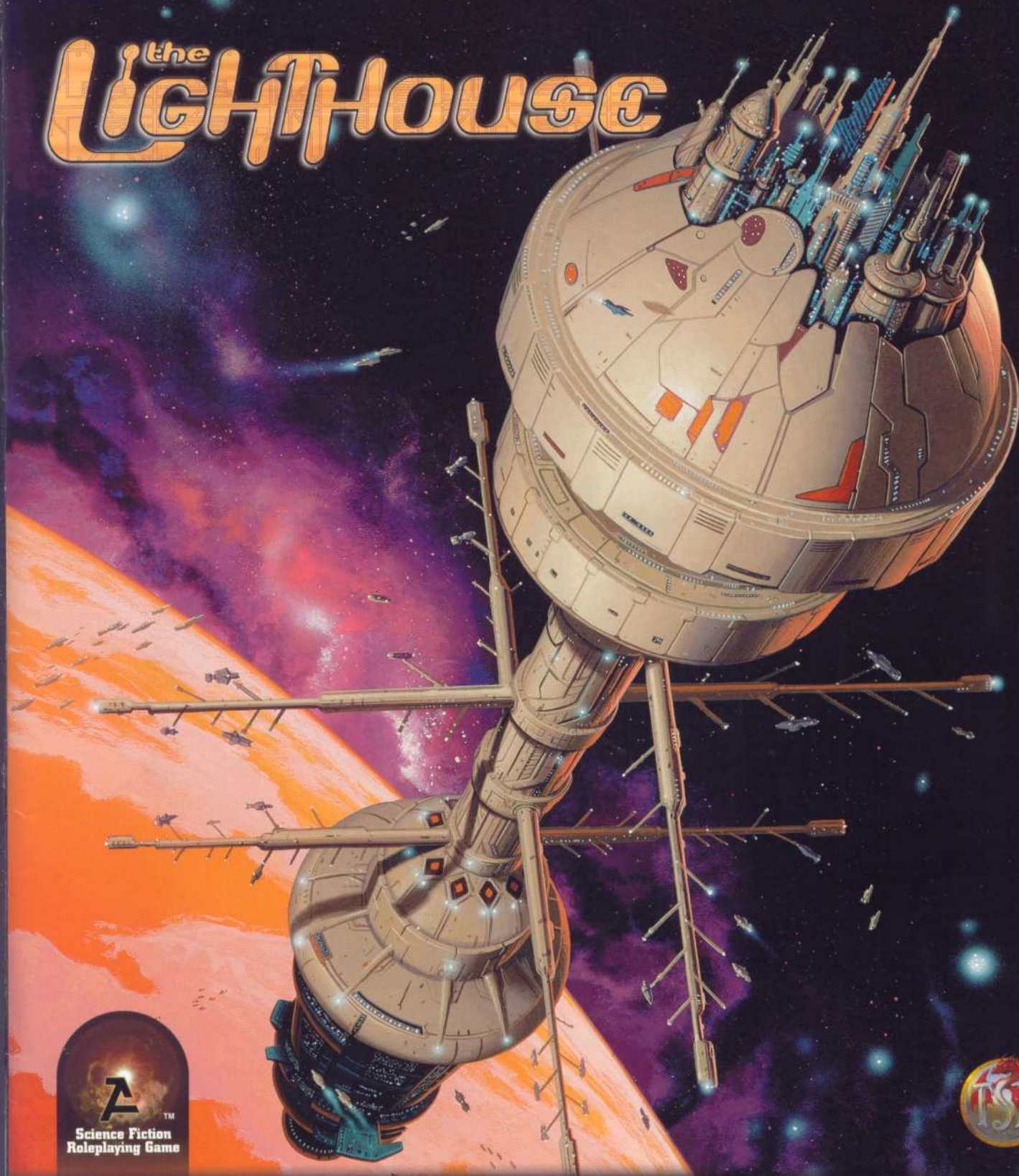
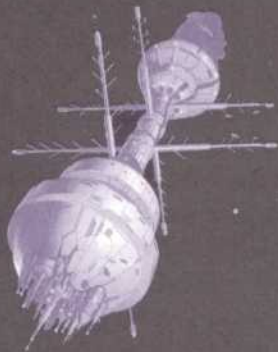


The LIGHTHOUSE



by David Eckelberry



The Light House

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INTRODUCTION

The *Lighthouse* is an accessory for the STAR*DRIVE campaign setting that explores a single place in the Verge—in point of fact, a place that moves between the stars. This is the *Lighthouse*, once a thriving temple of worship and now a center of activity and hope in the far-flung stars of the Verge. She represents a chance for renewal and reunification, an opportunity for the underdeveloped colonies of the frontier to keep in touch. She also symbolizes the interest that all of the Stellar Ring—and especially the Galactic Concord—shares for this special corner of space.

