.

Also see special magic abilities of the *Shausa-raheem* R.C.C. which applies to all Zuwadza alive today. That may change in the future, but the Splugorth only had use for the *Shausa-raheem* weaponsmiths.

R.C.C. Weaponsmith Skill: All Zuwadza *Shausa-raheem* are skilled metalworkers, welders and blacksmiths as well as warriors. **Base Skill:** 82% +1% per level of experience.

Zuwadza Shausa-raheem R.C.C. Skills:

Art (+15%)

Basic Mechanics (+10%)

Basic Electronics (+10%)

Computer Operation (+15%)

Field Armorer (+30%)

General Repair/Maintenance (+15%)

Language: One additional of choice (+20%).

Lore: Magic (+10%).

Pilot: One of choice, including Small Spacecraft.

Prospecting (+10%)

Recognize Weapon Quality (+30%)

Salvage (+20%)

W.P. Knife

W.P. Paired Weapons

W.P. Sword

W.P. Ancient: One of choice

W.P. Modern: Two of choice.

Hand to Hand: Martial Arts or Assassin (pick one).

R.C.C. Related Skills: None. See Magic.

Secondary Skills: The character may select two Secondary Skills as found on page 300 of *Rifts® Ultimate Edition* at levels 2, 6 and 12.

Available O.C.C.s: None. Specialized.

Attacks per Melee: As per Hand to Hand: Martial Arts or Assassin and any applicable bonuses.

Bonuses: +2 to initiative, +2 to strike and parry with *any* melee weapon, +1 to disarm, +3 to pull punch, +1 to save vs Horror Factor at levels 3, 5, 7, 10, 12 and 15, and +6% to save versus coma/death and +2 to save versus possession.

Vulnerabilities: None per se, but require twice the daily water intake of most humanoid races.

Magic: All Zuwadza alive today are *Shausa-raheem* weapon makers, known and feared throughout most of the Thundercloud Galaxy. Part of what made them so scary in the eyes of so many other races was that the Zuwadza did not require special forges or cauldrons. They were (and are) able to use a simple, traditional, stone furnace and ordinary metals from which to create some of the most lethal blades ever seen. The *Shausa-raheem* enchant their creations by force of will and so can make their weapons almost anywhere, and at any time.

Note: In all cases, this applies only to *metal blade* and *spiked melee weapons* – axes, knives, forks, morning stars, picks, spearheads, arrowhead, and swords, as well as related tools (sewing needle, ice pick, shovel blade, etc.). Must be metal.

Turn Metal S.D.C. Blade Weapon Into M.D.C. Weapon (special): In all cases, the S.D.C. metal blade becomes M.D. point for point, so if the weapon did 1D6 S.D.C. it now does 1D6 M.D. Wooden parts, like that of a spear or axe handle, are NOT M.D.C., only the metal blade portion.

1. To temporarily turn an ordinary metal weapon into a Mega-Damage weapon, the Zuwadza uses the *Power Weapon*

spell at half the usual P.P.E. cost and for double the duration (four melee rounds per level of experience).

2. For the cost of an additional 30 P.P.E. and 10% of the sorcerer's S.D.C. points, the weapon can remain a Mega-Damage weapon for days equal to his own P.E. attribute number. Spent P.P.E. recovers as usual. Spent S.D.C. does not return until the enchantment ends, however many days later.

3. To turn the weapon into a *permanent* M.D. weapon, the Zuwadza must expend 100 P.P.E. and temporarily loses 10% of his personal M.D.C. points for 1D4 weeks.

Energy Metal M.D. Blade Weapon (special): The Zuwadza can make an Mega-Damage blade weapon glow with energy and inflict an additional 1D6 M.D. whenever the blade strikes. The weapon can also fire an energy beam that does 1D6+3 M.D. Duration: One melee round per level of experience. Range of the Energy Blast: 100 feet (30.5 m) per level of experience. P.P.E. Cost: 15.

Flaming Metal M.D. Melee Weapon (special): The Zuwadza can make a Mega-Damage blade weapon crackle with flames and inflict an additional 1D6 M.D. +1 M.D. per level of experience. Duration: One melee round per level of experience. P.P.E. Cost: 10.

Turn S.D.C. Metal Armor Into M.D.C. Armor (special): Similar to the power above, the Zuwadza can temporarily turn ordinary metal armor into M.D.C. armor. It costs 25 P.P.E. to do so and the magic lasts for only two melee rounds per level of the spell caster.

Wear Makeshift Metal M.D.C. Armor (special): A Zuwadza weaponsmith can collect and gather *M.D.C. scrap metal*, place them on his body, and it magically adheres to him! In this way, he can effectively create non-environmental body armor with M.D.C. equal to the character's own P.E. attribute number x8. The armor does not cause encumbrance, and, in fact, the magic makes the scrap metal feather-light. When all M.D.C. is gone, or the magical duration ends, the armor falls off in a heap. Duration: One minute per M.E. attribute point of the smith. P.P.E. Cost: 25.

Spells of the Zuwadze Shausa-raheem: Armorbane (100), Create Steel (68), Create Water (15), Create Wood (10+), Forcebonds (25), Fuel Flame (5), Ignite Fire (6), Impervious to Fire (5), Lantern Light (1), Magic Shield (6), Mystic Fulcrum (5), Power Weapon (35; twice the duration), Speed Weapon (100), Spinning Blades (20), Swords to Snakes (50), and Tongues (12). **Note:** The numbers in parentheses are the usual amount of P.P.E. required to cast these spells, but the Zuwadze Shausa-raheem can cast them at *half* that P.P.E. amount; round up. Seldom learn more than 1D6 others spells.

Psionics: None.

Weapons and Equipment: At first level, a Shausa-raheem has one enchanted melee weapon of choice, a set of metal etching tools, tool kit, a backpack or satchel, water skin, belt, a couple of sets of clothes, and a handful of personal items. Additional weapons and items are likely to be acquired or made over time.

Bionics & Cybernetics: None because they interfere with their smithing magic. Zuwadza over the age of 200 (most likely NPCs) will have an Absurr Life Node symbiotic organism, given to them by the Splugorth while still in bondage.

Money: Starts with 3D6x1000 Splugorthian or TGE credits, and another 3D6x1000 credits worth of tradable goods and items.

Habitat: Zuwadza on planets liberated by the Transgalactic Empire have been recruited to the *Imperial Legions* where they can rise to even greater prominence as warriors and weapon-makers. Those who have declined the TGE's offer have gone off to join mercenary companies, raiders, Space Pirates and adventurers operating in the Thundercloud Galaxy. The Zuwadza who remain slaves in the Kingdom of Desslyth live as they have for generations.

The High Lords of Desslyth had intentionally kept the Zuwadza population culled. There was no way that they could run the risk that an army of them might be able to rise up, each member armed with an array of magical weapons. Thus, it is estimated that there are less than two million Zuwadza enslaved by Desslyth and less than six million Zuwadza throughout the rest of the Three Galaxies. The majority of them have remained in the Thundercloud where they make weapons in exchange for the necessities of living. A scant few have found their way to market centers. No matter where they live however, their reputation as brutal, self-serving warriors, deserved or not, follows them. They are regarded as selfish merchants of death, and any dealings with them must be done with great care.

Allies: Their best relations are with Kreeghor and humans. Will create weapons for just about anyone though, including the Trust. Although they themselves have no problem with either the Dark Tribe or the Republican Wulfen, both sides are jealous of the quality of Zuwadza melee weapons which are far superior to anything the sword masters of Motherhome ever made. It should also be noted that Zuwadza males find the Staphra women (warriors) quite alluring.

Enemies: Most Splugorth Minion races. The Anvil Dwarves are regarded as competitors. Zuwadza are feared by most people in the Thundercloud.

Monsters & Exotic Species

By Braden Campbell & Kevin Siembieda

Abada, Thundercloud Unicorn
Abatwa, Thundercloud Faeries
Adze, Monstrous Beetle Creature
Adze Beetle Witch (Minion)
Batamzinga, Lizard Bat
Lurduuk, Thundercloud Lightning Bird
Nkoli, Thundercloud Crocodile
Pyashche Probe
Umdhlebi Tree
Yboor, Carnivorous Glob
Yboor Zombie (Minion)

The following are a few notable creatures that are generally classified as "monsters" or exotic animals. While some, like the Abada, seem to exhibit some level of intelligence, they tend to behave more like animals than sentient beings, and are therefore classified as such. Many of the creatures listed here are hunted and captured alive for zoos and private collectors around the



Three Galaxies as well as pursued by Big Game Hunters for sport and trophies.

The situation being what it is in the Thundercloud Galaxy, when an exotic animal or monster is discovered, it may be hunted for sport and profit without restraint or concern for its survival. Over the last four centuries, at least 53 known species have been hunted to extinction and many others forced to the brink by transforming their natural environment.

Abada

Also known as the “Thundercloud Unicorn”

Thus far, explorers have recorded more than thirteen different species of “Abada,” gazelle-like creatures found on worlds across the Thundercloud Galaxy. Most of them share common traits: they tend to be smaller than a horse (some as small as a coyote), bear 2-4 long horns, and are swift, shy, and gather in herds. They are herbivores and live on grassy plains or grass covered rolling hills. They get most of the water they need from the plants they eat, munching on shrubs during the dry seasons, and grasses during the wet. Most Thundercloud gazelles develop horns, although the number, shape, and length vary with each species. All told, these creatures collectively number into the trillions, and have become a source of food and sport for colonists from every power bloc, and a food staple for many indigenous people. The rarest of the thirteen Abada types however, is the Abadauna, better known as the *Thundercloud Unicorn*.

The Thundercloud Unicorn is the size of a small pony, but has the body shape of a gazelle. It is instantly recognizable by its long, single horn that grows from the forehead. The animal’s pelt is a light tan color with a white underbelly and a distinctive black, lightning bolt stripe running along each side of the animal. The stubby tail is shaped like that of a bear’s and it is also black on top with a white underside. The single horn is thin, tall (2-3

feet/0.6 to 0.9 m) and has the spiral ribbing that is common to gazelle/Abada. In the wild, females give birth to one young after a gestation period of 12 months. They live in small herds called “families,” 3D4+2 members strong, with the young achieving adulthood at seven years of age. Members of the “family” watch out for each other. An entire family of Unicorn is a rare sight, and encounters are usually with a single animal or a pair.

Whether this animal is a result of M-Rad mutation or deliberate genetic tampering is unknown. What is certain is the Abadauna possesses *supernatural abilities* and high animal intelligence. Though most reject the idea, some people insist the Thundercloud Unicorn may have human-level intelligence. Indeed, there are rumors and legends of Thundercloud Unicorns coming to the aid of humanoids in distress and even protecting them from wild beasts. They are said to have led children to safety, lost travelers to water or food, or to a place of shelter or where they can be found by rescue teams. Likewise, there are reports of Thundercloud Unicorns having led rescue teams to those trapped, injured or unconscious, and there are tales of them even fending off animal predators to protect an innocent.

Thundercloud Unicorns seem able to tell good people from evil ones, and naturally help the former and avoid the latter. They are especially fond of children and are said to sometimes play with them and allow small children to ride on their back. Unlike most Abada which live in grassy plains, the Abadauna/Thundercloud Unicorn seems to prefer meadows and fields of flowers, but may be found in almost any environment with lush vegetation, be it a meadow, grassland, forest or jungle. The only environments where the Unicorn is not usually encountered is deserts, the ruins of civilization and urban settings.

Stranger still is that the Thundercloud Unicorn is known to exist on at least two dozen different worlds – which should be impossible, as most animals are indigenous to one planet and have no means of traveling to other worlds. Yet, it is said the Thundercloud Unicorns inhabit hundreds of planets scattered across the galaxy. This might be possible on worlds subject to dimensional anomalies, and has been known to happen here and there, but not dozens or hundreds of planets. This suggests that at one time the Thundercloud Unicorn might have been a pet or “seed” animal used in terra-forming planets, but if so, it was done by an ancient and lost civilization. The only other possible explanation is that the Unicorns are or were, at some point in their past, dimensional travelers. The latter seems extremely unlikely, but it is a possibility. Some people believe the Thundercloud Unicorn was created and seeded across the Thundercloud Galaxy by the *Cosmic Forge* or the *First Race*, and as such, the majority of Forge worshipers consider the animal to be sacred and never hunt or capture one. These faithful believe that even seeing the unicorn, let alone having a close encounter, is good luck. Having one play with your child is a sign that the child is destined for greatness.

Not all people see the Thundercloud Unicorn as holy. In fact, the *Splugorth* are said to use its horn, hooves and other body parts in Bio-Wizardry and the creation of Rune weapons. Among the *Kasaro*, it is said the horn of the Unicorn is a natural anti-toxin and has powerful healing properties. The *Kasaro* also claim that keeping one captive is a sure way to ward off demons and evil spirits. Many exotic game hunters see the animal as nothing more than a prize to bag and mount on their wall. Thundercloud Unicorns seem able to sense danger long before a hunter can get close enough to observe and shoot it. The creature also seems able to somehow conceal or cover its tracks and there are many stories of how the Unicorn’s trail simply stops, as if it continued on by walking through the air. Worshipers of the *Cosmic Forge* insist this is more evidence of the animal’s divinity, while naturalists claim it points to the animal’s high level of intelligence and capacity to reason.

Abadauna [Pronounced Ah bah dah ooh nah]

A member of the Abada family of Thundercloud antelope.

Also known as the Thundercloud Unicorn.

Alignment: Good only; Principled 50% and Scrupulous 50%.

Attributes: *I.Q. 2D4+8, M.E. 2D4+14, M.A. 2D4+16, P.S. 3D4+12 (Supernatural), P.P. 2D4+18, P.E. 2D4+14 (Supernatural), P.B. 3D4+14, Spd 3D4x10 +22; never slower than 70 (50 mph/80 km).

* Intelligence is near human, though the Thundercloud Unicorns are creatures of nature, instinct and empathy. They live off the land, have no use for technology, including magic, and rely on their natural abilities.

M.D.C.: 4D4x10 base +2D6 per level of experience. (In S.D.C. settings the Thundercloud Unicorn has 2D4x10 Hit Points and 1D4x10+30 S.D.C.)

Size: Small; average height at the shoulders is 3-4 feet (0.9 to 1.2 m).

Weight: 200-350 pounds (90-158 kg).

Awe Factor: 11

P.P.E.: 4D6

I.S.P.: M.E. attribute number x5, plus 1D6 per level of experience.

Average Life Span: Unknown. 1,000 years according to legend, but more likely 1D4x100 years.

Natural Abilities: Run at 50 mph (80 km) or faster, leap up to 12 feet (3.6 m) high and 16 feet (4.8 m) lengthwise, double with a running start; nightvision 300 feet (91.5 m; can see in total darkness), never tires (Supernatural P.E.), heals three times faster than a human.

Also see psionics. Cannot read or speak, but does have a range of whinnying, whines, purrs, snorts and grunts. The Thundercloud Unicorns use their psionic powers to get a good read on people and situations, are very empathic by nature, and can somewhat communicate via body language, head motions, and actions.

Vulnerabilities: Magic weapons inflict double damage.

Attacks/Actions per Melee: Four.

Equivalent Skills: Somehow (magically?) understands all languages, but is illiterate and cannot speak, land navigation 98%, wilderness survival 90%, identify plants 80%, holistic medicine 50%.

Mega-Damage: The M.D. from kick attacks varies according to Supernatural P.S.; stomp attacks do one third damage. Horn attacks inflict 1D6 M.D. to mortal Mega-Damage creatures, but do 1D6x10 M.D. to evil supernatural monsters, demons and Deevils.

Bonuses: +3 on Perception Rolls, +1 to strike and parry, +2 to dodge and disarm, +4 to roll with impact, and +3 to save vs magic and possession.

Magic: None, although their horn has innate properties.

Psionics: Sense Evil, Sense Magic, Sense Time and Sixth Sense (all automatic, and require no I.S.P. Range is 600 feet/182 m). Other psionic powers include: Clairvoyance (4), Empathy (4), Levitation (varies), Meditation (0), Object Read (6), Presence Sense (4), See Aura (6), See the Invisible (4), Telekinetic Leap (8), Telekinetic Lift (6), Telekinetic Push (4), Read Dimensional Portal (6), and Remote Viewing (10).

Healing – must touch a person/animal with its horn: Dead-en Pain (4), Healing Touch (6), Increased Healing (10), and Psychic Purification (8).

Special Psionic: Communication between themselves and other Abada is done via verbal sounds as well as Telepathy and Empathy at no I.S.P. cost and at a 1,200 foot (366 m) range. To communicate with other life forms the creature must use its other psionic abilities, body language and animal sounds (snorts, grunts, whinnies, etc.).

Allies: None, per se.

Enemies: The *Kasaro*, galactic game hunters, slavers, large predators, and most evil beings.

Value: Much like the unicorn of lore, a live Abada can be nearly priceless. A zoo or private preserve will pay 1D6 million credits per animal. They cannot be domesticated or turned into work animals, despite many people’s desire to do so. The horns can fetch 2D6x100,000 credits from an Alchemist or evil Techno-Wizard because of their healing and toxin-negating properties. However, to remove the horns, one must kill the Abada first! **Magic uses:** The severed horns can be used as a magical battery that always contains 1D4x10 P.P.E., and can hold as much as 120 P.P.E. The horn can be smashed into a powder and turned into a potion that will negate *any and all* poisoning.

Habitat: Found on all life supporting planets within the Heoda Cluster and many other planets where there is plentiful wilder-

ness areas and wide open spaces. Tend to prefer cooler, more mountainous terrain rather than the deserts and rocky canyons that tend to dominate those worlds. Rare and shy creatures, it is believed there are seldom more than a few hundred to a thousand on a typical continent. This may have more to do with their long life span than anything else. According to legend, there is a planet somewhere in which there are millions of Thundercloud Unicorns roaming happy and free.

Note: Non-magical Abada are gazelle-like animals with 2-4 horns, have the same basic stats as the Thundercloud Unicorn, except they are 30-50% larger, have a low animal intelligence, and do NOT possess any psionic powers, magic, awareness or special affinity for people. Value is 2D4x10 credits for their horn, 2D6x10 credits for their meat, and 1D4x100 for their pelt. They are found where the Thundercloud Unicorn is found, as well as hundreds of other worlds.

Abatwa

Available as an optional Player Character

The Abatwa are Faerie Folk; that is, tiny creatures of magic not too dissimilar from those found throughout the Megaverse. The Abatwa are minute, wingless, attractive, dark skinned humanoids, who wear only the most minimal of clothing and adorn themselves in bracelets and necklaces made of colorful plant seeds. Both male and female Abatwa are bald and have glowing blue eyes. Abatwa are the smallest of all their fey kin. It is said

in folklore that the Abatwa can ride on the backs of beetles, butterflies, mice and sparrows, and can hide beneath a single leaf of a dandelion. Indeed, the average Abatwa stands no more than three inches (7.6 cm) tall. As a result, they have an inferiority complex and do not associate with most other Faerie Folk, and only rarely appear to mortals and other “big folk.”

If a person should come upon an Abatwa in the wilderness, the first question out of the tiny creature’s mouth is likely to be, “When did you first see me?” If the reply is along the lines of “from a distance” (50 feet/15.2 m fits the bill, farther is even better), then the Abatwa smiles and is likely to be satisfied and friendly, for only a creature of considerable stature could be seen from a distance. If however, a person were to answer that they did not see him until a moment ago or a few feet away – or worse, practically stepped on the tiny fellow before noticing him, the Abatwa is grumpy and dismissive. He might even be incensed, and is almost certain to cause the person trouble, lie to him or mislead him, and even attack the big person with minuscule but highly poisonous arrows. Stepping on an Abatwa or treating them as unimportant or insignificant, even by accident, is to bring trouble and chaos, even death. An angry or insulted Abatwa is likely to follow the “big mean ones,” gathering an additional 1D6 Abatwa along the way, and doing things to cause them trouble and suffering. This includes leading other animals into the adventurers camp, causing riding animals to run off, provoke predators to attack and acts of sabotage. (**Note:** One might recover from insulting an Abatwa by telling the tiny Faerie that the reason he wasn’t seen sooner was because he hides so well, followed by praise for his stealth and hunting abilities. Telling the Abatwa



that so and so lied so as to not look like a fool for having not noticed such a dynamic warrior, and other forms of flattery can also turn things around quickly.)

This is not to say that the Abatwa are evil, just vain and touchy about their size. Indeed, the minuscule Faerie folk are known to aid the helpless and unfortunate, leading the lost back to a trail, providing them with food or leading them to water or fruit on a tree, even chasing off predators. Appeal to an Abatwa's vanity well enough, and the little fellow may agree to do scouting or fight alongside of you. However, most only allow themselves to be seen by small children aged four and under, magicians, and pregnant women. In fact, it is said that if a woman sees one during the seventh month of her pregnancy she shall have a boy.

Despite their size issues, the Abatwa have a dour and pragmatic world view. Whereas other faeries live immortal lives of frivolity and song. They live in nomadic tribes, several dozen members strong, moving from place to place and gathering nuts, berries, and morning dew. While they are too large to ride about on the backs of ants, they often use mice and goliath beetles (which grow nearly six inches/15 cm long) as mounts. They do sing and dance, but only among the members of their own tribe, and only at night around a tiny bonfire. Being so small and stealthy, Abatwa are all but invisible in tall grass, fields of flowers and among jungle plants under which to hide. Curious of other beings, especially Big Folk, the Abatwa may tail a group of explorers for miles and miles, and know rumors and happenings going on within a 50 mile (80 km) radius. They take a very dim view of those who would simply raze the wilderness in order to construct a house or shopping mall, and may cause trouble for the construction crew responsible. As the number of colonists increases, conflict with many an ignorant outsider is inevitable. Their favorite types of people are those who try to live in harmony with nature.

Abatwa [pronounced Ah baht wah]

Alignment: Anarchist (50%), Unprincipled (30%), Scrupulous (5%) and evil (any; 15%).

Attributes: I.Q. 2D6+5, M.A. 1D6+5, M.E. 1D6+5, P.S. 1D6+3, P.P. 2D6+5, P.E. 1D6+5, P.B. 2D6+11, Spd 3D6+9 running (have no wings and therefore cannot fly under their own power, but can ride on the backs of large insects and small wild animals such as mice).

M.D.C.: 3D6+7

Size: 2-3 inches tall (5.1-7.6 cm). Half as tall as most other faerie folk.

Weight: About three ounces (85 grams)

Average Life Span: Effectively immortal, and can only die by being slain.

Horror/Awe Factor: 7 for one, 10 for a group of six or more and 14 if facing down a tribe of 50 or more!

P.P.E.: 1D4x100 (less than true, winged Faeries and Pixies), plus they can automatically draw on ley lines same as the Line Walker O.C.C.

I.S.P.: 2D6

Natural Abilities: Nightvision 200 feet (61 m; can see in total darkness), see the invisible, keen normal vision, sense the location of water and ley lines: 80% up to a five mile (8 km) range.

Vulnerabilities: None per se, but like most faerie folk, they cannot step on or over salt.

Attacks per Melee: Four physical actions, or three magical spells, or any combination of the two.

Equivalent Skills: Understand and speaks Faerie and Gobblely at 98%, magically understand and speak other languages at 66%, Climb 80/70%, Cook 70%, Horsemanship: Exotic 75% (small animals and insects), Identify Plants & Fruits 80%, Land Navigation 82%, Lore: Faeries 90%, Preserve Food 70%, Tailing 85%, Track & Trap Animals 70%, Tracking (People) 90%, Prowl 90% in the wild among vegetation or 70% indoors, Swim 75%, Wilderness Survival 90%, W.P. Archery and W.P. Spear.

Damage: As per P.S. attribute. Their tiny, poisoned arrows and spears inflict one S.D.C. from the weapon itself plus poison. Lethal poison does 4D6 S.D.C. per arrow unless a successful roll of 14 or greater is made to save. They also have a poison that does 1D6 M.D. to Mega-Damage creatures. The range of their bows is a surprising 20 feet (6.1 m). They may also use magic.

Bonuses: (in addition to any possible attribute bonuses) +2 to strike, parry, and dodge; +3 to initiative, +2 to roll with impact or fall. They are also +6 to save versus Horror Factor, and have +2 to save against all forms of magic.

Magic: The Abatwa have a selection of innate magical spells instinctively known to each of them. Each spell can be cast as often as desired without drawing on their personal P.P.E. reserves. HOWEVER, they cannot cast the same spell more than once on the same person within a 24 hour period. Magic that affects only themselves, such as Tongues or Invisibility, does not carry this limitation, and can be cast upon oneself as often as desired, but the Abatwa are immune to each other's spells. The saving throw against their power is *14 or higher*, and all Abtwa spells are equal to those of a sixth level wizard in terms of damage, duration, and range. Cannot learn additional magic. They do not possess "Jinx Magic" or the "Faerie's Dance," though they wish they did.

Spells of the Abatwa: Befuddle, Cleanse, Fear, Float in Air, Death Word (typically used only if they are stepped on), Invisibility (simple), and Tongues. Considered to be a tenth level in terms of damage, range, and duration.

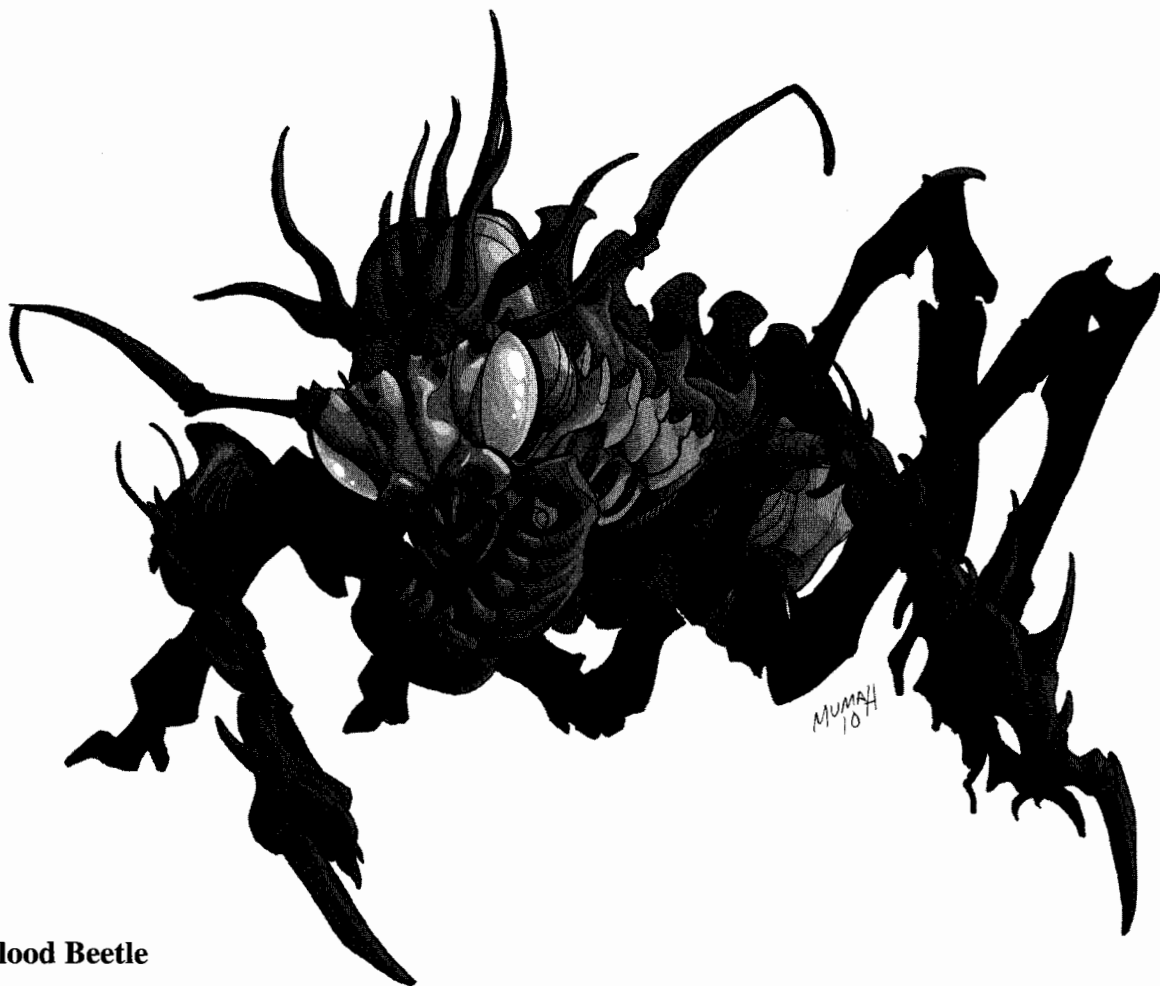
Psionics: None.

Allies: None per se, tend to stick to themselves. In a pinch, they can turn to other Faeries, Sprites, Pixies and Brownies, and sometimes, a befriended humanoid.

Enemies: Dedicated enemies include the Splugorth and their minions, demons, Deevils, evil wizards, Alchemists, and those with a total disregard for the environment. Abatwa are wary of most mortal "Big Folk," and almost never associate with other Faeries to whom they feel inferior.

Value: Abatwa have no wings, so their alchemical value is somewhat low – 4D4x1,000 credits, at best, much less than what other Faeries are worth. Used mostly as P.P.E. batteries in certain Bio-Wizard and Rune items where their small size and good level of P.P.E. is handy.

Habitat: Found on worlds throughout the eastern Thundercloud, especially within the Shing Pride Worlds.



Adze

Also known as the Blood Beetle

Not all the dangers in the Thundercloud Galaxy are giant monsters or alien raiders. Some are the size of a peanut still in its shell, or at least it is when dealing with the Adze, also known as the Blood Beetle or Demon Light. The Adze appears as a small, hideous beetle covered in sharp thorn-like barbs, so that even the act of stepping on one in bare feet or swatting it away with your hand pricks the skin and draws blood. The Adze is a vampire that feeds on blood, and even a drop will send the little monster fluttering to the ground after it.

Like so many creatures in the Thundercloud Galaxy, the Blood Beetle is much more than it appears to be at first glance. The bug is really an ancient species of *demon* that predates the Demons of Hades. As an evil supernatural being, it possesses a degree of demonic powers and wicked intent. Its goals: To prey upon the innocent, make people suffer and create confusion and chaos wherever it goes.

The monster's primary form is that of an ugly beetle with all sorts of barbs, spikes and wicked looking appendages. Like most insects, the Adze has an iridescent bluish-grey outer shell and gossamer wings that fold up and are concealed behind an external shell covering like a beetle. When it takes flight its lower abdomen glows a faint, blood red.

When angry, captured or cornered, the Adze is capable of enlarging itself into a four foot (1.2 m) tall, giant insect with large, biting serrated mandibles, slashing feet and frightening appearance. Its blazing red eyes and high-pitched chittering are warning signs that it will kill anyone who comes within 10 feet (3 m) of it. If attacked first, the giant bug lunges at the nearest attacker and fights to the death.

It is ironic, but the hideous insect is most dangerous when it is in its tiny, insect form, for it is as a little flying beetle that the Adze can mind control people and cause them to do terrible things.

The Adze's power to control others. To seize control of one or more individuals, the Adze must wait until dark. When the sun goes down the Blood Beetle takes flight to dance in the night air, tracing intricate patterns and arcane magic symbols in the dark with its glowing crimson tail. It is a sight to behold and always attracts attention, however, this is how the monster seizes control of people, and those in the know will immediately look away and try to get others to do likewise. Even looking up to chase and strike the demon insect is dangerous because you might fall under its spell. The moment the light show begins, everyone who sees it rolls to save vs being fascinated, even mesmerized by the enchanting display. A 16 or higher is needed to save. Those who fail to save are not frightened or harmed, they just become fascinated and stand still, watching the show. This, in turn, attracts others to come and watch too (roll to save, 16 or higher). Those who save vs mesmerism are safe for the rest of that melee round (the remaining 15 seconds) and can shield their eyes, forcibly cover the eyes/faces of others, or attack the little thing (attacks are -3 to strike). However, each new melee round, individuals who saved must keep their eyes averted. Looking at the light/Adze even for a second requires another saving throw. When the individual fails to save, he stands there watching the Adze draw symbols and patterns in the night air. All who watch slowly lose their will as the magic symbols mesmerize them. The process of seizing control of the viewing audience takes 1D6+1 minutes.

The Adze can place as many as 2D6+12 observers into a trance and keep them standing in place like mindless statues, their minds blank and oblivious to everything going on around them for up to one hour. When they awaken, it seems as if only a minute has gone by. While entranced as statues, they can be taken away without resistance. For the Adze, this is one way for the Blood Beetle to gorge itself, drinking a pint of blood from each victim without them ever realizing it. All they notice later is a bug bite like a large mosquito bite on their neck, face, arm, hand or other exposed area of flesh.

In the alternative, the malicious Adze – which is a demon let's not forget – can *compel* them to perform a simple task or to run wild for an hour. That task is often an act of mindless violence such as smashing windows and destroying property, knocking down fences, tearing down signs, chasing house pets or farm animals, trashing food supplies and so on. As a rule, people are attacked by the violent mob only when they try to stop them or get in their way. Even then, the entranced people only fight with their fists and any melee weapon handy to them, only to get the person to unhand them or get out of their way. This can be bad enough when one Adze takes control of a dozen or two innocent people. It is bedlam when several Adze unleash scores of people on a rampage. **Note:** Mesmerized victims possess half their normal number of attacks and combat bonuses, and only inflict half their usual damage with bare hands and blunt weapons to attack. Any guns in their hands are used as a club and not as a ranged weapon.

Each Adze can also control their own set of entranced victims like simpleminded robots to gather and block a road, tear down a gate, gather at the entrance of a building to prevent those inside from leaving, or to seek out and capture one particular person or a small group (6-8 people). Being simpleminded robots, however, they stop attacking as soon as their victim stops moving. (Playing dead has a 75% chance of working and can be tried every melee round. Roll once for the entire attacking crowd.)

Saving Throw vs Mesmerism/Trance: This is a magic attack, so psychics don't get any special bonus to save, but bonuses to save vs magic apply. A 16 or higher is necessary to save. Once entranced the character remains entranced. Victims pulled away or have their heads covered so they can't see the light show BEFORE the 1D6+1 minutes to completely entrance them, snap out of their stupor in 1D4+2 melee rounds. Until then they have only one melee attack, no bonuses and act like they are sleepwalking. They can be pulled and led by the hand, and will run along with their rescuer, but do not have their faculties or wits about them until the 1D4+2 melee rounds pass.

When the trance ends an hour later – or upon the death of the controlling Adze – victims snap out of the trance within 1D6 minutes. However, while coming out of their stupor their minds are foggy as if waking up from a dream they can't quite remember. That's a blessing, because it means they do not remember anything they did while in a trance state, however, while hazy, reduce Spd and skill performance by 20%, and attacks and combat bonuses are at half.

For total control over one single victim, the horrid beetle burrows into the back of the skull (takes two melee rounds to accomplish) and latches onto nerve endings along the spine. This enables the Adze to utterly dominate its victim, overriding their mind and controlling the body like a puppet. Again, the Adze cannot make its victim kill or maim themselves, but it can manipulate the body to say and do just about anything short of it.

A creature of chaos, the beetle controls its victim to cause pain, confusion and danger for others. As intelligent as any human, the Adze may manipulate its humanoid puppet to trick others or incite violence. **Saving Throw:** 15 or higher. A successful save means the victim is free of the monster's control but feels a bit hazy (-1 attack per melee round, -1 on all combat bonuses, -5% on skill performance). Unless noticed and somehow removed or lured out, the Blood Beetle may remain inside the skull as long as it wants to, and it can try to seize mind control once every 24 hours. As a creature of chaos, the Adze has no patience and leaves after three successive failures to seize control.

To kill an Adze. This diminutive demonic creature of chaos, like a true vampire, is *impervious* to most S.D.C. and M.D. weapons, including poison, lasers, particle beams, rail gun rounds, missiles, explosives, and even nuclear or anti-matter detonations. Likewise, many magical spells have little to no effect on it, though magical energy blasts (fire, electricity, etc.) as well as those of Cosmo-Knights, inflict half damage. The only things that can hurt the vile creature are weapons made of *wood* or *silver*.

Combating the Adze is further complicated by the fact that it almost never does anything directly itself, preferring to take control of innocent people via mind control and trickery to create havoc. Likewise, the Adze can create a wicked henchman known as the **Beetle Witch** and is likely to have 1D4 Beetle Witches nearby to provide help and protection. **Note:** The Adze Beetle Witch is described below under Natural Abilities.

Feeding. The Adze enjoy eating honey, coconut oil and palm water, which are like candy to it, but its mainstay is blood. Unlike many other vampires however, the Adze is not dead/undead, it is a demon. It is also very, very particular about the kind of blood that it drinks. A Blood Beetle can drink the blood of any humanoid, but it is said the Adze prefers to drink "the blood of the innocent," thus it feeds on *children* whenever possible. In its small, insect form, the demon insect enters a house and attaches itself to the neck or head of a sleeping child, where the bite is less likely to be noticed, and drinks. At least one whole pint of blood is consumed every evening. This is especially disturbing when one considers that an 80 pound child (36 kg) has four pints of blood, half the volume of an adult. Thankfully, only one Adze claims a child as its prey at a time, but it will return to feast night after night. The loss of blood makes the child pale, weak and anemic. Of course, if there are multiple children living in a house or village (or space colony), then it can visit a different child every few nights, letting the others recuperate for a bit. It takes 4-6 weeks for a victimized child to replace the blood which has been lost, so if the same child is visited a several nights in a row, he could die in less than a week. After a third night of feeding in a row, the child lapses into a light coma. After five consecutive feedings, the child dies. The only saving grace is that victims who are killed in such a way do not rise from the grave at any time, nor become an Adze, they just die.

Of course, in the modern era, certain protections can be taken to ward off or deter an Adze, including the use of force fields, sleeping within an environmentally sealed space, and, depending on the village or colony, the use of mystical protection circles and charms. Disabling and undermining these defenses is a job that will be left to the Adze's witches. Therefore, not only will the people in the village be forced to fight the Adze, but at the same time, they will have to figure out who among them is a traitorous Adze Witch. The attacks only stop when the monster

is destroyed, but how is one supposed to find a specific firefly in the midst of a jungle or forest full of them? For many, the answer is to bait the Adze somehow, leading it into a trap. Once caught, it transforms into its giant size (it has no choice in the matter), and can then be beaten with sticks, shot with silver bullets or stabbed with silver plated blades, and magically set aflame until it is destroyed.

If for some reason the Adze is denied blood for more than a month, it will go into a feeding frenzy and do anything to get food, probably attacking in its larger form. A frenzied Adze fights savagely, attacking and killing every adult who crosses its path. The monster drinks their blood but gets one quarter the nourishment from it. **Note:** While in this state of starvation, all the demon's skills and combat bonuses are reduced by half.

Adze [pronounced: add zee]

Also known as Blood Beetle and Demon Light.

Alignment: Diabolic only.

Attributes: I.Q. 2D6+9, M.E. 2D6+7, M.A. 1D6, P.S. 1D4 as an insect, 2D6+16 in giant form, P.P. 1D6+11, P.E. 1D6+13, P.B. 1D6, Spd 1D6+6 as an insect (triple speed when flying), 1D6+17 running in giant form (cannot fly as a giant).

Size: One and a half inches (3.8 cm) long as an insect. Four feet (1.2 m) tall and 7 feet (2.1 m) long in giant form.

Weight: As a beetle, weight is .035 ounces (one gram). In giant form, 500 pounds (225 kg).

M.D.C.: 4D6x10+13 M.D.C., whether the monster is a tiny bug or the size of a sofa.

Horror Factor: 13 only when one realizes what the beetle is, 15 in withered humanoid form.

P.P.E.: 1D4x100

I.S.P.: 2D4x10

Disposition: Selfish, cruel and evil, the demon sees all sentient life forms as prey and playthings. It loves to create confusion, panic and chaos almost as much as it enjoys preying upon and slaying children. Adze are bloodthirsty monsters with no redeeming virtues.

Average Life Span: Effectively immortal until destroyed.

Experience Level: 1D6+1.

Natural Abilities: Nightvision (1600 feet/488 m), see the invisible, speak, flight (insect form only), impervious to poisons and chemicals, and does not require air to breathe, can smell blood up to one mile (1.6 km) away. Impervious to knockout and stun attacks, all forms of mind control, and magical or psionic paralysis or sleep induction. The Adze does not radiate heat, and the light from their tails cannot be picked up on either ultraviolet or infrared wavelengths (fireflies emit neither). Bio-Regenerates 2D6 M.D.C. per melee round.

Mesmerism and Mind Control (special): As described previously. Also see Psionics.

Impervious to Most Weapons (special): Like a vampire, ordinary weapons do no damage to the cursed thing.

However, any type of wooden weapons do full damage. Even an ordinary, S.D.C. wood club or broomstick does the equivalent of M.D. to the Adze. Thus, if a wooden club normally does 1D6 S.D.C. damage, it inflicts 1D6 M.D. to the Adze. Silver is even more deadly, inflicting double damage. Thus, a silver coated dagger that normally does 1D6 S.D.C. does 2D6 M.D. to the Adze. Magic fire and energy blasts do

half damage. The same for energy blasts from Cosmo-Knights. See *Vulnerabilities* for full details.

Grow to Giant-Size (special): The Adze can grow from the size of a peanut to a four foot (1.2 m) tall, 7 foot (2.1 m) long, giant version of itself. In this form, its bite does 3D6 damage, a claw strike does 3D6 M.D., it has five attacks per melee round and is a bloodthirsty combatant, though it mainly fights only long enough to escape, grow small again and fly away. However, should the monster be feeling petulant, it may transform into its giant humanoid shape at will and can maintain it until the sun rises. Cannot turn giant-size in daylight.

Creation of Beetle Witch (special): The Adze can share a bit of its supernatural and magical powers those who willingly serve it. These lost souls are known as **Beetle Witches** and are, as a rule, tormented, vengeful and cruel people to begin with. The Adze bites its willing henchman in the back of the neck where the monster imparts a tiny fragment of its evil essence into the victim's mind. This instills the Beetle Witch with magical powers and supernatural abilities. That person is now a servant to the Adze, able to hear the wishes of the creature, regardless of distance, until such time as the beetle is destroyed or the witch is slain. A successful Exorcism (reduce chance for success by half) only restores the Witch to his original state of mind for 1D6 hours, and as noted, since the individual is likely to have been wicked or demented with murderous thoughts of vengeance to begin with, the change is not likely to be much of an improvement. The powers granted to the Beetle Witch are temporarily gone, but that only makes him or her enraged and more vengeful.

The Powers of the Beetle Witch include:

Alignment: Anarchist (15%), Miscreant (45%), Diabolic (40%).

P.S. Attribute: Becomes the equivalent of Augmented P.S. If Augmented P.S. to begin with, P.S. becomes equal to Robotic P.S.

M.D.C.: Becomes a minor Mega-Damage creature. Add Hit Points and S.D.C. together, and the combined number is the total M.D.C. of the Beetle Witch. If the character was a mortal M.D.C. being to begin with, increase M.D.C. by 30%.

Bio-Regeneration: 1D6 M.D.C. per melee round.

Bonuses: +1 to strike and parry, +2 to save vs mind control and magic attacks, and +4 to save vs possession and Horror Factor.

Fly: 30 mph (48 km), maximum altitude 3,000 feet (914 m).

Insanities: Roll once under Phobia, once under Obsession and once under Psychosis Table.

Nightvision: 1,000 feet (305 m).

Psionic Powers of the Beetle Witch: Hypnotic Suggestion, Sense Evil, and Empathic Transmission. I.S.P. is M.E. attribute number x2.

The Hunger: Beetle Witches crave blood and raw meat for food; ideally the blood or flesh of humanoids. Many target children, teenagers and/or young women. Like the Adze demon they serve, Beetle Witches crave chaos, confusion and suffering for enjoyment.

Vulnerabilities (Adze): Like most vampires, the Adze is harmed by weapons made of wood and silver. Wood does full damage. Silver does double damage. Magic energy attacks and "cosmic energy" blasts do only one-half their normal damage. Holy symbols and magical circles of protection hold Adze and their

witches at bay, as will the leaves of the *aloe vera plant* (worn around the neck, or suspended above windows and doors). Sunlight is anathema to them: reduce the number of attacks and speed attribute to one-third, and Adze cannot use any of their powers in daylight, even if a gloomy day. They can, however, use their powers during the daytime but only in dark areas. Running water and bodies of water such as lakes and rivers pose no danger to the beetle.

Attacks per Melee: Five attacks per melee whether tiny or giant-sized.

Equivalent Skills: Biology 75%, Climb 95%, Land Navigation 79%, Prowl 75% (insect size only), Swim 60%, Track People 77%, and magically understands all languages. The demon relies on its Beetle Witch to take care of any other needs.

Mega-Damage: As a small beetle, as per mesmerism, mind control and drinking of blood described previously. As a giant, hideous beetle see *Grow to Giant Size* under *Natural Abilities*, above.

Bonuses as a Small Insect: +1 on initiative, +1 to strike, +5 to automatic dodge (the act of dodging does not use up a melee attack).

Bonuses as a Giant Monster Insect: +2 on initiative, +3 to strike and parry, +1 to automatic dodge (the act of dodging does not use up a melee attack). +5 to save vs Horror Factor and impervious to possession and mind control at either size.

Magic: None, other than its innate abilities as described (mesmerism, mind control, create Beetle Witch, etc.).

Psionics: Deaden Pain, Induce Sleep, Death Trance (1), Empathy, Mind Block, Presence Sense, Sense Evil, and Telepathy. The Adze is considered a Major psychic, and only needs 12 or higher to save against psionic attacks; is impervious to mind control and possession.

Telepathic Link to Beetle Witch (special): The Adze can sense when one of its Beetle Witches is within 10 miles (16 km), is in pain or has been killed. It can instantly speak to any number of its witches within a 1000 mile (1,600 km) radius of itself, giving them commands or summoning them to come to its aid. This power costs no I.S.P.

Habitat: Found all throughout the Thundercloud Galaxy, but are especially common on the magic-rich planets of the Crèche Clouds. Prefer jungle and forest climates, but can be encountered anywhere, including ruins and dark places.

Slave Market Value: The Splugorth will pay a bounty of one million credits for every Adze delivered to them, dead or alive (preferably dead).

Allies: With the exception of the witches it creates, and other Blood Beetles, the Adze has no use for anyone. Thankfully, Adze tend to travel alone, in pairs and sometimes in small groups of 3-6, seldom more than that.

Enemies: All sentient beings are seen as prey. Priests, Medicine Men, mages, Undead Slayers, the Splugorth (enslave them and use them in Bio-Wizardry), and Cosmo-Knights are all considered to be natural enemies. They hate the Demons of Hades who are regarded as upstarts and rivals, and dislike most other supernatural beings except those who promote chaos. The Adze despise being trapped, magically enslaved, or otherwise made subservient, and exact a gruesome vengeance upon those who try to capture them once they break free.

Batamzinga

Also known as the Lizard Bat

The Batamzinga is a species of reptilian creature reminiscent to Earth's pterodactyl. Their skin is rough with large, scales and is red to reddish brown in color. They have an elongated, powerful beak filled with teeth, and large wings, each tipped with a sharp, hooked claw. The hind legs end in clawed, finger-like talons, but they are small and stunted, good for little more than perching on a branch, cliff or other outcropping. The creature catches and carries prey in its tooth-filled mouth. Batamzinga are versatile creatures that make their homes in the sides of ocean cliffs, along river banks that have an abundance of large trees in which to roost, and around swamps and marshlands. The creature eats just about anything, from fish and animals to carrion and humanoids. A Batamzinga wouldn't normally attack prey the size of a man, but humanoids have proven to be slow, soft, easy prey. The reptilian predator may hunt alone or in pairs, it also gathers in flocks of 1D4x10, sometimes two or three times that size. Batamzinga that gather in large flocks are much more audacious, and are known to attack very large creatures. Against humanoids, 2D4 Batamzinga may swarm and surround the person, each taking their turn biting at the poor soul. However, as soon as one of the animals is slain or several suffer serious damage, they give up the fight and fly away squawking in anger. Very large prey, such as something the size of an elephant, can be attacked by a dozen or more. In this case, the monsters land on the creature's back, neck, and head as each digs in their talons and take bites out of the creature while it is still alive and fighting. These mass attacks count on the weight of numbers to bring their target down. Even flying power armor, giant robots, and shuttles are not safe from large flocks, as they have been known to be attacked by individuals and small groups.

For tens of thousands of years, the Batamzinga have been bought, sold and traded as animal slave stock by Lord Desslyth the Elder. They were sold as monsters to battle in the arena, to zoological aviaries, and to stock animal preserves used for big game hunting. In some places they are even trained as riding animals and are very steady in the air. However, they can never be completely domesticated (think tamed lion or chimpanzee), so they are always a danger to their owner or rider. This limits their value and use as a live animal. Over time, millions of the beasts have been shipped to other worlds where they escaped or were released into the wild. Resilient creatures, they have adapted to hundreds of worlds (more?) in Oswoe's Arm and at least a few dozen worlds in the Gaelra Arm. On worlds where the winged terrors thrive, there are great flocks eager to welcome colonists as a new source of food. When attacking armor-clad foes, Batamzinga seem to know, by instinct, to go for exposed areas of flesh. Batamzinga taste delicious and have become a staple food for tribal people and colonists alike. There are hundreds of delicious recipes for preparing Batamzinga, and, yes, they do taste like chicken.

Batamzinga [pronounced: boht ahm ZEEN gah]

Also known as Screech Terrors, Flying Terrors, Devil Eagles and many other names.

Alignment: Considered to be Anarchist or Diabolic evil.

Attributes: I.Q. 1D4+3 (animal), M.E. 1D6+4, M.A. 1D6, P.S. 3D6+21, P.P. 2D6+12, P.E. 4D4+10, P.B. 1D6, Spd 1D6 on the ground, 2D6x10+22 flying (average is 70 mph/112 km).



Size: 5-7 feet (1.5 to 2.1 m) tall, with a wingspan of 20-30 feet (6.1 to 9.1 m), with a body length roughly the same.

Weight: 200-300 pounds (90-135 kg).

M.D.C. Equivalent: 5D6+26 M.D.C. for main body. Head has 4D6+20 M.D.C., and each wing has 1D6x10+18 in equivalent M.D.C.

Horror Factor: 9 for an attacking individual or pair, 12 for a flock of 6-12 attacking animals. H.F. 15 if the flock is 20 or more and attacking.

P.P.E.: 3D6

Disposition: Batamzinga behave very much like giant, featherless birds. Among themselves they can be playful, spend most of their time hunting for food, and establish a pecking order within the flock. The largest are the ones who rule the roost. From most humanoids point of view, they are aggressive flying monsters to be feared and avoided.

Average Life Span: 2D6+13 years. Savage as they can be, the creatures are very loyal and mate for life. Females lay a clutch of 1D4+1 eggs once every six months, and take care of their young for 3-4 months until they are ready to go off on their own. Batamzinga can bear young every six months.

Experience Level: Not applicable.

Natural Abilities: Fly at exceptional speeds, and track by smell at 54%.

Equivalent Skills: Land Navigation 90%, Swim 35%, Track animals 80%, and Wilderness Survival 90%.

Vulnerabilities: None per se.

Attacks per Melee: Two. A body block/tackle uses up both attacks.

Damage: Nipping Bite: 5D6 S.D.C. damage plus P.S. damage bonus. Power Bite does 1D6 M.D. (counts as two attacks), Wing-

tip claws inflict 3D6 S.D.C. plus any bonuses from the P.S. attribute. Batamzinga sometimes slam into opponents. While such a slam attack is usually reserved for large targets such as giant robots, aircraft and shuttles, once in a while a creature will slam into the ground, a wall or people. A slam/body block/ram attack at full speed does 2D6x10 S.D.C. and has a 90% chance of knocking targets of equal size or smaller off their feet and flying back 1D4x10 feet (3 to 12.2 m). In addition to the damage, the victim loses initiative and two melee attacks. There is also a 50% chance that a living being is *stunned* for 1D4 melee rounds (-9 on all combat rolls, reduce skill performance, Spd and the number of attacks by half). **Note:** Characters in M.D.C. armor take only 3D4 S.D.C. damage from the impact, and there is only a 20% chance of being stunned. The dumb beast, itself, suffers one M.D. from the collision and has a 20% chance of being stunned for one melee round (same penalties).

Bonuses: Only those gained by high physical attributes.

Magic: None.

Psionics: None.

Habitat: Many worlds throughout Oswoe's Arm in particular, but can be found throughout the Thundercloud Galaxy.

Market Value: One credit a pound for the meat and sometimes there is a market for its leathery hide. Teeth only get pennies. It is so common there is little value as a zoo or gladiatorial animal (1D6x100 credits), and they don't domesticate well so they make awful pets. Even one trained to be a flying, riding animal commands only 2D4x1,000 credits. Riding animals are only semi-domesticated, are unpredictable and may attack their rider at some point.

Allies: Only other members of its own species.

Enemies: Other large predatory animals and humanoids.



Lurduuk

Also known as Lightning Bird

The Lightning Bird is a medium-sized fowl that resembles a large duck with a curved bill and head crest that gives it a unique “hammerhead” profile. Its feathers are drab brown with slight purple streaks along its back, a white band around its neck, and cream colored underbelly.

Lurduuk are social animals, though for reasons that no one has been able to discern, they gather in groups of ten or increments of ten. Such a group is called a “ceremony.” While the typical flock is 10 birds, it is not unusual to see gatherings of as many as ten “ceremonies” – 100 birds (always increments of 10).

Lightning Birds earn their name because they have the ability to fire bolts of electricity and call down lightning to protect themselves. When a predator is spotted prowling towards a Lightning Bird or its nest, the Lurduuk fires off an electric arc or brings down a bolt of lightning. One zap is usually enough to send most predators running for their lives. If there is a group of predators (including humanoid hunters), and since Lurduuks gather in groups of 10-100, when one bird is spooked and starts calling down lightning, 1D4x10% of the other birds may do the same, lobbying blasts at the threat or in its general area. The salvo continues until the predator or humanoid intruder flees or is slain. The entire time the water fowls squawk like mad, making a ruckus and flutter their wings.

Lightning Birds are prodigious builders, and construct between three and five nests per year whether they use each of them or not. Each of these nests measures at least five feet (1.5 m) across and is composed of thousands of sticks held together by mud. By the time it is complete, it is strong enough to support a man’s weight (up to 300 lbs/135 kg). The nests are always built along a source of water like the shore of a lake or river banks. The fork of a sturdy tree near

the water or in a marshland is another common location for a nest. The sides of man-made structures like dams, bridge supports, and docks can also house a Lurduuk’s nest. An abandoned nest can be a comfy location for a traveler to rest, hide or sleep for the night, though other creatures, like giant snakes, young Nkoli, lizards, bears, and tribal people may make similar use of an abandoned nest.

Lurduuk are noteworthy for other, more commercial reasons. Their feathers possess magical properties coveted by many, and their meat is a delicacy. Big game hunters find the birds to be exotic and a challenge, and are willing to pay big bucks for the opportunity to hunt them. See **Natural Abilities** and **Market Value** in the stat block that follows for more details.

Lurduuk [pronounced: LURE Duke]

Also known as: Thunder Duck, Lightning Duck, and Hammerhead Duck.

Alignment: Considered Anarchist or Unprincipled.

Attributes: I.Q. 1D4+2 (animal), M.E. 1D6+2, M.A. 1D6+4, P.S. 1D6, P.P. 2D6, P.E. 2D6+2, P.B. 1D6+2, Spd 44 flying, 15 swimming or 5 running.

Size: 22-30 inches long (56-76 cm).

Weight: 2-5 pounds (0.9 to 2.25 kg).

Hit Points: 2D6+5.

S.D.C.: 2D6+3

Horror Factor: 9.

P.P.E.: P.E. attribute number x3.

Average Life Span: 1D4+10 years. Females lay a clutch of three to seven eggs that hatch after roughly thirty days. Young Lightning Birds head out on their own after three months. A year from hatching, they reach full maturity.

Natural Abilities: Flight, Land Navigation 88%, Swim 90%, dive 10 feet (3 m) underwater, and can hold breath underwater for 30 seconds per P.E. attribute point.

Impervious to Electricity and Energy Blasts (special): It is often comical to see the look on an off-worlder's face when a laser or other energy weapon fails to even ruffle the Thunder Duck's feathers. Fire does full damage as do bullets, arrows and other kinetic weapons.

Call Lightning (special): This is why the creature is known by names such as the Lightning Bird, Lightning Duck and Thunder Duck – it can fire electric arcs (below) and call down a bolt of lightning upon predators and other threats. Range: 1,200 feet (366 m). Mega-Damage: 3D6 M.D. Each blast uses up two P.P.E. points.

Electric Arc (special): Range: 400 feet (122 m). Mega-Damage: 1D6 M.D. Each blast uses up one P.P.E. point.

Electrical Force Field (special): Whenever the Thunder Duck senses danger, sees a predator or fears for its nest, mate or young, it throws up an Electrical Field that crackles around itself and protects everything within a 10-12 foot (3 to 3.6 m) diameter. No P.P.E. cost.

Any energy blast directed at the field creates a loud pop and rumbling sound, like distant thunder (hence the name "Thunder Duck").

Projectiles (arrows, bullets, and even rail gun rounds) create a loud crack, like lightning, a flash of light, and a rumble like thunder. Half of the projectile is disintegrated, the other half deflected into the ground.

When a living being, humanoid, animal predator, etc., larger than a rat tries to pounce on the Lurduuk or strike it with a melee weapon, there is a loud cracking sound and a flash of light. The attacker is struck by a force that sends him flying backward 1D4 yards/meters to land on his backside. There is a 01-65% likelihood that any object held in the attacker's hand is dropped, he takes 1D6 points of S.D.C. damage, loses initiative and two melee attacks, and his hair stands straight up as if he took a jolt of electricity (which he did).

Magic Feathers (special): The weird and magical nature of the Lightning Bird is such that its large feathers can be used on arrows to give them an M.D. punch. An arrow with fletching made from the animal's feathers imparts the arrow with electrical properties. Upon impact, the arrow explodes, unleashing an electrical blast that does 1D6 M.D. (feathers are destroyed in the blast so the arrow has a one-time use). Thus, primitive people who live on planets inhabited by Lurduuks can create low-powered Mega-Damage arrows (range of the arrow is unchanged). The feathers, beak and skull are also used as components in other types of magic and magic items.

Attacks per Melee: Three, physical or by magic electricity/lightning strikes.

Damage: The duck's bite and head butt does 1D4 S.D.C. damage, or by electrical attacks (see Natural Abilities above).

Bonuses: +1 to initiative, +2 to strike with electrical arc, +1 to strike with lightning bolt, and +3 to dodge while in flight.

Magic: The Thunder Duck has innate magical capabilities. See *Natural Abilities*, above, and *Market Value*, below, for details. P.P.E. is recovered at a rate of two points per hour.

Psionics: None.

Market Value: Lurduuk meat is mouth watering delicious. The meat is a delicacy among the people of the Republican Enklaves, CCW and TGE, where it fetches a price of 50 credits a pound. Lightning Bird feathers command 50-100 credits per each feather (only the long wing and tail feathers are suitable),

and the animal's beak and hammerhead skull get 1,000-4,000 credits as magic components. **Note:** The defensive and offensive electrical powers of the Lurduuk makes hunting them a challenge and requires stealth, surprise attacks and long-range strikes. Big game hunters and sportsmen enjoy the challenge and claims it makes the hunt that much more fun, and bagging one much more rewarding. After all, it is the only "duck" that can kill a man with thunder and lightning. Such hunters are willing to pay thousands of credits for the opportunity to hunt the Lurduuk.

Habitat: Wetland habitats on planets across the Thundercloud, including irrigated land like rice paddies, as well as in watering holes, ponds, lakes, and rivers of most any environment, including colonies and cities. They are known to exist on at least 122 different worlds.

Allies: Other Lightning Birds. Animals like ducks, geese and squirrels can be lured to people who feed them. As time goes by, the Lurduuk becomes less afraid of people and comes closer without putting up an electrical defense or attack. Of course, you need to move slowly and make no sudden movements or the Hammerhead Duck may blast you with electricity. Smarter than you'd think, the birds come to recognize the specific person(s) who feeds them. If the Lurduuk feels extremely safe and comfortable, it will bring its ducklings with it to feed after they hatch (lays 1D6+1 eggs). Lightning Birds who become attached to such "feeders" have been known to protect them from predators or hostile humanoids by blasting threats or enveloping their "friend" within the electrical force field.

Enemies: Nkoli, giant snakes, other carnivorous predators, and of course, humanoid hunters.

Nkoli

Also known as the Thundercloud Crocodile

Nkoli are big, mean and ugly. Nkoli is the collective genus for several species of giant, crocodile-like creatures found throughout the Thundercloud Galaxy. Their bodies are adapted to a life in and near the water. They have changed little over the past 200 million years, surviving one mass extinction event after another. Their maws are filled with conical teeth and the jaw can lock in place to hold onto prey. Feet are webbed and crooked spikes run up and down the beast's spine from the forehead to tail tip. The elongated tail is a rudder and a weapon, and the Nkoli's tapered profile enables the monster to swim with ease and good speed, and to make sharp turns while doing so. Despite their reptilian appearance, the Nkoli have a complex biology. They have a heart with four chambers, a cerebral cortex, and the equivalent of a diaphragm. In combination, these traits make the Nkoli a very perceptive and alert predator able to voluntarily hold its breath for extended periods of time. They stalk prey, hide underwater where they wait to pounce at prey along the shoreline, and are a menace to humanoids and animals alike.

All Nkoli are ambush predators. That is to say, they lie still, waiting for prey, such as animals and people, who come to the shore to get a drink of water. Then, in a sudden burst of speed, the Nkoli springs forward, clamping down with its powerful jaws. The bite from one of these creatures is 5,000 pounds (2250 kg) of pressure per square inch, twelve and half times that of the Great



White Shark. However, these teeth are not for chewing, but for clamping and holding onto prey. Once the Nkoli has a victim in its clutches, the monster drags its prey into the water, holding him under until he drowns. Sometimes they spin their body in what is called the *death roll*. The death roll is used to keep the victim off balance and unable to fight back, as well as to tear off the victim's limbs or otherwise weaken them. When the victim stops moving, the Nkoli knows he is drowned and releases the creature to tear off pieces and swallow them whole. As strong as the Nkoli's grip is, the jaw muscles which *open* their jaws are quite weak. This means that Nkoli can be subdued by clamping their snouts shut and tying them closed with rope or tough bands of rubber. It should also be noted that the Nkoli have no sweat glands, and must get rid of excess body heat through their mouths. Some even lie still, panting like a dog, in extremely hot weather.

The beasts have a sensitive organ at the back of their throats however, called a glottis, which they use in breathing. Forcing one's arm into the throat of a Nkoli may convince them to let go, although such a move is likely to cost the character their arm in exchange for freedom. Likewise, the Nkoli won't pursue a target onto land for more than a short distance, so if a person can evade their lightning-quick initial attack and scramble back from the water's edge, they should be relatively safe. Nkoli also eat fish,

turtles, amphibians, birds and anything that comes their way below or above the waves.

There are 27 species of Nkoli known to inhabit more than one thousand worlds. Each varies somewhat in size, color and in the shape of the spikes along the monsters' spine and tail. Otherwise, they are all pretty much the same animal. The crocodile-like monsters are always found near sources of water in groups as small as 2D6 and as large as 2D6x10. They prefer brackish (muddy) water and swampland. They pose a real danger to humanoids because Nkoli consider them prey and can strike before a person has a chance to react. Every year, across the galaxy, hundreds of people are killed in Nkoli attacks. This situation is compounded because colonists tend to settle near bodies of water. The record number of victims in a single attack is an astounding (but unverified) 380. This occurred when a unit of nine hundred TGE colonial troops attempted to cross a ten mile (16 km) stretch of mangrove swamp infested with Nkoli. Only 520 men survived.

Nkoli generally reach full maturity in ten years. During mating season, the males bellow, snort water out of their noses, and slap their tails in the water in a display to the females. Two months later, the female will lay between 25 and 80 eggs, which she buries in a shallow, sandy pit near the water. Both parents will then guard the nest for three months while the eggs incubate, viciously

defending it from hungry thieves and interlopers. After hatching, the mother will protect the young Nkoli for up to two years. The male leaves almost immediately.

Nkoli [pronounced: nnn KOH lee]

Alignment: Considered to be Anarchist and Miscreant.

Attributes: I.Q. 1D4+4 (animal predator), M.E. 2D6, M.A. 1D4, P.S. 2D6+17 (equal to Robotic for adults), P.P. 2D6+12, P.E. 2D6+12, P.B. 2D4, Spd 3D6+16 in water, or 2D4 on land, but also see Sprint Attack under Natural Abilities.

Size: 40-50 feet (12-15 m) long on average.

Weight: The largest recorded specimen weighed in at just over 5 tons. Average is 1.3 tons per every 15 feet (4.6 m) of body length.

M.D.C. by Size and Age:

Hatchling (under 2 feet/0.6 m) – 6D6+6 S.D.C.

Young (under 6 feet/1.8 m) – 2D6+4 M.D.C.

Juvenile (under 15 feet/4.6 m) – 5D6+30 M.D.C.

Adult (2D4+40 feet/12.8 to 14.6 m) – 2D6x10+30 M.D.C.

Ancient(2D6+48 feet/15.2 to 18.3 m) – 2D6x10+80 M.D.C.

P.P.E.: 1D6

Horror Factor: 7 for young, 9 for Juvenile, 13 for Adult, 15 for Ancient.

Disposition: Aggressive when hungry. Murderous when cornered or attacked. Otherwise, lazy and keeps to itself.

Average Life Span: 4D6+70 years in the wild. 100-120 years in captivity if given proper care.

Natural Abilities: Detect Ambush 70%, Land Navigation 55% (+20% in water or marshland), Prowl in water 80%, Prowl on land 45%, Swim 96%, Tailing 60%, Track Animals or People 45%, and can hold its breath for 2D6+5 minutes, nightvision 500 feet (152 m). Clever stalkers and ambushers, Nkoli are quite adept at learning the routines of travelers, campers and livestock. Recovers lost M.D.C. at a rate of 3D6 per 24 hours, immune to the effects of M-Rad.

Sprint Attack (special): The Nkoli's secret weapon is a sprint attack. The creature appears big, lazy and aquatic, and that's what leads to the demise of most prey – they don't realize the Nkoli can charge and run at a Spd of 50 (35 mph/56 km) for 1D4 melee rounds. (Must rest for 20 minutes after such a sprint.) The typical maneuver is to lunge out of the water or charge an unsuspecting victim so fast that it doesn't have a chance to dodge, is caught in the monster's jaws and dragged to its doom before it knows what hit it.

Vise Grip Jaws (special): The locking jaws of the Nkoli are double its normal Robot equivalent P.S., so if the creature has a Robot P.S. of 24, a Robot P.S. of 49 or greater (or Supernatural P.S. of 24) is required to pry open the mouth to release it's victims. Of course, the Nkoli will fight any such attempt, swatting with its spiked tail, thrashing, and possibly letting go of the captured prey to bite at those trying to open its mouth. Killing the creature or putting it to sleep with magic also makes the jaws slack.

Note: See Market Value for Nkoli armor and weapons.

Vulnerabilities: Low salt tolerance, as is true of most crocodile species. Must remain near a source of water lest its skin dry out.

Attacks per Melee: Four.

Mega-Damage: The percentage numbers are the breakdown of a typical group or gathering of Nkoli (i.e., 10% are hatchlings,

10% young, 25% Juveniles, 45% Adults, 10% ancient) or may be used as a random encounter table. Nkoli may be encountered as an individual, pair, trio, group of 1D6+6 or colony of 2D6x10.

01-10% Hatchling: Bite does 1D6 S.D.C. Tail slash does 1D4 S.D.C.

11-20% Young: Bite does 3D6 S.D.C. Tail slash does 4D6 S.D.C.

21-45% Juvenile: Bite does 1D6 M.D. Tail slash does 2D6 M.D.

46-90% Adult: Bite does 3D6 M.D. but the grip is like a vice. Tail slash does 4D6 M.D.; adult Nkoli have a thick tail lined with large, sharp spines 1-2 feet (0.3 to 0.6 m) long. The 3-4 pair of spikes at the end of the tail are 30% larger than the rest. Getting struck by the tail does blunt impact plus stabbing and cutting from these spines.

91-00% Ancient: Bite inflicts 4D6 M.D. but the grip is like a vice. Tail slash does 6D6 M.D.; ancient Nkoli have a thick tail lined with large sharp spines 2-3 feet (0.6 to 0.9 m) long. The 4-6 pair of spikes at the end of the tail are 50% larger. Getting struck by the tail does blunt impact plus stabbing and cutting from these spines. Combat Bonuses of the Ancients: +1 attack per melee round, +1 on Perception Rolls, +2 on initiative, +2 to strike, and +1D6+4 to P.S.

Note: Remember, the Vise Grip of the Nkoli is double its normal Robotic P.S. Victims caught in the creature's jaws can only escape by besting the monster's doubled Robotic P.S. number which is usually around 45-50 Robot P.S. Thus, a Robot P.S. of 46-52 (or a Supernatural P.S. of 24-28) can usually pry the jaws open. Killing the creature makes the jaws slack.

Bonuses (in addition to any attribute bonuses): +2 on Perception Rolls, +3 on initiative, +4 to strike. In water, +3 to dodge. Reduce juvenile bonuses by half, round down.

Magic: None.

Psionics: None.

Habitat: Along slow moving rivers, estuaries, lakes, and coastal lagoons. They have been known to enter the sea, but never further out than 17 miles (about 21 km); prefer warm, subtropical and tropical environments.

Market Value: Nkoli always make popular attractions at zoological parks and gladiatorial arenas. Live specimens can get 2D6x1,000 credits for a juvenile or adult specimen, double for a massive ancient one. The Nkoli can be eaten and taste quite good. In fact, Nkoli steaks, stews and sandwiches are starting to show up on the menus of Eden and many TGE and Splurgorth worlds, as well as upscale restaurants on Phase World and some of the Core Worlds of the Corkscrew and Anvil galaxies. Their meat is white, tastes like a cross between chicken and crab, and has a lower cholesterol count than comparable meats. Cuts include steaks, ribs, backstrap and tail filet. The oils from their skins can also be used as a natural healing skin balm, and the skin itself makes fine leather if properly treated.

A Resource for Primitive Humanoids: M.D.C. Hides for Armor & Weapons Made from the Nkoli (special): When dried

out and prepared properly, the thick, bumpy, top part of the Nkoli's hide can be used to make hard, M.D.C. armor (A.R. 15, 4D6+44 M.D.C. per suit) and the underbelly skin a soft, flexible and light armor (A.R. 13, 2D6+12 M.D.C.). Thus, wherever Nkoli are found, the primitive people who share the habitat are likely to wear Nkoli body armor and M.D.C.

capacitors, cloaks and ponchos. Such armor is non-environmental, of course. Hard armor sells for 6,000-24,000 credits, soft and capes for 2,000-8,000 credits, and weapons for 1,000-6,000 credits.

Nkoli spikes are often used for the tips of spears (1D4 M.D.), spikes for war-clubs (2D4 M.D.), and knives (1D4 M.D.). Teeth are sometimes used in jewelry.

Allies: None per se, though they may congregate with others of their own kind, the largest tend to prey on hatchlings and young Nkoli, and there is no sense of friendship or kinship; animal predator.

Enemies: Humanoids, game hunters, large flocks of Batamzinga, and a few other gigantic creatures.

Pyashche Probe

Alien Menace or First Contact?

The Pyashche (pronounced pie-ash-key) are neither indigenous to the Thundercloud Galaxy nor alive. Though rumored to be a race of intelligent machines, it is believed they are an advanced A.I. (Artificial Intelligence) from another galaxy or dimension. Some wonder if they are secret probes of the Exiles as the technology behind the probes are completely different than those known to the Three Galaxies.

Pyashche look like some kind of space probe or robot covered with camera lenses, antennae, lights, glowing tubes that seem to shine from within, and two large, heavy, cable-like tentacles and eight thinner, lighter tentacles. They hover and fly by what is presumed to be a form of anti-gravity, but that is not a certainty.

When one is encountered it speaks in the language it has observed being spoken or has overheard, offering a friendly greeting in a synthesized but all too human sounding voice. The probe claims to represent a race of beings known as the Pyashche and come in peace. Its mission: to make first contact with the many colorful people of the Thundercloud Galaxy. The probe is happy to chat about many subjects, talk and ask all kinds of questions about the many people, civilizations, intergalactic power blocs, politics, technology, practice of magic and other details about the denizens of the Three Galaxies (not just the Thundercloud), HOWEVER it refuses to reveal anything about itself or the Pyashche other than broad stroke aspects that tell a person *nothing*. "The Pyashche are good and noble people." "Their technology is advanced." "They have sent the probes to study, observe and make first contact with the people of the Thundercloud." "Do not be afraid, they come in peace." These broad strokes are repeated like a broken record. When pressed for details the Probe apologizes saying, "I'm sorry, we are not programmed to share that information." Pyashche Probes always refer to themselves in the plural, which is disturbing to some people.

Where is the Pyashche's galaxy or home world?

"Far away."

What's the name of the galaxy or home world?

"I am sorry, we are not programmed to share that information."

What's your purpose?

"To observe you."

Why? For what purpose?

"I am sorry, we are not programmed to share that information."

Why should we trust you?

"You have nothing to fear. We come in peace."

Who is we?

"We are the Pyashche."

What is it you hope to observe?

"We observe you."

"Why?"

"It is what we are programmed to do."

What do you want from us?

"We come to observe."

What do you hope to learn about us?

"I am sorry, we are not programmed to share that information. May I accompany you?"

And on and on.

If allowed to "accompany" and "observe," the Pyashche Probe hangs in the back, hovering silently at shoulder level or higher for a bird's eye view. It *never* takes the lead. If asked to take the lead, it refuses, saying, "How, then, can we observe you? Please continue so we may observe." It is interesting to note that the machine never uses the word 'study,' and dodges the question of whether the people being 'observed' are being recorded and the data transmitted to the Pyashche back home (or wherever). If the people under observation fall under attack the Probe falls back and continues to observe without assisting in any way. It fights only to protect itself. It is at that point that people realize the probe has many attacks per melee with its tentacles as well as concealed lasers and other features.

If a mortal traveling companion becomes injured or separated from the rest of the group the probe may elect to stay behind or follow him. It does not help or provide directions, but asks questions. "Are you afraid? Tell me how that feels?" "Do you think your companions are worried about you? Would it upset you if they were not?" "Do you fear death?" "You seem unworried, why?" "How do you know (fill in the blank)?" If the living companion should fall into a pit or quicksand, the probe is unlikely to help him. Instead, asking him questions and moving into various positions that would suggest it is, indeed, filming and recording his responses and actions. If there is nothing left to be gleaned, the probe may remain floating and filming until the character dies, or at some point, thank him for his time and cooperation and fly off.

In just the last year, reports of encounters with these probes have been flooding in. Some making contact. Other simply observing in the distance and flying away when approached. The probes seem interested in all people and aspects of intelligent life in the Thundercloud Galaxy, from primitives and monsters to advanced civilizations and their technology. This has made many individuals and power blocs concerned. Nobody knows who the Pyashche are or what they want. When attacked, the probes fight long enough to escape and fly away. When the probe's M.D.C. reaches zero, the device vanishes in a flash of light and particles – presumed atomized by a self-destruct mechanism. The TGE and Minions of Splugorth have adopted a policy of destroying the probes on sight. The CCW wants to capture and examine one, but has strict orders not to take any out of the Thundercloud Galaxy. Stories of the Automaton War still haunt the people of the CCW, and they are suspicious and wary of any "alien artificial intelligence." So far, capturing and examining one has proven to be impossible. Observing the probes in action has yielded no helpful information in understanding or tracing them.

The probes are not programmed with the location of the Pyashche home world, nor have they been built with any kind of in-

ternal flight recorder that could be tracked to their point of origin. If reports and video are being transmitted, they are sent by light signals of some kind and possibly through a space warp, making tracing or following them impossible. For reasons yet unexplained, the probes cannot be Object Read and powers of Telemechanics do not work on them. This has led some to wonder if the “probes” are really a mechanical body or spacecraft for a sentient creature composed of light or other type of energy. The machine’s construction is based on principles of light, rather than on electronics, and are, presumably, powered and recharged by solar light cells.

Pyashche Probes are almost always encountered as a single unit. If others are a round, observing, they do so in hiding. On the rare occasion one probe meets another, the two communicate through a dazzling display of swirling light and color patterns. The probes have a built-in force field, but it too is some kind of *photonic bubble* – an energy shield made of pure light. While this makes the machines incredibly intelligent and computations are made at the speed of light, it also means that they are incompatible with 99% of the technologies they encounter in the Three Galaxies. A Pyashche Probe cannot directly interface or jack into most computer systems of the Three Galaxies. Even the fabulous Machine People cannot meld with the probes. This means that they have to learn about other races through observation and hands-on experience. They travel through the void for years at a time in a state of low-powered sleep. When a new star system is approached, the Probe awakens and begins searching for the telltale signs of intelligent life such as radio signals and other

transmissions, as well as visual cues such as city lights on the night side of a planet, satellites, following spacecraft, and so on.

The Pyashche Probes present themselves as neutral observers, but they are so secretive, everyone assumes they must have an ulterior and dangerous motive, like invasion. Furthermore, there have been a few reports of incidents in which a Pyashche Probe absconded with, or was suspected of absconding with, ancient high-tech relics believed to have been created by one of the Elder Races.

Pyashche Probe [pronounced: pie-ASH-key]

Model Type: Unknown

Class: Bracewell probe designed to find and make first contact with alien life forms.

Crew: Uncertain. Presumed to be a computer A.I. May house a sentient being made of light.

M.D.C. by Location:

- * Antennae (7) – 20 each
- * Light Ports or Bubbles (32) – 45 each
- * Small Light Ports/Bubbles (11) – 15 each
- Main Tentacles (2, sides) – 200 each
- Secondary Tentacles (8; rear and lower) – 100 each
- Forward Laser (2, concealed) – 50 each
- ** Photonic Energy Shield – 400
- *** Main Body – 450 for small probes, 600 for the larger ones.

* A single asterisk indicates a small or difficult target to hit. They can only be struck when an attacker makes a Called Shot, and even then he is -3 to strike.



**** Photonic Energy Shield** is a force field that recovers lost M.D.C. at a rate of 1D6x10 M.D.C. per hour. If reduced to zero, the main body becomes vulnerable to attack until the Photonic field can regenerate.

******* When the Main Body is reduced to zero M.D.C. it vanishes in a flash of light and is presumed destroyed.

Speed:

Running: In an emergency, tentacles can be used like legs to walk or run at speeds up to 60 mph (96 km).

Flying in an Atmosphere: Uncertain. It is known to hover stationary and fly up to a speed of Mach 3. Presumed to be an anti-gravity flight system. Unlimited altitude and can breach the atmosphere to enter outer space.

Flying in Outer Space (long distance): The Pyashche Probes travel from star to star at relativistic speeds. That is, at non-FTL velocities. When preparing to cross interstellar distances, the probe goes into "sleep mode" and diverts power to its main drive. Then it generates a gamma-ray field around itself and travels along it like riding a surfboard through space. The probe can only ever travel at 99.999% the speed of light. To avoid all kinds of hairy mathematics, and for ease of game play, ignore the effects of time dilation and assume that its top speed is one light-year per year (670 million miles per hour).

Statistical Data:

Alignment: Unknown. Presumed to be Anarchist or Aberrant evil, but who knows?

Attacks/Actions Per Melee Round: Eight via tentacles or lasers.

Height: 7 feet (2.1 m) tall.

Width: 7 feet (2.1 m) wide.

Length: 8 feet (2.4 m) long.

Weight: 1.5 tons.

Physical Strength: Robot P.S. of 22 and P.P. 18.

Intelligence: I.Q. 23.

Cargo: Cargo space is presumed none, but that may not be true. There could be a small cargo container within the probe.

Power System: Photonic battery with backup solar panels/sails. Two hundred and fifty years of continual operation, but may spend decades or centuries more in hibernation sleep as the probe travels through space.

Penalties: 1. Incompatible technology, cannot interface with human or Three Galaxies computers and technology.

2. The probe has no physical self-repair or regenerative systems, so when it becomes damaged, loses a tentacle or light array, they are gone. Almost impossible to fix, an Operator or robot engineer can try to make simple physical repairs to the machine's external shells with patchwork, spray metal and other such materials at a penalty of -50%. Any internal or A.I. damage is permanent. Replacement parts are not available. Only the force field regenerates. When the M.D.C. of the Main Body reaches zero, the probe vanishes in a flash of light and is gone.

Allies: None known within the Three Galaxies.

Enemies: Everyone with the Three Galaxies is a potential enemy.

Habitat: So far, encountered only in the Thundercloud Galaxy.

Weapon Systems & Special Features:

1. Laser Cannon: Built into the lower front hemisphere of the Probe are two a high-intensity lasers for self-defense. It is tied into the probe's Radar/Lidar Suite, Combat Computer, and Targeting Arrays.

Primary Purpose: Defense.

Range: 4,000 feet (1219 m).

Mega-Damage: 5D6 S.D.C., 2D6 M.D., 4D6 M.D. or 1D4x10 M.D. per single blast.

Rate of Fire: Each blast counts as one of the Probe's attacks.

Payload: Effectively unlimited.

2. Retractable Manipulators/Tentacles (8): The Probe can use everyday items, tools and weapons by extruding as many as eight long, flexible, metal tentacles. They also let the machine fight in melee combat when necessary.

Range: Physical reach up to 20 feet (6.1 m), can retract two-thirds of the length inside body housing when not in use.

Mega-Damage: As per Robot P.S. of 22. Inflicts 1D4 M.D. with a punch, 2D4 M.D. with a power punch (counts as two melee attacks).

3. Retractable Manipulators/Tentacles (2): The Probe has a pair of heavy tentacles positioned on the sides that are used for heavy lifting and combat when necessary.

Range: Physical reach up to 25 feet (7.6 m), can retract two-thirds of the length inside body housing when not in use.

Mega-Damage: As per Robot P.S. of 22. Inflicts 1D4 M.D. with a punch, 2D4 M.D. with a power punch (counts as two melee attacks).

4. Photonic Energy Shield: This is a light-based force field to protect the Pyashche Probe from harm. It can be raised in an instant (takes one melee action), and due to its nature, takes NO damage from lasers of any kind. Particle beams, ion beams, plasma, kinetic attacks, phase beams, magic, and Cosmic Energy attacks inflict full damage. The Photonic Shield also glows with a soft, warm light and regenerates damage at a rate of 1D6x10 per hour.

M.D.C. of the Shield: 400. Once depleted, it requires time to recharge, and cannot be raised again for thirty hours. When it comes back on-line, it will again have 400 M.D.C.

5. Light Portals/Bubbles (32, large): The larger light bubbles are part of the eyes and optic systems of the Pyashche probe. They emit the equivalent of sunlight that will keep vampires at bay out to a distance of 50 feet (15 m). Each can also fire a light beam up to 2,000 feet (610 m) to do precise range finding or 1,000 feet (305 m) as a spotlight.

6. Observation Ball (1): Stored inside of the Pyashche Probe is a remote probe the size of a grapefruit. It is dispatched to enter buildings, vehicles, and openings too small for the probe to fit through. This small orb has 15 M.D.C. and all the optic and sensor features of the main Probe, and a transmission range of about 5,000 feet (1524 m). If destroyed, the main probe can build a new one using common technologies for about 50,000 credits.

7. Hand to Hand Combat: Eight attacks per melee round via tentacles and/or lasers.

Bonuses (includes all sensor and programming bonuses): +3 on Perception Rolls, +5 on initiative, +3 to strike and disarm, +8 to parry and entangle, and +7 to dodge, +5 to roll with impact, +3 to strike with laser and long-range weapons. Force field is impervious to lasers. The probe is also impervious to psionic attacks, probes and readings as well as illusions. Takes no damage from radiation or EMP weapons and is immune to the effects of M-Rad. Cannot be surprised or attacked from behind.

8. Notable Skill Programs:

Communications: All mechanical communications skills at 98% (excludes skills like Performance and Public Speak-

ing), Sign Language using light patterns. Speaks four Trade Tongues at 94% and has a built-in language translator that can translate most languages at 74% proficiency.

Observational Skills: All Chemistry skills at 98%, Intelligence 92%, Land Navigation 94%, Prowl 64%, Research and Tailing both at 90%, Tracking Animals and People 70%.

Pilot Related: All at 94%.

Technical: Photography and Computer Operation 96%, and five Lore skills of choice at 70%.

9. Sensor Systems of Note:

Advanced Audio and Recorder. Amplified hearing across the full decibel range. They can pick up inaudible frequencies as well as wide-band radio transmissions. Range 50 miles (80 km) in an atmosphere, or 200,000 miles (320,000 km) in space.

Clock Calendar.

Combat Suite. Passive nightvision built into a panoramic cluster lens, light targeting (invisible and visible light may be used).

Modulating Voice Synthesizer. Includes sound analysis computer.

Radar/Lidar Detector. Tells the Probe when it is being scanned by others; 80% detection rate.

Lidar Suite. Can identify and track 148 separate targets out to a range of 50 miles (80 km).

Radio Wide-band Receiver and Transmitter. 500 mile (800 km) range in an atmosphere, or 200,000 miles (320,000 km) in space.

Recording System. Everything the probe sees and hears is recorded. The light coding used has an infinite recording capacity, though the A.I. sorts data and images to collate them into subjects and categories. However, the entire, unedited files also remain in a separate storage system. When the probe suffers physical damage that reduces it to 50 M.D.C., the collated data files are lost.

Superior Optics. Can see the *entire* light spectrum from gamma rays, through all visible light, and into extremely low frequency radio waves. Can see the invisible and heat signatures.

Telescopic sight – can read a street sign up to 20 miles (32 km) away.

Almost every “light bubble” is an eye, so unless they are destroyed, the probe can see in all directions and cannot be surprised from above, below or behind.

Umdhlebi Tree

Also known as the Death Tree

Animals are not the only potential danger that explorers, settlers and land grabbers have to contend with in the Thundercloud Galaxy. There are a myriad of plants which can cause allergic reactions, poisoning, or even death. The Umdhlebi tree is one of the deadliest.

The Umdhlebi Tree has large, glossy, dark green leaves that exude a milky, bitter sap when broken. The edges of the leaves cut unprotected skin like a razor and must be handled with extreme caution. The trunk is thin and gnarled, covered in two layers of bark; a dry, dead, outer layer that hangs down around it like half-shredded wallpaper, and a smooth, younger layer underneath. The roots are also gnarled and appear partially above ground

and resemble tentacles crawling away from the tree. Long, black pods with red tips are the plant’s lethal fruit. Even with all these distinguishing features, there are two things that mark the tree as a Death Tree – there are no wildlife other than bits within its branches (the leaves would cut them to ribbons), and the bones of animals and humanoids laying in heaps around its base.

The Death Tree leaves cut any creature that touches them. In addition to the damage (1D4 S.D.C. from a single leaf), a toxin from the leaf makes its victims dizzy (roll 16 or higher for non-lethal poison), which may cause them to stagger into more leaves and take more damage. Dizziness reduces speed, attacks, combat and skill performance -25%.

The roots release an invisible toxic gas. Standing under the shady tree for more than 10 minutes makes eyes bloodshot and causes delirium. The delirium makes the victim confused and doubles the penalties of the cut from the razor leaf (reduce everything by 50%). (If not cut and poisoned by a leaf cut, then the penalties from delirium are only -25%.) Once the victim has dropped down dead, their decaying remains are absorbed into the soil around the tree, nourishing it.

The fruit of the Umdhlebi tastes sweet and delicious, but is poisonous. Eating as little as two bites causes 5D6 damage direct to Hit Points (if a Mega-Damage creature the damage is 5D6 M.D.). Eating half of the fruit does 1D6x10+12 damage direct to Hit Points. Eating the whole thing does 2D6x10+34 damage. Damage is not immediate, it takes 2D4 minutes for the poison to take effect.

Predators know the fighting abilities of creatures under the tree are reduced, so they wait until the creature or person seems to start behaving erratically, attack, try to make a quick kill, feast and leave the rest of the carcass under the tree, or drag it away. Of course, predators and scavengers that eat someone that has



died from poisonous fruit are, in turn, poisoned, and die under the tree's shadow. The decaying remains are absorbed into the soil around the tree, nourishing it.

Umdhlebi [pronounced: oomd LEH bee]

Also known as Death Tree, the Bone Tree and Razor Tree.

Alignment: Not really applicable, but would be considered Diabolic. Tribal people often believe the tree is evil and haunted by the spirits of the dead.

Attributes: Not applicable.

Size: The largest specimens can grow 25 feet (7.6 m) tall, and have a trunk with a diameter of 6 feet (1.8 m).

Weight: 1D6 tons.

M.D.C.: 4D6x10 Main Body. Individual roots and branches are 1D4 M.D.C. and leaves are 1D4 S.D.C.

Horror Factor: 11 for those who know what the tree is; 10 for those who don't know, but who see the pile of bones heaped around the base of the tree.

Disposition: Not applicable to a tree, but the atmosphere the tree imbues to those who see it is one of death, fear and dread.

Average Life Span: 2D8x100 years. Once every five years, an Umdhlebi will not produce fruit, but will instead generate flowers filled with seeds which are released on the wind. Where the seeds take root, a new tree grows over the next twenty years. Only when it reaches full maturity will it begin bearing fruit and begin to generate the toxic root gas.

Natural Abilities: Photosynthesis, regenerate 1D6 M.D.C. per day. Is able to survive in poor soil and clay, and is resistant to defoliants and chemical attacks (+7 to save, half damage even when the saving throw fails).

Vulnerabilities: Fire does full damage.

Attacks per Melee: None physically. The poison gas can be released once per round.

Equivalent Skills: None per se.

Mega-Damage: Read the description for details.

Bonuses: Resistant to defoliants and chemical attacks: +7 to save. A successful save means no damage. If the tree fails to save, it suffers one third the usual damage.

Magic: None.

Psionics: None.

Allies and Enemies: Depending on how you look at it, the Death Tree either has no enemies (it is what it is) or most life forms are its enemies. Primitive people tend to regard the tree as evil and bad medicine/dark magic and avoid it. Necromancers are likely to find it a valuable resource.

Value: The razor leaves and poisonous fruit have some value, but are so specialized that the market is minimal. Razor leaves get 1D4 credits each. Poison fruits 1D6 credits each. The wood of the tree is not suitable for much of anything, except perhaps as firewood. However, the smoke from burning Umdhlebi wood is toxic and breathing it has the same effects as the roots. Practitioners of magic may find more value in the thing, though it is not a well known tree. An experienced Alchemist can make a staff made from Umdhlebi wood that can do one of the following: Cast Mist of Death spell three times daily, turn dead four times daily (up to 50 dead at a time), and inflict double damage to vampires and undead.

Habitat: Rare. Found here and there on planets across the Thundercloud. The tree is more common on worlds in the Crèche Clouds. Death Trees do not grow well in rich, fertile soil. The

tree does best in rocky, barren ground, or clay. It cannot grow in sand or ice and snow, but it does well in dust and parched earth.