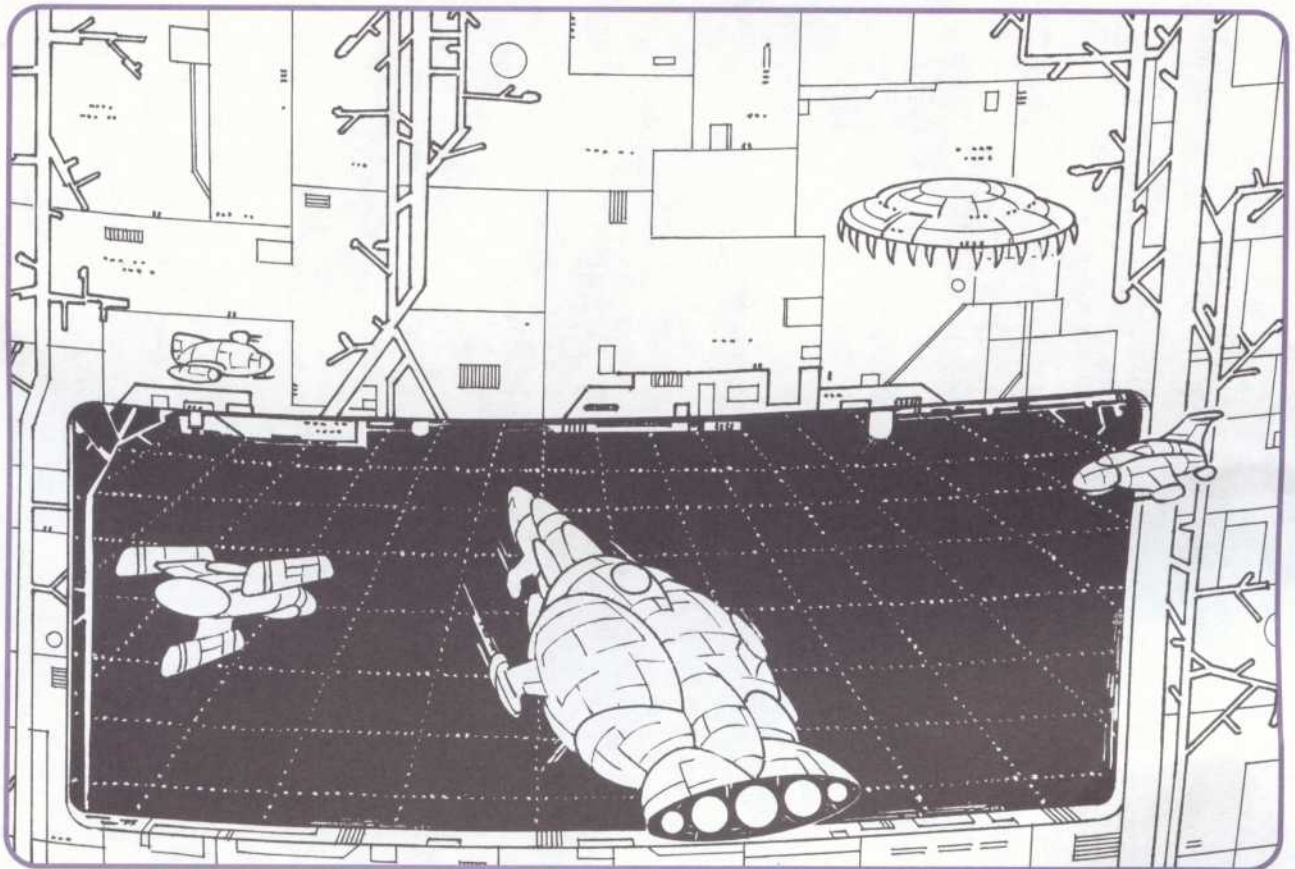
For the heroes of the twenty-sixth century, the *Lighthouse* offers a wealth of opportunity. Sailing through the stars faster than any driveship, she can serve as a bridge to any destination in the Verge. She welcomes fortune seekers and entrepreneurs in her spacious trading halls and cargo bays. She can provide the focus of an adventure or series of adventures as heroes unlock her secrets and explore the complex machinations—both technical and political—that keep her running. Finally, the *Lighthouse* offers herself to those who wish to visit the many stars of the Verge and yet still have a place to call home.