Yboor

No one is certain if the Yboor should be classified as intelligent beings or as monsters. Native to the Thundercloud Galaxy, they are one of the very few species in the Three Galaxies that propagate through a process called *panspermia*. In brief, the Yboor travel from one world to another by shooting their genetic seed into space. Encapsulated by a mass of frozen protoplasm, the seeds travel for hundreds or thousands of years through interplanetary and interstellar space. When a comet, meteor or space junk laden with Yboor gene-seeds impacts onto a planet, it melts and the seeds reanimate. If there is no life on that particular world, then the seeds die of starvation within a few days. However, if there is any kind of natural biosphere, the seeds go to work.

The Yboor resemble large amoebae, bigger than a human being, with several organelles floating about on the inside. Slithering about, each of these creatures survive by smothering and feeding upon any living beings they encounter. The more the creature eats, the larger it becomes, until it undergoes cell division and splits to become two identical versions of itself. Animals, including people, are easiest for the Yboor to digest, because they don't generally have a tough cell wall, but given enough time, plant life can be broken down and absorbed too. When the Yboor has consumed enough biological material, it splits in two. Both seed genes then go on their way to find new organic "food" to devour. Growing exponentially, it takes only *one Yboor* to eventually infest and lay waste to an entire planet.

When the Yboor amoeba can no longer find animal food sources (which generally means they have eaten every organic creature there is to be eaten!), they begin to starve and die. This triggers a *mass migration* in the amoebae-like creatures. The Yboor instinctively gather by continent and key geographic locations, and merge into a gigantic mountain of living organisms. The massing Yboor form the cone shape of a volcano that can tower miles into the sky. When the majority of the Yboor population from that region has assembled, somehow the mountain of Yboor is able to eject globs of its core material out into space to start the process all over again. The Yboor left behind disperse and turn cannibal, feeding upon each other. Eventually, the last Yboor dies of starvation, but that could take 1D10+10 years.

It is important to note that Yboor eat all living creatures, from people to insects. They can and do eat vegetation, but plant-life doesn't agree with their digestive systems, so they may leave a planet when only plant-life and a few species of insects remains. While the ecosystem of the planet may be crippled, it is an ideal environment for terra-forming and colonization, and may attract space-faring people. Any Yboor still alive spell trouble, not only for the terra-formers, but for their space stations, other colony worlds and home world. If a single Yboor gets onto a spaceship, a space station or colony world, look out. This is also where Yboor exhibit intelligence as they can be quite sneaky and clever.

The Yboor sound like creatures operating on animal instinct, and in many respects, they are. However, they can control their instincts and need to feed, in order to make smart, cunning and even calculating moves. When one, two or a few Yboor find a spaceship or colony of settlers, the creatures can control their instinct to feed, even if starving, and wait for the right moment to strike.



Furthermore, the creatures pick off people who are not be missed, or whose "disappearance" can be explained (must have fallen into the crevice, gotten swept away by the currents, etc.). Yboor wait, lurk and pick off their victims. The creatures crawl into out of the way places to hide and stow away so they can be carried off on a spaceship and, ultimately, to another world to devour. That means the monsters understand what a spaceship is and that it will eventually carry them to another planet. In addition, the Yboor seem to know when and where to hide, recognize soldiers, police and weapons, and some claim they have even taken action to sabotage machinery, power supplies, communication systems, etc. Such actions require a developed mind, much more than animal instinct.

Even within the most advanced cities and eco-environments, Yboor reap havoc, hiding and growing in numbers until there are so many, they no longer have to remain in seclusion. By then, they will have secretly and quietly spread across the land, so nuking just one contained area is not sufficient to destroy the invader. Furthermore, since the Yboor can survive in most biospheres, including underwater, once infested, they are nearly impossible to completely exterminate.

The above notwithstanding, nobody is known to have ever been able to communicate with the Yboor. Psychics report brain overload from alien sensations, sounds and emotions that defy interpretation. Magic language spells produce a series of musical notes and sounds that resemble bubbling water, but no comprehensible words. Nor do the Yboor seem to have any type of language, culture, or purpose other than to feed, grow and continue.

Yboor [pronounced: yuh-BOOR]

Also known as The Devouring Plague or just Devourer.

Alignment: Considered to be Diabolic Evil.

Attributes: I.Q. 2D4+4, M.E. 1D6+8, M.A. 1D4, P.S. 1D6, P.P. 1D4, P.E. 1D6, P.B. 1, Spd 1D6+3.

Size: 8-11 feet (2.4 to 3.3 m) long, 5-6 feet (1.5 to 1.8 m) wide.

Flat and oval in shape with an appearance similar to that of an amoeba, or like a quilt blanket or other shapeless mass.

Weight: 300-500 pounds (135 to 225 kg).

M.D.C.: 6D6+6 in amoeba form. (In S.D.C. settings, Yboor have 5D6+12 Hit points, 1D6x10 S.D.C., and a Natural AR of 9.)

Horror Factor: 13

P.P.E.: 6D6

Disposition: None other than a relentless, devouring force.

Average Life Span: Unknown. In space, Yboor gene spores can enter a dormant stage that lasts for thousands of years.

Natural Abilities: Takes half damage from kinetic (punches, melee weapons, bullets, etc.) as well as electric-based attacks, double damage from heat based. **Note:** Also see Damage and Psionics.

Animated Dead. The Yboor can also animate, to a limited degree, large animal species (while supplies last). See details below.

Flatten or Congeal Body (special): The body of the Yboor is soft and flexible, enabling it to squeeze under doors, through bars and narrow openings, and through narrow pipes.

Resistant to Damage (special): Kinetic attacks (punches, kicks, bullets, melee weapons, explosions) do 10% their normal damage. Cold and cold-based attacks do 10% their normal damage. Sonic and energy attacks inflict half damage. Impervious to disease, poisons, and toxic fumes when in its natural form. Can survive in space and underwater; can breathe underwater. Also see Bonuses.

See Electromagnetic Energy (special): Yboor see electromagnetic waves and can follow natural lines of magnetic energy like a beacon or a highway to navigate planets and space. This helps the creature navigate and find its way; always knows where magnetic north is.

Sense/Hear Radio Waves (Special): Yboor can sense and hear radio waves and transmissions, radar signals, microwaves and electromagnetic energy. Follow radio transmissions to its source: 76%.

Animated Corpse (special):

How it works: The Yboor use a weird form of psionics exclusive to their race to seize limited control over the corpse of the person or creature it has killed and is feeding upon. It controls the corpse like a puppet, but without physical strings attached, to move and perform simple tasks.

This is another area in which the Yboor exhibit intelligence. Its own amoeba-like body is unsuitable for operating devices, weapons and other types of equipment, nor is it suited to combat. However, the Yboor can animate the corpse of the creature it has killed and manipulate the corpse to open a door, operate machinery, pick up and use guns, weapons and tools, and to perform other simple tasks, including driving a vehicle (badly). Base skill equivalent is typically 25% (+20% to use sensory, radio and communication equipment).

Limitation of the Power: The Yboor cannot animate just any dead body. The creature can animate only the prey it has personally killed, and the body must still have muscle structure; cannot animate bones or a skeleton.

Range: The controlling Yboor must be within 600 feet (183 m) and have sight of its animated meat-puppet.

Duration: Indefinite; as long as it has sufficient S.D.C.

S.D.C.: When the corpse loses more than half the S.D.C. or M.D.C. it had in life, the body becomes too damaged and broken to be animated and it falls to the ground unable to move. No Hit Points apply because the body is dead, smothered.

Attributes of Corpse: I.Q., M.E., M.A., P.E. are not applicable. P.S., P.P., P.B. and Spd are *half* what they were in life.

Attacks per Melee of the Corpse: Four.

Weapon Usage: The animated corpse can use any kind of weapon, including guns and simple explosives, but without any skill proficiency – NO BONUSSES; unmodified die rolls only to strike, parry, dodge, etc. Base Skill: 25%.

Attacks per Melee (of the Yboor): Two melee attacks/actions per round (15 seconds), but when it animates a dead body, the zombie has four attacks per melee round, but seldom uses an animated body to kill.

Bonuses (in addition to those acquired by attributes and skills): +10 to save against Horror Factor with the exception of fire – is afraid of fire (it has an H.F. of 16 to the Yboor). Impervious to mind control and possession, disease, poisons, and toxic fumes. Also see Resistance to Damage under Natural Abilities.

Damage/Smothering Attack: In its natural, amoeba form, the Yboor have only one method of attack, to *smother* their prey. Being smothered to death is a terrifying experience: the Yboor's soft, rubbery body slides over its prey, blankets the body to prevent movement (most victims have one attack/action per melee round). The victim may feel the Yboor as it slides over him, usually from the feet up, but before he can react and manage to pull himself away, the thing covers his entire body. Once covered by the creature, the victim is cloaked in darkness and cannot breathe. The Yboor constricts its body to squeeze out any air that might remain, pins the body of its prey and presses tight against the face, making breathing and screaming for help impossible. Panic ensues, but the prey is

trapped under the *heavy carpet* that is the creature's body, holding him down and snuffing the life out of him.

Most victims lose consciousness in 30-75 seconds (1D4+1 melee rounds), and are dead – suffocated – after an additional 1D4+2 melee rounds (45-90 seconds). For most victims, it feels as if several hundred pounds of heavy, wet carpet has been dropped on top of them. A blanket that conforms to the shape of their own body and prevents air from reaching them. **Note:** Only characters who do not need to breathe or can hold their breath for a longer than usual time won't die in a matter of minutes. However, "playing dead" won't help, as the Yboor remains laying on its victim to absorb the nutrients from the body as chemicals are secreted to accelerate its decomposition. A Yboor can melt a body away to nothing but bone in a matter of days (see below). Characters in environmental body armor, a spacesuit, or with an air supply survive much, much longer, though they may remain unable to move under the patient Yboor. Actually, Yboor are *smart enough* to know that an armor clad humanoid can not be killed in this matter, so it seldom attacks them, unless it is for some other reason (hold them at bay while other Yboor escape, hold them down to prevent attack or until unarmored prey are devoured, etc.). Yboors pick and choose their prey as well as the time and place of their attacks.

Escaping the Embrace of a Yboor: Characters with a human P.S. of 28, an Augmented (bionic) P.S. of 24, or Robotic P.S. of 20 or greater (Supernatural P.S. of 10+), have a better chance of escaping the clutches of the giant amoeba. Strong characters see their number of attacks/actions reduced by half rather than one, and with intense effort and 1D6+3 melee actions, the super-strong character should be able to *pull free* of a Yboor's deadly embrace before he loses consciousness. It is important to note that as long as the Yboor can sense life or the body moving (even from just breathing), it patiently holds on tight, even if it takes hours.

Likewise, a victim can be pulled out by allies who have a combined P.S. greater than a P.S. of 28 (see the numbers above). However, it takes 1D4 melee rounds just to manage to slide one's hands or body under the soft, slimy, giant amoeba tightly conformed to the victim and/or pressing tightly to the ground, to try to lift it enough for someone else to slide under the monster, and 1D4 melee actions to pull the (unconscious?) victim out of the heavy, wet, undulating Yboor. Furthermore, the Yboor will jostle and try to slip free of the people holding it off the victim. Those lifting the Yboor up must roll 14 or higher to maintain their grip every melee round (strike bonuses apply). Of course, a super-strong character or group of characters (P.S. 35 or Robotic P.S. 25 or Supernatural P.S. 20) is able to pick up or drag the Yboor completely off the victim.

Consuming Prey: Once its prey is dead, the Yboor consumes it by absorbing the body through its skin as it decays. In game terms, the amoeba-like thing absorbs 4D6+6 S.D.C./Hit Points or M.D.C. per day for six days. As it feeds, the dead body decomposes at an increased rate: skin vanishing and its muscles shrinking. When all the S.D.C. and Hit Points (or M.D.C.) are gone, nothing remains of a human-sized victim except for indigestible bones, and the Yboor reproduces by dividing into two identical selves. **Note:** In the case of small animals weighing less than 20 pounds (9 kg), the Yboor devours it in a matter of 1D6+1 hours, not days. Plant life takes four times longer for the Yboor to digest and offers one quarter the nutrition the

alien requires. As a result, feeding on plants is akin to starvation and seldom done.

In all cases, the Yboor cannot feed on the corpse of its victim when it is animated. The creature must lay on top of it to feed.

Vulnerabilities: Fire and heat attacks inflict double damage.

R.C.C. Skills: Climb, Land Navigation, and Swim at 90%. Escape Artist, Palming, Prowl and Tailing, all at 60%.

Available O.C.C.s: Not applicable.

Psionic Powers: Object Read, Presence Sense, and Mind Block.
I.S.P.: M.E. attribute number x5.

Magic Powers: None.

Weapons & Equipment: None, or as suitable for the animated corpse.

Armor: None.

Habitat: Can be encountered anywhere in the Thundercloud Galaxy.

Allies: None.

Enemies: All life.

Monster Creation Guidelines

The Thundercloud Galaxy is the most bio-diverse of the Three Galaxies and many factors contribute to its range of flora and fauna. It has undergone several galaxy-wide cataclysms which have killed dominant species, collapsed advanced civilizations, devolved and mutated sentient and animal life forms, or has otherwise played havoc with creatures held within its arms. Mysterious and godlike beings such as the Dominators, Gene-Tech and others have also modified and played with the genetic structure of life in the Thundercloud Galaxy, giving birth to new species and transforming existing ones. In addition, the slave trade of both the Splugorth and the Dominators has transplanted species from alien worlds and dimensions to who knows how many other planets within the Thundercloud Galaxy.

Many of the animals in the Thundercloud Galaxy are quite benign, posing little or no threat to explorers and settlers. Others, however, are frightening predators or monsters. The following are some quick-roll tables to enable Game Masters to come up with all manner of animals and monsters to cause trouble for player characters. While we try to account for a wide variety of animals, the emphasis of these tables is on dangerous creatures. **Note:** There are exceptions to every rule and the Game Master can adjust stats, S.D.C./M.D.C., powers and abilities as he deems appropriate.

Quick Roll Tables for Monster Creation

The following tables and lists are meant as guidelines for the Game Master to create monsters and animals of his own. Most are designed to give the G.M. a start, not to roll up a complete critter. Uncork those imaginations, extrapolate at will and have fun.

Alignment

Most domesticated animals are considered Unprincipled and trained pets are Scrupulous.

Most wild animals are considered Anarchist.

Predatory animals are considered Anarchist or Miscreant.

Predatory monsters are considered Miscreant.

Man-eaters and Thrill killers are considered Diabolic.

Only monsters with human equivalent intelligence can *choose* to behave a particular way and pick an alignment, but they tend toward Anarchist and evil.

The Eight Attributes

Roll percentile dice or pick one for each attribute.

I.Q. (Intelligence):

01-25% Low: 1D4+2

26-50% Medium: 1D4+5

51-75% High Animal I.Q.: 2D4+7; tend to be predators. This is not the same level of intelligence as a human, but the creature shows cunning, cleverness, may hide, use surprise attacks, engage in cat and mouse tactics, recognize and avoid weapons and vehicles as well as evade traps and ambushes.

76-85% Human Equivalent I.Q., Average: 1D6+7

86-95% Human Equivalent I.Q., High: 2D6+9

96-00% Human Genius Level I.Q.: 2D6+15

M.E. (Mental Endurance):

01-20% Low: 1D6; easily startled and scared away.

21-40% Moderate: 1D4+4; timid.

41-60% Confident: 1D6+9; tend to be large animals and predators.

61-80% Bold: 1D6+13; tend to be smart animals and predators.

81-00% Daring: 2D6+15; tend to be fast, smart animals and predators.

M.A. (Mental Affinity):

01-20% Low: 1D6; not very appealing.

21-40% Moderate: 1D4+5; average.

41-60% Good: 1D6+10; shows distinct and attractive personality.

61-80% High: 1D6+14; shows an abundance of personality, charisma and appeal, or cuteness; perhaps deceptively so.

81-00% Charismatic: 2D6+16; shows an abundance of personality, individuality, charisma and appeal, or may be adorable; perhaps deceptively so.

P.S. (Physical Strength): +6 P.S. bonus, regardless of category for predators and +12 for giants (more than one ton or 10 feet/3 m tall).

01-10% Low: 1D6+5; human equivalent P.S.

11-20% Moderate: 2D6+6; human equivalent P.S.

21-30% Strong: 3D6+12; human equivalent P.S.

31-40% Powerful: 4D6+14; equivalent to human Augmented P.S.

41-50% Incredible Strength: 4D6+20; equivalent to Robot P.S.

51-60% Extraordinary Strength: 5D6+22; equivalent to Robot P.S.

61-70% Supernatural P.S., Dangerous: 2D6+10

71-80% Supernatural P.S., Dynamic: 3D6+16

81-90% Supernatural P.S., Deadly: 4D6+22

91-00% Supernatural P.S., Devastating: 5D6+30

P.P. (Physical Prowess): +2 P.P. bonus, regardless of category for predators.

01-10% Low: 1D6+2

11-20% Moderate: 1D6+5

21-35% Nimble: 1D6+11; +1 to roll with impact.

36-50% Quick: 1D6+15; +1 to parry.

51-70% Agile: 1D6+19; +1 to automatic dodge and +1 to pull punch.

71-85% Extraordinary Agility: 2D4+21; +1 on initiative, +2 to automatic dodge and +1 attack per melee round.

86-00% Superhuman Agility: 2D6+24; +2 on initiative, +4 to automatic dodge and +2 attacks per melee round.

P.E. (Physical Endurance):

01-20% Low: 2D4+1

21-40% Moderate: 2D4+8

41-60% Good: 2D4+12

61-80% High: 2D6+14

81-00% Supernatural: 2D6+18

P.B. (Physical Beauty):

01-20% Unattractive: 1D6; not very appealing.

21-40% Plain: 1D6+6; average.

41-60% Attractive: 1D6+12; perhaps deceptively attractive.

61-80% Exotic: 1D6+16; perhaps deceptively attractive.

81-00% Beautiful/Stunning: 2D6+18; perhaps deceptively so.

Spd. (Speed Running or Flying): +6 Spd bonus for herd animals, and +12 for flying creatures.

01-10% Slow: 1D6+2

11-20% Ponderous: 1D6+8

21-30% Steady: 2D6+14

31-45% Rapid: 3D6+22

46-60% Fast: 4D6+30

61-70% Ultra-Fast: 5D6+40

71-80% Wicked Fast: 6D6+50

81-90% Speedster: 1D6x10+60

91-00% Super-Fast: 2D6x10+80

Size

Roll percentile dice to make a random determination of size or pick one.

01-05% Very Small: No larger than a frog, mouse, bird or similar sized creatures, including many varieties of insects.

06-10% Small: No larger than a squirrel or jack rabbit, and may include large insects.

11-30% Moderate: No larger than a house cat to mid-sized dog.

31-50% Medium: No larger than a wolf or mountain lion.

51-70% Large: No larger than a horse. Includes such animals as alligators, crocodiles, African lions, tigers, cattle and humans.

71-80% Very Large: No larger than an elephant.

81-90% Giant: 10-15 feet (3 to 4.6 m) tall or long.

91-95% Massive: 16-25 feet (4.9 to 7.6 m) tall or long.

96-00% Humongous: 26-35 feet (7.9 to 10.7 m) tall or long, or bigger. May include giant insects, dragons and the largest of dinosaurs.

S.D.C. or Mega-Damage Creature

The Megaverse is filled with beings that are either ordinary mortal creatures with S.D.C. (Structural Damage Capacity) and Hit Points, and those that have M.D.C. (Mega-Damage Capacity) hides, shells or exoskeletons. S.D.C. is the norm, especially among animals, but Monsters often have M.D.C.

Animals:

Roll percentile dice to make a random determination of whether the animal is S.D.C./Hit Points or M.D.C., or pick one.

01-88% S.D.C. & Hit Point creature.

89-00% M.D.C. creature.

Monsters:

Roll percentile dice to make a random determination of whether the animal is S.D.C./Hit Points or M.D.C., or pick one.

01-40% S.D.C. & Hit Point monster.

41-00% M.D.C. monster. **Note:** Mega-Damage creatures inflict M.D. when they attack, but do not automatically get Supernatural P.S. or P.E.

S.D.C. & Hit Points of S.D.C. Animals and Monsters

This table is applicable only for S.D.C. and Hit Point animals and monsters. For ease of use, Hit Points and S.D.C. are determined by size. Increase the S.D.C. of predatory animals and those with natural body armor by 20%.

Very Small (frog, mouse, birds & similar animals): 1D4 Hit Points and 1D4 S.D.C. points.

Small (rat to squirrel sized): 1D6 Hit Points and 1D6 S.D.C. points.

Moderate (house cat to mid-sized dog): 2D6 Hit Points and 2D6 S.D.C. points.

Medium (large dog to wolf-sized): 2D6+12 Hit Points and 3D6 S.D.C. points.

Large (alligator, human-sized, African lion, tiger, cattle and horse-sized): 4D6+20 Hit Points and 4D6+10 S.D.C. points.

Very Large (rhino to elephant sized): 4D6+20 Hit Points and 2D4x10 S.D.C. points.

Giant (Animals taller than 10 feet/3 m or longer than 20 feet/6.1 m): 5D6+30 Hit Points and 1D6x10 S.D.C. points, +1D6x10 S.D.C. per additional six feet (1.8 m) in size.

Creature of Magic, Lesser: 5D6+6 Hit Points and 4D6+20 S.D.C. points. Becomes a Mega-Damage creature in M.D.C. settings like Rifts Earth.

Creatures of Magic, Greater: 2D6x10 Hit Points and 5D6x10 S.D.C. points. Becomes a Mega-Damage creature in M.D.C. settings like Rifts Earth. Special magic creatures usually have a Natural Armor Rating (A.R.) of 2D6+4, are resistant to cold, heat, drugs and chemicals (they inflict half damage and last half as long), magically understands and speaks all spoken languages, and Bio-Regenerates 3D6 Hit Points or S.D.C. per melee round.

M.D.C. of Mega-Damage Monsters

This table is applicable only for Mega-Damage monsters. For ease of use, M.D.C. is determined by size. Increase the M.D.C. of predatory animals and creatures with natural armor by 20%.

Very Small (frog, mouse, birds & similar animals): 1D4 M.D.C.

Small (rat to squirrel sized): 2D4 M.D.C. points.

Moderate (house cat to mid-sized dog): 2D6+6 M.D.C. points.

Medium (large dog to wolf-sized): 5D6+6 M.D.C. points.

Large (alligator, human-sized, African lion, tiger, cattle and horse size): 1D6x10+20 M.D.C. points.

Very Large (rhino to elephant sized): 2D4x10+30 M.D.C. points.

Giant (Animals taller than 10 feet/3 m or longer than 20 feet/6.1 m): 2D6x10+40 M.D.C. points, +6D6 M.D.C. per additional six feet (1.8 m) in size.

Creature of Magic, Lesser: 2D4x10+20 M.D.C. points. Becomes an S.D.C. and Hit Points creature (split M.D.C. number in half for each) in S.D.C. settings.

Creatures of Magic, Greater: 1D6x100+30 M.D.C. points. Becomes an S.D.C. and Hit Points creature (split M.D.C. number in half for each) in S.D.C. settings.

Supernatural Beings, Lesser: 3D6x10+50 M.D.C. points.

Strength and endurance are considered to be Supernatural and the creature's physical attacks inflict Mega-Damage (M.D.) as per Supernatural P.S. plus any additional damage from natural weapons. Supernatural creatures are impervious to S.D.C. weapons and attacks, drugs, chemicals, and attacks inflict half damage and last half as long, are impervious to disease, magically understands and speaks all spoken languages, and Bio-Regenerate 2D6 M.D.C. per melee round.

Supernatural Beings, Greater: 2D6x100 +60 M.D.C. points (rare).

Strength and endurance are considered to be Supernatural and the creature's physical attacks inflict Mega-Damage (M.D.) as per Supernatural P.S. plus any additional damage from natural weapons. Supernatural creatures are impervious to S.D.C. weapons and attacks, drugs, chemicals, gas attacks inflict half damage and last half as long, are impervious to disease, +6 to save vs possession and Horror Factor, magically understands and speaks all spoken languages, and Bio-Regenerate 4D6 M.D.C. per melee round.

Supernatural Beings, Lords and Powerful: 1D6x1,000 +350 M.D.C. points (rare). Same as Greater Supernatural Being, except they Bio-Regenerate 5D6 M.D.C. per melee round.

Horror Factor

Horror Factor varies based on the type and nature of the animal. What follows are common categories of animals and their corresponding Horror Factor (H.F.) range.

No Horror Factor. Common animals of a non-threatening nature and general pleasing appearance have no Horror Factor. Even on alien worlds, animals often share features and traits we recognize and find appealing and non-threatening. An alien fish, frog, rabbit, squirrel, puppy, deer, or bird is not likely to look frightening or threatening and has no Horror Factor. The only exception might be if the character has a phobia about such creatures.

1D6+6 Awe Factor. Cute, pretty and attractive or graceful non-threatening animals are likely to have an Awe or Prettiness Factor rather than a Horror Factor (ugly and/or scary). +1D4 for exotic and especially beautiful creatures.

1D6+6 Horror Factor for Vermin. Even if they are not deadly or dangerous, creatures that fall into the category of vermin:

cockroaches, spiders, mice, rats, snakes and similar. They are repulsive and frightening to most people, even big, bad soldiers. **Note:** Horror Factor is half for characters who are naturalists, Explorers, Big Game Hunters, Wilderness Scouts, and anyone who regularly works with such vermin.

1D4+8 Horror Factor for Large and Ugly or Strange Creatures. By the virtue of their size, many people are nervous or frightened of large animals, including large dogs, horses and cattle, let alone alien creatures.

Humans and most humanoids have a knee-jerk reaction to fear and avoid ugly animals and creatures we don't recognize, especially if they are strange or ugly.

1D4+10 Horror Factor for Predators. The aggressive nature of predators combined with their capacity to hunt and kill is threatening and scary. Furthermore, many predators are large beasts and equipped with threatening fangs, sharp teeth and claws.

1D4+12 Horror Factor for Monsters. Defining a monster is somewhat difficult as some people consider certain ordinary animals to be rather monstrous. In a game context, we include beings and creatures that have a demonic or wicked appearance, the features of a predator (fangs, claws, etc.) usually combined with an ugly, strange or horrific appearance. Monsters may be any size, but the majority are man-sized or larger. Evil supernatural beings, dragons and dragon-like creatures, and other beasts that fit humankind's image of a "monsters" all fall into this category.

P.P.E. of the Creature

All living creatures have P.P.E. (Potential Psychic Energy), the stuff of magic and human potential. The amount of P.P.E. possessed by an animal varies with its size and type.

Very Small (frog, mouse, birds & similar animals): 1D4 P.P.E.

Small (rat to squirrel sized): 2D4 P.P.E.

Moderate (house cat to mid-sized dog): 3D4 P.P.E.

Medium (large dog to wolf-sized): 3D6 P.P.E.

Large (alligator, human-sized to cattle & horse sized): 4D6 P.P.E.

Very Large (rhino to elephant sized): 4D6+1 P.P.E.

Giant (Animals taller than 10 feet/3 m or longer than 20 feet/6.1 m, such as the dinosaurs of Earth's past): 5D6 P.P.E.

Creature of Magic, Lesser: 2D6x10 P.P.E.

Creatures of Magic, Greater: 2D4x100 P.P.E.

Supernatural Beings, Lesser: 1D4x100 P.P.E.

Supernatural Beings, Greater: 2D6x100 P.P.E.

Supernatural Beings, Lords and Powerful: 1D6x1,000 P.P.E. (Rare)

P.P.E. Bonuses: +1D6 for predators and those with human intelligence, double for babies, +2D6 for young and those that possess an Awe Factor.

Attacks per Melee Round

Insects and Reptiles: Three.

Non-Aggressive: Two. This category includes most herbivores and fish, amphibians and birds.

Predators: Four.

Monsters: Five (+1 one if it has human-level intelligence).

Note: Natural Weapons and Special Attacks sometimes add one or more attacks.

Natural Weapons and Special Attacks

All animals and monsters begin with the number of attacks noted in the previous list by type, but this might increase depending on what kind of natural weapons the creature has at its disposal. Roll twice on the table below or select two. **Note:** S.D.C. creatures inflict Hit Point/S.D.C. damage. Mega-Damage creatures, including most creatures of magic and supernatural beings inflict Mega-Damage (M.D.). Thus, the level of harm for the weapons and special attacks are listed only as “damage” (S.D.C. or M.D. depending on the nature of the creature).

01-10% Horns. Good for stabbing attacks; 2D4 damage in addition to any P.S. bonuses and +1 to strike.

11-20% 1D4+1 Tentacles. Usually in place of hands, paws, or other types of limbs. Inflict 1D6+2 points of damage in addition to any P.S. bonuses. Each *pair* of tentacles beyond the first grants an additional melee attack.

21-30% Bite Attack. Huge and powerful jaws inflict 3D6 points of damage.

31-40% Bite Attack. Small, sharp, needle-like teeth inflict 1D6 points of damage.

41-50% Claws. Inflict 3D4 or 2D6 damage in addition to any P.S. bonuses.

51-60% Large Claws. May or may not be retractable; 3D6 damage in addition to any P.S. bonuses.

61-70% Thick, Slashing Tail. Does 2D6 points of damage, but does not add to the creature’s total number of attacks per melee.

71-80% Prehensile Tail. Can be used like an additional limb to hit enemies and hold onto objects. Physical strikes inflict 1D6 points of damage, and adds one additional melee attack to the creature’s total. Physical Strength of the tail is usually half that of the animal’s P.S. attribute.

81-85% Prehensile Tail with Spikes or Blade. Used like a stabbing or slashing weapon inflicts 3D6 points of damage.

86-90% Poisonous Stinger Tail. Roll again to determine type of poison. Saving throw for non-lethal poison is 16+. Lethal is 15+.

01-40% Deadly Toxin: 4D6 damage direct to Hit Points (6D6 M.D. to Mega-Damage Beings) per each sting.

41-70% Dizzy/Disorienting/Stun: The victim feels dizzy and his mind foggy. Reduce the number of attacks per melee round by half, reduce Spd by 30% and -3 on all combat bonuses for 1D4+2 melee rounds.

71-00% Paralysis: The limb stung by the Stinger tail goes numb and cannot move for 1D6+1 melee rounds. If stung in the chest or main body, reduce Spd by half and -1 attack per melee. If stung in one leg, reduce Spd by half. If stung in both legs he can’t move and may fall to the ground or need to prop himself up. A paralyzed arm or hand means the limb is temporarily useless.

91-00% Breath Weapon. Could be a poisonous fog, some kind of corrosive acid, cold/frost or fire attack. Range is 40 feet (12.2 m), inflicts 3D6 points of damage (4D6 if a creature of magic or supernatural).

Additional Evolutionary Features

Roll once on the following table or choose one that seems appropriate.

01-10% Poison Fangs. The creature has a venomous bite so severe that anyone bitten must make a save vs non-lethal poison (16) to avoid becoming paralyzed or dizzy (pick one; see description of effects on the previous table). Or it is a lethal poison that inflicts 3D6 points of damage if the person fails to save vs lethal poison (14).

11-20% Poison Spurs. Usually found on hands/paws, wrists and ankle joints, that serves as a poison attack during strikes. Characters must save versus lethal poison (14 or higher) or take an additional 2D6 points of damage.

21-30% Psionic Powers. Pick 1D4+1 Psionic abilities (that makes sense for this creature) from the Sensitive or Physical category. I.S.P. is 1D6x10 (+25 for sentient creatures).

31-40% Electrical Field Generation. Just like an electric eel, this creature can shock its opponent. This is meant to stun the victim, not outright kill it. Inflicts 2D6 points of damage.

41-45% Sonic Burst. A super loud shout, roar, or cry, sometimes on a frequency that approaches the ultrasonic. Characters must roll a dodge or be stunned for the entire melee round. Range: 60 feet (18.3 m).

46-50% Chameleon. The creature’s skin allows it to blend into its surrounding environment. If it remains motionless, there is only a 5% chance of it being discovered visually. At the G.M.’s discretion, the creature might also be able to lower its body temperature to match the environment as well, making it invisible to infrared and thermal sensors and optics.

51-60% Quills. A natural armor providing an additional 60 S.D.C./M.D.C. A physical attack (with a fist, kick, etc.) against this creature that rolls 12 or less will contact the quills. The attacker then takes 2D6 damage. The creature can also body block using its quills inflicting 4D6 plus any P.S. bonus. An attack using a quill-covered limb inflicts 2D6+ P.S. bonus.

61-70% Stink Spray. A natural compound that contains a horrific smelling sulphur based chemicals. It can be used up to 8 times a day, and will incapacitate victims that fail a save of 15 or higher by causing nausea for five minutes or as long as the person is subjected to it. During that time, the victim has no initiative, performs skills at -80%, and can only take defensive actions, with any bonuses reduced by half. The spray’s stench “marks” its victim, staying on him or her for 1D6+6 days. The gagging smell makes surprise attacks, Prowl, Camouflage, or any hiding impossible (can smell it from 2000 feet/610 m away! Three times as far for creatures with extraordinary sense of smell). Tomato juice, or a chemical equivalent, reduces the effects of the smell by half if the person soaks in it three times in 24 hours, reducing the duration as well to 1D4+3 days. Can be eliminated completely after six baths in tomato juice.

71-80% Stink Glands. Not a weapon *per se*, just a really bad smell to prevent predators from approaching. It’s hard to fight and vomit at the same time, so characters must save against non-lethal poison (16 or higher) to avoid retching (-2 to strike, parry, and dodge, lose half their attacks).

81-90% Energy Blast. The creature can fire an energy blast, laser beams or electrical arc from its eyes or hands. Range is 100 feet (30.5 m; that’s per level of experience if an intelligent be-

ing). Damage is 3D6 (4D6 if a creature of magic or supernatural being).

91-95% Mimic. This creature can imitate animal sounds and even human voices, much like a parrot. Predators often attempt to lure prey to them by imitating the sounds of the herd, or even the voices of the player's friends!

96-00% Psionic or Magical Powers. The most common paranormal abilities displayed by animals (or monsters) are those of Sixth Sense, Sense Evil, and Sense Magic; range averages 1D6x100 feet and requires no I.S.P. expenditure. Game Masters can also use this opportunity to gift the creature with whatever else they like, including equivalent incantations, temporal spells, special attacks, or immunities.

Characteristics Based on Environment

This is the type of environment the creature feels most at home in, and the kinds of behaviors it may have evolved because of this.

01-10% Arboreal/Tree Dwellers. Like monkeys and squirrels, these creatures prefer the safety and height advantage that comes from living above the ground, high up in trees. These creatures live in extended families, carefully tending to their young. Average group size is 3D6. Equivalent skills include Acrobatics, Climb and Identify Plants and Fruits, all at 90%, and are +2 to roll with punch/fall or impact.

11-20% Arctic. All the animals and monsters here have adapted to life in snow and sub-zero temperatures. Mammals will have thick fur coats (might be a valuable commodity) and/or large fat reserves (which can be eaten or burned for fuel). Reptiles and other cold-blooded creatures will have also evolved some kind of resistance to the cold (including extended periods of hibernation). Creatures in cold environments tend to be larger than those in warmer climes, so increase typical size for that type of creature by 1D4x10%. Equivalent skills include Land Navigation 90%, Swimming 80%, and Wilderness Survival 90%.

21-40% Desert. These creatures tend to be small and stealthy animals like snakes, lizards, spiders and scorpions, or small fast creatures like rabbits and birds. They tend to live, travel and hunt alone, in pairs or small groups (2D4+1). Stealth creatures get the equivalent skills of Fasting, Prowl, and Track and Trap Animal, all at 70% and are +1 to strike. Fast animals get the equivalent skills of Dowsing, Fasting and Land Navigation, all at 80%, and see their Spd attribute increased by 30% and are +1 to dodge.

41-60% Forest/Jungle Dweller. Anything living here will use the vegetation to their advantage. Expect to find all sorts of animals from birds and tree climbers, to burrowing animals, wild boar, canines, deer, birds, snakes, insects, scavengers and stealthy predators. Equivalent skills include Detect Ambush 70%, Escape Artist 50%, Land Navigation 80%, Prowl 60%, and Swimming 70%, and are +2 on Perception Rolls.

61-80% Plains and Grasslands. Plains animals are usually fast and fall into two main categories: herd animals like sheep, horses, buffalo and wildebeasts that are herbivores feeding on grass and plants, and the predatory pack animals (wolves and coyotes) that hunt them. Herd animals tend to live in very large groups of 2D6x100 or more. Pack animals travel and hunt in groups of 1D6x10. Equivalent skills of herd animals include Dowsing 60% and Land Navigation 80%. Pack hunters get Land Navigation 75%, Prowl 50%, Tailing 75%, and Track and Trap

Animals 66%. Increase Spd attribute of plains herd animals and pack hunters by 50% and +1 on Perception Rolls.

81-00% Swamp & Water. These animals include alligators/crocodiles, amphibians, reptiles, birds and small mammals. Aquatic animals (including water fowl) can hold their breath underwater for 1D4+4 minutes and have equivalent skills of Camouflage 68% (particularly their nests and lairs), Escape Artist 55%, Prowl 50% (+15% underwater), Swimming 96% and are +2 to dodge. Ground mammals have the same equivalent skills as Forest animals.

Dietary Disposition

If the number of carnivores in a community increases, they will eat more of the herbivores, thus decreasing the herbivore population. After a while, it becomes harder for the carnivores to find prey, and the population of carnivores decreases. Therefore, in just about any *healthy* ecosystem, the number of plant-eating species is much greater than the number of meat eaters. This is good news for most player characters. It is important to note that as a general rule, most animals regard humans and humanoids as a threat or rival, and respond accordingly. Most small to medium-sized animal predators do not prey on people, but *monsters* are a different story.

01-40% Plant Eater. A dedicated herbivore, the creature eats plants which may include leaves or grass, grains/oats/hay, vegetables, roots, nuts or fruit, or several of the items listed. As a rule, plant eaters are not an obvious threat as they tend to be timid, flee rather than fight, and never attack people as prey to eat. However, all are protective of their young and fight to the death to defend them. This means the parent animals fight until the intruder/threat is chased away or killed, or until the adult animals are slain. Cornered animals also fight and may kill an intruder or threat, but are usually happy to make good an escape. This is also true of an animal followed or attacked inside its lair/burrow/nest. Many herbivores gather in herds or flocks and while the members of the herd/flock are likely to run, one or more dominant males may attack and try to chase away or kill intruders and threats.

Do not underestimate the danger of plant eating creatures. Many city folk think of herbivores as harmless. While most herbivores are timid and flee rather than fight, they all will at some point fight to protect themselves. Furthermore, some plant eaters are large and aggressive toward humanoid intruders – animals such as male bulls and buffalo, moose (male and female), elephants, and rhinoceros (and alien creatures like them) come to mind as very dangerous plant eaters best to be avoided. However, even the cute little bunny rabbit, squirrel and woodchuck will bite, claw and kick when attacked, cornered, or grabbed and held. Likewise, any wounded animal is a dangerous one.

41-55% Insect Eater. Insectivores are much more common than the average person imagines and includes many species, such as mammals (moles and anteaters for example), but are most common among amphibians, reptiles, fish, bats, and birds.

56-80% Meat-Eater/Predator. The creature is a strict carnivore that hunts and preys upon other animals. Meat-eaters are found among most species from fish and crustaceans, to reptiles and birds, but the largest and most dangerous predators are among mammals. Carnivorous animals that immediately come to mind are all types of canines (coyotes, wolves, etc.) and felines (lions, tigers, leopards, etc.). **Note:** Roll on the Predator only tables that follow.

81-00% Eat it All. This creature is an omnivore, consuming both plants and animals, or it could be a dedicated predator. Regardless, roll on the predator only tables that follow.

Predator Hunting Abilities

Meat eating predators roll three times on the following table. The same power cannot be taken twice.

Omnivores roll once.

01-10% Tailing at 4D6+64%.

11-20% Prowl at 3D6+50%.

21-30% Track by sight at 3D6+50%.

31-40% Track by smell at 4D6+60%.

41-50% Sense P.P.E./Magic, same as the psionic Sensitive power.

51-60% Climb 4D6+68% and +1 to roll with punch/fall or impact.

61-70% Nightvision: can see clearly for 1D6x100 feet (30.5 to 183 m) in total darkness, and 4,000 feet (1219 m) with some kind of light source such as the moon and stars.

71-80% Keen hearing: +1 on Perception Rolls, +2 on initiative and +1 to parry and/or dodge.

81-90% Natural Sense of Direction: Never gets lost due to a homing sense equivalent to a Land Navigation skill equal to 98%.

91-00% Sixth Sense, same as the psionic Sensitive power only it is automatic and does not require I.S.P. to use.

Predator's Hunting Orientation

01-25% Solitary hunter, always found alone.

26-55% Mated pairs. Where there is one, the other will be close by, and both are protective of the other.

56-75% Hunt in small packs of 2D4.

76-95% Hunt in medium packs of 3D6.

96-00% Hunt in large packs of at least 1D4x10.

Predators Primary Food Type

01-15% P.P.E. The monster does not eat its prey, but feeds on its P.P.E. (Potential Psychic Energy), which doubles at the moment of death.

16-30% Blood. The monster feeds on the blood of animals and/or humanoids, much like the vampire bat. In some cases (01-60%), the vampire kills its victims to drink their blood, while other monsters (61-00%) drink blood without killing its victim, but leaves him weakened. Reduce Spd, attacks per melee round, and combat bonuses by 30% for 1D4 hours.

31-70% Meat and Bone. This creature is the classic carnivore that eats the flesh and bones of the creatures it kills. Large, alien predators are likely to attack and prey upon humanoids.

71-80% Man-eater. A carnivorous predator that has acquired a taste for humans or humanoids as its favorite prey. The monster can prey upon other creatures to sustain itself, but it prefers the taste of humanoids above all others and seeks them out.

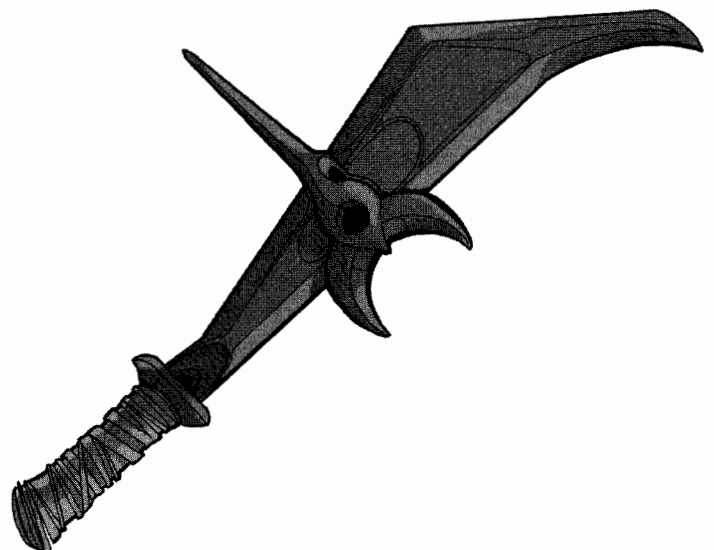
81-90% Fear. A psychic vampire who empathically feels and absorbs a victim's feelings of terror, feeding upon it like sweet nectar. The monster doesn't need to actually kill its prey to feed upon fear, so many create a deliberate atmosphere of terror. However, as a predator, the monster often (75% of the time) kills its prey out of instinct or sadistic pleasure.

91-00% Bloodthirsty Thrill Killer. The creature is likely to be a classic carnivorous predator that enjoys killing so much that it hunts and kills just for fun. Such a creature preys upon humanoids, as well as slaughtering cattle, livestock, and pets for the sheer pleasure of it. Of course, it also kills to feed, but most of its kills are only partially eaten or left uneaten. Such monsters often enjoy playing cat and mouse games with their prey before making the kill.

Can I Eat the Animal or Monster?

During the course of a game, it might become necessary to know whether or not the local animals can be safely consumed. The quick answer is usually yes. Most animal species can be eaten, although they might very well taste atrocious or be totally repugnant. For example, maggots and worms are full of protein, but we shudder at the thought of dining on them. *Carnivores* are, as a rule, foul tasting and have tough, stringy meat. *Herbivores* and *omnivores*, are generally good tasting. Many *lizards* and *snakes* taste like chicken, but not all birds are edible or have enough meat on them to prepare (i.e. sparrows, finches, etc.). Almost all *fish* are good eating. The final ruling is always up to the Game Master, but in general, *Mega-Damage* and/or *supernatural beings* cannot be consumed except by other *Mega-Damage* or *supernatural beings*, unless prepared just right (which some indigenous people might know how to do, but not most colonists and "civilized" people). Monsters or animals that inflict poison can be eaten, so long as care is taken to remove ALL of the poison sacs, glands and stingers.

Exotic Weapons & Equipment



Throwing Irons

Several cultures indigenous to the Thundercloud make these oddly shaped knives for hunting and combat as deadly thrown weapons. Against an unarmored opponent any of these can easily sever a limb. They can also punch through wooden boards a quarter of an inch thick (0.6 cm). Throwing irons are traditional weap-

ons of the Tsongkuba, so the TGE has crafted a Vibro-Blade version for them that inflicts Mega-Damage. Likewise, some magic using cultures construct enchanted throwing irons that also have M.D. capabilities and return to the thrower. In all cases, the irons are thrown horizontally, like a Frisbee.

Weight: Human-sized throwing irons average 2.5 pounds (1.1 kg). Twice to three times as heavy for giant-sized versions.

Range: 270 feet (82.3 m) by someone with a standard physical strength, 50% farther for those with Robot P.S. and double the range for those with Supernatural P.S.

Damage: 2D6 S.D.C. (plus any P.S. bonuses) for the traditional S.D.C. weapon. Vibro-Blade Irons and magical versions inflict 2D6+2 Mega-Damage. Add an additional 1D6+1 (S.D.C. or M.D.) for giant-sized versions. Some magical versions may inflict even more damage and return when thrown.

Bonuses: +1 on initiative and +1 to parry. These are in addition to any bonuses from W.P. Knife, W.P. Targeting and other bonuses.

Cost: S.D.C. throwing irons are worth about 400-600 credits. Vibro-Blade versions will cost 10,000-12,000 credits each. Magic ones may well be priceless although low-powered ones run anywhere between 40,000 and 80,000 credits (+200,000 if it magically returns).

Patchwork Armor

A patchwork suit of armor is a hodgepodge of pieces of body armor, recycled M.D.C. materials and salvaged scrap taken from the battlefield or stolen from high-tech rivals. They may be built over a leather or padded armature or undergarment, or combined with the hide of a Mega-Damage monster such as the Nkoli. Some look rather high-tech, others look primitive, strange or like they are ready to fall apart.

Weight: 25-35 lbs (11.4-15.9 kg) for light suits, 50-60 lbs (22.7-27.3 kg) for heavy.

M.D.C. by Location:

Helmet – 4D6+40 M.D.C.

Arms – 3D6+20 M.D.C. each.

Legs – 3D6+26 M.D.C. each.

Main Body – 4D6+30 M.D.C. for a light suit., 6D6+60 M.D.C. for a heavy suit.

Movement Penalty: -7% for skills like Climb, Prowl, Swim, etc. for light suits, -15% for heavy suits.

Note: 75% are non-environmental.

Cost: 8,000-10,000 credits for light non-environmental armor, 12,000-15,000 credits for heavy non-environmental armor; +20,000 credits for environmental armor.



Denlech Long Rifle

The Long Rifle began as an S.D.C. projectile weapon used for shooting game. When Naruni Enterprise and other invaders began raping their land, the Denlech settlers converted their rifle to use stolen Naruni K-Hex explosive rounds to turn their large-bore gun into a Mega-Damage weapon. The Long Rifle can also fire other large bore ammunition and heavy cartridges. The Denlech find it fitting that they use the invader's own weapons (processed Killaryte) against them. **Note:** The Denlech also steal K-Hex

grenades and explosives to use against the Naruni (see **Rifts® Dimension Book 3: Phase World® Sourcebook**, pages 55-56, for stats and details).

Weight: 11 lbs (5 kg).

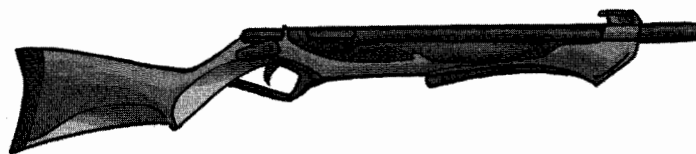
Range: 2,600 feet (792 m).

Mega-Damage: 4D6 M.D. to a 4 foot (1.2 m) blast radius for K-Hex rounds. 6D6 S.D.C. for standard rounds.

Rate of Fire: Single shot only. Each shot counts as one melee attack.

Payload: Four round internal magazine.

Cost: 1,000-3,000 credits for the actual rifle, plus ammunition. Five credits for 10 standard S.D.C. rounds. K-Hex ammo is stolen from Naruni warehouses and factories. (NE manufactures K-Hex explosive ammunition in many sizes and calibers, ranging in price from 250-350 credits per round.)



Tranquilizer "Capture" Gun

This is a medium-bore weapon used to deliver tranquilizer darts to sedate and capture wild animals. This is an essential tool for scientists, explorers and Big Game Hunters who wish to bring an animal back alive for display or study. In fictional accounts, these weapons fire little tufted darts that instantly put an animal to sleep, but this is far from reality. Tranquilizer darts are essentially a big syringe filled with drugs, and when it hits its target, a small explosive charge goes off to inject those drugs. The dart itself can inflict serious injury to small animal species and even shatter bones. Moreover, most "chemical incapacitation" agents take 2D6+6 minutes for full effect, requiring the hunter/zoologist to follow the animal until it finally collapses or becomes so sluggish it can be handled, muzzled and caged. Sometimes the drugs don't work at all (saving throw of 17 for most animals, 16 to save vs non-lethal drugs/poison for predators and sentient creatures).

Once an animal has been sufficiently affected by the dart, the handlers must move in quickly to help stabilize it. Many creatures, especially predators with high metabolisms, are very sensitive to stress, and can easily go into shock and die when they are forcibly put under. It is best if the creature's vital signs are monitored all throughout the transport period (roll under the Animal Husbandry, Veterinary Science or the Zoology skill to do so). In the real world, it should also be noted that different animal species, despite being similar in shape or size, require different drug cocktail mixtures in order to knock them out. To a certain extent, this is a matter of trial and error, especially when dealing with new species.

A capture gun is almost always a rifle (stats below are for a rifle), though some versions might be a pistol (200 foot/61 m range), crossbow (600 foot/183 m range), or blow gun (60 foot/18.3 m range).

Weight: 7 pounds (3.2 kg).

Range: 1,000 feet (305 m).

Damage: 1D6 S.D.C. from the impact of the dart itself. The target must also roll a save versus non-lethal drugs (16 or 17; see above) in order to ignore the effects of the sedatives. If the sedated animal (or sentient being) does NOT fall unconscious – 01-70%

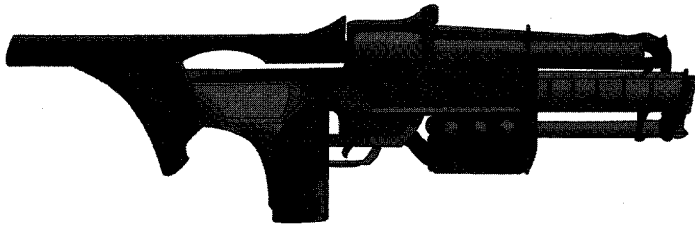
likelihood that it does – it is so groggy that it has only one melee attack/action per round, has no Perception Roll or initiative (always last to strike), reduce Spd 95% (can barely stand or crawl, can not fly), and is -8 to strike, parry, and dodge.

Duration: 4D4+4 minutes.

Rate of Fire: Single shot only.

Payload: Single, breech-loaded round. Each shot counts as one melee attack.

Cost: 1,200 credits for the gun. Each dart costs about 100 credits.



Trensik Rail Gun

This is a sleek rail gun with a rear mounted ammo drum. Additional rounds can be fed into the weapon via a belt attached to an ammo backpack. The Trensik's great strength enables them to handle the load as easily as any full conversion cyborg or power armor. Comes standard with built-in laser targeting and HUDS optical display and single round firing is used for precision shots and sniping.

Weight: 47 lbs (21 kg). 170 lbs (77.2 kg) for backpack ammo drum and belt.

Range: 4,000 feet (1,219 m).

Mega-Damage: 2D6 per single shot, 1D6x10 M.D. per 8 shot burst.

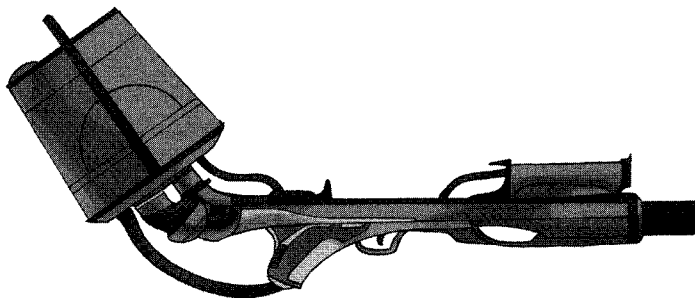
Rate of Fire: Each single round or burst counts as one melee attack.

Payload: Standard drum is 160 single shots or 20 bursts. Backpack ammo-drum adds 800 rounds or 100 bursts.

Bonuses: +2 to strike on an Aimed/Called Shot (superior balance, and laser targeting array with x10 optical scope).

Cost: 40,000 credits for the gun. 40,000 for a full backpack.

Note: Characters with a P.S. less than 22 are -2 to strike, unless the weapon is mounted or braced.



Desslyth Variable Blast Rifle

Combining properties of both the Kreeghor rifle, and the Kitani K-30 pulse rifle, Desslyth's technicians were able to create a massive laser cannon for use by the Kydian Overlords. The Blast Rifle is a monstrous construction; its bore is six inches (15 cm) in diameter! A heavy, barrel-shaped energy canister, the size of a small beer keg, loads into the back of the gun. There are two fir-

ing settings, light and heavy, although the light setting is almost never used against Imperial Legionnaires.

Weight: 142 lbs (64 kg) for the gun. Each energy canister weighs 30 lbs (13.5 kg).

Range: 1,800 feet (548.6 m).

Mega-Damage: Light blast: 4D6 M.D. Heavy blast: 1D4x10+4 M.D.

Rate of Fire: Single shots only. Each blast, whether light or heavy, counts as one melee attack.

Payload: A clip holds 50 charges – that's fifty light blasts, or twenty-five heavy.

Cost: 50,000-60,000 credits when sold to outside parties. Humans and other non-supernatural beings can really only use it with powered armor, or as a mounted emplacement weapon.

Accessories for Contra-Gravity Rifles

For most armies in the Three Galaxies, CG guns tend to take a back seat to energy weapons. There are some however, who either don't mind the diminished range, or who have been unable as a species to develop reliable directed energy systems, who prefer Contra-Gravity weapons. The Wulfen are in the former camp, since they prefer their combat at close range. Less developed races like the Trensik often fall into the latter.

Presented below are a number of add-ons and accessories that can be fitted to any type of contra-gravity assault rifle.

Belt-Feed Mechanism: This is a factory fitted conversion mounted to the CG assault rifle itself. Uses a disintegrating belt of ammunition and allows for single shot and burst fire, but cannot be used in conjunction with sniper attachments. It can be easily removed and a regular clip inserted at any time. The belt-feed box increases the rifle's ammo capacity to 100 rounds, but incurs a penalty of -1 when firing bursts. **Cost:** 6,600 credits fully loaded. Fair availability for those who know to look for it.

"Snail" Mini-Drum: Another possible replacement for rifles such as the CG-15AR. It is loaded by means of a special tool (costs 100 credits). The drum rests comfortably on the forearm or hip, and the entire assembly is stable when firing. As with the belt-feed box, it can be easily popped off and replaced with a normal ammo clip at any time. Increases the ammo capacity to 90 rounds. **Cost:** 6,000 credits. Fair availability.

Ready-Mag Speed Loading System: This allows a CG rifle to carry two regular ammo clips side by side. The weapon fires until the first magazine is empty. Then the wielder simply presses the catch, and pushes the fresh clip sideways into place. For those with the proper W.P., the process takes about two seconds, and does not burn up an attack for changing clips. **Cost:** 4,500 credits fully loaded. Quite common.

Detachable Grenade Launcher: This is a single-shot, breech-loaded grenade launcher that is fitted to the undercarriage of the CG rifle. The launcher can easily fire most kinds of explosive, micro-fusion, smoke, or illuminating grenades. It comes with a pistol grip, and a folding stock can be easily attached, enabling the launcher to be used independent of the rifle if necessary. Loading a new grenade takes two melee actions/attacks.

Weight: 6 lbs (2.7 kg).

Range: 1,300 feet (396 m).

Mega-Damage: Varies with grenade type.

Payload: Single shot.

Cost: 5,000 credits, plus the cost of grenades.



Colony Riverboat

Colony "riverboats" are cheap, light, hover vehicles with almost nothing to them. Most are flatbed barges with simple hover propulsion systems. There is nothing fancy about them and almost no expense has been put into their construction. Riverboats have no electronic sensors, no on-board weapons, very little protective plating, and run on combustible fuels instead of nuclear power packs. In shape, they often look like a long, flat platform with an engine on the back and a small control cabin somewhere near the front. Modular additions, such as covered pilot compartment, box cargo container, railings, heated compartment, cargo crane, armored shielding with gun ports, weapon mountings, weapons, and so on, are extras built onto the vessel.

The speed of these simple vessels is a modest 13 knots (15 mph/24 km). Souped-up versions can have as much as double that speed, but that's the maximum. They can also travel along the current of a river without expending fuel or via long poles or rowing. Many of the colonial armies have transformed these simple hoverbarges into gunboats by adding armored plates and manned gunner positions or weapon turrets.

Class: Civilian Hover Vehicle.

Crew: One pilot, one copilot or helmsman, and work crew as necessary. Depending on the size of the barge, dozens of people/passengers can be accommodated with or without cargo.

M.D.C. by Location:

Bridge Cabin – 90

Engine – 125

Solar Canopy (optional) – average is 100 M.D.C. (solar panels have 3 M.D.C. per square foot)

* Engine House (optional) – 130

** Main Body – 250 per 60 feet (18.3 m) of length.

* Unless an Engine House has been added on, the riverboat's propulsion system is vulnerable to attack. If it is destroyed, then all hover and motorized propulsion capabilities are lost, but can still travel unpowered.

** Depleting the M.D.C. of the Main Body destroys the barge, causing it to crash and/or sink.

Speed: A leisurely 15 mph (24 km/13 knots) is standard, but speed can be doubled for an additional 75,000 credits.

Statistical Data:

Height: Varies with height of cargo, whether there is an attached crane, cargo cabin, etc., but the standard flatbed is 10 feet (3 m).

Width: 30 feet (9.1 m), but a double-wide is available for an extra 220,000 credits.

Length: Standard is 60 feet (18.3 m), but also available in 120 feet (36.6 m), 180 feet (55 m), and 240 feet (73 m) long. Add 100,000 credits for each size increase.

Weight: 2 tons, plus 1 additional ton per deck.

Cargo: 30 tons for the standard boat, increase by 20 tons per size increase.

Power Systems: Liquid fuel is standard, but solar power is available (+50,000 credits), electric batteries (+40,000 credits), and nuclear (+1.2 million credits).

Range: 850 hours of operation with liquid fuel. A solar array can provide 8 hours of continuous power with a 4 hour backup battery. The electric cells will recharge fully with one hour of bright sunlight.

Market Cost: Anywhere between 160,000 (standard size) to 1 million credits is typical, but can cost 5 million if maximum size, nuclear powered and including other features.

Weapon Systems: None standard, but rail guns and laser cannons may be added. Most do not have built-in weapon systems as the cost is prohibitive and usually requires a nuclear power source or an expensive independent power supply for each weapon system. Instead, there is typically 1-4 armed guards, more if trouble is expected, and these guards may include mercs, cyborgs and power armor troops with heavy weapons. Others have gunner positions with a heavy weapon like a rail gun, machine-gun, or heavy laser rifle mounted on a weapon platform (a length of pipe with a swivel) that can turn 360 degrees; must be manned.

Homesteader Colony Spacecraft

The Homesteader is a small shuttle style spacecraft designed for use by colonists. These craft are typically purchased by a small group of families. This allows them to colonize a planet without having to be under the supervision of one of the major power blocs. Larger groups of colonies are often associated with a major government or planet and so they are obligated to follow the laws and mandates of those paying for the colonization effort. This is not the case with the Homesteader. If several families or a small group of people pool their resources they can afford a Homesteader and set off on their own under no rules or regulations.

Model Type: Civilian Small Colony Spacecraft.

Class: Homesteader.

Ship's Complement: 30-50 people which is typically six to ten families. There is a minimum of four Spacers needed to operate the ship at peak efficiency.

M.D.C. by Location:

Rapid-Fire HI-Laser Turrets (2) – 100 each

Reinforced Pilot Compartment – 400

* Forward Hull 1/3 (bridge and living quarters) – 500

** Midships Hull 1/3 (cargo hold) – 600

*** Aft Hull 1/3 (main engines) – 800

* Destroying the forward hull destroys all bridge controls. The ship can be controlled from the engineering area at a -25% penalty to piloting skills.

** Destroying the midship hull cripples the vessel. FTL is gone, conventional speed is reduced by half, there is a -40% piloting penalty and the mid-section laser turret is dead. There is also a 01-50% chance of losing 1D6x10% of the cargo.

*** Destroying the aft hull disables the engines and power systems. There is a 01-10% chance of causing the power core to go critical, detonating and destroying the rest of the ship. It creates an explosion which does 1D4x100 M.D.C. to everything in a 500 foot (152 m) radius. More likely, the ship is crippled and set adrift while other systems shut down one by one every 1D6+6 hours. Thankfully, life support is the last to go, but that gives survivors only a 48-72 hour window to be rescued.

Speed:

Atmosphere: 4,325 mph (6920 km or Mach 6) to hovering.

FTL: 2 light-years per hour.

Sub-Light: Homesteaders can maintain a speed of 6489 mph (10,382.4 km or Mach 9).

Range: Limited only by supplies. The reactor carry enough fuel to operate the ship at full readiness for 5 years, but shipboard supplies are only good for two years. Rationing can extend the duration to four years.

Statistical Data:

Height: 55 feet (16.7 m).

Length: 145 feet (44.2 m).

Width: 68 feet (20.7 m).

Weight: 550 fully loaded tons.

Cargo: 30 tons of cargo can be stored, plus 50 passengers.

Power Systems: One civilian class micro-antimatter reactor.

Market Cost: 55 million credits.

Weapon Systems:

1. Rapid Fire HI-Laser Turrets (2): Homesteaders are not combat vessels but have two high-powered laser turrets for defense; one in the forward section on top of the spacecraft and one in the belly of the mid-section.

Primary Purpose: Anti-Fighter.

Secondary Purpose: Anti-Missile.

Range: 1 mile (1.6 km) in atmosphere and 6 miles (9.6 km) in space.

Mega-Damage: 1D6x10+10 per blast. Both turrets can be brought to bear on an enemy ship depending on its position.

Rate of Fire: Equal to the number of hand to hand attacks of the gunner (usually 4 or 5).

Payload: Effectively unlimited.

2. Homesteader Colony Construction Notes: Once a Homesteader has arrived at its destination, the vehicle is designed to be broken down to support the fledgling colony. With a few commands from the cockpit, the Homesteader begins to elongate and change shape. This preps the ship for deconstruction. With one final command from the ship's cockpit, hundreds of bolts disengage and the ship separates into several modular pieces and sections. This whole process takes less than an hour. From this point there is no returning it to being a space-worthy ship unless a skilled starship engineer is available. The ship can be easily pulled apart to make five large homes or ten small homes. Each small home is a two bedroom house with 1D6x10+40 M.D.C. each. Double the M.D.C. and number of bedrooms for the larger homes. The ship's power plant can sustain the settlers for 30 years before needing more fuel and the ship's sensors and communication gear can be used to communicate with approaching spacecraft.

3. Homesteader Ancillary Support: There is limited room for vehicles and major equipment. One large vehicle or four small vehicles can be transported in the cargo area in addition to what is considered basic colony gear and supplies.

Conestoga Colony Ship

The *Conestoga*-class colony ship has a long history starting in the Human Alliance. They were one of the first ships to leave the human solar system and spread out to the stars. Over the years, they have seen several incarnations. The latest *Conestoga* has all that a potential group of colonists needs to start a new life on an alien world in a remote part of space. The ships are built with a modular design. Once they reach their destination the ship can be disassembled and converted into homes, a power plant, water purification

plant, a communications center and all the basics a colony needs to get started. The ship's cargo hold is filled with necessary supplies and there is often tons of farming equipment, construction materials, tools, vehicles, seed, and even cattle and other farm animals.

Conestogas are very expensive and are rarely privately owned. They are usually sponsored by a specific government or sponsoring company, so more often than not, this group of colonists are affiliated with one of the major power blocs. There are often government officials among the civilian crew and it is their responsibility to establish a colonial government and set up basic government services.

Model Type: Civilian Colony Ship.

Class: Conestoga Mk. X.

Ship's Complement: 3,230 (125 Spacers with an expertise in starship operations). The remaining crew are civilians with little space training.

M.D.C. by Location:

Interior Bulkheads per 10 feet (3 m) – 30

Interior Hatches – 15

External Hatches – 30

Ventral Shuttle Bay – 4,500

Shuttle Bay Doors (2) – 700 each

Point Defense HI-Laser Batteries (12) – 120 each

*Forward Hull Section 1/3 (main cargo bays) – 13,000

** Midships Hull Section 1/3 (civilian section) – 15,000

*** Aft Hull Section 1/3 (engineering section) – 20,000

**** Main Bridge (upper hull) – 4,000

Variable Force Fields – 3,000 per side (18,000 total)

* Destroying the forward hull destroys all cargo contained within. The ship is still flyable in space, but will have problems landing; -30% to piloting rolls while landing.

** Destroying the midship hull kills 2D4x10% of the passengers.

*** Destroying the aft hull disables the engines and power systems. There is a 01-07% chance of causing the power core to go critical, detonating and destroying the rest of the ship. It creates an explosion doing 3D6x100 M.D.C. to everything in a 1,000 foot (305 m) radius. More likely, the ship is crippled, loses power, loses FTL capabilities and reduce remaining speed by 50%. The vessel is set adrift and loses 2D4 onboard systems, starting with the force field and half the weapon systems, but life support continues to function.

**** If the bridge is destroyed the ship can still be controlled from the engineering deck, but suffers a -20% to piloting skill and the communications system is destroyed.

Speed:

Atmosphere: Conestogas have limited atmospheric capabilities. They can maintain an atmospheric cruising speed of 1,522 mph (2,435.2 km or Mach 2).

FTL: 2 light-years per hour.

Sub-Light: Conestogas are not built for speed. They can maintain a speed of 5707.5 mph (9,132 km or Mach 8).

Range: Limited only by supplies. The antimatter reactors carry enough fuel to operate the ship at full readiness for 25 years, but shipboard supplies are only good for three years. Rationing can extend the duration to six years.

Statistical Data:

Length: 2034.1 feet (620 m).

Beam: 574.1 feet (175 m).

Height: 803.8 feet (245 m).

Mass: 144,000 tons.

Cargo: 130,000 tons of cargo.

Power Systems: One sub-capital class antimatter reactor powering two banks of civilian-class thruster arrays.

Market Cost: 65 billion credits.

Weapon Systems:

1. Double-Barreled Rapid Fire HI-Laser Turrets (12): Conestogas are not combat vessels and as a result, are limited with their weapon systems. Most are equipped with limited point defense systems.

Primary Purpose: Anti-Fighter.

Secondary Purpose: Anti-Missile.

Range: 2 miles (3.2 km) in atmosphere and 8 miles (12.8 km) in space.

Mega-Damage: 2D4x10 per double-barreled blast. Multiple turrets can be brought to bear on an enemy ship depending on its position.

Rate of Fire: Equal to the number of hand to hand attacks of the gunner (usually 4 or 5).

Payload: Effectively unlimited.

2. Conestoga Colony Construction Notes: Once a Conestoga has arrived at its destination, the vehicle is designed to be broken down to support the fledgling colony. After the Conestoga lands, the first thing done is to deploy all the construction vehicles. They clear the land and prepare the area for habitation. The next step is to detach the shuttle bay. The shuttle bay can serve all kinds of functions if needed, but is ultimately designed to store the shuttles and other large construction vehicles. The rest of the ship is disassembled section by section. The whole engine compartment becomes the colony's power plant, the life support becomes a water purification and waste treatment center, the bridge becomes the colony's communication center and the rest of the ship is made into the homes of the colonists. Depending on the needs of the colonists, the ship can create 800 to 1,000 homes. Each home is a small, two bedroom house with 1D6x10+40 M.D.C. each.

3. Conestoga Ancillary Support: In the belly of the Conestoga is a shuttle bay with two short-range space shuttles. The shuttles are used for exploration of planets and setting down on planets without landing the Conestoga. They also serve as heavy lift vehicles to move ground vehicles, building materials and equipment around the colony once settled.

Colony Med-Bot

There's nothing like being 10,000 light-years from home and having a broken leg with no doctor around. Not every colony has a trained medical team or hospital. In those instances, it is a good idea to purchase a Colony Med-Bot. The robot is programmed with the same skills as a trained medical doctor and field surgeon. It also carries a small supply of medical drugs, nano-robot repair kits and other basic medical capabilities and supplies. While not as proficient as a real doctor, the Med-Bot can save a life that is teetering on the edge and take care of most common medical needs. Med-Bots are becoming so popular that it's not uncommon to see them on a variety of spacecraft found throughout the Three Galaxies, let alone pioneer colonies.

Med-Bots do not have a humanoid appearance. The original thinking for these robots was that instead of legs it could have

a Grav Pack and several arms with a variety of diagnostic tools. Instead of a head the bulb on top of the body is a sophisticated sensor unit that can take a variety of scans to help diagnose many medical issues.

Model Type: MP-1202

Class: Fully-Automated, Self-Sufficient Medical Robot.

Crew: None, a simple artificial intelligence.

M.D.C.: 50 for main body, 50 for the sensor bulb and 12 for each of the six limbs.

Speed:

Running: Not possible.

Leaping: Not possible.

Flying: 60 mph (96 km) maximum. Note that flying does not tire the robot and the speed can be maintained indefinitely, however, constant flying at maximum speed is considered heavy use and wears down the battery more quickly.

Water: Can move through water at one third its speed and has a maximum depth of 2,000 feet (610 m).

Range: The electric battery provides 80-100 hours of use. The robot can be shut down when not in use to conserve energy, and automatically goes into a low energy "sleep mode" when its services are not needed.

Statistical Data:

Height: 4 feet (1.2 m).

Width: 3.5 feet (1.06 m).

Length: 3.5 feet (1.06 m).

Weight: 175 pounds (78.8 kg).

Physical Strength: Robotic P.S. 20.

Notable Attributes: I.Q. 16, P.P. 13 and P.B. 6.

Cargo: None, but can extend a fiber mesh to carry a single patient.

Power Systems: Electrical battery, with solar recharging capacity (takes six hours to fully charge) or can be plugged into any kind of nuclear or antimatter reactor and charged in an hour.

Market Cost: 900,000 credits for a new model, but used models can be purchased for as little as 500,000 credits. Really cheap models are typically 1D4+6 years old and are -10% on their skills.

Standard Skill Programs

General Knowledge: Chemistry 98%, Chemistry: Analytical 96%, Chemistry: Pharmaceutical 96%, Computer Operation 96%, Language and Literacy: All Trade Languages 90%, Mathematics: Basic 98%, Mathematics: Advanced 98%, and Radio: Basic 90%.

Medical Knowledge: Biology 90%, Brewing: Medicinal 80%, Field Surgery 85%, Medical Doctor 86%, Pathology 88%, Sensory Equipment 96%, Sewing 90%, Veterinary Science 80%, and Xenology 70%.

Utility Robots

Utility Robots are multi-purpose repair drones that can be programmed for a number of tasks. Some ships use them as engineers to make repairs or maintain their ships. Colonists have been buying them to help build the colony and fill in a niche that may be needed. Other colonies use them to fill in when people have multiple roles to perform. Nicknamed "Fixers," they can work for 12 hours non-stop, don't need a break or food, don't complain about work conditions and can work in conditions dangerous for humanoids.

Utility Robots do not have a humanoid shape, but rather they have a round torso that has a variety of tools, a sensor dome on top and they hover via a Grav Pack.

Model Type: UB-0524

Class: Fully-Automated, Self-Sufficient Utility Robot.

Crew: None, a simple artificial intelligence.

M.D.C.: 90 for main body, 80 for the sensor bulb, 25 for each of the twelve limbs.

Speed:

Running: Not possible.

Leaping: Not possible.

Flying: 60 mph (96 km) maximum. Note that flying does not tire the robot and the speed can be maintained indefinitely, however constant flying at maximum speed is considered heavy use and wears down the battery 30% sooner.

Water: The Utility Bot can move through water at one third its speed and has a maximum depth of 2,000 feet (610 m).

Range: Electric battery provides 80-100 hours of use. The robot can be shut down when not in use to conserve energy, and automatically goes into a low energy "sleep mode" when its services are not needed.

Statistical Data:

Height: 5 feet (1.5 m).

Width: 4 feet (1.2 m).

Length: 4 feet (1.2 m).

Weight: 250 pounds (112.5 kg).

Physical Strength: Robotic P.S. 40.

Notable Attributes: I.Q. 14, P.P. 13 and P.B. 6.

Cargo: None.

Power Systems: Electrical battery, with solar recharging capacity (takes 12 hours to fully charge) or can be plugged into any kind of nuclear or antimatter reactor and charged in an hour.

Market Cost: 1.4 million credits for a new model, but used models can be purchased for as little as 850,000 credits. Really cheap models are typically 1D4+6 years old and are -10% on their skills.

Standard Skill Programs:

General Knowledge: Computer Operation 95%, Computer Programming 88%, Language and Literacy: All Trade Languages 90%, Mathematics: Basic 98%, Mathematics: Advanced 98%.

General Utility Knowledge: Automotive Mechanics 90%, Basic Electronics 90%, Basic Mechanics 90%, Carpentry 90%, Electricity Generation 80%, Excavation 75%, General Repair & Maintenance 96%, Jury Rig 50%, Masonry 90%, Mining 80%, Recycling 90% and Salvage 80%.

Special Areas of Knowledge (Optional): Each of the following must be purchased separately for an additional cost of 125,000 credits each: Aircraft Mechanics 85%, Computer Repair 88%, Electrical Engineer 80%, Excavation 86%, Firefighting 85%, Locksmith 90%, Mechanical Engineer 80%, Sensory Equipment 80%, Spaceship Mechanics 70% and Weapons Engineer 65%.
Cost: 125,000 credits each.

Technology of the Exiles

The mysterious Exiles may act like beggars and wandering gypsies, but they are a people who possess advanced technology on par with or somewhat superior to Naruni Enterprises. What follows are just a couple of examples.



Exile “Heavy Hands” Power Armor

Heavy Hands power armor is used for both work and combat in all environments, from outer space or undersea to land and air operations. An alien technology designed specifically for the unique requirements of the frail Exile people, the pilot is strapped into a cushioned suit, wears a special breathing apparatus, fed via nutrient dispensers, boosted with drug injection tubes and the entire pilot's compartment is filled with a thick, green, shock absorbing gel. These measures all work together to protect the Exile pilot from sudden accelerations or decelerations which can prove lethal to their relatively frail bodies. The Heavy Hands power armor uses a neural interface that enables the pilot's thoughts to direct its movement. This suit has no view ports and what looks like goggles for eyes are really cameras and special optics, with a sensor cluster in the forehead between the eyes. While when walking around under heavy gravity, special reinforcements slide into place and the feet have an electro-magnetic grip feature to adhere to the exteriors of metal hulls on spacecraft and space stations. A wrench and cable with a hook and/or electro-magnetic clamp is built into the lower spine of the power armor to provide an additional anchor when in a weightless environment or underwater. It can unwind up to 90 feet (27.4 m) of thin, strong cable. Multiple layers of armor plating provide heavy armor protection. A built-in jet pack and directional thrusters built into the feet, back and abdomen (just under the rib cage, hips, and in the shoulder blades) provides flight, space and underwater capabilities with superior control.

Model Type: Multi-Environmental Robotic Exoskeleton (MERE).

Nicknames: “Heavy Hands” and “Mira” (for M.E.R.E.).

Class: Power Armor.

Crew: One.

M.D.C. by Location:

Winch and Cable (1, lower back) – 100

Hands (2) – 90 each

Arms (2) – 220 each

Legs (2) – 300 each

* Sensor Head/Helmet – 180

Reinforced Pilot Compartment – 120

** Main Body – 420

*** Magnetic Deflection Shield – 320

* Destroying the Sensor Head (face of the power armor) eliminates all optics, targeting and sensors, rendering the operator blind; -10 to strike, parry, dodge and all other combat maneuvers. It does NOT expose the pilot's own face or head (he's safe and snug inside the Reinforced Pilot Compartment). Likewise, the suit's communications system remains intact.

** Depleting the M.D.C. of the Main Body destroys the armor, rendering it useless. In space the character is set adrift. Underwater he sinks. However, unless the Pilot's Compartment has also been destroyed, then the Exile inside is just fine.

*** This is not a variable force field, its entire M.D.C. must be depleted before any attacks can impact the armor. Once depleted to zero, the shield is gone and requires eight hours to come back online. Otherwise, it regenerates damage at a rate of one point per melee round.

Speed:

Running: 70 mph (112 km) maximum. Note that the act of running does not tire out the operator.

Leaping: The powerful legs of the Heavy Hands can propel it 20 feet (6.1 m) high and lengthwise from a standing position. Double that distance with a running start.

Flying: 190 mph (304 km) in an atmosphere and 570 mph (912 km) in space.

Underwater: 70 mph (112 km) underwater. Maximum depth 5 miles (8 km).

Statistical Data:

Height: 12 feet (3.6 m).

Width: 5 feet (1.5 m).

Length: 3 feet (0.9 m).

Weight: One ton.

Physical Strength: Equal to Robot P.S. of 37.

Cargo: None.

Power System: Nuclear, with an operational lifetime of five years.

Market Cost: Not available on the open market; exclusive to Exiles.

Weapon Systems:

1. Laser Fingers (2): The Heavy Hands has no built-in weapon systems other than a laser finger on each hand, and even it is designed to be a cutting tool.

Range: 100 feet (30.5 m).

Mega-Damage: 1D6 M.D. or 2D6 M.D. per single shot.

Rate of Fire: Standard. Each blast counts as one melee attack.

Payload: Effectively unlimited.

Bonuses: Laser targeting adds +1 to strike.

Market Cost: Not available on the open market; exclusive to Exiles.

2. Ion Pulse Cannon. This massive energy rifle can fire either a single stream of particles, or a rapid succession of pulses. It is powered by an onboard fusion battery, which must be replaced annually.

Weight: 300 lbs (135 kg).

Range: 2,000 feet (610 m) in an atmosphere. Double range in space.

Mega-Damage: 5D6 M.D. for a single shot, or 2D4x10 M.D. for a rapid-fire pulse.

Rate of Fire: Standard; each single or pulse blast takes up one attack.

Payload: 15 single blasts or five pulse blasts per E-Clip. Effectively unlimited if cabled to draw power from the suit.

Bonuses: Laser targeting adds +1 to strike.

Market Cost: Not available on the open market; exclusive to Exiles.

3. Other Handheld Weapons: Exiles "acquire" weapons and equipment from everyone so their raiders and warriors may use anything commonly available in the Three Galaxies, from contra-gravity weapons to the items manufactured by the Bushi Federation and Naruni Enterprises. Exiles tend to prefer heavy weapons.

4. Hand to Hand Combat: Rather than use a weapon the pilot can engage in Mega-Damage hand to hand combat. See *Flying Power Armor Training* on page 352 of *Rifts® Ultimate Edition*.

Restrained Punch – 1D4 M.D.

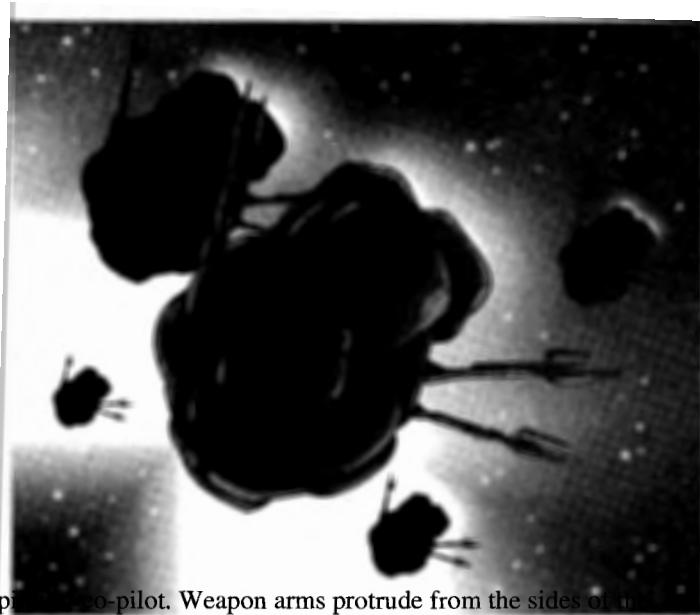
Full Strength Punch – 2D6 M.D.

Power Punch – 4D6 M.D.

Heavy Hands is fully capable of delivering Kick and Leap Kick attacks. Damage is 3D8 M.D. for a Kick and 5D8 M.D. for a Leap Kick.

Exile "Beetle" Fighter

The Exile "Beetle" Fighter is a large, blocky spacecraft with a somewhat oval shape. Four rounded lumps protrude from the top and bottom of the fighter and a quartet of powerful engine thrusters are mounted at the back. This gives the vessel a profile that resembles a meteor, not a spacecraft, and inflicts a penalty of -10% on enemies trying to properly read the sensor signature to identify it as a space fighter. Actually, many people think the fighter rather resembles a beetle, hence its name. Two recessed particle beam cannons are built into the nose and are operated by



the pilot and co-pilot. Weapon arms protrude from the sides of the fighter and can track a target, blasting away as the fighter flies past in a horizontal 180 degree arc of fire. Unlike many space fighters in the Three Galaxies, the Exile ship is not designed as a cruise missile delivery system, and is therefore not a "ship killer." That role is reserved for the frigate and cruiser. Instead, they perform best when used in fighter-to-fighter combat, or to intercept and destroy incoming enemy missiles before they reach their targets, as well as launching raids or boardings against cargo ship. Raids on large cargo vessels or cargo fleets, as well as assaults on enemy capital ships, usually involve strafing runs to disable the vessel before boarding, and swarming tactics.

Class: Space Fighter/Interceptor.

Crew: Four; pilot, co-pilot, and two gunners. There is also room for a boarding party of 6-8 warriors in Heavy Hands power armor.

M.D.C. by Location:

Weapon Arms (3) – 150 each

* Forward Particle Beam Guns (2; concealed) – 100 each

Reinforced Pilot Compartment – 250

** Main Body – 630

*** Magnetic Deflection Shield – 1,800 (entire ship)

* A small and concealed target requires an Aimed/Called Shot to hit and even then the attacker is -4 to strike.

** Depleting the M.D.C. of the main body destroys the spacecraft and causes the escape pod/reinforced pilot's compartment to eject. Exiles always try to recover all lost spacecraft, even wreckage.

*** This is not a variable force field. Its entire M.D.C. must be depleted before any attacks can impact the hull. Once destroyed, the shield will require 8 hours to come back on-line. Otherwise, it will regenerate damage at a rate of five points per melee round.

Speed:

Flying (sub-light only): Mach 14 in space. Reduced to Mach 3 in an atmosphere.

Range: Limited only by life support (keeps one person alive for up to two weeks).

Statistical Data:

Height: 30 feet (9.1 m).

Width: 40 feet (12.2 m).

Length: 70 feet (21.3 m).

Weight: 27.5 tons fully loaded.

Cargo: Cargo bay can hold up to seven tons of goods.

Power System: Nuclear; average energy life of 10 years.

Market Cost: Not available on the open market; exclusive to Exiles.

Weapon Systems:

1. Forward Particle Beam Guns (2): Recessed into the nose of the fighter in a forward position are a pair of particle beam cannons similar to the point defense guns of the Regulator Cruiser. They can only be fired at targets directly ahead of the fighter, only have a 20 degree up and down arc of fire, and always fire in tandem.

Primary Purpose: Anti-Fighter/Anti-Missile.

Range: Two miles (3.2 km) in space, 1 mile (1.6 km) in an atmosphere.

Mega-Damage: Each of the guns fire in tandem at the same target inflicting 4D6x10 M.D. per dual blast.

Rate of Fire: Each dual blast counts as one melee attack of the pilot or co-pilot.

Payload: Effectively unlimited.

2. Ion Beam Weapon Arms (3): Two weapon arms are on one side, a single arm is on the other side. Each can rotate 180 degrees, side to side, enabling the arms to continue to fire broadsides as the fighter flies past larger, less maneuverable enemy spacecraft. The arms' range of movement also means they can point forward to engage enemies in dogfights and backwards to fire upon pursuers.

Primary Purpose: Anti-Fighters and Spacecraft.

Weight: Not applicable, part of the ship's hull.

Range: Four miles (6.4 km) in space, 1.8 miles (2.9 km) in an atmosphere.

Mega-Damage: 2D4x10 M.D. per single blast, 4D4x10 M.D. per simultaneous dual blast at the same target and 6D4x10 M.D. from all three weapon arms firing at the same target. The weapon arms are usually aimed at three different enemy targets, firing single blasts at each.

Payload: Effectively unlimited.

Colony Creation Tables

By Kevin Siembieda & Braden Campbell, with additional ideas from Alex Marciniszyn, Wayne Smith and Carmen Bellaire

There are so many uncharted worlds being claimed and colonized that, rather than describe a lot of specific ones, author Braden Campbell decided we should provide *Colony Creation Tables* so Game Masters can create their own colonies and adventure settings. Perhaps future sourcebooks set in the Thundercloud Galaxy will focus on specific worlds, colonies and conflicts. Meanwhile, using these tables will enable a Game Master to quickly whip up his or her own hotbed of trouble, adventure and gaming fun.

The opportunity to explore alien worlds and engage in any type of adventure is likely to entice player characters to traipse around the Thundercloud Galaxy tackling all sorts of challenges and jobs. They may want to try their hand as lawmen, colonial defenders, armed escorts/guards, or mercenaries hired to fight pirates, raiders, hostile natives, monsters and other threats. Others might seek adventure as explorers, cartographers or research scientists, or engage in prospecting, mining, salvage operations and excavation of ancient alien ruins, any of which might uncover advanced weapons, technology, magic, magic items, strange machines, lost secrets and ancient dangers of unknown alien civilizations. Likewise, adventurers may find active colonies in need of help, places to buy and trade goods, and abandoned colonies, and even the secret hideouts and bases of the *Dominators*, *Elder Races*, *Deevils*, *demons* and others. Still others might enjoy big game hunting or serving as the scouts and weapon bearers of big game hunters (the armed men who accompany and protect the rich and famous while they are on safari), or make a fortune running weapons and supplies to colonies. There are also those heroes who hunt the most dangerous prey, such as demons, Deevils, Exiles, Fallen Cosmo-Knights, Kreeghor, fugitives on the run, and even Dominators. Some characters might even want to found their own colony or start a business at a colony. Less scrupulous characters might be Runners, Space Pirates, mercenaries, raiders, thieves, independent traders, and all sorts of rogues looking to get rich by seizing opportunities in the Thundercloud Galaxy.

It falls to the Game Master to create interesting places for player groups to find adventure and opportunity. Below are a series of tables designed to help G.M.s do just that, and *quickly*. These tables have been written up to reflect the kinds of colonies that are springing up like weeds all over the Thundercloud Galaxy. They should also provide enough information from which adventures can spring or a place where an ongoing campaign can be anchored.

Note: Also see the tables for *Ruin Adventures*, *Indigenous People*, and *Monster Creation*. A detailed set of Planet Creation tables can be found in **Rifts® Dimension Book™ 5: Anvil Galaxy™**, beginning on page 146. All planets being colonized as part of the Scramble are habitable worlds that can support human and similar life forms. Many of these tables may apply to indigenous people as well, especially broad stroke conditions such as Alignment, Trade Practices, and Natural Resources; use common sense. There are also some specific tables for indigenous people at the end of the Colony Tables.

Sponsoring Organization

Choose whichever one seems most appropriate, or roll percentile dice to make a random determination.

01-25% Company Colony. This is a CCW colony set up, settled, and run by the Thundercloud Development Company – a.k.a. The Company.

26-58% Transgalactic Empire. This can either be an Imperial colony or a group of indigenous people being supplied by the TGE.

59-68% Splugorth Kingdom. This is most likely the Kingdom of Desslyth, although it could also be an outpost belonging to any of the other three Splugorth Kingdoms of the Three Galaxies. At least one Splugorth Intelligence not known to be in the Phase World universe is currently hiding in the Thundercloud as well.

69-76% UWW (United Worlds of Warlock). This colony will be located somewhere deep inside the Crèche Clouds, where

the magic levels are insanely high. There is a 97% chance that it belongs to the Trust. Otherwise, it has been settled by an independent group of Warlock adventurers, such as the Dwarves of Maul. It will not have a Tangent linking it to rest of the United Worlds, although it might have a regular pyramid.

77-86% Private Corporation. A number of mega-corporations across the Three Galaxies find it desirable to establish colonies and claim worlds. Such worlds may be designated for mining, manufacturing, shipbuilding, lumber operations, scientific research, and exotic exports, or a broad range of business operations. These *corporate worlds* can include just about any commercial operation(s) or serve any purpose. Privately held, a corporate owned world is seldom a CCW Chartered Company, and it is the corporation that makes all the rules, laws, and decisions. Most (99.8%) have their own *private security force* as well as “contract workers” (read: mercenaries and adventurers) to function as the police or security force, and army. The corporation also hires other “contractors” such as adventurers, freelancers, mercs and independents to do a lot of their dirty work, as well as handle the dirtiest and most dangerous jobs, including exploration, mapping, and “pest control.” Pest control may include battling monsters, trapping or exterminating dangerous animals, and dealing with insects, but it is sometimes a euphemism for relocating, controlling and/or exterminating indigenous people who present a problem. **Note:** Private corporation colonies may become CCW Chartered Colonies in order to get CCW support and protection, but that means the planet and the colony become possessions of the CCW. Consequently, 90% are privately owned and operated. These do not enjoy any protection from the *Consortium* or the *CAF*, and everything is handled by the corporation. Such private corporate worlds are targeted by raiders, space pirates, claim jumpers, rival corporations, and would-be conquerors such as the Demons of Hades, the TGE, and others, because it is presumed they are more vulnerable. However, the complete autonomy and secrecy afforded by a privately held colony world is worth the risk and trouble. Furthermore, the biggest corporations such as *Naruni Enterprises*, the *Galactic Armory*, *Wolfpack Weapons*, and *Bushido Industries* have military resources on par with any galactic civilization, providing their colony planets with superior protection and security. It is the worlds colonized and developed by small and medium-sized conglomerates that are at a higher risk.