This book is divided into four chapters. *Chapter One: An Emissary of Hope* offers a basic description of the station: her history, her role and importance in the Verge, and the welcome that newcomers can expect on arrival. *Chapter Two: The Powers of Light* details the principal leaders, factions, and

personalities that make the decisions aboard the *Lighthouse*. *Chapter Three: A Starfalling City* provides detailed descriptions of specific areas and compartments, along with information on important denizens of the station. Finally, *Chapter Four: Adventures Aboard* presents the Gamemaster with suggestions for adventures centered around the *Lighthouse*, including four complete adventure outlines.

Both players and Gamemasters can find this accessory valuable, as it provides information about a specific locale in the Verge while also casting greater illumination on the diversity of the STAR*DRIVE setting. However, throughout this book the reader will find numerous details of hidden information and secrets that individual heroes are unlikely—or completely unable—to know. Whenever possible, this privileged information is set aside in a sidebar. A player can choose to pass by this text and remain ignorant, or by reading it agree to roleplay a hero without all the knowledge he or she has.

Of course, with dozens of vital station systems, hundreds of compartments, and thousands of sentient beings aboard, some of the *Lighthouse* remains yours to explore, develop, and populate. It's a big place, and you should feel free to add your own heroes and supporting characters to the surroundings. As they interact with one another and the rest of the station, the *Lighthouse* comes alive: more than a construct of plastic and durasteel, she is the nucleus for adventures in the heavens.



CHAPTER ONE: AN EMISSARY OF HOPE

Two years ago, the Galactic Concord relit the fires of an aging symbol of peace and hope. The *Lighthouse* hearkens back to a time when lonely men in lofty towers stoked flames to offer guidance to travelers of troubled seas. More than ever, the station must live up to her name, acting as the single greatest bond that the Verge shares together.

HISTORY

By all rights, the *Lighthouse* should be an artifact in a museum or a derelict of a floating junkyard. Almost a century old, few spacecraft of a similar age still operate, and none of these can rival the station's distinction. Of course, none of them languished in a coma that lasted for 38 years.

THE LIGHTHOUSE OF FAITH

As late as 2401, the Orlamu Theocracy had avoided taking serious losses in the Second Galactic War. A strong alliance with the Orion League, coupled with nonaggression policies toward its other neighbors, allowed the Orlamu to fight and fund conflict in distant, foreign stars. The Theocracy took full opportunity of this comfortable position to continue growing its internal economy and advancing scientific research.

The *Lighthouse of Faith* represented the last gasp of focused Orlamu nonmilitary spending in the Second Galactic War. Construction began in 2398. The Orlamu intended the station to act as a model for a fleet of space stations that would travel the star lanes, making prodigious leaps through drivespace and bringing humanity and the sentient species together. In 2401, the war came to Orlamu space with the opening of hostilities with the Profit Alliance—and its members the Union of Sol and StarMech.

The Orlamu completed the *Lighthouse* in 2402, a full year after her scheduled commission. She immediately began shuttling material and personnel throughout the length of Orlamu space. They also publicized a pacifist policy; this traveling emissary of the Divine Unconscious would carry no arms, munitions, or soldiers. The station itself maintained only the most limited armament and constabulary. Thus, the Orlamu hoped to avoid losing their valuable station to armed conflict. And, with the blessing of the Unconscious, the doctrine of pacifism succeeded. Eventually, it appeared as if the station's own natural lifespan would come to an end before the tide of war threatened her.

DEATH

The might of the Solar Union put an end to such sentimental speculation in 2461. Conflict along the Orlamu-Solar border had grown fierce, with terrible fighting involving the two combatants coupled with the occasional intrusion of hostile Thuldan fleets into both territories. After the Dycliffe Campaign of that year, the Union of Sol crushed an Orlamu task force and destroyed its fortress ship. Through the hole in the Theocracy's defenses, the Solar navy raided deep into enemy territory. By the time the Orlamu could repel the invaders, the attack had claimed the *Lighthouse* as one of the victims. She burned and died, taking with her most of her crew.

The Orlamu protested the assault as a crime of war. The Solars returned an accusation that the *Lighthouse* carried advanced weapons technology. Of course, no one existed in those days to hear a nation's appeal to justice, and the flames of war fanned hotter.