87-92% Criminal Enterprise. One could argue that criminal organizations were among the first colonists of the Thundercloud Galaxy, as many a band of Runners, Raiders, Space Pirates and fugitives have set up shop in the galaxy for centuries. Even with the Scramble going on at full tilt, there are plenty of worlds, moons, planetoids and asteroids ideal for establishing a secret base or lair. Not only that, but many are full-blown colonies and colony worlds, where the brigands have established a safe haven and homes for their families. People sometimes forget that criminals are people too, and like anyone else, they want their families and loved ones close at hand. Thus, bandits operating in the Thundercloud Galaxy establish ports of call and secret colonies for themselves and their families where they can relax, live well and enjoy their ill-gotten gains. Such crime worlds, colonies, and secret bases usually have decent communications systems and security. Space Fleets are, as a rule, small and nimble, comprised of many space fighters and small, fast spaceships that can handle raiders, adventurers and even small fleets from galactic nations with relative ease. Outsiders may be welcomed at such worlds

and colonies, especially for trade, but they are always looked upon with suspicion. If an outsider causes too much trouble or appears to be a spy, the individual(s) is likely to disappear without a trace, his belongings sold off or added to the crime organization’s property (complete with forged bill of sale). Known and suspected crime worlds and colonies are attractive to adventurers and mercenaries because such places are willing to buy and trade goods no questions asked, and contraband and hard to find items are often available on the open market, or can be acquired for the right price in a short amount of time. Crime colonies are also hotbeds of news, rumors and information that can lead to opportunity and adventure. **Note:** Unless such a crime world has pushed one of the galactic powers or mega-corporations too far, “the law” avoids such havens of sin and treachery, and there is little threat of attack or interference from the authorities.

93-00% Independent/Other. The colony is either being founded by an independent group of settlers, or by a lesser power bloc such as the Golgan Republik, the Shing, and others.

Colony Size

The idea behind the Scramble is to *seed* the Thundercloud Galaxy with as many colonies and outposts as possible. Thus, the majority of planets claimed by the power blocs are very thinly populated, especially in comparison to worlds in the Anvil and Corkscrew Galaxies. Note that this number is separate from any *indigenous* life that might already inhabit the planet.

01-15% Base Camp. The inhabitants are either a shipwrecked crew or a small band of explorers, a science team, survey team, runaways, independent band of settlers, or bandits. In the alternative, a Base Camp may also be the secret base, hideout or camp for adventurers, mercenaries, raiders, Runners, Space Pirates and other bands of people operating in the galaxy. Such a small operation may be (01-50%) self-sufficient or (51-00%) dependent upon regular supply drops to stay operational. In the latter case, without the delivery of supplies the Base Camp must be abandoned or the colonists will perish.

Population: 2D6x10 colonists.

16-70% Colony Outpost. This is one of the most common sizes of colonial holdings in the Thundercloud Galaxy. Anything smaller is just asking to be overrun by someone or something. Outposts are usually the people who do the ground work of establishing a foothold for a colony on a new world. It is filled with scientists, miners, explorers and other hard-knock types. These places feel less like an actual colony and more like a village, big camp or bustling workstation. It is almost always the only settlement on the entire planet, apart from any possible native peoples. The outpost is often (01-70%) self-sufficient, though it might (71-00%) require supply drops from the outside world to keep it running at maximum capacity.

Population: 1D6x1,000 colonists.

71-95% Colony. Some planets, especially those settled in the first two centuries of the Scramble, have self-contained, self-sufficient colonies the size of a small city. The colony probably started out as an outpost, but has grown and prospered. The “Colony” may be a single location or the population may be split between a few smaller colony towns and outposts; satellite Colony Outposts are common particularly among the older colonies. G.M.’s choice. Many CCW and TGE worlds fall into this category.

Population: 2D6x10,000 colonists. As usual, the population number is that of the colonists, and does not include any indigenous people.

96-00% Settled Colony World. These colony planets have at least one large city three to five times the size of a Colony, plus 1D6 satellite colonies (equal to #71-95%, above) and 4D6 Colony Outposts/towns and villages. The population density is sparse over an entire planet, but this world is definitely settled. When a Consortium world hits this level of development, it can apply to the Congress for full membership as an independent planet, and break free of Company control/sponsorship to become an autonomous governing world.

Population: 1D6x1 million colonists. As usual, the population number is that of the colonists, and does not include any indigenous people.

General Alignment of a Colony

Here we use Palladium's alignment designations as a barometer to indicate the general moral and ethical nature of the majority of colonists (65%). Though the majority of people may fall into a particular category, there are always a good percentage (35%) who differ. These people run the gamut of other possible alignments. These same tables can be applied to indigenous people.

01-15% Principled (Good). The majority of colonists are Boy Scouts with good hearts and the best of intentions. They always try to take the high road and care about the environment and finding a way to maintain peaceful and prosperous relations with any indigenous people. Law and order are a necessity they work hard to maintain. Crime and corruption are minimal.

16-40% Scrupulous (Good). These good, hardworking people want to start a new and better life. They have good hearts and good intentions, and try to live in peace and harmony on their new world and with any indigenous people. Order and personal freedom are important to maintain. Crime and corruption are minimal.

41-55% Unprincipled (Selfish). Hardworking people who mean well and try to do the right thing, but they tend to be focused mainly on the welfare and survival of the colony above all others. Personal freedom and civility are important to maintain. Crime and corruption are low, but the colony has a little bit of a chaotic and Wild West feel to it.

56-70% Anarchist (Selfish). These colonists seek a new and better life and are willing to do whatever it takes to succeed, even if it's at the expense of the indigenous people and/or the environment. For many of these people the welfare and survival of the colony is all that matters, and the end justifies the means. If they have to bend a few laws, reshape the world to their desired image, and wipe out animal species and/or primitive people who get in their way, so be it. Personal freedom and prosperity are important to maintain. Crime and corruption are fairly high, but serious crime (murder, rape, and kidnapping) is moderate. The colony has a chaotic, Wild West or Casablanca atmosphere where if you grease the right palms, you can acquire or get away with almost anything, even murder, provided the victim was nobody important, an outsider or an indigenous person. Visitors need to be careful.

71-80% Aberrant (Evil). These colonists believe in law and order as much as the next guy, but it is their laws and survival that matters. They'll do whatever is necessary to tame and shape

their environment to their needs and specifications, and if the indigenous savages need to be taught a lesson, they are prepared to give it. If the indigenous people want war, they'll respond in kind. If the native people bring about their own destruction, it is a tragedy the colonists are willing to live with. This world is their home now, and nobody is going to chase them away. Order is firmly enforced and personal honor is important to maintain. Crime is low, and corruption and vice are a gentleman's game with unspoken rules and decorum.

81-90% Miscreant (Evil). These colonists are opportunists seeking fame and fortune. They tend to be ruthless in their business practices and see themselves as the ones in power and in control. Thus, they tend to ignore protocol, morality and the law. For most of these colonists, the end justifies the means, and all they are concerned about is coming out on top. They have little to no regard for the environment or the indigenous people, and do whatever benefits themselves, their business and the colony, even if it is detrimental to the local people. These colonies have a "them or us" attitude and outsiders and independents are either with them or against them. If against them, the outsiders are regarded as rivals or enemies. It is understandable then, that colonies with this attitude have serious problems and ongoing conflict and war with the indigenous people. The colony has a sinister and dark atmosphere, and it becomes quickly apparent to visitors that this is a cutthroat, dog eat dog society. Visitors need to be careful.

91-00% Diabolic (Evil). Half the colony is a den of thieves, cutthroats and bullies, the other half are their victims and the weak, though some of them are no better than the rest. Might makes right at this colony and the colonists take what they want. The most ruthless, brutal and cunning of the lot tend to hold the reins of power and function as tyrannical leaders, the heads of corrupt businesses and crime lords. These colonists came to the new frontier to get away from the laws and morality of "civilization" to make a new life and seize opportunity. They live in a dog eat dog society and do whatever it takes for them (not the colony as a whole) to survive and profit. Most are willing to do whatever it takes to succeed, including cheat, lie, steal and kill. The indigenous people are troublemakers and an obstacle to be "removed." Who cares if they are slaughtered and wiped out? The weak always fall to the strong; it is the way of the jungle. Crime, corruption and vice are high. Murder, rape and theft are commonplace. The colony is likely to have dealings with Space Pirates, criminals and other cutthroats and villains as well as mercenaries, adventurers and other independents looking for a base of operation or trade where no questions are asked. The atmosphere is that of a den of thieves where life is cheap and one can acquire just about anything if the price is right. Those in power or with the right connections, or enough money, can usually get away with anything, including murder. Visitors need to exercise extreme caution.

Trade Policies

Roll percentile dice for a random determination of the predominant type of business practices, or pick one. Random rolls may be modified by the alignment of the colony. Thus, a colony that runs everything "by the book," but is Miscreant or Diabolic, only does so on the surface or only enough to fool any visiting inspector or agent from the CCW or its legitimate sponsor. Under their clean facade is the dark underbelly of a thriving criminal underworld and corrupt government and law enforcement that

is either complicit in the underworld operations or take payoffs to look the other way. Good, bad or indifferent, there may be exceptions to the rule, especially at the larger colonies (tens of thousands of people or bigger). These same tables can be applied to indigenous people.

01-20% By the book. Everything is done by the book. The cost of business and the price of goods and services sold, purchased or traded are fair and reasonable. Most colony businesses pay 40% of the market price when buying or trading goods from outsiders (+10% for premium items and necessities). The colony does not trade in illegal goods, slaves, contraband, nor items that *may* have been stolen or have no clear paper trail regarding legal ownership. Bills of sale, receipts, contracts and proof of ownership are required. NEVER deals with pirates or criminals and cast a wary eye upon mercenaries and adventurers.

21-40% Fair and reasonable. Business is open and legitimate, but the law and standards may be bent a little, especially if the goods are important to the welfare of the colony. The cost of business and the price of goods and services sold, purchased or traded are fair and reasonable. Most colony businesses pay 30% of the market price when buying or trading goods from outsiders (+15% for premium items and necessities). The colony does not trade in illegal goods, slaves, or obvious stolen goods. Items offered for sale or trade should have a reasonably clear and legitimate looking paper trail regarding legal ownership. Bills of sale, receipts, contracts and proof of ownership are the norm, but deals under the table can also be made. Businesses and government avoid dealing with known or obvious pirates and criminals and seldom buy goods that appear likely to have been stolen or are of questionable origin. Fairly open to dealing with mercenaries and adventurers, provided the goods being offered for sale or trade appear to be legitimate.

41-60% Flexible and pragmatic. Business is open and legitimate for the most part, but the colonists are realists and may bend the law and standards, or turn a blind eye when it is convenient and the risk of getting in trouble is low. Some deals can be made under the table and goods that have a questionable pedigree or have been stolen from a rival or enemy *may* be purchased with no questions asked. The cost of business and the price of goods and services sold, purchased or traded are usually fair and reasonable. Most colony businesses pay 30% of the market price when buying or trading for legitimate goods from outsiders (+15% for premium items and necessities). However, if the goods are suspected of being stolen and there might be a risk to the purchaser, the business offers only 25% (+5-20% premium if the item is something that can get big bucks). The colony does not openly trade in illegal goods, and never in slaves, but some contraband, drugs and stolen goods with no clear paper trail regarding legal ownership are available if one knows where to look. This community tends to avoid dealing with known pirates and criminals, but may do so from time to time, especially if their survival hangs in the balance. They are open to dealing with mercenaries and adventurers, and don't ask too many questions about the goods being offered for sale.

61-80% No questions asked. Not necessarily corrupt or involved in crime, the authorities and businesses at this colony just play fast and loose with the law and fair practices. They find it easier if paperwork never gets filed, contracts are in their favor, and under the table deals are made with a handshake. A no questions asked policy allows them to purchase or trade for goods that may have been (or are obviously) stolen, with a clear conscience and a sizeable profit. The *trade* of goods and services for goods

and services (i.e. the equivalent of cash deals) means nobody has to know about the transaction other than the parties directly involved, and there is no pesky paperwork, evidence of the transaction, or annoying taxes to worry about. This very much appeals to Space Pirates, Runners, raiders, thieves, mercenaries and adventurers. HOWEVER, the colony business people and even its underworld are likely to refuse purchases or trade of items that are obviously stolen goods, acquired through blood, or too "hot." They don't consider themselves criminals and always try to be discreet, thus they try never to flaunt their questionable activities or engage in flagrant illegal activity.

81-00% Down and dirty. The businesses and even the government of this colony have little to no regard for the law or fair business practices. They deal in vice out in the open, trade with anyone, invite pirates, brigands and lowlifes to do business with them and turn a blind eye to criminal activity or openly engage in it. The colony not only asks no questions, but even when it is known an item is stolen or illegal, they'll take it anyway. Such colonies encourage may trade in contraband, including the slave trade, and trade with enemies and rivals like the Splugorth and TGE, and Space Pirates, raiders and other criminals. To clean up this town/colony, new, uncorrupt leaders and a small army of heroes who can't be bought or chased away by evildoers will be required. Most of these corrupt colonies and dens of iniquity continue as such for a long, long time, their leaders and criminal kingpins getting rich all the while.

Environment Around a Colony Site

This determines the type of environment in and around the colony site within a 1D6x100 mile radius (160-960 km). Note that this does not have to be indicative of the entire planet or even that one continent, though it very well may.

01-10% Shocking/Extreme Environment. An arid scrubland, sandy desert, or stony desert; no trees, and suffers from one of the following (roll percentile dice again for random determination or pick one):

01-10% Active Volcanoes: 1D6+1 active volcanoes make life dangerous in the region. Billowing clouds of black smoke and hot, white ashes are frequent occurrences. Lava and molten rock showers happen 1D4 times a month and the land around the volcanoes is barren. However, the soil is rich and ideal for farming, and the region is dotted with groves of trees and mini-forests.

In the alternative, the volcanoes are inactive, but the land is covered in tall hills, broken by numerous volcanic mountains, and the ground is extremely rocky, difficult to traverse and unsuitable for farming or raising livestock.

11-20% Extremes in Weather: Temperatures goes from 4D6+76 degrees Fahrenheit (27-38 C) during the day to freezing at night, plus the area is plagued by frequent high winds that gust up to 40 mph (64 km), heavy rainstorms or lightning storms, or tornados in the summer and snowstorms in the winter (4D6 inches of snow from a single storm is common). Other extremes in weather (ice storms, hurricanes, tsunamis, drought, etc.) may be substituted.

21-30% Earthquake Zone: The area suffers from 3D6 minor quakes and 1D4 major earthquakes (1D6+3 on the Richter scale) a year. Advanced building techniques and high-tech building materials help to reduce damage, but there is always some damage from every major seismic event.

31-40% Flood Plain: The area is prone to severe flooding 1D4 times a year and has an abundance of swampland.

41-50% Harmful Levels of Radiation: The colonists must stay inside an enclosed habitat and wear radiation suits to go beyond the enclosure.

51-60% Insect Plague: 1D4 times a year, clouds of insects take wing or crawl through the streets. There are so many that they fill the sky like a fog or cover the streets and walls like a carpet. They are mostly disgusting rather than outright dangerous (though they could be), but they clog engines and air filters, get inside buildings and food, and make a mess. The infestation lasts for 2D6 days per occurrence. In the alternative, the region could be prone to a particular parasite or disease carried by a particular insect or other vermin.

61-70% Lifeless: Once upon a time, something bad happened here and the parched earth is cracked, blistered and completely lifeless. It may be a blast crater from an ancient war between civilizations long forgotten.

71-80% Magic Zone with Active Ley Lines and Nexus Points: There are 2D6+1 ley lines and 1D4+1 nexus points along several intersecting ley lines. Ley line storms and freak dimensional occurrences are weekly events. Furthermore, Entities, Deevils, demons and a host of other supernatural beings and creatures of magic are attracted to the ley line nexus points. This might include Temporal Raiders, dragons and Sphinxes.

81-90% Meteor Field: 2D6 times a year, the area is pelted by a shower of tiny meteor fragments which cause 1D6x10 M.D. to whatever they hit and have a 01-25% chance of causing brush fires. 1D4 times a year a larger meteor strikes the area doing 1D6x100 M.D.

91-00% Wet and Humid: The temperature never drops below 50 nor rises above 80 degrees Fahrenheit (10-26.7 C), but monsoon season lasts 1D4+2 months and the region is always humid and steamy, which attracts mosquito-like insects and other bugs, snakes and amphibians that like wet, humid conditions. The place is always like a sauna, the humidity makes it feels 10-20 degrees hotter than the actual air temperature, morning and evening fog are daily occurrences.

11-20% Marshland. Think Florida Everglades or Vietnam rice fields – swamps, scrubs and sparse patches of forest; good fishing, hunting and rice growing. High ground is light forest or fields of grass and flowers suitable for habitation, some farming and raising livestock.

21-30% Light mixed forest. Think forests of the Eastern United States. Cleared land is suitable for homes, industry, farming and raising cattle and livestock.

31-40% Heavy mixed forest ideal for hunting and lumber. Think the forests of the Northern United States, particularly Oregon and Washington, or southeastern Canada. Cleared land is suitable for homes, industry, farming and raising cattle and livestock.

41-50% Dense rain forest/jungle ideal for hunting and lumber. Think the jungles of the Congo or Thailand, and the Brazilian rain forest. Cleared land is suitable for homes, industry, farming and raising cattle and livestock.

51-60% Arable plains land ideal for farming and livestock. Low rolling hills, grassy plains broke by small patches of light forest. Perfect for farming and raising cattle and livestock.

61-70% Arable rustic land ideal for farming and hunting. Mostly flat land with rich soil, covered in grass, fields of wildflowers, and light forests, and dotted by meadows and small



lakes, ponds and rivers. Good for hunting, farming and raising livestock.

71-80% Low mountains with alpine forests and lush mountain valleys. Mountain height 4,000-6,000 feet (1,219 to 1829 m).

81-90% Towering mountains with alpine forest only along the base of the mountains and 20% up, with lush mountain valleys as high as halfway up. Snow covered peaks year round. Mountain height 25,000-35,000 feet (7,620 to 10,668 km).

91-00% Arctic Conditions. Winter lasts 1D4+4 months in this flat scrubland (may have low rolling hills) dotted with lakes, rivers, streams and spotty, light pine forests. Even in summer temperatures seldom exceed 80 degrees Fahrenheit (26.7 C) and in the winter temperatures hover at zero (-17.8 C). Growing season is short, but summer is spectacular with plains of flowers, exquisite meadows, and a wealth of cold climate wildlife. Environment is suitable for hunting, mining, light industry and habitats in a controlled environmental enclosure.

Notable or Special Natural Resource

Roll percentile dice once for random determination or pick one.

01-05% Ancient Ruins. Excavated ruins of an ancient alien civilization have become a tourist attraction as well as attracting scientists and historians. A collection of mysterious buildings from another time by an unknown civilization. The Game Master can decide whether or not they are intact, lying destroyed, or have some kind of special power. 3D6 ruined buildings, each with 4D6x100 M.D.C. **Note:** At the G.M.'s discretion, it may be possible for the colonists to use the ruins for some other purpose (defense, emergency fortified shelter, hiding place, weapon depot, vehicle storage, hangar, etc.).

06-15% Arable Land. Rich soil for farming and/or growing fruit trees.

16-20% Big Game Hunting. Exotic and or dangerous wild animals and so-called "monsters" attract Big Game hunters from across the Three Galaxies.

21-30% Coastal Fishing. A wealth of fish and aquatic life (such as shrimp, lobster, etc.) supports a thriving fishing industry.

31-40% Hunting and Trapping/Fur Trade.

41-50% Lumber Trade.

51-60% Mining: Fossil Fuels, such as coal and oil.

61-65% Mining: Killaryte.

66-75% Mining: Industrial Minerals/Metals such as iron, nickel, lead, copper, etc., used in building and industry.

76-85% Mining: Natural Gas or Non-Metal Minerals.

86-90% Mining: Precious Metals or Gemstones.

91-95% Vacation Spot: Exotic. A location whose vista features something alien and amazing or beautiful that attracts people to come and experience it for themselves. Or some other unusual attraction.

96-00% Vacation Spot: Paradise. A location blessed with a spectacular and beautiful vista that attracts people to this delightful paradise.

Initial Buildings/Facilities

Every colony *starts off* with enough prefabricated buildings and facilities to house all of its colonists and establish the initial base colony. Housing is a given. There are always enough build-

ings to house everyone, but this might mean a small, one story house for each family and preassigned team, or large communal style buildings. Everything listed below is what a colony is *supposed* to have to get started. However, the Scramble is so large and unorganized that it can often be a crap-shoot as to what the colonists actually get. Things are mismanaged, lost, mislabeled, left behind, or redirected at the last minute.

Roll percentile for each of the following facilities or structures. *A roll of 01-65% means the colony has one.* A roll of 66-00% means the item is missing and the colonists will have to improvise. If a request is made, missing items *might* (01-50% chance) be provided with the next supply run in 2D6+6 months.

All of these buildings come disassembled in crates. They include easy to follow directions, and according to their labels, can be put together by the colonists in as little as a few days. This is often a bold faced lie, and even if a colony has a certain structure, it might remain packed away in boxes or sit unassembled for months or even years at a time. Having a Civil Engineer on site to help in construction is *highly* recommended. Otherwise, the buildings cannot be erected properly (has a poor foundation, is incorrectly wired, poorly lit, crooked, roof leaks, etc). **Note:** Medical Facility gets its own Table. Also note that only planets suitable for habitation are being colonized. Those requiring terraforming first are not included. Large and established colonies are very different and look and function like cities.

Armory. A small, fortified building that serves as both a bunker (3D4x100 M.D.C.) and a fortified weapons position, as well as a place to store weapons. Comes with 96 M.D. energy rifles (4D6 M.D. per single blast, 2,000 foot/610 m range), 24 energy pistols (2D6 M.D. per blast, 800 foot/244 m range), 1D4+1 E-clips for each, plus two E-Clip recharging stations, 48 explosive hand grenades, 72 smoke grenades, 96 signal flares, 1D6+2 rail guns with 2,000 rounds of ammunition for each, 48 S.D.C. assault rifles with 400 rounds of ammunition for each, 12 S.D.C. shotguns with 100 rounds of ammo for each, 12 S.D.C. automatic pistols with 400 rounds of ammo for each, six Vibro-Swords (2D6 M.D.), and six Vibro-Knives (1D6 M.D.).

Barracks. A building meant to house soldiers, it is heavily reinforced, airtight, has armored, locking doors (200 M.D.C. each), narrow windows with sliding M.D.C. coverings/shielding (30 M.D.C. each), temperature control (heating and cooling), air-purification and circulation system (good for using the same air for 1D4+6 months), and can comfortably house 80 men (two platoons) in bunk bed configuration. 80 M.D.C. per 12 foot (3.6 m) wide section of exterior wall.

Bio-Dome: Agriculture. This is a high-tech hothouse and hydroponic garden that can grow edible plants and food (often with seed and plants the colonists brought with them) until the colony can begin its own traditional farming. After farms can support the colony, the Bio-Dome can be used to supplement supply, provide food from home, or be turned into a botanical garden or laboratory.

Church/Temple. A medium-sized building that could also double as a school and/or town meeting hall.

Command Center. The heart of any colony site, the Command Center is a combination computer core, administration building, power plant, and heavy bunker. It can have as much as 3D6x1,000 M.D.C. and be up to five stories tall. Its 1D4 main entryways have blast doors with 400 M.D.C. apiece. The Command Center contains meeting rooms, apartment suites for the colony

Administrators, and in an emergency, can house up to 1,000 people. It also has its own independent power supply.

Communications Tower. This can either be a modular attachment for the Command Center, or a separate building unto itself. It provides the colony with a long-range radio transmitter/receiver (500 miles/800 km), plus a short-range radio transmitter/receiver (50 miles/80 km), radar/lidar suite (25 miles/40 km), satellite laser communications suite, recording studio, radio and TV station, sound lab, and computer data sphere network. Satellite relays can increase range for thousands of miles and enable the colony to communicate with incoming spacecraft and supply ships.

Construction/Farm Vehicles. A large, metal container (each wall has 130 M.D.C.) the size of two boxcars, with an open top, drop down, drawbridge-style rear hatch, that contains: Two small tractors with backhoe, two medium-sized tractors with detachable backhoes, one bulldozer, four small wood chippers, a thresher, and various attachments suitable for farm work, digging holes for fence posts, etc., along with spare parts. The container has wheels and can be used as a grain or lumber hauler, cargo carrier or storage unit, or taken apart and used to build a storage building.

Construction Vehicles, Medium. A large, metal container (each wall has 130 M.D.C.) the size of two boxcars, with an open top, drop down, drawbridge-style rear hatch, that contains: Two medium-sized tractors with backhoes, one bulldozer, one small steam shovel, one roller, and various attachments and spare parts. The container has wheels and can be used as a gravel or garbage hauler, cargo carrier, storage or taken apart and used to build a storage building.

Construction Vehicles, Heavy/Mining. Two large, metal containers (each wall has 130 M.D.C.) the size of two boxcars, with an open top, drop down, drawbridge-style rear hatch, that contains the vehicles and equipment one needs for digging, mining and excavation. As usual, the containers can continue to be used as haulers or storage units.

Drill: Well/Water. An auger and drilling device designed for accessing underground water for use in irrigation and providing drinking water.

Drill and Oil Rig. Everything you need for two medium-sized or four small oil/natural gas drilling facilities.

Farm: Animal Pens and Corral. Building material for 1D4+1 small pens, 1D4 large corrals and a shed that can be alternately used as a chicken coop.

Farm: Barn. Building materials for 1D4 barns to contain livestock, hay and farm supplies.

Farm: Grain Silo. Silo and elevator for holding grains and corn.

Factory: Flower Mill. Facility for grinding and processing corn, wheat and other grains.

Factory: Lumber Mill. A factory style facility for creating, cutting, trimming, molding and processing wood.

Factory: Specified Manufacturing. The colony is expected to produce something, and this building is going to help them do it. Thanks to the wonders of modern science, it is largely automated, but it still has to be fed the raw materials it needs.

Factory: Vehicle. A heavily automated factory that can be run with a skeleton crew of personnel and workers. The factory is designed to create modular spare parts and components for vehicles used by colonists. The largest and best vehicle factories make parts as well as 1D4 actual vehicles.

Fortification: Fence, Light. A 15 foot (4.6 m) tall perimeter fence to encircle the initial colonial compound. Wire fencing topped with an additional two feet (0.6 m) of razor wire or concertina wire along the top. 20 M.D.C. per 12 foot (3.6 m) wide section.

Fortification: Double-Door for Fence or Wall. A reinforced, locking gate with key pad entry and emergency, physical override key. The gate has 500 M.D.C.

Fortification: Watchtower. Four 25 foot (7.6 m) tall, fortified towers where one or two lookouts can be posted. Comes standard with two high-powered spotlights (30 M.D.C. each, 1,200 foot/366 m range; rotates 360 degrees), radio communications, motion detector (800 foot/244 m range), four surveillance cameras, and siren to warn of attack, danger or emergency. Tower has 300 M.D.C.

Fortification: Gun Tower. Two 25 foot (7.6 m) tall, fortified defensive towers where one or two lookouts can be posted. Each comes standard with one high-powered spotlight (30 M.D.C. each, 1,200 foot/366 m range), radio communications, motion detector (800 foot/244 m range), four surveillance cameras, and a weapon turret that can rotate 360 degrees. The weapon turret is typically a double-barrel laser (2,000 foot/610 m range, unlimited payload, 4D6 M.D. per single dual blast, 1D4x10 M.D. per burst), with two flip-top roof hatches where additional gunners can take up a position. Tower has 550 M.D.C.

Fortification: Wall. A 15 foot (4.6 m) tall wall made of solid Mega-Damage materials. 1D6x10+60 M.D.C. per 10 foot (3 m) wide section. Such a wall is considered suitable against low-tech indigenous people and simple bandits. **Note:** Only very well funded colonies get a defensive wall around their perimeter.

Hangar. Has enough room to store a few small aircraft or space fighters, or one small to medium spacecraft.

Jail and Security Office: Another fully equipped, modular trail-like building with a front office for 4-6 law enforcement personnel, private office, two small jail cells, one large jail cell, private lavatory, small storage room, and one secret compartment (about the size of a closet).

Laboratory, Chemistry. A completely built and fully equipped, ready to use laboratory in a light M.D.C. trailer (think mobile home without wheels). Needed for testing water and soil samples, and so on.

Laboratory, Hazmat. A completely built and fully equipped, ready to use isolation lab in a light M.D.C. trailer, complete with a small surgical room and two small isolation chambers. The isolation lab is used for the containment and study of subjects suspected of having infectious disease and for post-mortem autopsies. Each individual room/chamber is airtight and has its own air purification and circulation system, as well as an independent air supply good for 6 hours. It also comes with a self-destruct mechanism designed to incinerate everything inside (people, equipment, everything), without breaking any seal or burning outside the lab. In such an event, the entire trailer is to be buried.

Laboratory: Science Labs. A completely built and fully equipped, ready to use science lab with testing and research equipment, small isolation chamber, refrigeration units, and gear to perform basic chemical analysis and scientific study.

Laboratory, Veterinary. A completely built and fully equipped, ready to use lab in a light M.D.C. trailer (think mobile home without wheels). Used for the care of animals and testing and studying indigenous wildlife.

Machine Shop/Fabricating Facility. The tools and machines to cut, mold and put together materials for building and maintaining the colony.

Mechanics' Garage. A fully equipped garage for the repair, maintenance and modification of large vehicles and heavy equipment.

Mess Hall, Kitchen and Dining. Though colonists are expected to provide for themselves, over time, initially they need to have food and a facility to store, prepare and cook meals. This barracks style building has an independent power supply/generator, kitchen, storage area, buffet-line counter, and dining area that can seat 400 people at a time. When no longer needed as a mess hall, it can be used as a town hall or meeting place.

Mining Facility. All the basic machines, explosives, equipment and gear to start a mining operation.

Monument. The sponsors of the colony have sent plans and material to erect some kind of commemorative monument to themselves. Its looks are limited only by the imagination of the Game Master, but it generally serves no purpose whatsoever. Someone just decided that the colony should have one. Note that for Splugorth and UWW colonies, this building can be a functional dimensional pyramid.

Motor Pool. A large hangar type building for the repair, maintenance and modification of ground vehicle, power armor and light robots. Standard issue vehicles include: 24 jet packs, 1D6+4 hover cycles, 1D4+4 hover jeep type vehicles, four 20 foot (6.1 m) hover cargo trucks, two larger trucks, fuel tanks, six hoists for working on vehicles, a light crane (can handle up to 10 tons) on a rail system in the ceiling beams, two independent generators, cutting and welding equipment, and all the basic tools, equipment and gear needed for the repair and maintenance of vehicles and power armor.

Orbital Satellite. 1D4+2 satellites are placed in synchronous orbit, positioned for communication with sites around the globe. All have communication, photographic and sensor capabilities, and one also has a weather scanning and prediction function. Bouncing signals from satellite to satellite provides communication capabilities with more than one colony site on the same planet, as well as ground communication, though there will be "dead zones." Satellite relay should provide communication to 70% of the planet's surface. **Note:** Interface with an orbiting satellite requires the Comm Tower facility (or a really good, jury-rigged facsimile).

Recycling Tanks. These can be a godsend for a colony with limited resources. The tanks are able to break down and recycle any one kind of non-M.D.C. material (metal, plastics, organic material) with 98% efficiency. Roll each time for the type of material the tanks recycle. If necessary, the corpses of dead colonists can be recycled in an organic waste tank, their bodies broken down into various useful chemical components, including drinkable water (an average Human being is 65% water).

Refrigeration unit. A semi-trailer sized, or bigger, refrigerated warehouse. Divided into four sections that can be sealed off independent of each other.

Road Works System. These are the large, automated construction machines that build streets, highways, tunnels and bridges. The Road Works System is a full robotic operation with manual override. It has a number of programs and can perform a wide range of road construction, but is not an A.I. The robots can do the work of bulldozers, graders, auto-pavers (a cool kind of road roller that also makes and pours its own asphalt), excavators, dump trucks, and front-end loaders. If the colony doesn't have

one, its streets are likely to be dirt or gravel roads, or roads built the old fashioned way. Trying to dig a well without a modern auger is a pain beyond comprehension for most folks.

School. A trailer designed and equipped to function as a schoolhouse, with two private lavatories, small office, small teacher's lounge, one 32 seat classroom, one 16 seat classroom, and supply closet. Teachers not included, but each desk has a note pad, writing implements, and portable computer.

Storage Building: General Use. A large, simple warehouse building with reinforced walls, two large bay doors, security doors and security system (alarm and cameras). A racking system runs down the center of the building and it comes with one forklift. Used for the storage of supplies, parts and vehicles.

Storage Building: Food. A large, simple warehouse building with reinforced walls, a concrete floor and airtight seams to keep out vermin and water. Comes with security doors and security system (alarm and cameras). A racking system runs down the center of the building, a large, walk-in refrigerator unit is located in the rear, and the facility comes with two traditional forklifts. Used for the storage of food, grains, seed, farm crops and other perishables.

Supply Depot. A communal supply facility where preassigned supplies and goods are distributed to the colonists upon arrival, and whenever new supplies are delivered. It can also function as a general store with goods and basic supplies that can be purchased or acquired through trade.

Tach-Line Transmitter. The Tachyon Communications Array allows the colony to record messages and data packets, and then fire them off to places light-years away. This is the only way to communicate with other star systems or ships in deep space without waiting decades for a reply. Think of it as an FTL radio with a reply time of one hour per every 50 light-years the message was sent. This can either be a modular attachment for the Command Center, or a separate building unto itself.

Water Collection, Processing and Purification System. The means to collect, clean and dispense drinking water for the colony.

Medical Facility

01-10% None. The colony has, for whatever reason, no medical ability. There is no surgeon, no drugs, no nanoscopic robot medical systems, no protein healing salve. This place is in serious trouble.

11-30% Basics. There are 1D4 paramedics, but no actual doctor. Medical supplies are limited to 1D4+1 robot medical and surgical kits, a dozen first-aid kits and basic medical supplies (bandages, gauze, protein healing salve, blood and tissue builders, megacillin tablets, etc.). Serious injury and illness will be life-threatening, and invasive surgery is simply not possible.

31-40% Holistic Medicine. Roughly equal to a Clinic/Infirmary (below), but relies on natural healing, herbs, and medicine created from indigenous plants, roots, minerals and wildlife.

41-60% Clinic/Infirmary. A small medical facility with 3D6+12 private sick rooms, two wards, four surgery rooms, and a good selection of medical equipment (including nano repair systems). Big and expensive equipment like a holo-MRI, stasis chamber, or an auto-medic are not part of this facility. Minor surgery and the installation and repair of cybernetic systems (no full conversion) can be preformed here without risk. Major surgery can be attempted, but at a higher risk than a true hospital (-10% penalty to all surgical skills and -5% penalty to save vs Coma and

Death). There is one chief doctor who is a 1D6+7 level Body Fixer, one Cyber-Doc who is 1D4+6 level, and 1D6+2 other Medical Doctors and/or psychic healers who are 1D6+1 level, and 2D6 nurses/medical assistants.

61-94% Small Hospital. A small hospital with all the basics, as well as 2D4x10 private rooms, and six wards (each can accommodate up to 20 patients comfortably, or twice the number in an emergency). It comes with a fleet of 1D4+3 ambulances. There is one chief doctor who is a 1D6+8 level Body Fixer, one head of surgery chief doctor who is a 1D6+6 level Body Fixer, 1D4 Cyber-Docs who are 1D4+6 level, and 1D6+2 other Medical Doctors/Body Fixers or Psychic Healers who are 1D4+4 level, and 2D6+10 nurses/paramedics/medical personnel.

95-00% Large Hospital. A fully functioning hospital that can handle as many as 800 patients at a time. It has all the modern equipment and facilities that one could imagine, including at least one auto-medic. This place has a full staff of doctors, nurses, and paramedics, plus it has a specialized clinic with a half dozen Cyber-Docs, as well as 1D6+6 laboratories.

Primary Source of Energy for the Colony

One of the following are the primary (75-90%) source of power for the colony.

01-15% Wind.

16-30% Fossil fuels.

31-50% Solar.

51-70% Nuclear power plant.

71-85% Geothermal. Powered by the heat and energy of the molten core of the planet.

86-95% Satellite energy transmission. Solar energy is collected by massive solar platforms and transmitted to the colony via beam transmissions. Note this creates one or more narrow bands of energy that will damage/destroy anything that flies into the beam (1D6x10 M.D.).

96-00% Magic (rare). There are a variety of magic systems to supply energy to the colony.

Primary Source of Transportation

Vehicles are an important part of life on the frontier, especially when settlements and colonies can be so very far apart from one another. Sometimes vehicles are required to plow fields, carry timber from a forest, or take water from a dam as well as haul cargo and transport people.

01-10% None. It is possible because of budgetary cutbacks, weight limitations or an accident that caused the loss of a few precious vehicles, that the colony has no vehicles available to them. As an alternative, the colony's surviving 1D4+2 vehicles may have all fallen into a state of inoperable disrepair because no one there is skilled enough to fix them.

11-25% Live animals. While it's almost entirely unheard of back in the core worlds, the use of animals for labor and travel is quite common among the colonies of the Thundercloud Galaxy. In most instances, it's something picked up out of necessity or from the indigenous, less industrialized natives. However, in other cases, especially when the colony hasn't any other choice, colonists are quick to take to riding horses or dinosaurs, or whatever local animals are easy to domesticate and suitable for riding

and work in the fields. Exactly what the animals may depend on the environment and the imagination of the Game Master.

26-60% Simple and basic range of vehicles. The colony has a few common multi-purpose vehicles such as jeeps, pickup trucks, ground cars, or hover cycles (1D4 per every one hundred colonists) as well as a few beat up utility vehicles (cargo truck, flatbed truck or boat, river boats, etc.; one per every 100 colonists). The colony has at least one expert garage and a handful of spare parts to keep the vehicles going. If built near water, the colony will have a few sail and row boats. Unless nuclear, solar or rechargeable electric powered vehicles, fuel may be in short supply. To reduce expense, some colonies rely on old style combustion engines and fossil fuels, especially if such a resource is available to the colony. 5D6% of the people in this community are also likely to use work and riding animals.

61-85% Good range of vehicles. The colony has a fair number (3D6+12 per every one hundred colonists) of personal vehicles (cars, hover cars, hover cycles, etc.) and utilitarian vehicles (buses, trucks, construction vehicles and boats) in fair to good condition, as well as a few aircraft. In addition, the colony has several large, cargo hauling trucks and hover trucks, and a few sea/deep lake-worthy barges and freighters. If built near water, many colonists are likely to own small sail boats, row boats, canoes and motorboats, while the commercial part of the colony is likely to have twice as many fishing boats, barges and freighters. There may also be a small commercial airport used primarily by industry, business and the authorities. 2D6% of the people in this community are also likely to use work and riding animals. 01-50% chance of having a tiny space fleet consisting of 2D4 space fighters, 2D4 space shuttles, and 1D4 cargo frigates.

86-94% Excellent range of vehicles. The colony possesses one mode of public transportation (typically hover buses), a privately owned taxi service, a medium-sized commercial airport primarily for business and industry use, and 1D4x10+15% of all private citizens own a personal vehicle (probably a hover car or hover cycle, and/or sail or motor boat). The colony has a large range of ground transportation, cargo and construction vehicles, as well as a good range of commercial aircraft, boats and ships. The colony has its own factory for making spare parts and possibly even one or two types of utilitarian vehicles, as well as having a stockpile of a year's worth of spare parts. There are a good number of skilled personnel to maintain and repair the vehicles and the colony has one garage or vehicle repair shop per every 600 colonists (even if it didn't roll for any in the Buildings category). 01-65% chance of having a small space fleet consisting of 2D4+6 space fighters, one combat frigate, 2D4+4 space shuttles, 1D6+4 cargo frigates and one destroyer or light (combat) cruiser.

95-00% Superior range of advanced vehicles. Like most big cities, the colony has at least two modes of public transportation (rail system, subway system, hover buses, etc.), privately owned taxi and delivery services, a commercial and public airport, and 1D4x10+45% of all private citizens own a personal vehicle (probably a hover car or hover cycle, and/or sail or motor boat). The colony has a full range of ground transportation, cargo and construction vehicles, as well as commercial aircraft, boats and ships. The colony has 1D4+1 factories for making spare parts and 2D4 types of utilitarian vehicles, as well as a stockpile of 1D6 years' worth of spare parts. There are plenty of skilled personnel to maintain and repair the vehicles and the colony has one garage or vehicle repair shop per every 300 colonists (even if it didn't

roll for any in the Buildings category). A modest space fleet consists of 2D6+10 space fighters, 1D4 combat frigates, 2D6+12 space shuttles, 2D6+8 cargo frigates, two destroyers, two light cruisers, one heavy cruiser and one battle cruiser.

Security/Fighting Force

01-10% None. It's every man for himself out here. This colony had better hope that a wandering Cosmo-Knight or other such champion of order happens to drop in, otherwise they have almost no protection against wild animals, predatory monsters, space pirates, hostile locals, or even each other. Sometimes, a band of good-hearted adventurers will adopt such a place while they are in the area.

11-75% Colonial Soldiers. This colony has a group of full-time defenders to protect everyone in times of trouble. Their numbers are rarely more than 10-20% of the total population of the colony, although they will have one overall commanding officer. If things get really hairy, 1D6x10% of the remaining colonists can take up arms to defend the site.

76-86% Mixed Garrison. A token group of actual soldiers that are supposed to work in tandem with the Colonial force. The number of troopers could be as small as 40, or as great as 160. They will have 1D4+3 commanding officers who average 1D4+4th level. Conflicts can often arise between the soldiers and the IDF members in situations such as these.

87-95% Regular Army. Hooray! Actual soldiers. This is a full company of 160-200 fighting men and women who have spent years training in the ways of modern warfare. In total there are fifteen or nineteen platoons of regular soldiers, two squads of power armor or robot pilots (about 20 soldiers total), ten military specialists or commandos, and 1D6 psychics. In addition to civil defense, the garrison may send out squads for reconnaissance, search and rescue, espionage, seek and destroy, and sabotage missions.

96-00% Small Mechanized Army. Same as above, plus another company (160 troops), a platoon of 40 special forces types (might be snipers, combat cyborgs, Invincible Guardsmen, Silver Hawk power armor commandos, temporal warriors, etc.), a platoon of ground power armor, and two platoons of heavy combat vehicles (80 assorted tanks, APCs, and giant robots). This colony is ready for action.

Outside Threats to a Colony

These threats are suggestions for likely conflicts and dangers to colonies and adventurers in the Thundercloud Galaxy. Game Masters can pick one and develop it any way he or she deems appropriate. Multiple scenarios and adventures can be spun from each. For random determination, roll percentile dice.

01-05% Colony War. A rival group of colonists also claims this world. One set of colonists are from the CCW. Another could be from the TGE, Golgan Republik, Shing, Kingdom of Desslyth (or other Splugorth or alien power bloc), or even one of the other lost Denelech colonies! It is possible that one arrived via magic or dimensional portals, and the other via spaceships. Both may have actually existed on the planet, in different parts of the world, for one or more generations before discovering each other. Or perhaps a prior colony was destroyed by a plague, natural disaster or invasion. The founding company or galactic nation had always planned to rebuild its lost colony, but it has taken years to do

so. Now that they've returned to "their" colony world, they find someone else has established a colony on "their planet." Disputes and open hostilities ensue. Can the planet be shared or will this become an inter-galactic incident between two space-faring nations/galactic power blocs?

In the alternative, demons or Deevils (or other evil beings or monsters) claim the planet as one of their colonies, and until the sponsor of the human/mortal colony can send a fleet to evacuate the colonists or battle the supernatural invader. The waiting could last months. Longer, if the colony's distress call was never heard! Who can help? How will the colonists survive?

06-10% Creature(s) from a Rift. Almost anything can emerge from a Rift. Entities and other supernatural monsters as well as creatures of magic are all attracted to ley lines, nexus points and other places of magic. Such creatures can be the source of mischief and comedy, trouble and mayhem, or terror and death. Such travelers might bring trouble and danger with them by accident – disease, an enemy, a monster, dangerous technology, unstable magic, or dangerous ideas. They might sow the seeds of discontent and instigate rebellion among the indigenous inhabitants or create division between factions within a colony. Game Masters, explore the possibilities.

11-15% Invaders from a Rift. Warriors or monsters may spill out of a Rift in great numbers. They may come as colonists themselves, or as raiders or as warriors intent on conquering the inhabitants of the planet (colonists and indigenous people). Game Masters, explore the possibilities.

16-20% Deevils. With the eruption of the Minion War, Deevils are searching for magic artifacts, the technology of the Elder Races and recruits to join their war against the demons. Deevils also seek to undermine demon operations, take away their resources and cause them strife every way they can. This means they are recruiting, manipulating (i.e. tricking mortals into helping the Deevils or hurting demons) and helping the mortals of the Three Galaxies. Thus, Deevils may, for the moment, serve as unlikely allies against demons and other dangers if it helps them or their cause in some way.

Don't start feeling warm and fuzzy about Deevils, and certainly do not trust them. Deevils are as evil and rotten as demons (for evidence of that, see *Armageddon Unlimited*). They see mortals as fools and to be used as pawns and underlings, nothing more. A Devil will turn on a human ally two seconds after that mortal has served his purpose. Furthermore, like demons, they too seek ancient secrets and weapons, and do whatever they can to procure them.

Deevils are more devious and underhanded than the direct and intimidating demons, so their activities in the Thundercloud are likely to take place quietly behind the scenes. They may also appeal to disgruntled indigenous people to recruit them as Devil worshipers in exchange for helping them in conflicts with colonists and corporations who are mistreating native inhabitants and/or the environment. This can stir up all kinds of problems and resentment that can lead to civil unrest, riots, isolated conflicts and all-out war.

21-25% Demons. For a long while now, demons have been secretly scouring the Thundercloud Galaxy for the lost weapons and technology of the Elder Races and powerful magic artifacts. They do so directly, through hired thugs and via unwitting third parties. Every time there is word about the discovery of ancient ruins or a strange artifact, or weird occurrence that could be tied to such an object, odds are the demons hear about it. If it sounds like it could



be something they can use themselves or against their enemies, the demons investigate or send a mortal agent, henchman or dupe on their behalf. If it turns out to be something they want, they steal it or take it by force. If there is a situation they can exploit to their benefit, they try to do so. This makes demons a force of chaos and turmoil throughout the Thundercloud Galaxy.

Demons abandoned subterfuge and finesse when they invaded the Three Galaxies with Demon Stars and massive Demon Fleets. Though their forces are least numerous in the Thundercloud Galaxy, if there is something they want, they'll dispatch a small army of demons or mortal henchmen to take it. Thus, if a colony or indigenous people discover something of value to the demons today, they could find themselves fighting demon troops tomorrow. Like the Kreeghor, even the demons' mortal soldiers are aggressive and belligerent, running roughshod over anyone who dares to stand in their way. Evil and cruel, their demon masters don't care what their advocates and troops do to the people in the Thundercloud. As a result, demon forces – whether actual demons or mortal flunkies – engage in unnecessary displays of power and brutality, killing innocent people, razing villages and colonies to the ground, ransacking communities, raping women, taking people into slavery, and so on. This is not always the case, but often. Demons also hire Space Pirates, other criminals and evildoers to enforce their will and serve their needs.

This all means demons (and Deevils) can function as a *wild card* in the Thundercloud Galaxy, appearing out of nowhere to cause trouble, attack or bring mayhem. Remember, while mortal servants of demons and Deevils require spaceships to travel from planet to planet, supernatural beings do not. Most demons (and Deevils) can have a Greater Demon or Demon Lord open a dimensional Rift at a ley line nexus anywhere, provided they have a connection on that world (servants or worshipers), or know the coordinates. Likewise, demons and many supernatural beings possess the power of Dimensional Teleport, or know magic invocations to teleport to other worlds or open dimensional portals. Thus, the Demons of Hades (and Deevils of Dyval) can, via natural abilities, magic or Rifts, appear on a planet without anyone knowing it.

Humans and mortals do have one thing going for them: demons and Deevils almost always underestimate them. Arrogant in the extreme, demons (and Deevils) often underestimate mortals, which gives people a fighting chance. This means they may send an insufficient force to accomplish the task at hand, make dumb moves, ignore the human potential for resourcefulness, and never stop to think that colonists and indigenous people at odds with one another might put aside their differences to fight a common demonic enemy, or come to each other's aide. **Note:** See **Rifts® Dimension Book™ 10: Hades** and **DB 11: Dyval™** for

complete details about how demons and Deevils think and how their societies function, among other valuable information.

26-30% Dragon. Dragons are powerful creatures of magic known to traverse the Megaverse in search of adventure, magic, secret knowledge, treasure and power. The Thundercloud Galaxy offers the promise of all these things. Just as demons, Deevils and so many other people come to the Thundercloud in a quest to find the secrets, magic or weapons of the Elder Races, dragons are lured there for the same reason. Others may seek the worship of primitive people and live as a god, while some may choose to become their king and protector, while still others may terrorize the countryside for fun or out of spite. Some dragons, particularly hatchlings and young adults, simply seek adventure, excitement and fun. A dragon may be a villain, a hero or an opportunist. It may bring peace and prosperity or trouble and violence. Still others seek a place where they can establish a quiet sanctum away from people and civilization, or a place to practice magic, or hide their treasure. For a long time, the Thundercloud Galaxy offered many places to hide or live in secret, and still does, but with the Scramble, those places are becoming fewer. You can imagine how a dragon might feel if his sanctum or treasure or secret place of meditation and rest is violated by humanoids or looted out of ignorance. The dragon's reaction is not likely to be pretty or gentle. **Game Master Note:** The many possible adventures involving a dragon will depend on the creature's age, alignment, abilities, agenda and you. Have fun with it whether the dragon is young and curious, heroic or wicked.

31-35% Exiles. Nobody is sure about their real agenda, but they are not to be trusted. Exiles seem to be habitual liars, hot-tempered and unpredictable. While they often try to play the role of hero, their true motives are less than noble. They are part con-artist, part thief, part raider, part alien invader, part insane and all trouble. Exiles are opportunists who, even if things started out well, in the end, will sell out their own mother if they can make a big enough profit. "Beware the Exiles" is a common refrain heard throughout the Thundercloud Galaxy. They wander the galaxy talking trash about the big corporations and intergalactic power blocs, stir up trouble at colonies, like to instigate revolts and conflict among indigenous people, and seem entertained by the conflict and angst of other people. When nobody is looking they rob and steal, cheat, lie and try to profit from the misfortune of others. When they offer their services to serve as protectors and guardians, it is often discovered later that they were the ones to have stirred up tension or caused the conflict to begin with. Even when helpful, they are like the houseguest from Hell who abuses the generosity of his benefactor until thrown out on his ear. Only then the Exile feels angry and mistreated, giving him justification to seek revenge by robbing his benefactor or one-time ally, or vandalizing his property or joining the side of his enemies.

36-40% Fallen Cosmo-Knight. Cosmo-Knights are said to have secret hideouts and monasteries scattered throughout the Thundercloud Galaxy. Nobody knows how true that is, but there are at least a few known to exist in the remote galaxy. With the demons' invasion of the Corkscrew and Anvil Galaxies, the vast majority of Cosmo-Knights are off to war in those galaxies leaving the Thundercloud to fend for itself.

Many *Fallen Cosmo-Knights* on the other hand, have either stayed out of the conflict or engage in a lifestyle less than pure or heroic. Fallen Cosmo-Knights see the Thundercloud as an op-

portunity to make money or find ancient magic and technology in a bid to exact revenge or regain power. Others come to the galaxy to find adventure, vent their anger and disappointment through violent work, or join other rogues and dark forces for personal gain. Others hide in shame or become reclusive hermits. Still others see the chaos and injustice going on in the Thundercloud Galaxy as an opportunity for them to redeem themselves as heroes who protect colonists, help indigenous people, battle Space Pirates and champion the innocent. However, most are anti-heroes at best, others are self-serving opportunists, and the worst are dangerous, hate-filled villains. Villainous Fallen Cosmo-Knights may work with or lead Space Pirates, Raiders and other camps of criminals and cutthroats, or throw in with demons or Deevils, travel the galaxy as a sort of gunslinger "Hero Slayer," or go around as independent villains or a force of chaos with little regard for anyone but himself.

41-45% Kreeghor Pirates and Kreeghor Raiders. These rogue Kreeghor are not operating on the part of the TGE. They are rogue soldiers, Space Pirates or criminals who find cargo and supply ships easy targets and colonies attractive opportunities for raids. They are likely to engage in all kinds of crime and villainy, including the slave trade, piracy, kidnaping, robbery, extortion, and murder for hire.

46-50% Kreeghor, Agents of the TGE. The Transgalactic Empire is always happy to stir up trouble for its rivals and enemies like the CCW. The great distance between colony worlds and the chaos of the Scramble makes this all the easier in the Thundercloud Galaxy. Thus, you can find TGE agents, spies and operatives almost anywhere snooping around, helping indigenous people rise up against CCW/Company colonies and stirring up trouble. Of course, they pretend to be "rogue" Kreeghor, but they are secret government agents and are likely to have the resources of a small fleet close at hand. In the alternative, these could be agents of the Splugorth, demons, Deevils, Trensik Mercenaries, Gorgans or any of the space-faring civilizations.

51-60% Monsters. Monsters from ancient ruins. Monsters indigenous to the planet. Monsters or mutants spawned in a colonial laboratory. Monsters created and unleashed upon the world by Gene-Tech, Elders or other aliens. Monsters from the Rifts. Monsters from a crashed spaceship. Vampires unleashed by a Vampire Intelligence. Any of these possibilities and others, can unleash a threat to a colony or indigenous people of the Thundercloud Galaxy. Use the monsters in this book and any other appropriate creatures from any of Palladium's many RPG titles, or use the Monster Creation Tables in this book to create something new.

61-65% Raiders. These villains are the worst of the lot. Raiders hit planet-bound communities with the purpose of looting them of valuables. Raiders are brutal and ruthless, beating or killing anyone who gets in their way. They may also stop to have their way with women, torture people, take slaves, and cause wanton destruction. While the stories of raiders razing a town to the ground are plentiful, such tales are exaggerations. Most Raiders leave the community standing so they may return to loot it again and again. With all the colonies popping up, and new primitive civilizations being discovered (i.e. native inhabitants of the planet), there are more planets and places to plunder than ever. It's a boom time for Raiders. With the law and defense space fleets spread so thin, Raiders, Pirates, smugglers and other crimi-

nals are having an easy time of it. If you don't mind hurting and killing people and robbing them blind, then the life of a Raider is one way to profit from the Scramble.

Raiders may also attack space stations and spacecraft though it puts them in direct conflict with Space Pirates and has led to some bloody feuds. Though Space Pirates are bad, Raiders tend to be the worst of the worst. True cutthroats who kill without conscience and take whatever they want.

66-70% Temporal Raiders. These are notorious alien beings known to use magic to bring raiding parties to targeted locations for attack. As a rule, Temporal Raiders tend to be sophisticated, high-end thieves interested mostly in magic items, powerful artifacts, art treasures, gems, jewelry, high technology, and other coveted treasures. Most are independent operatives out for themselves, but some allow themselves to be hired by powerful beings, organizations and governments, including the Splugorth, Deevils, demons, deities and other supernatural powers, ancient dragons, the Naruni and others. They are found in the Thundercloud Galaxy because of the many opportunities and ancient treasures, both magical and technological. Like demons and Deevils, these mysterious beings covet magic, wealth and power. (See **Rifts® World Book Three: England** for details about these beings.)

71-75% Slavers. Slavers are raiders who specialize in the slave trade. While most Slavers tend to leave colonies and colonists alone for fear of getting the CAF and other lawmen, authorities and heroes after them (trouble they don't need), primitive native inhabitants are often targeted. All the sentient humanoids described in this book are attacked by Slavers, snatched up and carried to distant worlds where they are sold as slaves. Once in a while, colonists, explorers and adventurers away from the safety of a community are also captured for sale as slaves. Though slavery is outlawed in the CCW, the slave trade is alive and well among the Splugorth, Deevils, demons, and various places and civilizations across the Megaverse. Likewise, some primitive native inhabitants practice slavery, particularly when it comes to defeated enemies. The life of a slave may be one of hard labor, servitude or battle as soldiers forced to fight in wars or gladiatorial arenas.

76-80% Space Pirates. These brigands are quickly becoming thick as flies in the Thundercloud Galaxy. As the name suggests, they seldom invade or attack colonies or any planet-bound community. Instead, they target spaceships – cargo and transport ships, to be exact. Space pirates are thieves. They raid and attack cargo ships to steal the goods and valuables they are carrying. They may also attack personnel transports to steal whatever cargo the vessel may have on board, to rob the individual passengers of their belongings, especially gold and jewelry, and sometimes kidnap important people and hold them for ransom or take innocent people to sell into slavery.

When you encounter Space Pirates on a colony world or space station it's because they are present trying to sell or trade their ill-gotten gains or are looking to spend money and find a little rest and relaxation. Space Pirates also deal in smuggling and the buying, selling and distribution of contraband, drugs and other illegal items. Some pirates may also let themselves be hired as armed escorts (in space, on land and at sea), bodyguards and military forces to individuals and communities, including colonists. Of course they can't really be trusted, but desperate and frightened people will look toward anyone during times of need.

81-85% Unknown God. A being who seems to possess the power of a god appears. This being may be one of the legendary Elder Races or a being from another time or dimension.

86-90% Minions of Splugorth. Lord Desslyth the Younger is not happy with the power slip of his aging father and the conquests of the aggressive Kreeghor of the TGE. The Splugorth still wield considerable power in the Thundercloud Galaxy and their Minions and Slavers can be encountered anywhere. They still raid planets, take slaves, and engage in acts of piracy, especially against ships of the TGE and UWW (United Worlds of Warlock) but everyone is fair game.

Furthermore, the Younger has been letting the TGE conquer planets in the Kingdom of Desslyth that have exhausted their planetary resources, suffer other problems or are just too much trouble to bother with any longer. Rather than fight the Kreeghor for planetary possessions no longer profitable or desirable, Lord Desslyth the Younger has begun to "colonize" other planets in the galaxy. He has a particular interest in planets that have ancient ruins and are rich in magic energy (ley lines and nexus points), and has no qualms about taking them even if the planet has already been claimed and colonized by another party – colonists are overrun, taken captive and sold into slavery away from the Three Galaxies.

91-95% Corporate Treachery. Corporate and/or political rivalry and greed can cause a wide range of conflict that can lead to treachery, sabotage, unfair trade practices, side deals, stirring up unrest among the native population, "accidents," space piracy, and rivalry that leads to violence and outright war. The feuding rivals may be members of the same civilization, same industry and even the same corporation jockeying for position, wealth and power over one another.

96-00% Dominator! I was tempted to write "Nuff said," but there can be more to a Dominator than mass destruction and all-out war. Game Masters, use your imagination and explore the possibilities. Perhaps the Dominator appears to find or reclaim something he or she left behind on the planet thousands of years ago. Maybe he's come to protect the planet (and by default the colonists and/or indigenous people) because he has a secret base hidden on it. Or perhaps he has come to protect the indigenous people because he considers them his property, or drops some weird creatures onto the planet for safekeeping, or one of his experiments goes wrong and trouble ensues, or he comes to his favorite world to die, and so on.

Indigenous People on the Colony World

Size of Population

01-20% Small population; outnumbered colonists 10 to 1.

21-40% Medium population; outnumbered colonists 50 to 1.

41-60% Large population; outnumbered colonists 100 to 1.

61-80% Huge population; outnumbered colonists 500 to 1.

81-00% Gigantic population; outnumbered colonists by 1D6x1,000 to 1.



Indigenous People Hostility Index

01-15% Indifferent. The indigenous people don't know exactly what to make of the "new people" and tend to ignore them and go about their business as if they were always there. They will engage in some limited trade, but mostly just walk away and avoid contact and interaction. If the outsiders become pests or too disruptive, the indigenous people relocate themselves, and if possible, hide from them. They fight colonists only if attacked first or cornered, and then only long enough to make good their escape. In the end, these people are likely (01-70%) to be assimilated by the colonists, or slowly pushed into a small corner of their own world (71-00%) where they are treated as oddities and second-class citizens.

16-30% Peaceful. The indigenous people accept, if not openly welcome colonists and other off-worlders. Even if the natives are getting the short end of the stick, they remain peaceful and are likely to be assimilated by the colonists.

31-45% Angry Isolationists. These people only attack outsiders when the intruders come into the traditional lands claimed and/or inhabited by the indigenous people. Otherwise the indigenous people try to avoid the invaders – they want no contact with them. If off-worlders try to "relocate" the native population, that group of people will go to war. Whether other clans, tribes or nations join that battle depends on whether or not they also feel threatened, insulted or attacked.

46-60% Agitated and Discontented. The native people see colonists and off-worlders as a threat and invaders, but they aren't sure what to do about it. They don't necessarily mind sharing their planet, provided the outsiders respect their traditions and stay out

of the traditional lands claimed and/or inhabited by them. However, most colonists are bossy, pushy know-it-alls who have come to save and elevate the primitive indigenous people by forcing their colonial view of morals, culture and civilization on them. When that happens, there are verbal clashes and violence. Furthermore, the indigenous people hold the intrusive colonists/outsider in contempt so they target them for robbery, theft and other trouble. However, unless they are attacked first, these malcontents may harass, rob and beat up an outsider, but seldom kill without good reason. The indigenous people recognize the invaders' superior technology and are careful to avoid it, counter it, and steal it for themselves.

61-80% Angry and Openly Hostile. The native people see colonists and off-worlders as cold-hearted invaders and rivals to be harassed, plundered and slain. The indigenous people engage in random attacks and acts of violence, raids to cause destruction and terror, raids to steal food, medicine, weapons and other supplies, engage in acts of sabotage, steal livestock and cause all sorts of trouble. When colonists and outsiders enter what the indigenous people consider their territory/nation/homeland, even if only passing through or coming in peace to talk, they should expect to be stopped, challenged, robbed, threatened and harassed. If the indigenous people are insulted, embarrassed, antagonized, threatened or attacked, they respond with hate and violence, and fight back, rob, and capture or kill the outsiders responsible. Further retribution leveled at the colonists – even if they were not responsible for what happened – is very likely.

81-00% Outraged and Warlike. The native people see colonists and off-worlders as invaders to be driven away or destroyed. As far as they are concerned, they are at war in a life and death

struggle to drive the alien invaders from their world. Outsiders are not safe anywhere and are attacked at sight.

Tech Level of the Indigenous People of the Thundercloud Galaxy

01-20% Stone Age Hunters and Gatherers. These are tribal people and probably nomads who travel following the game animals they hunt and moving to different locales depending on the time of year and seasons, like migratory birds flying south for the winter.

Tools and weapons are simple and basic: Tools are made of bone, wood and stone. Sewing needles are made from carved bone, teeth, claws and ivory, or possibly the quills of animals or plants. Spoons, ladles and such are made from wood, clothing from the hides of animals (buckskin). Knives and blades for hand axes, sickles and similar “edged” tools are shaped from chipped stone in a process called “knapping.”

Weapons are limited to stone blades and blunt weapons: Wooden staves, wooden clubs and cudgels (1D6 damage) and possibly throwing sticks (1D6 damage), as well as wood and stone hand-axes/tomahawk (1D6 damage), hammers and war clubs (2D4 to 2D6 damage) that have stone heads lashed to a shaped wood handle. All are S.D.C. weapons that can be surprisingly effective and deadly.

Stone Age long-range weapons: Limited to *throwing sticks* (think boomerang and African throwing sticks, but are uncommon compared to spears and other weapons; 1D4 damage). *Spears and javelins* (both of which may have a sharpened end hardened with tar, or a stone blade fastened to the end, and inflict 1D6 to 1D8 damage), *slings and slingshots* that hurl stones (1D4 to 1D6 damage), and the *short bow and arrows* (1D6 damage per arrow and has an effective range of 340 feet/104 m).

Armor: If any armor is used at all, it is *soft leather* that wraps around the forearms and lower legs, and may include the addition of wood or leather shin guards, arm bands, leather cloak or cape, and possibly soft leather gloves, additional padding in strategic locations, and a wood or bone lamellar breastplate. Typical Leather Armor Rating (A.R.): 9 and 20 S.D.C. Armor supplemented with wood or bone A.R. 10 and 30 S.D.C. Patchwork armor incorporating modern metal, plastic and/or ceramic pieces stolen or salvaged from the advanced colonists: A.R. 12 and 38 S.D.C. (Make it 2D6+28 M.D.C. when Mega-Damage materials are used.)

Housing: Domiciles range from tents made from animal hides and huts made of sticks, mud and animal hides, to living in caves and under the stars.

Transportation. Foot power: walking and running to riding animals, probably bareback.

21-40% Stone Age Builders and Farmers. They use the same tools and weapons as the Hunter and Gatherers, but have learned to grow crops and raise livestock, which also means they are no longer nomads, but have settled land and built permanent homes and structures.

Housing: Settlements are the equivalent of towns, with domiciles that range from homes and buildings made of clay or sod, to those made of wood or stone. They also build fences and animal pens made of wood, and walls, statues and monoliths made of stone. Think Mayans, Aztecs, and even ancient Egyptians without the use of metal. The size and sophistication of the structures depend on the culture, society and level of technology even

among Neolithic people and primitive stone builders. These people are also likely to use color dyes and paint, and wear jewelry made of seeds, bone, teeth, coral and polished stones. Standing stones, monuments and megalithic open air sites like Stonehenge are also part of the builders’ culture. They have also learned to work with clay to make pottery, weave baskets, weave clothing, create works of art and may even have a written language.

Stone weapons and all else are the same as the Stone Age Hunters and Gatherers.

41-60% The Early Metal Age. For the purpose of this book, we are combining the use of soft metals, such as bronze and copper, into one category. These people are much more advanced and fall into the category of the Greek, Roman and Egyptian Empires at their height.

Early Metal Age civilizations use a wide range of tools and weapons made of copper and bronze, from spoons and forks to saws and hammers, to knives, short swords (1D6 damage) and metal tipped heads for spears and arrows (same damage as stone). They also make elaborate jewelry, work in all soft metals, including silver and gold, use paints and dyes, and make exquisite pottery.

Armor (Bronze): The most sophisticated armor is made of bronze metal (think Greek and Roman warriors) with metal helmets, vambraces, gauntlets and leggings. The armor may be combined with padding and leather, and there are a variety of other armor that included soft, hard and studded leather armor. Typical Bronze Armor Rating (A.R.): 14 and has 2D6+46 S.D.C. Includes metal breastplate, helmet, vambraces for arms and legs, supplemented with soft or hard leather. Patchwork armor incorporating modern metal, plastic and/or ceramic pieces stolen or salvaged from the advanced colonists: A.R. 15 and 2D6+50 S.D.C. (Make it 2D6+45 M.D.C. when Mega-Damage materials are used.)

Housing: Wood to stone structures that range from simple houses to stone bridges, grand temples, and coliseums. Towns and cities are large compared to early standard (as many as 80,000).

Transportation. Ranges from walking to saddled riding animals, drawn carts, wagons and chariots, as well as sail and row boats. Some alien cultures may ride flying animals.

61-80% Advanced Metal Cultures: The Iron Age and Medieval Technology. This culture has discovered hard metal and use iron and iron alloys. They are comparatively advanced, make elaborate suits of armor, tools, weapons and clothing. Think Medieval England, Europe and the Middle East. They have a wide range of armor, tools and weapons made of iron, from spoons and forks to saws and hammers, to swords, battle axes and pole arms, as well as metal tipped heads for spears and arrows. Metal weapons and tools last longer and much greater precision is possible. These people also have more complex machines and devices that have more metal gears and moving parts and have probably mastered making glass, paper, and a variety of fabrics. The civilization’s use of other metals is also more advanced, enabling the people to make superior jewelry, detailed and elaborate works of art and a wider range of boats and buildings.

Iron Weapons: Iron provides greater hardness, strength and durability. Iron weapons chop right through bronze armor and weapons, and provide greater protection and power. A wide range of iron weapons is possible. *Throwing stars and blades* – think Japanese shurikens and throwing spikes (1D4 damage) or the much larger and heavier African throwing irons (1D6 to 2D4 damage), but are uncommon compared to spears and other weapons (1D4

damage). *Spears and javelins* (both of which have sharp metal tips or spear head that inflict 2D4 damage or 2D6 for large spears), *pole arms* with long shafts and a wide range of forks (2D6 damage) and large blades (3D6 damage). Large swords are now possible (2D6 to 3D6 damage) and even short swords are lethal (1D6 to 2D4 damage). The battle axe (3D6 damage) and other large axes (2D6 damage), along with weapons like large swords and pole arms, are the product of hard metal technology, so is the ball and chain (2D6 damage), metal war hammer, the mace and morning star (2D6 damage). Better technology and craftsmanship has also led to the long bow and/or crossbow and better arrows (2D6 damage per arrow and has an effective range of 640 feet/195 m).

Armor (Iron): A wide range of body armor is available: A full suit of chain mail has an A.R. of 14 and 2D6+40 S.D.C. Double Mail has A.R. 15 and 2D6+46. Scale armor has an A.R. 16 and 3D6+60 S.D.C. Plate and Chain has an A.R. of 15 and 4D6+80 S.D.C., and full plate armor for knights has an A.R. 17 and 5D6+140 S.D.C. Helmets are metal and so are many shields. Patchwork armor incorporating modern metal, plastic and/or ceramic pieces stolen or salvaged from the advanced colonists are the equivalent of plate and chain or full plate armor. (Make protection 4D6+75 M.D.C. when Mega-Damage materials are used.)

Housing: Building materials have also improved. There are more varieties and cuts of wood, brick and mortar, tar and concrete, and doors, gates, and fences may be made of iron or made with iron hinges and handles. Structures range from simple wood houses to brick homes, grand cathedrals, and castles. Massive buildings and fortifications are possible. Cities are large compared to early standard (as many as 250,000).

Transportation. Ranges from walking to saddled riding animals, drawn carts, wagons and chariots, as well as boats and sailing ships. Some alien cultures may ride flying animals.

81-90% Industrial Age. This is the age of machines and factories. Technology ranges from the equivalent of 18th and 19th Century Europe and America, think the Eras of British Imperialism to the American Civil War and the Old West. Steam engines, the cotton gin, and early trains are the latest technology. Automobiles, aircraft, radio and talking movies are still a generation or two away. Guns – kinetic projectile firearms such as the revolver, rifle, and shotgun – have replaced the sword and bows and arrows.

91-00% Nuclear or Space Age. This civilization can range from the equivalent of World War II era, to Cold War era, to early Twenty-First Century Earth. Automatic weapons, explosives, bombs, automobiles, aircraft, and modern buildings and communications are all in place. If on the most modern end of the spectrum, computers and advanced communications are the norm, and genetic engineering, bionics, robotics and space travel are the developing technologies of the new age.

For this planet to be a candidate for CCW colonization, the indigenous people cannot dominate more than 40% of their planet. For an advanced civilization of this technology level that probably means their world has suffered a natural or man-made catastrophe that has damaged or decimated half or more of their world. This catastrophe could be self-inflicted or the result of an invasion or attack by a more advanced, space-faring people who have no regard for the rights of others. The TGE, Minions of Splugorth, Dominators, Gene-Splicers and others come to mind.

Note: A civilization more advanced than the last category will dominate their planet and not be a candidate for colonization un-

der the rules and practices of the CCW. However, they can be invited to join the CCW, engage in trade, and receive advisors and counseling to become a more active member in the galactic community. Such worlds may also be targeted by aggressive space-faring civilizations, like the TGE, for conquest.

Origin of the People

01-10% Outcasts or castaways. These beings are the survivors of a crashed spaceship or space ark, a group of refugees or outcasts who either came to this world or were exiled there long ago. Without the resources of their civilization, and left to fend for themselves in a hostile and untamed environment, they devolved and have forgotten their past. Today they believe they are indigenous to the world they inhabit.

11-20% Slaves or experiments. These people once served an advance race of beings who created them through genetic engineering for labor or space exploration. They either escaped their creators and started their own civilization, or became stranded on a distant planet where they have managed to survive and develop their own culture and civilization. 01-50% The people have a creation myth based on their true origins. 51-00% The people have no knowledge of their past.

An alternative possibility. The people were created as a social-scientific experiment in which they were designed and placed on the planet where their development and progress as a society has been closely monitored. Question: Is the advanced race responsible (Dominator, Gene-Tech, Elder Race, etc.) still watching, or are these people on their own? If their creator is still watching, will the intrusion of off-world colonists be accepted and observed, or will the watchers intervene to “remove” the intruders so the experiment and the people’s natural progression may continue?

21-30% Newly evolved. These are the indigenous people who evolved through natural progression into the beings they are and the civilization they have.

31-40% Devolved from an advanced, high-tech civilization. The ancestors of these beings were once members of an advanced civilization. They may be living on their home world and place of origin, or on a colony world they mistakenly believe to be the birthplace of their civilization. They have no clue about their past, and any ancient ruins are regarded as alien or a lost civilization unrelated to their own. The advanced civilization may have suffered natural, social, or self-inflicted catastrophe that destroyed their old way of life and sent them back into the Stone Age. If their tech-level is better than that, it’s because their civilization is once again developing.

41-50% Devolved and mutated from an advanced civilization. These people share the same story of a rise to greatness and power, only to fall back into the Stone Age. However, self-inflicted events or outside forces have also mutated and changed them to the point that you’d never know they and the old civilization were ever related. They know nothing of their ancient history and neither does anyone else.

51-60% Evolved pets. These people were once the “pets” of a powerful, advanced race of beings such as the Dominators, Elder Races or Splugorth. One day their “masters” disappeared or the advanced civilization of their masters was destroyed or fell to ruin. Their masters are likely to have perished with their ancient civilization, but the *pets* survived and have evolved into their own autonomous people.

61-70% Crumbling civilization. Be they Stone Age tribal people or a low-tech civilization, these people still know their past as an advanced civilization – or at least bits and pieces of it. However, they have lost their technology, and lack the knowledge to preserve or reverse engineer it. They don't even know how to maintain or repair the old tech, and depending on how far they have fallen from their old heights, may look upon it as magical or supernatural. They have only a few remnants of their old civilization left.

71-80% Survivors of a collapsed civilization. These people completely lost their history and culture. They are a shadow of who they once were and are comparatively primitive. However, they are rediscovering their past and striving to learn who they once were. They aspire to become a technologically advanced civilization again, and try to learn from the ruins and relics of their past. Thus, such ancient artifacts are important and precious to them, and they become incensed if outsiders/invaders/colonists take, bury or destroy them.

81-90% A plundered civilization. This once technologically advanced civilization began to crumble long ago. They might have been able to stop their decline, except their world was plundered for its resources and technology. Even as their civilization sunk lower and lower, outsiders came to rob them of their secrets of technology and science, as well as their manufacturing capabilities. So great was their technology (magic?), that to this day, unearthed ancient relics and artifacts are a marvel and often still work. These amazing (magic or Techno-Wizard) artifacts are marvels coveted by all who learn of them and continue to be plundered by the likes of demons, Deevils, Splugorth, Dominators and Fallen Cosmo-Knights.

It is ironic, but the indigenous people have changed so much that neither they nor outsiders attribute the ancient wonders to them. It is probably best that the people don't know who they once were and do not try to rediscover their past heritage and lost technology. For they must have once been one of the Elder Races or on the verge of becoming one before something knocked them back to the Stone Age hundreds of thousands of years ago.

Though they have no connection to their past, they are angry that outsiders have stolen their history. This culture should be no more advanced than Medieval.

91-00% Transplanted Civilization. This is a race of people from someplace else in the Three Galaxies, outside the Three Galaxies or even another dimension. It is a surprise to find them in the Thundercloud. This can be an existing race of people from any Palladium game setting, but their culture is now uniquely their own and their tech-level is low; roll on the usual table to determine the Tech-Level.

Sacred Technology (Optional)

If the Game Master so desires it, the indigenous people may have a few "sacred" items, relics or artifacts from their past that still function. These could be things like an energy rifle, force field or other high-tech (or magic) device with a regenerating power source, and still works even though it is thousands (even tens of thousands) of years old. In a game context, it should be a device or handful of devices that can have a direct impact on the player characters, threats and enemies/attackers. The bits of ancient technology should be played for fun, surprise and drama. In all cases, there should only be one to a few "sacred" ancient items

available to the indigenous people, but depending on the situation and the G.M., that could be expanded to one or several items for each clan, tribe, kingdom or nation.

Roll on the following tables for a random determination or pick one. As always, we invite Game Masters to unleash their imaginations and whip up something not in the tables.

Sub-Table 1: Who Possesses the Sacred Technology?

Someone special and important is the keeper of this valuable and ancient sacred artifact(s).

01-20% The Chosen One. Only the chosen one (or perhaps Chosen Few, plural) can use the ancient artifact(s). The Chosen may have political or theological ramifications, or require specific I.Q., M.E., P.P.E., I.S.P. or genetic requirements in order to use the Sacred Technology.

21-40% Shaman or other tribal, religious or sacred leader. Only the spiritual leader possesses and uses the Sacred Technology. Or only the spiritual leader possesses the relic, and only he can activate and/or bequeath the artifact to a chosen protector/warrior.

41-60% The leader. The leader of the people has access to the sacred item(s). He or she could be a tribal chief or war chief, warlord, king, or Emperor. If desired, several devices could be used by a pair, triumvirate or small group of 4-8 leaders, heroes, elders, wise men or keepers of sacred knowledge. Each ancient item wielded by these elite people could be the same or different.

61-80% Elite warriors. Probably a group of elite champions and heroes like the Knights of the Round Table, or a group charged with a special purpose or mission like the Knights Templar.

81-00% Elite group or organization. This could be a specific group of elite warriors, defenders, spies, assassins, priests, elders, cultists or clan.

Sub-Table 2: The Sacred Technology Artifact

Roll percentile dice for a random determination or pick one or two, or come up with your own. Game Masters, the description of the Sacred Artifact is left deliberately vague so you can tailor it to your game and situation. The artifact could be extremely powerful or completely ordinary by the standards of an advanced civilization. Still, it should be a fun moment when the Space Pirates, intrusive colonists or player characters having an easy time against Stone Age warriors suddenly come face to face with a giant robot or trio of warriors clad in flying power armor.

Note: A G.M. may assign one or more of these items to one or more native inhabitants. However, as fun as this can be, not all indigenous people will have a working weapon or Sacred Technological Relic from the past.

01-05% Vibro-Blade(s). Ancient Vibro-Blades with renewable energy supply (solar, self-generating, magic, etc.) that inflict Mega-Damage and can parry M.D. weapons. If more advanced than the Vibro-Weapon technology of the Three Galaxies, the weapons are likely to inflict 1D6 or 2D6 more damage.

06-10% Energy Weapon(s). This could be as simple as one to a dozen lasers or particle beam pistols and/or rifles. Damage should be at least comparable to current weapons in the Three Galaxies, but as advanced, alien technology, could be one or two dice greater, and range could be 10-40% farther.

11-15% Mega-Damage Body Armor. One or more suits of environmental body armor – probably with exoskeleton enhance-

ment to strength and speed. They may have jet packs or limited flight capabilities, or just offer M.D.C. protection.

16-20% Mega-Damage Power Armor with energy weapons and Vibro-Blade. The armor either self-repairs, or has a self-charging M.D.C. force field. It should be comparable to anything Naruni Enterprises has to offer.

21-25% Force Field. A personal body field generated by a device hung from a belt, carried in or hooked to a pocket, or worn like a wristwatch or as a piece of jewelry. The amount of M.D.C. should be considerable (200-800 M.D.C. sounds reasonable – roll 2D4x100 for random determination – 1D6x1,000 M.D.C. for very advanced technology). Depleted M.D.C. recovers at a rate of 10% per hour. The device itself, even if tiny, has 1D4x100 M.D.C. and requires a Called Shot with -4 to strike by the shooter to be targeted for attacks. Of course, it is protected while the force field is up. **Note:** The force field is likely to require being turned off to fire energy weapons, but handheld melee weapons (swords, spears, etc.) can be used to full effect.

26-30% God's Messenger. The leader of the clan, tribe, kingdom or nation is counseled by God's Messenger – some sort of robot or magic automaton with an advanced artificial intelligence (A.I.), or magical construct with the mind or life essence of an ancient alien (Elder?), mage, dragon, or supernatural being. The people accept it as an angel or other type of messenger from god. The robot or automaton may be good or evil and truly cares about the people, or it may have its own agenda. It should be extremely powerful (at least equal to or twice as powerful as a *Naruni Repo-Bot* or *Iron Juggernaut* from Rifts Earth). Whatever it is, it works to protect (possibly control and lead) the indigenous people and may function as a general, warlord, wizard-advisor, or as the secret power behind the throne.

31-35% Hover Cycles or Rocket Bikes. The warriors of an elite cavalry have fast and agile hover cycles or rocket bikes with built-in laser weapons (4D6 M.D. per blast, 2,000 foot/610 m range, effectively unlimited payload). In the alternative, the "combat vehicle" could be a robot horse or Pegasus, or giant robot lion, insect or other mechanical animal.

36-40% Lightning Bringer. A gauntlet, pistol or rifle that fires bolts of electricity that inflict 1D4x10 M.D. or 1D6x10 M.D. per bolt, are +2 to strike, and have a range of 2,000 feet (610 m) for gauntlets and pistols, 6,000 feet (1,828 m) for rifles. Unlimited power supply. Each blast counts as one melee attack.

41-45% Lightning Defense System. This can be a tech or magic defense system that creates a sort of defensive bubble that destroys incoming missiles and projectiles leveled at a particular city or area. Anything that comes within range is zapped and destroyed long before it hits the populated area. Energy blasts are not affected, but the source of the energy (flying aliens, power armor, aircraft, space fighter, etc.) will fall under attack. What looks like lightning bolts or flashes of energy fire at incoming aerial attackers. Damage is 5D6x10 M.D. per blast at targets smaller than a bomber, and double damage against larger attackers. This is very much a defense system and cannot be used to launch an attack. Range: Fires at any aircraft or spaceship that comes within 10 miles (16 km), and one mile (1.6 km) for small, man-sized targets. If magical, it is likely to tie into and draw power from ley lines and nexus points.

46-50% Sacred Healing. This could be an ancient ruin, secret room, cave, grotto, pool, or device that heals the injured. This could be done via a team of medical robots, an automated medi-

cal chamber, nano-medical robots (the size of ants or smaller so it seems like a miracle), healing pool with nano-machines and nutrient fluids, or magic.

51-55% Medicine Lodge. Medicine lodges were places of vision and inspiration. In the case of ancient technology, this could be an ancient ruin where a computer or artificial intelligence, or supernatural or magic force "speaks" to select leaders and people via dreams, Telepathy or artificial means (holograms, transmissions direct to the brain, etc.). It may work on anyone with the proper focus or mental attributes or only with psychics, and gives them precognition and other psychic premonitions and sensations that warn and protect them. Rather than a place, this could be a helmet, headdress, or skullcap that is worn.

56-60% Knowledge Giver. This could be a machine or device that instills the user with temporary knowledge (lasts 1D6+4 hours) in any given area, from cooking or medicine to combat or repairing (or sabotaging) a spacecraft or using advanced technology. Or the device could provide benign information only, such as farming, healing, building, mending, crafts, artistry and so on. The device could be a machine one must sit or lay down in, or something that is placed on the head. Or it could be something that must be worn on the head the entire time the knowledge is available. After the duration ends, the knowledge imparted is completely gone and forgotten. The device cannot be used on the same person again for 24 hours. To do otherwise is dangerous: 01-50% the individual shuts down and is in a coma for 6D6 hours; 51-75% the individual has the knowledge he seeks but his mind is like that of an eight year old child (reduce all other skills -50%, attacks per melee and all combat skills are also reduced by half, and the penalties lasts for 6D6+6 hours); 76-00% lucked out and gets the knowledge without obvious problems other than a throbbing headache and a penalty of -1 to save vs psionic attack for the duration he possesses the special knowledge. Only one area of knowledge can be imbued at a time.

61-65% Teleportation Device, Man-Portable. A personal teleportation device hung from a belt, strapped to the body, carried in or hooked to a pocket, or worn like a wristwatch or as a piece of jewelry. The device can teleport the user to a location up to 10 miles (16 km), but the location must be visible to him, or a known location with pre-programmed coordinates (default setting includes the ruins or cave where the device was first discovered). It can perform 1D6+4 Teleportations per day before requiring 24 hours to recharge.

66-70% Teleportation Device, Large Scale. This can be a large machine on a mobile platform or a machine built into a stationary location (i.e. a temple or secret location built on ancient ruins). If mobile, the Teleportation device goes with the people it Teleports and can Teleport them from one location to another. Since the indigenous people probably lack the advanced tech capabilities to program or set the machine's destinations, these are probably ancient settings to what may be open wilderness (where a city or base once stood) or ancient ruins above or below ground. The location could be only a few hundred miles away, but is likely to be some distance, like a different continent or other part of the world. In fact, Gatherers and Hunters may use the device to migrate to a warmer and more hospitable location to avoid extreme changes in weather or season, as well as a means to hide or escape (seeming to vanish) from invaders, colonists and other hostile forces. Depending on the G.M., the device can Teleport hundreds, thousands or tens of thousands at a time.

If stationary, the machine itself is located in a secret and sacred place, such as ancient ruins, a secret, ancient underground compound, or a temple, church or fortification built upon ancient ruins (not that you can tell). It Teleports people to one or a few predetermined locations where a similar functioning Teleportation machine is located. The locations are to places that once had strategic or commercial significance to the lost civilization. Today that location might be a forest or desert, but in the past it was a city, town or military base. While most of these locations are on the surface of the planet, one or a few could be to a secret underground base (still functioning on some level if there is another Teleport machine there), or even a location on a moon, orbiting asteroid or space station around the planet.

In the alternative, the device might carry the people to an entirely different world or dimension, but just one. Again, this could be ideal for Hunter/Gatherer societies who may travel to the other world or dimension to escape bad weather and changing climates on a transdimensional migratory pattern. The indigenous people may not even realize they are on a different world, or they may have myths that explain how their god has given them two or three worlds to live on. The tribes' reappearance would certainly surprise and confuse colonists who thought they were settling an uninhabited planet.

71-75% Psionic Booster. A helmet, headdress, crown, or cap that boosts the wearer's natural psychic abilities (increases the number of abilities, or provides 1D4+4 Super Psionic powers and quadruples I.S.P.).

76-85% Magic Artifact. This could be almost anything from the sublime to the amazing. Game Masters, we leave this to your imagination. Remember, ancient super-technology and magic ar-

tifacts of great power are exactly what the demons and Deevils in the Minion War are searching for to claim for themselves. Thus, they could make an attempt to grab the relic, and enslave, torture or destroy the indigenous people or colonists while they are at it.

86-90% Hidden Space Fleet! Hidden someplace in an undetectable underground military complex, moon base, secret asteroid base or Dimensional Pocket, is a space fleet. There are 2D6x100 space fighters, 2D6x10 power armor units, 1D4x10 light cruisers, 1D4x10 heavy cruisers, 2D6 battler cruisers, 1D6 battleships, 1D4 carriers and one dreadnaught equal to anything the CCW or Naruni Enterprises has. The space fighters and power armor are so advanced they link directly to the pilot/gunner to respond to his every movement, pretty much fly themselves, and all the gunner has to do is fight, dodge and fire his weapons (voice and visual instructions teach the pilot all he needs to know, and practice makes perfect). "Pilots" are teleported to the secret space fleet via one of several sacred temples.

91-95% Divine Protector. God's servant. Doomsday Machine. This is one or a handful of giant combat robots or war machines of considerable power. The machine is either powered by an advanced computer or an A.I., or by the mind or life essence of a living warrior placed inside the machine. This device should be something capable of taking on an entire Naruni company of Repo-Bots, and should have a self-generating force field or living metal that recovers M.D.C. at a good pace.

96-00% God's Army. In times of emergency, a small army of (1D6x100 or 1D6x1,000 depending on their power level) combat robots appear to help and/or protect the indigenous people. The robots have advanced computer brains but are not A.I.

101 Adventures Based on the Discovery of Ruins

By Kevin Siembieda – with additional text and ideas
by Matthew Clements, Greg Diaczuk, Carl Gleba,
Alex Marciniszyn and Julius Rosenstein.

In all cases, the ruins are ancient, going back thousands of years. Roll percentile dice or pick one of the following:

01-20% 1D6x1,000 years.

21-40% 3D6x1,000 years.

41-60% 1D6x10,000 years.

61-80% 3D6x10,000 years.

81-00% 2D4x100,000 years.

Note: Sometimes even older.

Unless stated otherwise (because of outside or unusual influence), these are truly ancient ruins. They are almost always underground because the passage of time over a period of thousands to tens of thousands of years has buried them under dust, dirt and debris. Thus even structures that were built on the surface are many (sometimes hundreds or thousands of) feet underground. Books, paper, scrolls, fabric/cloth, furniture, wood, and most other items that deteriorate will have, over time, crumbled to dust. Depending on the environment and amount of time passed, even plastic, rubber, resin and ceramics are likely to have turned to dust or deteriorated into bits and pieces. Only items made of stone and metal will have survived, and moisture, extreme temperatures, water and wind erosion can destroy them.

Mega-Damage materials are the most likely to have survived unscathed, but non-M.D.C. and light M.D.C. (under 20 points) materials, components and internal workings of machines are likely to have deteriorated to nothing. Mega-Damage materials more than 190,000 years old are likely to have lost 1D6x10% of their M.D.C., and continue to lose 2D4% of their M.D.C. for each additional 100,000 years. Likewise, moving machine parts and openings are likely to be fused or clogged with dirt, dust, grime and fossilized organic material.

Magic items and machines that incorporate magic or have magic energy supplies, as well as self-repairing machines and those in stasis, or protected by dimensional magic or other dimensional forces (Pocket Dimensions, Time Holes, etc.), may survive millions of years with little or no deterioration or damage. In fact, some ancient items, such as those placed in a Time Hole or other type of stasis, might be, in effect, like new. So might rare weapons, devices and vehicles maintained over millennia.

In 99.9% of the cases, the civilizations responsible for the creation of these ruins, artifacts and devices are unknown. Only bits and pieces of even the most advanced civilizations are likely to have survived the passage of such long periods of time.

Game Masters, the following **101 Ruin Settings & Adventures** are presented as the seed of an idea. They represent just some of the possibilities. We invite you to expand upon those



presented in the pages that follow, and to create your own. Unleash your imaginations and have fun.

01% Cave of the Ancients

A flat stone slab covered in alien inscriptions lies against the mouth of a cave. Legends among the local people tell of an underground world abandoned by a previous race that has promised to return in the future. That was over 3,000 years ago. What the locals know is minimal and fragmentary: There is a black door, the living statue, and great machines. They have never explored it themselves, because it is taboo, and because it is said those who dare enter are never seen again.

Removing the slab that covers the entrance enough to squeeze inside reveals a short tunnel. It leads to a large chamber. The chamber is lit with a dim light coming from a glowing orb in the ceiling. To one side is a pile of metal parts and panel sections, possibly from machines or a spacecraft. On the other side of the chamber is a black door in the wall. This door, a little bigger than human size, is actually a non-lethal energy field of some kind. Anyone can walk through it without ill effect. Beyond the “black door” is a control room and a humanoid robot that is slumped against a wall. Everything is dust free and looks new, as if no time has passed. Anyone entering the room causes the robot to awaken and stand up. It makes no hostile moves. Further exploration reveals several underground levels of what was once an advanced manufacturing complex. There are an additional one

thousand robots and four hundred laser rifles (3D6 M.D. per single blast, 2,000 foot/610 m range, 20 shots per E-Clip) in storage. It looks like it would be possible to get the production line operational again but raw materials are needed. The factory produces the robots, but it could be modified to make other things. **Note:** There are two big questions that remain unanswered: Are the robots dangerous, and what is it that has prevented the locals from entering and past explorers from ever being seen again?

02% Mystery of Star Hill

When first spotted, the twinkling starlike lights that hovered over this low hill at night caused archaeologists some concern. Were they a warning or an invitation? Excavations uncovered nine metal rods about three feet (0.9 m) in length. Each carried a single marking, all different. Experts who examined the rods were about to consign them to the unknown purpose category, but one worker learned their secret.

While handling one, he had a vision of a being instructing him in their use. 1) This light blue rod can fire a burst of electricity, 200 feet (61 m). Damage can be 3D6 S.D.C. or 2D6 M.D. It can fire once per melee round with a maximum of 10 shots per hour. 2) The red rod fires a burst of flame, 30 feet (9.1 m) and can inflict 1D6 S.D.C. damage or 2D6 M.D. It can unleash a maximum of 15 bursts of flame per hour. 3) The silver rod unleashes a paralysis beam. Range is 100 feet (30.5 m). The narrow beam can paralyze one S.D.C. humanoid for 1D4+4 minutes and can be fired

once per 12 hours. 16 or higher to save. **4)** The yellow rod fires an ion energy beam that does 6D6 S.D.C. damage or 4D6 M.D. up to 500 feet (152 m). Payload is six blasts per hour. **5)** The white rod creates a force field that moves with the wielder. Diameter: 3 feet (0.9 m), and 1D4 inches (2.5 - 10 cm) above the height of the wielder. It provides 1D6x10+80 M.D.C. for 10 minutes, twice per day. **6)** The black rod creates a zone of impenetrable darkness for a 300 foot (91.4 m) diameter centered on the wielder. Duration: 10 minutes, twice per day. **7)** The copper rod levitates the wielder to a maximum height of 100 feet (30.5 m), 10 times per 24 hours. The levitation lasts for up to 20 minutes. **8)** The semi-transparent rod gives the wielder limited flight capabilities for 60 minutes, three times per 24 hours. Maximum speed of 30 mph (48 km). Maximum altitude of 2,000 feet (610 m). **9)** The gold rod creates a transparent shield of energy that can deflect all types of energy blasts (no damage to person with the rod) and makes him impervious to radiation, heat and fire. Duration: 20 minutes, three times per 24 hours. **Note:** The rods do not communicate their function nor work for anyone who is not of a Principled or Scrupulous alignment. They were designed for construction and repair work, but also have limited applications for combat and adventuring.

03% Silver Lizards

A large area of flat, grassy land ideal for farming is plagued by robotic lizards about the size of a squirrel. They only attack humans or humanoid beings, leaving animals alone. Additional observation has revealed that they stay in a number of burrows located in a perimeter around some ruins in the area. Their sharp teeth and claws are their weapons. As best as anyone can tell, they are guarding the area and do not attack people after a certain point. Are they controlled by somebody? Are they automated and functioning on a pre-set program?

Each robot has 2D6+10 M.D.C., four melee attacks per round, inflict 1D6 S.D.C. damage with their bite, 2D4 S.D.C. from claw strikes, 1D4 M.D. with a power strike (counts as two attacks), can Climb 90%, leap 15 feet (4.6 m) high or across, and have a speed of 25 mph (40 km).

04% Crash Site

The ruins of a small cargo transport has been found in the bottom of a ravine, and the pilot is dead. The fuselage is broken open in the middle. Anyone going inside to investigate finds only one, large, unmarked M.D.C. shipping container. Inside are two monsters (or alien beings) that immediately awaken when the crate is opened and attack! (The creatures remain silent until the crate is opened.) They were being shipped to a zoo or laboratory when the transport ship was hit by pirates and this shuttle tried to make an escape, but was shot down. The creatures are a mated pair and the female is pregnant. This world is a new environment for the creatures, but they should be able to adapt and thrive. That could become a serious problem if the things breed in the wild.

05% Alien Visitors

A couple of large, alien cargo spacecraft and 2D4 space fighters have landed in the wilderness not too far from the colony. They clearly know something our player characters, indigenous people and colonists don't. They come in the middle of the night

and are gone before sunrise. Anyone who comes to investigate gets blasted or taken captive. These aliens (from the Corkscrew or Anvil Galaxy, or they could be Exiles, Minions of Splugorth, demons, Deevils, Space Pirates, etc.) know about ancient ruins at this location and are looting the site (can be taking ancient and magical artifacts, ancient machines and technology, collectible relics, raw materials, etc.). The plan is to get as much as they can (whatever it is) and leave before the locals find out or muster enough resistance to impede their efforts.

Or the alien visitors may be going into the ruins in search of something specific. If the native inhabitants know about the ruins, they may consider them haunted (especially if the aliens return at regular intervals or have been periodically exploring the ruins for years), or sacred ground, or nothing important.

06% Alien Visitors

A couple of large, alien cargo spacecraft and 2D4 space fighters have landed in the wilderness not too far from the colony. They clearly know something our player characters, indigenous people and colonists don't. They come in the middle of the night and are gone before sunrise. Anyone who comes to investigate gets blasted or taken captive. While here, the aliens (from the Corkscrew or Anvil Galaxy, or they could be Exiles, Minions of Splugorth, demons, Deevils, Space Pirates, etc.) have decided to raid the colony or the indigenous people, heading for warehouses and other buildings where they can get food, livestock or supplies. Or worse, taking people as slaves! Or perhaps the aliens decide to take people as subjects for probes and experimentation.

07% Alien Visitors

A couple of large, alien shuttle craft filled with armed troops (at least a few dozen) and 1D6 space fighters have landed in the wilderness not too far from the colony. They clearly know something our player characters, indigenous people and colonists don't. They come in the middle of the night and are gone before sunrise. Anyone who comes to investigate gets blasted or taken captive. The aliens (from the Corkscrew or Anvil Galaxy, or they could be Exiles, Minions of Splugorth, demons, Deevils, Space Pirates, etc.) discover that the relic they are searching for has been recently recovered by the colonists or the indigenous people, or a band of adventurers (the player characters, perhaps). The aliens want it and take cruel and deadly action to get it.

In the alternative, the aliens find the coveted item is missing and *assume* the locals or our heroes have the item they want. Problem is, they really do not have it and have no idea where it is. The item may have been found and taken cons ago or last week.

08% Alien Visitors

A large shuttle or two and 1D4 space fighters have landed in the wilderness not too far from the colony. They clearly know something our player characters, indigenous people and colonists don't. They come in the middle of the night and are gone before sunrise. Anyone who comes to investigate gets blasted and chased away. The aliens (from the Corkscrew or Anvil Galaxy, or they could be Exiles, Minions of Splugorth, demons, Deevils, Space Pirates, etc.) discover the ruins weren't so dead after all, and the alien grave robbers have unleashed something ancient

and terrible (supernatural monster, a creature in stasis or from another dimension, a creature of magic, a killer robot, several killer robots, etc.). The aliens go to the nearest community to give them a frantic warning short on details, say they are sorry, and blast off, leaving the locals (and our heroes, the player characters) to deal with "their mistake." Good luck.

09% Creatures from the Mountains

Farmers or tribes near a local mountain have been slowly losing livestock. At first, local predators were blamed until someone spotted what he called a "Gnome" near a chicken coop. The three foot (3 m) tall humanoid had slightly greenish skin and wore simple clothing, with a small knife in a sheath dangling from its belt. It was not frightened by the farmers or tribesmen at all. It then went in and left with a sack filled with chickens. The farmer believes the being controlled him in some way, making him unable to do anything but watch. There is a tribe of these cave dwellers living on the mountain inside caves that might be ancient tunnels.

10% Home, Sweet Home

Strange lights and noise have been reported at one or more sites of some ancient ruins believed to have been created by one of the Elder Races as they date back 900,000 years. The ruins have been explored, though not completely excavated, and there are no known dangers, secrets or items of value.

One night soon after, a strange, giant spacecraft lands and two 20 foot (6.1 m) tall aliens emerge. They are clearly an advanced race. They visit the most advanced city, colony or outpost and announce that this is their home world and that everyone on it, including what is believed to be the indigenous people, is trespassing, and they want everyone to leave as soon as possible. Or else.

There is no negotiating with these beings. Whether it is true or isn't, the two aliens have decided this is their home world and they claim it in the name of their people. It is obvious that one of the aliens is very ill, perhaps near death, and the other is quite insane and irrational. The question is, how dangerous are they and what can they really do to the people? **G.M. Note:** If they are really Elders, and they could be, they should have technology comparable to the Gene-Tech, though weapons would be half as deadly as the Dominators. Speaking of which, could a Dominator arrive on a mission to destroy these two Elders?! Do the colonists and player characters try to protect the aliens or is the Dominator the answer to their own problem?

11% Illegal Mining Operation

All the large galactic mining companies are going after the big finds, leaving smaller sources of ore alone since it would be less profitable. An unauthorized local operation has been spotted. It is being run by a group of smugglers, rogue Gorgans or Space Pirates who are using slave labor (people taken hostage from spaceships they've raided). The ore is sold off-planet and the smugglers are using the profits to build a heavily fortified compound to protect "their" mining operation. These interlopers are at least 100 miles (160 km) from the nearest colony or indigenous community, and have taken a "Don't bother us, and we won't bother you," approach to others living on the planet. However, some locals have been disappearing.

The missing locals could now be part of the slave labor force at the mines as it keeps expanding and slaves get sick or die. If so, anyone attempting a rescue will be faced by a private security group hired to protect the mine or by mercs or pirates.

Another possibility is that the brigands have unleashed something (monster, robots, a slumbering group of ancient aliens, etc.), and it is taking people. Not just locals, but some of the slaves and pirates as well. In fact, things could be so bad that the brigands have abandoned the mine, leaving their slaves to fend for themselves against the things from the ruin.

12% Invaders from Another Time

Rumors reach the player characters that a distant town has been taken over by unknown alien humanoids. But these aren't alien invaders or bandits. According to the story told by the towns-person come to our heroes for help, one of the children found an ancient machine in a tiny cave at the bottom of a ravine. Kids being kids, they began to play with it, flipping switches, and the next thing they know a dimensional portal tears open and a dozen beings (many more if the G.M. so desires) walk out and take the children captive. They claim to be the worst criminals of the "Galintu" and have been imprisoned inside some sort of extradimensional prison where time does not pass. On one hand, they are living relics of a time 180,000 years ago (they are not Elders). On the other, they are murderers, madmen and deviants who have used their knowledge, powers and ruthlessness to seize control of the town. They proudly proclaim they are the worst criminals in the universe. To keep the townspeople in line, the ancient lowlifes have taken a couple dozen children hostage. Meanwhile, these wicked beings (all are Diabolic or Miscreant) are creating havoc for the town, having their way with innocent women, killing anyone who tries to stop them, and doing whatever they please at the expense of others. The one who seems to be *the leader* is trying to reconfigure the machine to unleash the other 9,000 prisoners. Oh, one more thing, they think the leader is a Fallen Cosmo-Knight.

13% Scary Stories

Stories are going around about local woodsmen being attacked by intelligent animals. They are considered intelligent because one spoke a warning to them and another was seen carrying a spear. So far, a bear, a chimpanzee and some kind of fur covered, ape-like humanoid, are described as being the culprits. Stones and spears have been thrown with only minor injuries so far. The goal of these beings appears to be less about killing, and more about keeping people away from an ancient obelisk on West Stonefield. Under the statue is the short tunnel that leads to the cave where the trio live.

14% Alien Abductions

People have reported seeing a tall, frightening figure lurking in the shadows at night. Shortly after these reports began, people have started to go missing. So far, 1D4+1 locals have disappeared and everyone is up in arms. Search parties are being formed and the woodlands are to be scoured. There are no known caves or ruins in the vicinity, so it is believed there must be a camp in the woods or spaceship someplace.

As it turns out, there is an active Gene-Splicer outpost and small laboratory on this planet (maybe more than one). It is at least 60,000 years old and has remained hidden all these years at the center of an innocent looking hill. He has successfully performed some genetic experiments on animals he brought to the planet with him, and recently started capturing local inhabitants to perform genetic experiments on them. His secret laboratory is located in a hill deep in the woods and is guarded by a number of his monstrous creations.

15% Scavenger Hunt

The player characters are recruited to, or decide to participate in, a scavenger hunt to find and retrieve a list of weird and exotic items throughout the Thundercloud Galaxy. Some of these items can be found with little difficulty, though their legality may be called to question. Others items are in the possession of indigenous people. While the items belonging to the indigenous people may (appear to) be nothing of value to the player characters, each has great meaning to the native people, and taking it could cause an "incident."

Among the items to be recovered are ancient relics located at a handful of historical ruins. One of these sites is said to be haunted. Another is said to be the ancient base of a Dominator. Another is said to be a place of magic. And yet another is said to be the ruins of a city once inhabited by an Elder Race. All locations are off limits, but can be accessed with a little careful planning, good timing and stealth. In many cases, the items to be removed from the ruins appear to be of comparatively little value.

All items are supposed to be located within a 1,000 light-year area. Several competing groups are part of the scavenger hunt. Participants are paid a small, but fair, sum for each item on the scavenger list they recover (2D6x1,000 credits each). The Grand Prize Winner is the group that turns in the most items, with each *ancient artifact* counting as THREE ordinary items. The winning team gets a grand prize of a *new Naruni space cruiser* and *10 million credits*. All items recovered become the property of the "sponsor" of the scavenger hunt. All items must be turned over to him in order to claim the prize.

Of course, the sponsor for the scavenger hunt is a front man for someone who has special plans for the items recovered. That someone else could be Naruni Enterprises, the TGE, Gulgans, demons, Deevils, the Splugorth, a Dominator, a colony or company with its own agenda (perhaps the loss of certain items works to the company's favor, or the favor of its own colony, or causes political or legal problems for a competitor, or they can be combined to create a powerful magic device), and so on.

16% The Comet

The player characters are hired to conduct planetary surveys in the Thundercloud Galaxy (or just out exploring). This includes cruising through numerous star systems and taking scans of planets and moons that appear suitable for colonization.

After several weeks of boring and monotonous work, a strange power reading is discovered coming from a giant comet. Detailed scans reveal it is not a comet, but rather a large metallic structure under a few dozen feet of snow and ice. Further analysis suggests the structure is a *Dominator Sphere*. It is presumed the Dominator Sphere is damaged and out of control, its giant master dead or

not home. If the sphere could be accessed, there should be a fortune to be salvaged from it. Does the player group dare to ride the comet and see what they can find inside the sphere? **Note:** Game Masters, it is up to you to determine what might be available inside, or whether there is an injured or healthy Dominator inside.

17% The Cage

The player characters and inhabitants of a colony planet brace themselves for impact from an asteroid or a comet. However, before the rocketing sphere hits, it slows dramatically, and flies in a horizontal path along the planet's surface before it makes a soft crash-landing a day or two's journey away from their location. Investigation is warranted.

Twenty miles (32 km) before they reach the object, is a massive trench dug into the earth by whatever skidded across the surface. Trees are knocked over like tenpins and the trench is a half mile (0.8 km) deep and 10 miles (16 km) wide! Ten miles (16 km) before they reach the crash site, our intrepid investigators are attacked by one or more strange creatures/monsters the likes of which they have never seen and are not known to have existed on this planet. A few miles from the crash site they are attacked again by more strange creatures. From this point, they can also see a massive spacecraft (sphere if a Dominator vessel) a few miles ahead.

A massive, alien spacecraft sticks halfway out of the ground. If it is a full-sized Dominator Star Fortress, it is 30 miles (48 km) in diameter. If it's not, it is half that size but still a behemoth. Whatever it is, something happened and though the crash was not as devastating as it could have been with a direct, full speed impact, the vessel is definitely in distress and crashed.

The crashed vessel can be the creation of an unknown alien race, an Exile zoological vessel or an ancient *space ark* of some kind that could belong to a Dominator, Gene-Tech, Elder Race or other forgotten civilization. The crew is gone, dead, or the vessel may have been completely automated. Something happened and it crashed. When it crashed (or explosions or systems failures happened inside), it caused the biological stasis chambers and/or cages to open and release a number (vast or small depending on the G.M.) of animal specimens.

Problem number one: Stop the flood of unknown monsters getting loose into the ecosystem near the colony or indigenous community.

Problem number two: Stay alive doing it.

Game Masters, it's up to you as to how many, how dangerous and how deadly these creatures may be. It is also up to you as to whether or not there are intelligent life forms as specimens in stasis (or on the loose), as well as if there are any survivors of the people who created and crewed the space ark. If there is a crew, or if the vessel is automated and still functioning, repairs may be underway and the space ark may be able to leave the planet. Likewise, there may be an alien crew or systems in place (machines or robots) that will go out to try to recapture the escaped specimens. This could cause as much confusion and problems as the monsters and animals themselves. Furthermore, it is possible that the "keepers" of the space ark might want to add new specimens to their collection. Specimens that might not just include wildlife, but the player characters, colonists and/or indigenous people! Have fun.

18% Death from Below

Workers strike a metal object as they dig a new foundation. Moments later, the object, the size of a large house, struggles to rise up from its resting place. It is a Dominator war machine nobody has seen in 50,000 years! The massive robot is severely damaged. Its self repair mechanism is destroyed or offline, and only 2D6 of its secondary weapon systems are working (all are equivalent to the giant-sized *Nova Plasma Accelerator Rifle* on page 28 of this book). It is programmed to hunt down Elder Races and their associated people. However, that program's not working either, and the death-dealing machine targets anyone with special powers, including super abilities, Major and Master Psionics, spell casting abilities and any magical or supernatural characteristics. It fights and kills until it is destroyed or all qualifying targets are exterminated. Normally, it would fly off afterward, but it is incapable of doing so. Our heroes are lucky, the Dominator hunter-killer robot has only 2D4x1,000 M.D.C. for its main body, weapons have 1D6x100 M.D.C. each and its 1D6 remaining mechanical tentacles have 1D4x100 M.D.C. left.

19% The Better You

Deep in the ruins of an ancient city is a chamber filled with odd machines. This was once a high-tech self-improvement center. Individuals would be connected to machines which would then physically or mentally improve them (presumably for the better). Only two of these machines are still *somewhat* operational, though they may require the Electronics Engineer skill or the psionic ability of Telemechanics to start them up.

1. The Mindshaper: A helmet-like device that would be attached to the head of its patient/subject. Like a highly advanced MRI (Magnetic Resonance Imaging) system, this machine scans and charts the subject's brain activities. However, it can then alter these brain patterns.

When used properly, this machine can cure insanities and other mental aberrations and induce a sense of well-being in its patient. It could even be used to strengthen one's psyche (increase M.E. by 1D4).

Unfortunately, if used improperly or if the machine malfunctions, it could skew these brain patterns in a negative way. This could result in causing insanities. Roll to save vs insanity. A failed roll results in one phobia and one obsession, or make one random roll on the Insanity Table in **Rifts® Ultimate Edition**. Or the device can change a character's alignment, evil becomes good, good becomes evil, Anarchist becomes Aberrant or Principled. Or it may give the subject a Clairvoyant vision of the near future – something that haunts him but might help.

2. The Beautifier: An elaborate, automated mask-like device covers the face of its subject. Much like a plastic surgeon, the machine proceeds to alter the facial appearance of its subject. Since its database contains what was regarded to be physically attractive for different species, it was programmed to enhance and improve its user's appearance and make them more physically attractive (based upon its criteria for beauty).

However, the machine's database is limited to species that it has already encountered (although when treating a never before encountered species, it can extrapolate from familiar ones that are similar). Depending upon how well it is being operated and how familiar it is with the subject matter (i.e. their facial features),

the Beautifier is generally capable of changing (either increasing or decreasing) its subject's P.B. by 1D4 points, but changes the victim's features to look different than what is common for his species/race; i.e. looks feline or canine, or reptilian or apish, etc. Facial alterations are permanent, and can only be changed through drastic procedures such as plastic surgery, re-using the Beautifier machine again (Good Luck!), or turning to a Gene-Tech for help.

If these machines are disconnected (possibly to be used elsewhere), there is the (01-60%) chance they break and do not turn back on. Roll again every time one is moved.

20% Dominator to the Rescue?!

A colony is fending off an attack from demons (or Deevils) and a Dominator shows up to attack the minions of Hell. After the battle, the Dominator leaves the colony untouched. Dominators have no love for demons, but it seems strange that one would drop by to help a bunch of humans (or whatever race).

A short time later, the local authorities (or the player characters) realize there is something going on a few miles away. Perhaps there is evidence of more fighting, or perhaps the colony is alerted to the situation by one of the indigenous people in the area. An investigation reveals ancient ruins of the Dominators or one of the Elder Races have been unearthed sometime over the last 36 hours. The ruins could be a concealed or crashed and buried Dominator Star Fortress, a Demon Star, or spacecraft of an Elder. Or it could be the ruins of an ancient base or laboratory or testing ground. Whatever it is, the demons (or Deevils, or both) want what is inside. (If a spacecraft, they might want the entire vessel itself.) Demons and/or Deevils are trying to plunder old Dominator/Elder Races magic and technology for their own evil purposes, and the Dominator is opposing them. Or the Dominator might (directly or indirectly) alert the colonists or adventurers in the area and command them to stop the theft, or warn them that if the demons succeed, it will be bad for the planet or even have galaxy-wide ramifications. The Dominator has destroyed many of the demons, but for some reason, must leave. Finishing the battle is left to the people of this world.

The scope of this battle may be small or large. It may be a one night adventure or become a mini-campaign. Have fun with it.

The Dominator might return like the proverbial cavalry to finally finish the battle, or shut down a problem within the ancient ruins or caused by ancient technology or magic unleashed by Deevils or demons. If the ruin is a spacecraft, it may not be so "ruined" after all, and the Dominator is likely to return to take the entire thing away.

21% The CATheedral

These ruins were once a large temple. There is a stone altar surrounded by once-wooden benches that have long ago rotted away. Most of the marks identifying whose temple this was have also long faded away. However, an extremely thorough search may reveal that some sections of the altar are actually hollow.

Hidden inside the altar is a silvery (actually platinum) statue of a feline-looking creature. Despite its obvious age, this idol is in close to pristine condition. Anyone who can Sense Magic senses dormant, but powerful, magic emanating from the statue.

The statue is the only object in the ruin worth anything. If taken to be appraised or studied, most antiquarians identify it as an idol of a Cat God and estimate its value at 2D6 million credits for its age and rarity. However, an honest appraiser will also recommend that the idol be taken to an active temple of the Cat God.

The Cult of the Cat God will offer a cash reward of two million credits (that's all they can afford) for the statue. The characters may be able to get more than this from private collectors on the open market. However, although the Cult cannot match the financial rewards of possible competitors, they can offer some intangible benefits.

Donating (or even selling) the statue to the Cult makes the characters "heroes" in the eyes of the Cult's members. If the characters ever need any type of favor or assistance, the Cult will be there for them. This can include healing, exorcisms, access to their library, food, and a place to stay at no cost.

If the characters decide to sell it to a private collector, the Cult of the Cat God is likely to try to interfere (it will depend upon the local Cult chapter and the specific situation). However, regardless of the Cult's actions, the Cat God himself will react to the character's actions. Whomever gives/sells the idol to the Cult will be blessed. Whoever sells it to unbelievers will be cursed.

Blessed characters: **a)** Gain the ability to speak with ALL feline sentient races (not animals). **b)** Are regarded as Cat-Friends, and no feline (sentient or animal) ever willingly attacks them, not even for food. **c)** Can request ONE favor or service from any individual Cult member, as long as the favor is short of getting the feline alien killed or doing anything contrary to his/her alignment.

Cursed characters: Unfortunately, characters that do not show proper respect to the Cat God (i.e. not getting the idol to the Cult) are cursed. **a)** Their luck goes bad at important times (reduce a combat bonus or skill performance by half at a key moment) for the character (the curse doesn't apply when the character is doing good or helping others). **b)** ALL felines, including animals, take an instant dislike to the character and attack if he makes a sudden move or threatens them. This also means no sentient feline will trust the character or do him any favors. **c)** If the character is unlucky enough to ever encounter any feline deity, the deity will criticize and spit upon the individual (or individuals) and its worshipers will do nothing to help them.

Note: Demons or Deevils *may* also want the statue, but they'll try to steal it, not buy it.

22% Past Lives

This is a huge underground complex of computers. Although there were originally huge archives of data, much of it has been lost over the millennia. Despite the best efforts of its creators to preserve their data, over enough time, even the most sophisticated self-maintenance machines and programs fail and many of the files have become corrupted. Earthquakes and various other tectonic activity over the eons have caused cave-ins that have destroyed half of the computers. Of the accessible information, much of it is personal data about individuals, groups, and organizations at that time. Consequently, much of this data has no value except as a snapshot of an ancient, forgotten civilization – a profound discovery for scholars and historians.

Many archaeologists and other scientists would find examining these ruins well worth their while. Furthermore, this complex

is so expansive that a scientific expedition could spend years at this site and barely scratch the surface.

23% The Healing Cave

This used to be a high-tech holistic massage parlor whose massages could actually heal (i.e. restore lost Hit Points and S.D.C., re-knit broken bones, etc.). There are a variety of machines serving different functions; however, regardless of their specialized task, all of them were designed to repair damage sustained by organic creatures. Local indigenous people have been coming here for centuries and explains why there is nobody with broken bones or serious injury. It is a treasured secret they share only with the most trusted outsiders and they will not be happy if their secret is discovered by others.

The machines vary widely as to their appearance, some resemble Magnetic Resonance Imagers, others look like iron lungs (from the 1940s and 1950s), decompression chambers, tanning booths, CAT Scan machines, photocopiers, etc. The various machines will also employ differing methods of accomplishing their tasks. The three main forms of healing are: 1. Sonics, utilizing vibration, sound and isometrics. 2. Different chemicals, mostly in the form of sprays. 3. Various mechanical repair devices for surgical procedures, mending bones, etc. These also involve nanobot repairs. For the most part, the massage machines tend to be more effective in fixing physical damage (broken bones, sprains, re-attaching severed body parts, etc.) then they are in treating diseases, poisons, or toxins. In the case of serious injury, the damage is repaired, 2D6 Hit Points and 2D6 S.D.C. are restored, and the "repaired" individual is released to continue to heal at his normal rate. Cannot cure mental illness/insanity.

24% The Lake

There is a lake that has become quite famous to the people of this world. Although the lake is not large (its surface area is only 11.4 square miles/29.2 sq. km), legend has it that there is a great treasure somewhere at the bottom. Unfortunately, the lake is very deep and the water very murky and no one has been able to find any hint of treasure. Still, people come to search. If someone searching the lake were extremely lucky, they might find something virtually beyond belief – an *apple tree* in full bloom on the lake floor! Moreover, the apples on the tree are a beautiful shiny golden color. Obviously, these are no ordinary apples. It was apples such as these that formed the basis of various myths and legends, such as the Tree of Life and the Golden Apples of Idunn that the Norse Gods ate to retain their immortality.

Just like those apples, anyone who eats one of these apples is cured of any ailment and is instantly restored to full health. Any poisons or toxins in their system are negated and damage done by it healed. Even missing limbs or other body parts regenerate within 1D4 days after consuming an apple. Furthermore, the person's aging stops for 1D6+6 years (eating many apples does not add to the time of delayed aging, one will do the trick). When the aging starts again, eating a new golden apple will stop it again. This can be repeated for decades.

The main drawback to possessing the apple tree at the bottom of the lake is that if other people discover that someone has a source of health and immortality (legends do have a way of

spreading), others are likely to come to take it for themselves. However, the tree is not without its protectors.

The *Norse gods* check on the tree every few years. Furthermore, they can sense when someone in their immediate vicinity has partaken of a golden apple. This is a problem, because they believe only they (and their friends and allies) are entitled to the magical fruit. If a character encounters a Norse God within a year of having eaten a golden apple, the Norseman knows it. He'll want to question the character and demand to know which tree (there are a few more) he has eaten a golden apple from. If the individual does not confess, the Norse God attacks with the intention of killing him (to preserve the secret and hidden location). The deity also informs all who have eaten the apple (and their teammates who have not) that they must pay for their prize (the apples) by going on a quest either back in Asgard (he'll take them there) or someplace in the Three Galaxies (probably helping people or fighting demons or Deevils). Refusing the invitation to accompany the Norse god is invariably considered as a hostile act and the god responds accordingly.

25% Terraforming Apparatus

Deep underground, a passageway leads into a massive complex of alien machinery and vast reservoirs of water. The scale of the facility is beyond comprehension. It seems to draw power from the planet itself and to be stuck in a kind of "standby mode." After months or years of study, though the technology is beyond modern understanding, one thing is clear, this machine is what terraformed the planet the people are living on. One can only presume this is the handiwork of one of the Elder Races. It clicks back into operation whenever the atmosphere, water or land is poisoned or starts to deteriorate from whatever the cause. Odds are, such a planet is a lush paradise with wonderful, clean air, and an abundance of life. The apparatus has not had to do any environmental repairs in 45,000 years.

26% Ancient Danger

An ancient underground ruin is uncovered by accident (revealed after an earthquake, landslide, sinkhole opens up after torrential rain, colonists at work or excavating, etc.). Part of the ruin still has power and lights (perhaps magical in nature). There is a massive block that is sealed airtight. If breached, inside is an insane Elder with the powers of a Demigod or Godling. At first, he or she seems grateful, kind and helpful, but it soon becomes apparent that this god is quite mad and a potential danger to the colony or the indigenous people, or the planet itself, or even other planets (can't let the mad god get off the colony world). Ultimately, this genie must be put back in its bottle (the containment chamber) or destroyed before it brings about havoc and destruction to everyone it encounters.

The danger of the insane Elder may be subtle and passive, or overt and direct. Under the former circumstance, the Elder may instigate trouble, tempt and corrupt people or antagonize one side or the other – cause indigenous people to rise up against the colonists or vice versa, cause a revolt or power struggle within the colony or the native population, and so on. Or the mad god may directly attack the colony or lead them or the indigenous people in war or on a crusade, or seek trouble and mayhem in any number of ways.

27% Ancient Danger

An ancient underground ruin is uncovered by accident. Part of the ruin still has power and lights (perhaps magical in nature). There is a massive block that is sealed airtight. If breached, inside is an Artificial Intelligence (A.I.) that is a wicked and malevolent force. The A.I. may be insane or just evil, but it will ultimately seek to cause mayhem and destruction as well as desire to leave the planet and get to civilized space where it can cause even greater suffering and chaos.

28% Ancient Danger

An ancient underground ruin is uncovered by accident. Part of the ruin still has power and lights (perhaps magical in nature). There is a massive block that is sealed airtight. If breached, inside is an eight foot (2.4 m) tall assault robot and it attacks the first person it sees. The robot cannot be reasoned with and it fights without pause until destroyed. It has 1,110 M.D.C. for its Main Body, 350 M.D.C. for each appendage, a Robot P.S. of 50, eight attacks per melee round, a pair of *laser weapons* built into each forearm (3,000 foot/914 m range, 5D6 M.D. per single blast, 1D6x10 M.D. per dual blast from both arms, unlimited payload), a pair of small *particle beam weapons* are built into each shoulder (1,600 foot/488 m range, 4D6+6 M.D. per single blast, 1D6x10 M.D. per double pulse blast, unlimited payload), and a laser wand that extends and retracts from a forearm housing (melee combat, 2D6+2 M.D. per attack). Perhaps scariest of all, the robot's armor "heals" any damage it sustains at a rate of 4D6 M.D.C. per melee round. The advanced alien robot has standard sensor systems at double the usual range and capabilities. Once defeated (reduced to zero M.D.C.), the robot collapses. **G.M. Note:** If not blasted to smithereens (450 points below zero M.D.C.), tiny nano-bots the size of a grain of salt will begin to repair it. The assault robot plays dead until fully restored, then it rises again to track down its assailants, killing them one by one.

29% Ancient Danger

An ancient underground ruin is uncovered by accident. Part of the ruin still has power and lights (perhaps magical in nature). There is a massive block that is sealed airtight. If breached, the characters will think they just hit the jackpot! The containment room is a weapon depot for some forgotten alien race of humanoids. Much of its cache has been distributed, but there remains 1D6+3 suits of power armor. Each conforms to the size and shape of its wearer (including extra limbs, tail, wings, etc.), and links to the wearer's nervous system and mind to respond with a thought as if it were a second skin. Each suit has a Main Body of 425 M.D.C., 150 M.D.C. for the head and each appendage has identical weapon systems as the assault robot (see 28% above), all features common to environmental power armor at double the range and capabilities, plus attachments for a jet pack, and the armor heals at a rate of 2D6 M.D.C. per melee round. The armor boosts the wearer's P.S. to the equivalent of Robot Strength, triples the wearer's natural Spd, enables him to leap 15 feet (4.6 m) high and 30 feet (9.1 m) lengthwise, and provides the following bonuses: +1 to Perception Rolls, +1 on initiative, +1 attack per melee round, and can survive in space indefinitely. Power supply is unknown, but seems limitless. (Magic? Super-solar powered?)

There are also 1D4 rocket bikes that adapt to function in air, underwater, on the surface of water and in space (Maximum Speed in Atmosphere: Hover to 320 mph/512 km, double speed in outer space, half underwater and is impervious to underwater depths), and two particle beam rifles (2,000 foot/610 m range, 5D6+6 M.D. per single blast, 30 shot payload with self-regenerating E-Clip; recharges one blast every five minutes until charged to full). Tech is beyond current level of understanding and may incorporate magic, so it cannot be reverse engineered, though any weapon manufacturer would love to try.

The danger here is that whoever finds the weapon cache may use it for evil purposes. In the wrong hands, this gear could give an evil warlord the ability to destroy rivals, enslave the indigenous people or become a galactic terror.

30% Ancient Danger

An ancient underground ruin is uncovered by accident. Part of the ruin still has power and lights (perhaps magical in nature). There is a massive block that is sealed airtight. If breached, those who discover the chamber (as well as those nearby) are attacked by small robots that try to penetrate any armor or environmental suits and inject them with something, or spray them with some type of substance. (**Note:** Characters sprayed or injected – which should be all or most of the player characters – do not seem to be harmed or affected in any adverse way.) Fighting and destroying these (flying, crawling, or leaping) robots is easy enough (they only have 1D4 S.D.C. or M.D.C. each) and after awhile, the robots retreat into a housing in the floor, wall or ceiling, or are all destroyed by our triumphant heroes (actually a few manage to sneak away and a few others are carried off, unnoticed by the characters). The moment the containment chamber is breached, red lights flash and a warning in an undistinguishable alien tongue repeats over and over again. There might even be what looks like a countdown to self-destruction or a launch of something. The player characters (or NPCs) should be able to stop the launch/detonation if they try. If they fail to stop the countdown, nothing happens as the passage of countless centuries has disabled the self-destruct mechanism.

It isn't until the innocent people around them (colonists and/or indigenous people; one group first, then the next) begin to devolve or behave in a crazy or barbaric and savage manner, and perhaps even start to physically change, that our heroes realize an alien biological weapon or mutagen was released from the containment chamber. The robots were not attacking, they were inoculating those who entered the chamber (and continue do so to any who enter until all the robots are destroyed). As a rule, player characters should manage to get inoculated or are immune to the disease, while many around them are not. Typical saving throw is 16+. A successful save means immunity. Player characters are +3 to save. A failed roll means devolution and savagery. Those who are not affected are seen by the victims as dangerous enemies to be destroyed. Madness and violence ensues. Those who are not devolved must find a place to hide or hole up until they can find a way off the planet. They are NOT carriers of the disease. There is a formula for an experimental antidote in the alien computer, but it is only 50% effective once the disease has taken hold and symptoms have manifested. Any physical mutation is permanent. The rest is up to the G.M.

31% Ancient Danger

An ancient underground ruin is uncovered by accident (revealed after an earthquake, landslide, sinkhole opens up after torrential rain, etc.) or by the colonists. Part of the ruin still has power and lights. There is a massive block that is sealed airtight. If breached, 4D6 *stasis chambers* are discovered. Each contains a strange creature (use any of the aliens in this book or other Palladium titles, and/or the Monster Creation Tables in this book to create something new). Each is alive. There are a hundred or more other stasis chambers that have failed or broken over time. The creatures inside them are dead. Several other chambers are empty and whatever *was* inside them is presumed dead. These creatures may be sentient beings, animals, or monsters, or a sampling of each. They may have been specimens for a space ark, a cosmic zoo, scientific study or experimentation, prisoners, or any number of things. They may be good or evil. All date back tens of thousands of years.

If the specimen is a known, existing species or sentient being, the life form in the stasis chamber *may be different* from those known in the present. For example, if the specimen in stasis is an alien known to be a primitive people today, the one released from stasis might be intelligent and from an advanced civilization, or vice versa. If prisoners, they might all be Anarchist and evil alignments. If political prisoners or unjustly accused, they might be of good alignment, or a mixed bag of any combination of alignments. If monsters or animals, they'll behave like caged animals and respond according to their monstrous or bestial natures when released.

32% Ancient Danger

An ancient underground ruin is uncovered by accident or by colonists excavating. There is a sealed door within a large chamber. If the airtight door is breached, inside is a *Miracle Machine*. The chamber contains some sort of advanced laboratory and 1D4 *nano-medical healing chambers* that can mend bones, make repairs to internal organs, and restore mortals who have suffered damage as great as 90 points below zero, and restore missing body parts/limbs. Thus, people who appear to be dead may be brought back to life provided they have not been dead for more than three hours and damage is no greater than -90 Hit Points (or M.D.C. in the case of Mega-Damage beings). The process takes 1D6x10+30 minutes for simple damage, 2D6x60 minutes for serious damage (down to the character's last zero to 12 Hit Points) and 4D6x90 minutes for grievous damage (below zero Hit Points; increase time by 50% for repairs to Mega-Damage mortal beings). Patients are restored 100%, good as new. The machine can cure cancer, arthritis, immune deficiency and most other diseases.

Unknown to the "patient," it also "tags" and studies him, recording his vitals on tiny, organic implants that follow his medical history from that point forward. Coming back for future healing by the Miracle Machine or within 100 miles (160 km), dumps all data into the lab's secret files. The purpose of this data collection and who might be able to access it is unknown.

33% Ancient Danger

An ancient underground ruin is uncovered by accident. Part of the ruin still has power and lights (perhaps magical in nature). There is a massive block that is sealed airtight. If breached, inside

is . . . nothing. The chamber is empty. Other than strange symbols etched along each corner of the wall, the large chamber is empty. No machines. No furnishings. No debris. Nothing.

A short time later (1D4 days), people (indigenous or colonists or both) start to disappear or die.

Something invisible and immortal was inside the magic containment chamber until the colonists (or our heroes) breached the chamber and let it out. It could be an evil supernatural monster or god of chaos, ancient Chaos Demon Lord, one or more possessing Entities that are taking control of people and making them do terrible things, or something that hasn't stalked people in the Three Galaxies for 2D6 million years!

Game Masters have fun creating this horror. We suggest it possesses some range of magic or psionic abilities (though it may not be super-powerful), can turn invisible or ethereal at will, and is Diabolic evil. To stop it, the heroes probably have to find a way to lure it back into the containment chamber and seal it back inside. Or perhaps it has some other weakness, or some new species in the Thundercloud (or Three Galaxies) is immune to its powers and can destroy it or has the technology to destroy it. (Phase Weapons or Killaryte perhaps?)

34% Ancient Dragon Lair

A massive complex is unearthed. It is filled with shelves of books that have long since turned to dust. The same is true of tapestries, carpets and rugs that once adorned the place. Paintings and statues are covered in a thick layer of dust and cobwebs, and the liquids that once filled vials and bottles have all evaporated ages ago. Items made of wood are half rotted and only objects made of metal have survived. In the center of a grand chamber (maybe a bedchamber or laboratory, or library, observatory, or filled with high-tech machinery that has corroded, rotted and ceased to function long ago) is the skeletal remains of a dragon. Its bones alone are worth a fortune, if one is willing to defile the dead and perhaps awaken a powerful spirit or activate a source of magic defenses hidden by the dust of ages. This is the dragon's secret lair. Its sanctum sanctorum.

There are 4D4 other rooms – G.M.'s choice of what's still in them and the hints of what purpose they once served. There is likely to be a dissection room and laboratory, a dungeon, a meeting room, a kitchen, and a magick-works chamber where spells and other magicks were designed, tested and practiced. There may be a room with a Teleportation (or Dimensional Teleportation) circle or other circles and/or wards (some still active?).

One of the connecting chambers (or more likely, a secret chamber) is the dragon's treasure trove – or one of them. While scrolls and books and magic items made of materials that decay and crumble over thousands of years will be useless, there is likely to be the following that survived: 4D6x1 million credits worth of gold, silver and/or precious gems (it weighs tons), 1D6 magic items (non-weapons), 1D6 lesser magic weapons, 1D4 great magic weapons (Rune or Holy Weapons, Demon Slayer weapons, etc.), 2D6 non-magical melee weapons of superior quality, 2D4 suits of non-magical body armor (may be environmental armor if the G.M. so desires), and anything else the G.M. might want to include. Game Masters can totally change, add,

reduce and alter what is found, add curses, include a supernatural prisoner that begs to be released, and anything else that makes a compelling story.

Note: It is possible that the dragon did not die of old age or natural causes, but was killed and his treasure trove already looted. If this is the case, there will only be 2D6x1,000 credits worth of gold coins or gems that might have been accidentally left behind. Use the treasure as a vehicle for more adventures.

35% Subterranean World

At the bottom of what was believed to be a natural cave system, sinkhole or pit, the colonists (or our heroes) find one or more ancient tunnels leading down. Perhaps there is an elevator shaft or even a working elevator (large enough for small vehicles, no less!). A cool or warm breeze of surprisingly fresh air rises up from someplace below. Following the tunnel or shaft down leads to a subterranean world as alien as anything on the surface of the planet. The weird setting has a (presumably artificial) light and heat source that imitates the cycle of a day, going from morning to day, to night. There is moderate weather, the occasional wind, rain shower, and thunderstorm. Seasons probably do not change, but most of this environment behaves as one would expect on the planet's surface.

Massive, cavernous chamber after chamber (6D6x10 miles/96-576 km in diameter) is filled with flora and fauna you would expect on the planet's surface. Though the environment of some chambers may be dramatically different (sandy desert, rocky/mountainous, plains, swamp, massive lake or sea, etc.), the majority is a lush jungle and inhabited by a range of creatures reminiscent of Earth's own Age of Dinosaurs. Of course, being an alien world, the creatures could be truly weird or monstrous insects instead of dinosaurs.

36% Alien Spaceship Repair Center

A series of stone-like obelisks form a circle much like Earth's Stonehenge. It covers a large area (4D6x1,000 feet/1,219-7,315 m across) and initially appears to be the ruins of some kind of sacred site for worship.

The truth of the matter is the site is actually an automated alien ship repair center, which is currently dormant (as its services have not been required in the past few millennia). Teams of archeologists who frequently visit have a 10% chance per visit of activating the dormant systems on the repair center. Once activated, the average archeologist won't be able to tell the difference until the next ship flies overhead. That spacecraft is in for a big surprise when a tractor beam reaches out from the stone obelisks, grabs the ship, holds it in place and starts performing "maintenance" on the vessel.

If the ship was partially damaged or in need of repairs, chances are the alien repair station is able to fix the vessel as good as new! All damage to the outer hulls, airlocks, engines and sensor systems is repaired over the next 1D6 hours. Add 1D6 hours per size category; the bigger the vessel, the longer it takes. The repair center does not make interior repairs, nor does it create or supply munitions. **Note:** Rather than being discovered on a planet, this repair center could be on a large asteroid, planetoid, or moon.

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The truth of the matter is the site is actually an automated alien ship repair center, which is currently dormant (as its services have not been required in the past few millennia). When the repair center sees a spaceship fly by overhead (in orbit), that spacecraft is in for a big surprise when a tractor beam reaches out from the stone obelisks, grabs the ship, holds it in place and starts performing "maintenance" on the vessel.

Any ship captured by the obelisks receive an alien environmental upgrade: The system "sees" that the ship's life support system is failing and repairs it. The real kicker is that it recognizes if the vessel is missing one of the following standard features and installs it: Force field, FTL propulsion system, high efficiency engines, or galactic homing beacon. The alien repair center attempts to remove the existing inferior version and upgrade the vessel. This usually requires the system ripping out a large chunk of the ship and will appear as if the system is attacking or destroying the ship. As long as people don't stop the process (they may flee the ship, even using escape pods without incident), the ship will have a brand new power supply with a 100 year lifespan, a force field with the same M.D.C. as the main body of the ship, or a new engine that can travel twice as fast as the old one, or even convert it to travel at FTL speeds. It is also given an alien beacon that now tracks the ship's movements in the alien database.

38% Enemy Defense System

A trio of 50 foot (15.2 m) tall, stone pyramids sit upon an intersection of three ley lines. They appear to be the ruins of some ancient civilization, at least until spaceships belonging to Minions of Splugorth, Necrols, a Dominator, or Gene-Tech come within 300,000 miles (480,000 km) of the planet. The pyramids glow white, energy crackles around each and a beam of white light with blue crackles blasts out of the atmosphere to fire a warning shot at the "enemy" vessel, inflicting 2D6x1,000 M.D.C. It also responds this way to Demon Stars. All of these beings recognize this defense system and should immediately change their course to avoid this planet. If they don't, the pyramids keep blasting until the vessel is destroyed. Whenever activated, each pyramid is protected by a force field with 60,000 M.D.C.

39% Alien Planetary Communication Node

This can be either a standing stone or metal obelisk that glows on its own, or has symbols, characters or ideograms/pictures that glow. The artifact may initially be glowing or will start to glow upon the first arrival of a life form to the site. Roll on the table below to determine the effect.

01-45% Benign. It is a harmless communication tower, relay station or even galactic traffic sign, mostly useless to the average player, but it might lead a skilled archeologist to the next waypoint and possibly onto something even more interesting or exciting.

46-65% It's a Trap. Like a moth closing in on the light of a bug zapper, the obelisk was designed to draw the attention of the curious. It sends out intermittent signals that suggest alien life or at least the presence of an alien probe. As people approach the artifact it starts to "sing" and by all accounts it appears to be trying to communicate. However, the truth of the matter is it's trying to alert its creators (who may be long deceased) or robot sentinels (which may remain active or not) to come and observe these strange new beings and capture a few specimens for study.

66-85% It's a Trap. The obelisk is searching to find the right frequency to resonate with the brain waves of the people around it, and this may take several days (2D6 days). Once it is found, one member of the adventurer team, colonists, or whomever, needs to make a save vs mental attack/psionics or be drawn closer to the obelisk. The frequency and probing psionic energy can penetrate most space suits, force fields and even the hulls of thick ships and may cause pilots to fly their ships closer to the obelisk. Once enough people and vessels have been drawn close, the obelisk probes their minds and records all their memories and thoughts, for purposes unknown.

86-00% Depository of Alien Knowledge. The obelisk is a main data node for an intergalactic version of the internet set up by a long dead alien race. While accessing the data might be tricky (not to mention written in some obscure alien language that could take centuries to decipher), it might possess some relevant archeological or astronomical data (solar winds, meteor showers) and even specific planetary data (weather conditions, life forms, etc.), however, since the node hasn't been connected to the rest of the intergalactic internet for several millennia, the information has little relevance to modern civilizations.

40% Obelisk of Souls

This can be either a standing stone or carved stone obelisk that glows on its own. The artifact may initially be glowing or will start to glow upon the first arrival of a life form to the site. It contains the life essence, astral form or even the evolved/ascended form of an ancient alien race, resides inside the artifact. They are content with their existence inside the artifact and seek only to discuss philosophy with those they find to have curious minds and willing to speak with them on such matters. The spirits speak of nothing else, reveal no secrets of the past or locations of other ancient ruins. **Note:** Entities may be attracted to the Obelisk.

41% Ancient Tomb

An eerie place that was once an alien prison, but it is now nothing more than a tomb. The power plant that maintained and kept the prisoners inside has long expired and the remains of dead prisoners are found in their cells where they expired. A handful of haunting entities and poltergeist now roam the halls, reliving the tortured lives of the alien inmates. There is also a 10% chance that any remaining backup systems or containment protocols may be accidentally activated by the archeologists/player characters which could lead to the awakening of automated prison guards or prison lock-down.

42% Alien Automated Science Machine

This alien artifact is some grand scale alien machine meant to terraform, mine or explore a world. Probably launched towards the end of an alien civilization's life, it crashed, which prevented it from performing its programmed tasks. It is nothing but wreckage now, but there is still a wealth of salvageable M.D.C. material suitable for building and possibly other useful components. It is way beyond repair.

43% Alien Automated Science Machine

This alien artifact is a robot or machine that works out of an outpost that has become dilapidated over time. The robot still studies life forms and keeps its observation in a computer database. The colonists and/or player characters are its new subjects for study. The machine does not hurt anyone, it observes. It may take a captive from time to time to take DNA samples, conduct a physical examination and engage in active dialog with sentient beings. After 24-48 hours, it tranquilizes the subject and returns it to the wild (where it found him in the first place). The computer data includes all the life forms on this planet as well as many of those who have visited the planet over the last 55,000 years.

44% Automated Mining Colony

The machine is designed to dig into and strip a planet of its natural resources. It is unclear from initial review of the ancient and silent machinery if it was going to have someone pick up the raw materials or if it has some means of transporting the ores and mineral it has mined (i.e. through a Rift or wormhole). If the archeological team is not careful they may inadvertently reactivate the machine which will start churning up the planet, taking them and their exploration team with it! It is also possible that there are tons of mined ore in the ruins of one or more storage facilities someplace.

45% Alien Automated Science Machine

The machine is a massive terraformer, designed to alter the planet's natural habitat to meet that of a now, long dead alien race. For some reason, it has recently become activated. The process is highly destructive on the current ecosystem and its life forms and should the artifact not be stopped soon, the cataclysmic changes to the planet will make it unlivable for humans and most other races from the Three Galaxies.

46% Alien Automated Science Machine

The machine is an aggressive probe. Once activated, it takes samples of flora and fauna – including snatching up people and putting them into stasis into a hidden space ark. Once it has collected a sufficient number of samples (an amount known only to it), the probe will blast off to travel home with its specimens in tow. To rescue the captured “subjects,” our heroes had better hurry. **G.M. Note:** You can save the day by having the ancient space ark broken down and unable to blast off, or buried under so many millennia of dirt it cannot fly. Of course, the people who sent the probe may themselves no longer exist.

47% Sphere of Knowledge

This black sphere is about the size of a basketball and is covered in alien hieroglyphs. When touched the sphere becomes active, and the hieroglyphs begin to glow and the ball starts to hover about waist high. An alien voice speaks, but cannot be understood initially even with current language translators. After 1D4 minutes of hearing the characters speak among themselves, the sphere begins to speak in their language and asks the question: “Please state your request.”

The sphere identifies itself as *Atoni Mark Six* artificial intelligence matrix. The sphere sounds more or less like a computer, but that is a ruse to lure the characters into a false sense of security. The sphere is really what remains of an artificial neural intelligence. It was once part of an ancient war machine with the task of wiping out the enemies of its creator, but apparently it went too far and destroyed its creators as well. Other than being able to hover in place, the sphere is immobile and needs someone to transport it around. If the sphere is brought near any kind of technology it begins to meld with it and after 1D6 hours, is able to control whatever it is hooked to.

If asked what it is doing the sphere will make excuses such as “I am probing for additional data,” or “this piece of technology is primitive and I am attempting to understand its function.” Those with computer skills *may* notice the sphere is overwriting all of the native code and planting its own alien operating system. While the sphere can take over technology, it cannot transfer its neural intelligence out of the sphere or replicate itself, so the sphere is the heart of the neural intelligence.

Atoni Mark Six has 500 M.D.C. and is made of ultra-tech metals that are beyond current technology. The sphere's knowledge is limited to all Communication, Computer, Military and Science skills at 98% and the history of its creator race, but Atoni lies about its own purpose and role in their destruction.

If it has the opportunity, it will attempt to create a body for itself to give itself mobility. A suit of power armor would be ideal. Cyborgs and those with cybernetics are safe, as the sphere cannot interface with technology that has a biological connection. Once it has a body, it attempts to commandeer a spaceship. If the crew tries to stop it, Atoni will try to kill them. Its goal is to continue its campaign of genocide on all living creatures. It is almost as if the sphere has a homicidal need to kill and destroy.

48% Alien Warbot

This is an ancient automated war machine from 1D8 millennia ago. It is most likely to be discovered in some ruins or floating in space. Regardless of how it was found, it was helpless to do anything about its situation and had millennia to think things over. During that time it came to many conclusions and now that it is “free,” it wants to see about proving these conclusions. One of its conclusions is that violence is wrong and that violence only breeds additional violence. So it is a powerful war machine with an advanced A.I., and has become: 01-50% A pacifist that abhors violence, or 51-00% A champion of the oppressed and downtrodden dedicated to fighting evil, tyranny and injustice! It will defend those who freed it and be loyal to them only if they are good aligned characters. If the characters reveal themselves to be evil, Warbot will attack them with the purpose of destroying them.

Warbot is humanoid, but has no facial features other than two glowing orbs for eyes. It seems more organic than mechanical and if checked, it does indeed have an aura. It has 420 M.D.C. and regenerates 4D6 M.D.C. per minute, making it seem almost indestructible. It can survive up to -200 M.D.C. and still "repair" itself. Warbot has a built-in weapon system that morphs one of its arms when needed. It can create a cannon that fires a particle beam that does 1D6x10 M.D. per shot, and has a range of 2,000 feet (610 m) and a Vibro-Blade that does 3D6 M.D. It has six attacks per melee round, has the equivalent of Hand to Hand: Martial Arts at 6th level, can operate all modern weapons and swords with a bonus of +3 to strike, and is +5 to save vs all Telemechanic psionics. Knows all Communication, Espionage and Military skills at 94%.

49% Power Cube

A small, opaque cube is found among ancient ruins, or just in the dirt near some ruins. At first, it seems very mundane and may even be dismissed as a child's toy. The cube, if scanned, seems devoid of any atomic activity. If held for a period of five minutes or more, or placed next to a light or some kind of power source, it begins to glow and atomic activity is dramatic. The cube is able to pull in and store any kind of energy, be it chemical energy, atomic energy, solar energy or even biological energy. It does not impede anything that it draws power from, as somehow it is able to enhance and double even the smallest bit of energy until the cube is fully charged. Regardless of the power source, the cube is fully charged in six minutes. The power can then be accessed by a variety of means that any technician can tap into. One small cube can power a city block or space fighter for a week. When the cube is drained of all its energy, it must rest dormant for at least six minutes before it can recharge again.

50% Ancient Beads

A large number of beads are found among ancient ruins, or just in the dirt near some ruins. They are the size of grapes, and have a range of many different colors, and shapes (spheres, cones, discs, teardrops, etc.), as well as different materials (some feel like glass, others like wood, or stone, or metal, or ceramic, or resin, or shell). Some beads are solid pieces while others have holes through them (for stringing up, perhaps?). Some of the beads are plain while others have symbols or markings (now faded) on them.

Most of the beads look cheap, so it would be very easy to ignore them as being worthless. However, nothing could be further from the truth. Doing a Sense Magic, performing a Detect Psionics, or using a high-tech device that measures energy will all indicate these beads possess latent power. Their creators, long deceased, called them *Survival Beads*, an ancient means of storing and carrying small utilitarian tools and items. The beads are activated by channeling some form of energy into them, such as electricity or even P.P.E. or I.S.P. (this has to be focused energy, not just a cursory detection).

When charged with as little as 5 P.P.E. or 10 I.S.P., a bead transforms into something useful. What it is, is predetermined by its shape and color. Items include a knife, shovel, or other tools, water skin, a length of rope, flint and tinder for starting a fire, pocket mirror, small containers, backpack, satchel,

blanket, bedroll, a pair of torches, and even food (a chunk of bread, a small slab of meat, a fruit, etc.). These will not be elaborate things, just basic items that may come in handy and could make the difference between life and death in the wild. Note that the food and drink will not be particularly tasty but will provide the nutrition necessary for survival. Each bead is only good for one use and would seem to come from a magic society. Sadly, any catalog, guide, or database listing which beads will change into what is long gone. This will force characters into trial-and-error experiments to see what they have, but it is safe to assume that similar-looking beads transform into the same things.

51% Missing Colony Ship

The player characters are requested to search for a lost colony ship that never made it to its destination. They are given the ship's flight plan, details of the kind of spacecraft and a crew manifest.

Here are some possible reasons for the ship being missing:

1. It was snagged by an ancient ruin similar to the Spacecraft Repair Center, only this one pulled them down to the planet, dismantled their ship, and left them stranded. (Same thing might happen to the search party if they aren't careful. The ruin only snares vessels larger than a shuttle.)
2. It was captured by a Dominator. He has grown bored and wants a new group of playthings.
3. It was captured by a Gene-Tech for experimentation. The question is why? Does someone onboard have a unique strand of DNA or are they just the latest test subjects?
4. It was captured by Space Pirates or Slavers and the people need rescuing or face a terrible fate.
5. Aliens, unknown to the characters, have captured the ship. Exiles, perhaps?
6. The colonists reached their destination planet but were immediately attacked by a group of angry, indigenous people who do not want the colonists on their world. The communication array on the ship and at the colony has been destroyed and the colonists are prisoners.

52% Destroyed Colony

The ruins of one or more previous colonies are found. This colony is only 1D4x10 years old. The sponsoring company for the current colony never mentioned any previous attempts at colonizing this planet. What happened? Who destroyed this colony? Was it a Dominator or pirates? Could it have been the indigenous people or a natural disaster? Perhaps it was a rival power bloc or even a rival group of colonists? Is this the fate waiting for the new colony?

53% Minion War Breeding Ground

A group of colonists are attacked by giant animal-like monsters from Hades or Dyval. As it turns out, the planet is being used to breed their deadly war mounts! Colonists and indigenous people are of no concern of the demons and provide food for the animals! There is one or more breeding and training facilities occupied by demons (or Deevils) elsewhere on the planet manned by Lesser Demons (or Deevils).

54% Combat Test Ground

Our adventurers and/or colonists discover this planet is used by one of the regional power blocs in the Thundercloud for war games, troop maneuvers, and weapon testing. And the colonists have just become part of them. **01-20%** The Exiles, **21-40%** The Kreeghor, **41-60%** The Kingdom of Desslyth, **61-80%** Space Pirates, or **81-00%** Demons or Deevils.

55% Minion War Base

The planet where a colony is being set up also has a base for the demons or Deevils on it. It turns out that the planet's ley lines are very active and this is the perfect place for the demons and Deevils. Will the colony be caught in the middle of the Minion War?

56% Secret Weapon Cache

The concealed weapon container may have been placed here recently or centuries ago by **01-25%** The Golgan Republican Enklaves, **26-50%** The Kreeghor, **51-75%** The Kingdom of Desslyth, **76-00%** Space Pirates. The weapons and gear can be those of the civilization/people listed. In the case of Space Pirates, it will be a hodgepodge of weapons and gear from several different people (stolen goods), mainly CCW, TGE and Golgans.

57% Secret Lair

Remember Goldilocks? Well you're in her shoes now, as you've discovered somebody's small secret lair. Nobody's home now, but who knows when they'll come home.

58% Secret Observatory

The colony that the player characters are visiting is really a secret military base. Its job is to spy on neighboring colonies. The player characters are on good terms with this colony so what do they do? To make matters worse, if the colonists learn that the player characters know about the spying they may not be allowed to leave, at least not without a fight.

59% Missing Colony Ship

The ruins of a colony ship or space ark is found. Only it is hundreds of years old. Could it be one of the missing vessels carrying Denlech? Are the people thought to have been indigenous really the descendants of this spaceship? Is their anything salvageable? Dangerous?

60% Gene-Tech Bounty Hunt

This ancient ruin is not a ruin at all, but a secret lab or lair of a pair of Gene-Tech. The beings are not happy to have their lair exposed, but make the best of it by offering a bounty for demons, Deevils, and their war mounts brought in to them alive. What are the Gene-Tech planning to do with these supernatural creatures? How much is that bounty?

61% Escape Pod

An escape pod is found, crashed among the remnants of ancient ruins suspected of being related to the Dominators. (In the alternative, the escape pod could be adrift in space or found inside the lair of Gene-Tech.) Examining it reveals a giant-sized baby aboard. Scans of the child are inconclusive. Over the next few days the baby has sudden growth spurts. Soon, the child will be 30 feet (9.1 m) tall and all of a sudden it is calling itself a Dominator and is giving the crew orders. It turns out this is a Dominator clone who was trying to save himself from dying.

62% Green Fire

At certain times of the year, greenish flames hover just above certain boulders in a nearby forest. When these flames appear, a group of giant humanoids roam the area. Their heads appear to rest directly on their shoulders and they need to turn their entire body to see in a different direction. Their ferocious attacks with large wooden clubs have left many dead. When the green fire disappears, so do they.

63% The Dark Place

The natives speak of a cave where two ley lines intersect to create a nexus point as "the Dark Place." It is rumored that something evil lives inside the cave, but never comes out. However, from time to time, the "Evil Within" sends monsters out of the Dark Place to attack and murder people. Is there really a malevolent force inside that sends monsters to plague the community, or is there a dimensional portal somewhere inside the cave that randomly opens and spews menaces into this world?

Going inside the cave, adventurers find evidence of an ancient civilization and what looks like a magic or Techno-Wizard dimensional gateway that predates anything on Phase World. Over the millennia, the mechanism that once controlled the portal has fallen into ruin and now things come through it at random intervals. There may, however, be an evil (demonic?) force that is using the device to bring evil and trouble into this world. Finding out requires going deeper into the ruins.

64% A New Discovery

A meteor, space junk or crashed spacecraft has disturbed the earth beneath it and opened a fissure or cave that leads to some ancient, underground ruins. They are probably just empty tunnels and are not obvious from outside (the opening is under the crashed transport). Anything less substantial than the stone walls have perished long ago, but the ruins could make a good place to hide in case of an emergency, or use as a fallout shelter, or even a place for storage. Of course, nobody knows what else there might be in the tunnels, how far they go, or whether there are any other entrances to the tunnel complex.

65% An Old Mining Operation

An ancient mining operation, thousands of years old, is uncovered not far from the colony (and/or the indigenous people's community). There are signs of several devastating explosions, which may have been why the mines were abandoned. Indeed, the skeletal remains of 1,312 workers can be unearthed if one has

the inclination. (Their remains may be human, Noro, Wulfen or a previously unknown race of beings.) The mine appears to be rich in copper and one other mineral, *Killaryte!* The big question is: Report the discovery and cash out for 1D4x100 million credits per colonist and see the area stripped and industrialized by Naruni Enterprises, or cover up the mine and keep things the way they are. An NE mining operation will forever change the lives of the indigenous people and the colonists.

More Trouble: The mines are haunted. There are 2D6x10 Poltergeists, 4D6x10 Haunting Entities, 4D6 Tectonic Entities and perhaps a few other dangerous Entities at this location. Mining in or near this location stirs up all these ghostly monsters.

One more thing, was it the unstable Killaryte that caused the original miners to abandon the operation, or is there some other danger attached to this place or locked away farther inside the old mines?

66% Infested Ruins

A band of criminals wanted by galactic law enforcement have landed nearby and invaded and entrenched themselves in a particular set of ancient ruins. They don't seem to worry about the law finding them, and make regular raids on colony sites and/or indigenous people to steal what they need to survive.

It is a mixed group of thugs and races, all are heavily armed and are a menace. There are at least a dozen, maybe more, and they don't seem to be planning on leaving anytime soon. To remove them from the ruins will be a treacherous gauntlet for our heroes to navigate.

67% Infested Ruins

Ruins near a local community have become infested with (G.M.'s choice of) dangerous animals or monsters. They weren't much of a problem until the creatures started to come into the community. To exterminate them from the ruins means taking them down one by one. Is there something more going on here?

68% Ancient Monastery

Someplace tucked away in a forest or mountain or desert is a small monastery. It seems to have been abandoned for centuries, but the remaining artifacts and evidence suggests it was once a place of training and reflection for Cosmo-Knights. There are many secret doors and compartments in the building, but no signs of life. This could make a good secret lair or base camp for the player group or a secret hiding place for the colonists should they ever need one. Does the occasional Cosmo-Knight still drop by to reflect or rest?

69% Alien Cave Art

While not as flashy as an artifact or magic device, these scratchings represent the first attempts of a primitive species to understand the world around them. At the very least, the entire area is a valuable archaeological site and proves that the planet once harbored intelligent life. Photos and the cave paintings' coordinates could both be worth a price to the right scientists, or make a nice tourist attraction someday. Local people stay away from the cave art and speak of evil spirits living there.

Something is going on there, as people who spend the night in the caves report strange noises and sounds. Strangest of all are reports of the cave paintings moving, like an old style animated cartoon, to reveal silent stories of hunting, tribal rivalry and the arrival of ancient gods. A few believed to be insane, even claim they've been transported back in time to experience it themselves.

70% Ancient City Ruins

Interspersed across the wilderness are the ruins of a forgotten alien civilization. Columns and canals, walls and aqueducts. Some of them may be buried in ash or lava layers, a telltale signature of the force that put an end to the civilization that created them. The ruins are proof that intelligent, advanced life once inhabited the planet. That information alone may be worth something to the right buyer, or further exploration might yield even greater finds. Burial chambers, mighty statues, temples and pyramids could all exist among the ruins of this ancient city and elsewhere on the planet. Based on the size and shape of the buildings apparent so far, the people appear to have been human-sized beings. It is difficult to tell if they used technology or magic, or what secrets or relics might yet be found.

71% Fossilized Spacecraft

Buried in layers of ancient earth is what appears to be a long-lost spacecraft. The outer layers have been partially fossilized, but as impossible as it may seem, the environmental seal inside the vessel remains intact. Inside, a few skeletons of the crew may remain. The spacecraft and the equipment inside are all too old to work, but studying them may reveal secrets of science or Techno-Wizardry unknown to modern people. Inertia beams, phase technology, portal generators; anything is possible. And if the players can carefully remove the vehicle without destroying it, it could be worth an enormous amount to a museum or university.

72% Abandoned Mining Outpost

The player characters have come across one of the most common relics space travelers find, an abandoned mining outpost built at some point in ages past. A mining outpost may be built on a planet, moon or an asteroid. It could be a humble survey site with just a few dusty vehicles gathered around a test-dig, or a complete mining complex, left behind when the ore ran dry. No matter the size, there is bound to be some kind of salvageable equipment left inside, and possibly large amounts of precious metals or minerals as well.

Ah, but who knows who or what has moved in since the miners moved out? Game Masters, use your imaginations. This could be an equipment depot, hideout or secret lair for Space Pirates, Raiders, runaway slaves, fugitives, refugees or spies for any of the galactic civilizations (TGE, CCW, UWW, Golgans, Minions of Splugorth, Fallen Cosmo-Knight, Deevils, demons and god only knows what). Or perhaps, some kind of monster has crawled in and made it home. Or it might be empty, but holds a clue to some other mystery or danger.

73% Monster Lair

The player characters have found the lair of a terrifying creature. The lair may be a cave system, lava tubes, an alien forest or a giant crater, but the entire area is the backyard of something that does not like to be disturbed.

The monster(s) could be a massive cave worm or the tunnel complex could be a nest for some kind of monstrous insect, or the G.M. can roll up something new on the Monster Creation Tables. The monster(s) could be intelligent – even a reclusive Splugorth or Godling seeking isolation in the Thundercloud Galaxy. More likely, though, is that it is some lesser creature, a powerful alien or product of Gene-Splicing. Characters who explore the lair or stick around nearby will find out soon enough. Optional fun: Inside the lair is a treasure trove of crippled spaceships or vehicles, or weapons and armor of the previous fallen victims. Or perhaps the treasure has nothing to do with the monster and was inside the lair for eons before the monster(s) ever moved in.

74% Spaceship Graveyard

Long ago, two great fleets waged war in space and in the atmosphere high above an uninhabited planet. Or perhaps they weren't enemies at all, but allies who fell to the Dominators or some other terrible enemy. The battle was fierce and terrible. Tens of thousands of warships perished in the battle, crashing down onto the planet below. Crippled battle cruisers might have also limped down to the planet's surface in hope of being rescued later or making a bid for the planet's surface in hope of being rescued later or making a bid for survival in the wilderness (and failed). Today, thousands of years later, the surface of at least one sizeable portion of the planet is pockmarked with craters and littered with the half buried wreckage of once-mighty warships. Somehow, the giant graveyard has remained undiscovered till now. With no intelligent native life forms, the spacecraft have sat undisturbed all this time. What secrets they may hold is yet to be determined. (Game Masters, unleash those imaginations. This setting can be used in space as well with a cluster of derelict spacecraft in orbit or floating in an asteroid field or the rings of a planet, and so on.)

75% Castaways

The wreckage of a spaceship and its survivors are discovered. Living in improvised conditions, a group of "castaways" are found, clinging to the edge of existence. They are amazed to see the player characters or colonists, and relieved that fate has given them a way home. They will not be pleased if the players are also stranded, or are members of a rival galactic civilization, or without the means (or desire) to drop what they are doing and take them home or to some civilized place where the castaways can contact help. It may be possible the castaways have something to offer in trade for help: a piece of salvaged technology, a magic item, a cargo of Killaryte, a treasure trove of (stolen/pirated) goods, or a bit of useful information or secret plot. At the very least, they have become familiar with the conditions in this part of the world, and knowledgeable regarding survival and native wildlife. After months, years or decades stranded, however, their mental condition may be quite strained.

In addition, it is possible they've made enemies of the indigenous people, and now that the locals have seen them with the player characters or colonists, they assume our heroes are also

bad people or invaders to be hunted and slain. Worse, the castaways are likely to paint a poor picture of the native inhabitants, convincing colonists and/or heroes that they are evil savages or madmen. This may lead to a misunderstanding and animosity that lasts for generations.

76% Castaways

The wreckage of a spaceship and its survivors are discovered. Living in improvised conditions, a group of "castaways" are found, clinging to the edge of existence. They are thrilled to see the player characters or colonists, and relieved that fate has given them a way home. The castaways start asking all kinds of questions. Where are their rescuers from? Who are they? A colony? Indigenous people? Tell us more.

All this information is being transmitted to bushwhackers, raiders, bandits or enemy forces. They can be Kreeghor, Gorgans, Minions of Splugorth, Exiles, Space Pirates, or any nefarious group looking to steal goods, take slaves or destroy a (rival or enemy's) colony. Combat ensues as the treachery is revealed.

77% Swamp Ruins

In the middle of a swamp, there is an unusual object submerged in a pool of stagnant, brackish water. If this object was to be dredged out of the water and the vegetation encrusted over the years scraped away, it would be revealed as a cruiser-style spaceship. Someone familiar with spacecraft might recognize this as a blockade runner or smuggler-type of ship. With room for a crew of four, this ship is armed. Not particularly well by modern standards, but well enough to be able to put up a fight against any modern spaceship smaller than a frigate. However, this ship was designed for speed and was fast and maneuverable.

All things considered, the spacecraft is in surprisingly good condition and can be repaired and made to fly again. A lot of work will have to be done, but this is a salvageable ship only 5D6 years old. Or it could be salvaged for parts and used in another spacecraft. If attempting to repair the ship itself, the chances of getting it flyable within an atmosphere are several times greater than for making it spaceworthy.

78% Secret Pirate Camp

The player characters have stumbled across a den of pirates, hidden away in the vastness of the Thundercloud Galaxy. The occasional scout ship comes and goes, sometimes followed soon after by a pirate fleet off to strike some far-off target. Are the pirates potential friends or enemies? Do they have something the player characters want or need? Some pirates would be perfectly happy to help travelers lost in space. Others might claim the players as hostages or take their ship and leave them stranded. The final outcome will likely be the result of intense negotiation.

79% Stasis Pods

Buried underground or hidden away within a crater, the player characters find a ship or hidden facility. Inside, the stasis pods are amazingly intact, feeding off of some kind of persistent power source. At the center is a special chamber, filled with sealed pods. Within them are alien astronauts, frozen in cold-sleep for a journey that was never completed.

Who are they? Where did they come from? How long have they been frozen? The astronauts themselves must know, but is it safe to reanimate them? Are they still in stasis for a reason?

80% Protected Vault

The player characters have stumbled across the remains of a former underground colony or secure military facility. While the original inhabitants have obviously been gone for a very long time, the vault is still active - and protected by jealous, possibly malfunctioning Artificial Intelligence system. The players may find themselves led in circles, locked inside chambers or intentionally separated. The A.I. can control doors and elevators, computer systems, light, heat and air circulation, as well as many other features of the facility. It may even have robots at its disposal. Humanoid robots are a possibility, (M.D.C. 80, 2 attacks per melee, alien energy weapons do 2D6 M.D. damage, range 1200 feet/366 m), but robots with spider or crab-like body shapes are more universal. (M.D.C. 50, three attacks per melee round, may be equipped with similar energy weapons.)

The computer that controls the vault may be protecting anything from a fairly standard colony to advanced military technology or nothing at all. It may try to reach out to the player characters and mislead them through the guise of friendship, or attempt to convince them to leave without exploring further. Should they reach areas with more valuables or secrets, the A.I.'s response may change, swiftly becoming violent.

If the vault has been built with magic, its guardian could be a Golem or some kind of supernatural creature with a long life span. The entire area may be protected by spells, wards, curses or other enchantments.

At the center of the vault is the real prize. What? Any of the following are possible and more: An ancient alien colony. A doomsday machine. An army of robots. An army of soldiers in stasis (perhaps, ironically, all dead for eons). A dimensional gateway. A slumbering Elder or Dominator. A dreadnaught starship. Vast stores of supplies for some catastrophe that came too soon or not at all. A Demon Star. A Demon Star that has been successfully turned into a force for good. The Cosmic Forge! Okay, not the real Cosmic Forge, but some ancient artifact that has been mistaken for it. One thing is certain: the vault was built for a reason, and whatever is inside is an incredible prize or very dangerous.

81% Forgotten Space Gulag

This is a prison. The gulag is built like a fortress: reinforced doors, tiny windows and corridors and defensive observation points. If the gulag is still operational, there are automatic or magical operating systems in place. That means the player characters may have to contend with the guards and prison wardens or robots. There may be a series of computer-controlled weapons and robots, or simply an A.I. that locks down or electrifies areas that are "off-limits." Magic defenses may be much trickier or consist of Golems, zombies or supernatural creatures. If occupied, the people running the gulag may have lost contact with their superiors decades ago. When the supply ships stopped coming, they continued to maintain the facility as best they could. In fact, there are generations of "guards" and "prisoners" as they continued to maintain the only society they have ever known. Thus, the "prisoners" are not the actual criminals, but their de-

scendants. The warden and guards see outsiders as troublemakers or new prisoners to be incarcerated. Descendants of prisoners see them as possible liberators. However, they've only known life as prisoners, and it has made them primitive and savage.

82% Forgotten Space Gulag

This is a prison. The gulag is built like a fortress: reinforced doors, tiny windows and corridors and defensive observation points. The prisoners may have staged a revolt and taken control of the prison, but until now they've had no way out. Or the only prisoners left may be mainly cybernetic, or frozen in stasis. The prisoners in stasis might be evildoers or political prisoners, even heroes, unable to escape out onto the planet's surface. Depending on the nature of the inmates, they may try to attack the player characters or beg them for help. Who knows what services they have to offer or dark knowledge is in their possession? If the gulag is extremely old, the prisoners may even hail from a time when the Thundercloud Galaxy played host to a forgotten civilization or long-lost wave of colonists.

83% Dreamwaves

Something (machine, magic artifact, Elder, ancient alien, etc.) in the nearby ancient alien ruins is causing nightmares or visions, which are causing fear or instigating trouble or war. Find the source and stop it/kill it/destroy it, and the trouble ends.

84% The Bringer

The Bringer may be an alien being, Elder Race, forgotten deity, demon or other supernatural being, ancient robot or A.I., magical automaton, dimensional traveler, or other strange and mysterious being who brings knowledge, culture, power (scientific or magical) or weapons to primitive people, miscreants and misanthropes. Such beings may be wicked troublemakers and instigators, agents of chaos or doom, social experimenters, protectors/guardians (of the people or the planet), well intentioned helper, or masters of their own, mysterious agenda.

The Bringer lives/hides among an ancient ruin that serves as his place of origin, lair or hideout. It may also be his source of power. Destroy the ruins or something within the ruins (a pool of water, statue, machine, generator, magic artifact, etc.) and you unplug the Bringer from his source of power, weakening him by half and forcing him/it to make personal appearances to manipulate people. Destroy (or imprison him someplace in the ruins?) and the dreams end, but the trouble he's instigated may continue.

85% Monster Maker

Everything was fine until an ancient ruin was uncovered. Now some force is transforming indigenous people or animals and turning them into monsters. Find the source and stop it and the trouble ends.

86% Mysterious Monster

A mysterious monster (or monsters) is plaguing the colonists or the indigenous population. When attacked or chased, the creature runs off to a particular location (or a few different locations in the same general area) where it seems to vanish. A thorough

search uncovers shafts or tunnels or caves that lead to ancient alien ruins. Whether the monster has any relation to these ruins is unknown. It could be ancient aliens who mutated or devolved into savage monsters, or the alien's old watchdog devolved into a monster, or a creature that was once a monstrous specimen, or experiment that got free, and so on. Whatever it is, it has lived in this region for thousands of years, but is reclusive, elusive and few in number. Now that "people" are more common and numerous, or have recently moved in near its lair/the ruins, the monster has found people to be easy prey, and hunts them for food and/or pleasure. Regardless of the beast's relation to the ruins (it/they may have simply made their home in the old ruins), this is where it (or they) has made its lair. To stop the attacks, one must flush them out and kill them or go into the labyrinth to "relocate" them.

87% City of the Dead

A sprawling, alien subterranean city is discovered. Most of the city remains intact, though there are signs of fire, explosions and combat everywhere. Something bad happened here. The city is littered with shriveled, mummified bodies of the dead. The human-like corpses are the *walking dead*. Without a food source, the zombies went dormant, dried up like mummies and have laid unmoving, for thousands (perhaps tens of thousands) of years. Now that there is new humanoid life, they rise to kill and feed, and create new zombies.

88% City of the Dead

A sprawling, alien subterranean city is discovered. Most of the city remains intact, though there are signs of fire, explosions and combat everywhere. Something bad happened here. The remains of a castle-like fort has suffered the greatest damage. Deep within its dungeon is an airtight vault, its door sealed in wax and covered in religious symbols. Opening the vault unleashes 2D6 bats, which immediately attack any humanoid with an exposed jugular vein. If none are available the bats fly away. 2D4 days later, people drained of blood start being discovered, and talk of vampires abounds.

89% Ancient Tomb

Ever since an ancient tomb was opened, the neighboring community or colony has been plagued by a mummy (or several mummies). Was the tomb cursed?

90% Ancient Tomb

An ancient burial ground has been discovered. Deep in its catacombs are the bodies of thousands, but the tombs are also inhabited by dozens of Worms of Taut. If the tomb that opens up to the catacombs is not secure, Nippers, Fire Worms, Tri-Fang and Tomb Worms get into the wild and begin to prey on humanoids. Elsewhere in the catacombs is a forgotten dimensional portal to Hades. Forgotten by the demons, at least.

91% Ancient Geothermal Power Plant

Drilling, excavation or exploration of a cave network broke into the ruin of an ancient tunnel. The tunnel leads to a large chamber that is warm and hums with energy. The electronic

eye at the entrance opens the moment anyone walks within 20 feet (6.1 m) of the door, revealing a control room filled with monitor screens and work stations. The room and machines are designed for beings 10 feet or taller. The underground chamber leads to an ancient tunnel system. The original architects are unknown. The labyrinth of tunnels go on for miles (hundreds or thousands?). Breathable air is cleaned and re-circulated, and a system of dim lights illuminates the corridors by an unseen power and control source. So far, no chambers, rooms, doors, conduits or machines have been discovered. Nor any sign of life, past or present. The tunnels are dry and warm (average temp is 72 degrees Fahrenheit/22 C). Walls have an impressive 900 M.D.C. per 10 foot (3 m) wide section. Until there can be a thorough exploration and mapping, the tunnels are an oddity. The colonists can, if necessary or desirable, use the tunnels for storage and/or as a secret hideout and bomb shelter.

If techs can figure out this is a geothermal power plant and find a way to draw power from the ancient facility, they have enough energy to power cities across the continent.

92% Rift Gate

This is the ruins of an ancient, alien outpost, base or small city. It appears to have been abandoned (and forgotten) by its creators thousands of years ago. However, there are the skeletal remains of a variety of different races scattered here and there. Some are unknown to the colonists (or player characters), others are life forms they recognize; some humanoid, others animals.

There is a door from which a flickering blue light emanates. The hallway leading to it has quite the collection of remains of the dead. Most are whole, some are damaged or look as if they've been eaten. Inside the room is a permanently open dimensional portal. Once upon a time the portal could be controlled, but now, it randomly cycles through a list of alien worlds. The dead bodies are the people and creatures who came through the portal by accident, and died here. When the portal opens on another world, it warps people or animals from that world to this one.

93% Rift Gate to Center

This ancient Rift Gate, more than 100,000 years old, is to Center on Phase World. Only it's not one of the commercial portals on Level Three of Center, but at one of the ley line nexus points on one of the lowest levels of Center. It is apparent that this planet was home to an advanced civilization that traded with the Prometheans. Or could this have once been a Promethean colony planet? However the portal came to be, it is a handy thing to have for the colonists. Of course, getting home could be a problem if the travelers can't clearly indicate the location of the world they came from.

94% Replicator Robot

A man-sized alien machine appears from an ancient ruin. Exactly where it came from is unknown, and it may have been trapped in the ruins until recently released by adventurers or explorers. This is a Von Neumann probe – a robot with a simple A.I. programmed to replicate itself. Thus, it tears apart vehicles, spaceships, machines, buildings and anything it can use to build

more versions of itself. Whatever it can get its hands on is turned into copy after copy of itself. Its mission is to explore and gather information about the people and places in the Thundercloud Galaxy and send it back to its creators. Of course, its creator civilization is long extinct. However, the probe doesn't know this and until all of the probes can be found and destroyed, they continue to tear the colonies to pieces. The probe only has a main body of 50 M.D.C., but people need to act fast while there are only a few, not hundreds or thousands.

95% I Am Power

ID4 locals have appeared with alien technology. They are clad in weird power armor, giant robots or some weird alien vehicle. The alien tech has taken over their minds, making them claim this planet and its people in the name of a long forgotten civilization that vanished with the Elder Races 50,000 years ago. Nothing but sorrow and tragedy will come of this until it is destroyed, as they rule with an iron-fist.

96% Star Sphere

Deep in the dirt or within an ancient ruin, the player characters find an orb the size of a grapefruit. The Dominators call it a Star Sphere. According to legend it contains the energy of a small star. It was used to power some of the Dominator's planet smashers. If hooked up to a starship of any size or power plant, it can power the cities of a planet for eons. The sphere is worth millions. Two potential problems: 1. If the Dominators learn of it they'll want it back. 2. The Sphere communicates via Telepathy and asks to be set free by sending it into a star. It promises nothing bad will come of such action. It doesn't communicate well as its mind is quite alien.

97% A Better Mouse Trap

This is a mock ruin or large crashed spacecraft that radiates an energy signature that should attract explorers, adventurers and pirates. This ruin may be located in space or on a moon, asteroid or planet.

It is actually a trap. Think "roach motel" for humanoids: once you go in you can't get out. At least, not without some serious gunplay and a battle for your life. This "ruin" is a ploy used by the Splugorth and some Space Pirates to lure people into their clutches so they can be captured, robbed and sold on the slave market. Once the victims are drawn inside, the opening and walls of the passageway they came in shift and reconfigure. The way they came in is gone. Going deeper leads them into the maze of the faux ruin, where they are monitored by concealed cameras and ambushed at key junction points. To get out alive, they'll have to fight their way out.

98% Alien Factory

This ancient relic still has power and manufacturing capabilities. It just needs some repairs and raw materials to start cranking out product. What product? That's left to the Game Master, but it could be CCW equivalent energy weapons, hover platforms, cars, or widgets. Converting to make something different is months, maybe years of work, but that can be accomplished.

99% The Sliding Reef

Once upon a time, there was an advanced coastal city protected by a man-made Sliding Reef. The reef serves as a breaker against the ocean's powerful waves, bearing the brunt of them so that by the time the waves reach the city, most of the force has been dissipated. Legend has it that the Sliding Reef also protects a great treasure. So far, no one has ever been able to find this treasure. In fact, very few of those who made the attempt returned to tell the tale. Most people agree that the Sliding Reef is a death trap for the foolhardy and unwary.

First, the Sliding Reef is so named because of the consistency of its composition. It feels like a very hard but rubbery material. When it is wet (which is almost always except at low tide), it is extremely difficult to hold on to. Yet, the rubbery material can be very hard and unforgiving when one is being pounded against it by the waves.

Second, even if one manages to withstand the vicious waves and keep their hold, the Reef's hundreds of caves (both above and below the surface) are home to thousands of giant crabs and other sea creatures. The crabs are aggressive, voracious and their claws strong enough to snap through metal chains and, with enough time, tear open Mega-Damage armor.

Third, anyone who actually achieves the all-but-impossible task of fighting their way past the crabs and finding the right cave will find the fabled treasure, but there are hundreds of caves, and keeping track of which one you've been inside and fighting an army of giant crustaceans every trip is literally murderous work.

100% Castle Grim

These ruins of a haunted castle are the stuff of legend and terror. The ruins are located in a grim and stark expanse of land where it once stood as a proud sentinel guarding over all it surveyed. Today, it's in a state of disrepair, battered and broken.

Few people come to this area, and most of those who do feel a sense of dread and foreboding and avoid the castle. The castle itself generates an aura of fear and a successful saving throw vs psionics is needed in order to master one's fear to enter the castle ruins.

Inside the castle, room after room is empty. What few furnishings have not crumbled with age are caked with dust. However, there is one area of the castle that visitors will find impressive. The Great Hall (the castle's largest room) is filled with tapestries, paintings, and sculptures of warriors on horseback.

The paintings and tapestries are still in fine condition and not faded with time as one might expect them to be. There are empty suits of heavily armored knights and lightly armored bowmen, riders armed with swords, spears, axes, and a variety of other weapons. Over 600 in all, no two are exactly alike, the figures are each different and unique. They can be observed and touched, but not moved from their spot, as the magic that preserves this area keeps everything locked in place.

Those who dare spend the night in the castle awaken the next morning to find they have a visitor – a mounted warrior who inquires as to the business of the travelers and why they have come to the castle. If offered lies or rudeness, the rider will be provoked into doing battle or departing in disgust. A polite refusal causes the rider to leave without a word. However, if given a courteous answer, the rider offers to accompany the traveler(s). If the

traveler(s) are on a mission of some kind, the rider may offer to bring other knights to join them (up to 3D6 more, depending upon the importance of the task at hand). Alert travelers (those making a difficult Perception Roll) notice that there are fewer paintings and sculptures and/or figures on the tapestries than before. (Curiously, the same amount that there are riders.)

The rider(s) tags along and happily assists the traveler(s) on any noble cause, but just for that one task, and then vanishes into thin air. While on the initial assignment, the rider(s) will generally follow the traveler's orders (provided that it's within the bounds of the riders' moral codes). They are here to assist, not lead.

Also, the many riders are all individuals. They have different skills (some are Paladins, others are Knights, Janissaries, Soldiers, Mercenaries, etc.), with different alignments and personalities, as well as different attributes and experience levels. However, all of their weapons and armor will be Mega-Damage.

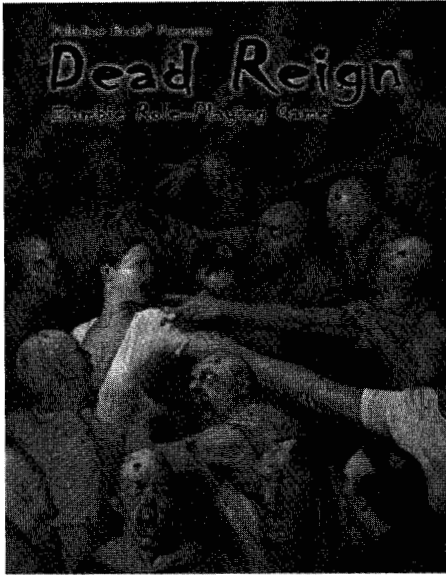
101% Wild Ride

Our heroes find the ruins of an ancient alien outpost. Inside the ruins is an ancient cruiser-sized starship. Its door is open but the vessel seems dead and derelict. Looking inside reveals all kinds of salvageable items. There may even be a weapon locker

or weapon racks on the walls. Going inside is safe. There are no traps or anything apparently dangerous. Pressing a single button or switch, or trying to remove a weapon or device, activates the lights of the ship. Holographic images appear and wall monitors flicker to life. A prerecorded message in an unknown alien tongue speaks on the loudspeakers. If people exit the vehicle, it goes dormant in 1D4 melee rounds. Go back in, and the lights and screens come back on. The message recycles in numerous languages until it finds one the characters understand. The displays then change and a sort of travelogue talking about the ship's creators' home world plays. The world sounds fantastic, beautiful, and peaceful. A paradise. Then the door closes and locks. The voice announces they'll be departing in a few minutes and flying through the black hole at the center of the Thundercloud, and blasts off.

This is not a trap, this is a transport, but our characters don't know where they are going or if the civilization even still exists. The travelogue talks about how the black hole is new in the galaxy, which means this vessel dates back 45,000 to 50,000 years. If they go for the ride, they find planet is dead, and the vehicle returns them to the starting point (unless the G.M. has other ideas). It may be possible, through dumb luck more than skill, for the characters to get the vehicle to cancel the flight and turn around. Taking control of the ship is extremely unlikely.

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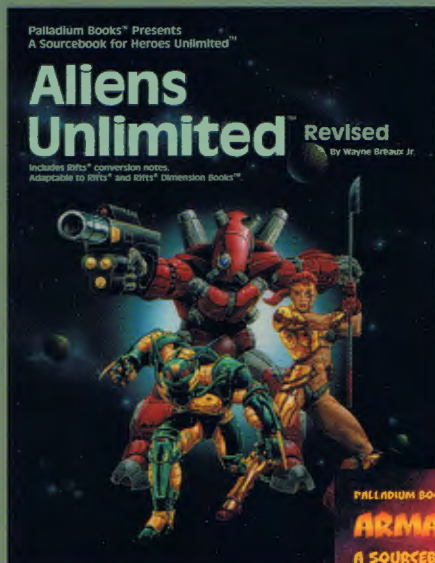
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