RENEWAL

Not completely destroyed, the crippled station slumbered until the end of the war. When the dignitaries forging the Galactic Concord called for donations of men, technology, ships, and stars from the stellar nations, the lengthy negotiations included the *Lighthouse* as one of the offerings. At the time, most considered the transfer an item of trivia; the Concord acquired so many more important resources that the *Lighthouse* was relegated to a footnote. A few even questioned the reasoning behind the Concord's request. But it all proved irrelevant. For 16 years, nearly everyone ignored the *Lighthouse*. Only the occasional exacting scholar of the Second Galactic War even bothered to visit.

On March 24, 2498, Michael Thayne, Undersecretary and Minister of the Galactic Consulate, led the Committee on Verge Integration in calling for a redeployment of Concord assets. Specifically, he proposed that the Concord drag the *Lighthouse* from her junkyard in Orlamu space, refurbish the station, and bring her into the Verge to serve there permanently.

Thanks to diplomatic wrangling and deal-making that had already been orchestrated, the Galactic Consulate approved Thayne's proposal on the same day. Concord engineers left immediately for Dycliffe and began the refit operation. The *Lighthouse* was in terrible shape, her upper habitat sections completely demolished, her mass reactor damaged beyond repair, and her defensive systems either

destroyed or hopelessly outdated. The more that Concord technicians surveyed, the more work they found for themselves in the months ahead.

The assistance of the Orlamu Theocracy itself allowed the project to be finished on time—in a single year. In exchange for special considerations aboard its onetime property, the Orlamu donated additional manpower and resources to the Concord project. On March 23, 2499, a fully operational *Lighthouse* made starrise in the Tendril star system.

TRANSVERGE NEWS HOLOBROADCAST : ACTIVE

"I offer up this gift to the people of the Verge in full hope and expectation of tremendous success. For too long, the people of the Stellar Ring have lost touch with their brothers and sisters out here on the frontier. That's beginning to change, and I think that the Lighthouse can make the difference.

"But it's more for the people here that I have brought in this tribute. Here, you've struggled too long and too hard, and we're all proud of the individual achievements that have been made. But the dark silence still surrounds us, leaving us unable to communicate even with our closest neighbors. For all of us, it's made working together difficult. I'm going to change all that. The shining future that awaits us all is just beyond our reach now, and I think the Lighthouse can be the beacon that lights our way together."

Michael Thayne, March 23, 2499

TWO YEARS OF PEACE

For two and a half years, the *Lighthouse* has wandered the stars of the Verge. As she moves swiftly and certainly between developed, lightly settled, and wholly undeveloped worlds, her existence and continued operation provides a tie that binds together the loosely defined region of space.

In her first runs through drivespace in 2499, most Vergers viewed the *Lighthouse* with suspicion. In the Verge, sentiment for self-determination and independence still runs high; many saw the station's deployment as an attempt by the stellar nations to wrest control of even the smallest colonies. A few of the most fervent—spurred on by groups such as the Concord Free Now—even sought to deny the *Lighthouse* right of passage through their space.

As luck would have it, the *Lighthouse* has yet to endure a serious conflict. Concord officials, applying subtle yet direct pressures, have clearly designated the station as off-limits to the occasional skirmish of stellar nations, Verge governments, and independent corsairs. Indeed, the full wrath of the Galactic Concord would come down upon those who threatened the Concord's base in the

Verge. Michael Thayne remained aboard the station during her maiden voyage from Tendril to distant Hathorn, variously negotiating with and intimidating the leaders of worlds and nations.

Meanwhile, a more gentle approach has attempted to point out other reasons to let the *Lighthouse* exist unmolested. And some perceptions have changed. But despite all the flowery speeches of Concord diplomats, the shift in public opinion has nothing to do with any changed attitude toward the Galactic Concord or any climactic winning over of hearts and minds. It has everything to do with technical realities—and self-interest. For both Vergers and Arrivers, the *Lighthouse* represents an unequaled opportunity for everyone from the smallest independent to a government of millions.

From her first journey through the Verge to the ones she makes today, the *Lighthouse* has shown many faces. Some see her as a stage to make it onto the galactic scene; others view her as an incredible means to turn a profit. Finally, she provides beings of all backgrounds with a chance not just to live, but to flourish.

THE PRESENT

When the *Lighthouse* makes starrise in a system, she changes everything. She takes a once-unreachable backwater system—at least in the eyes of the interstellar community—and thrusts it onto a galactic stage. The station suddenly experiences the focus of everyone's attention: politicians, businessmen, journalists, and every special interest group, from gridrunners to religious cultists.

STARRISE: MIKOA

November 11, 2501 (TVN) —The *Lighthouse* arrived in the Mikoa star system for the first time today and, as expected, has attracted interest far and wide. The little-known system, previously only a waypoint for travelers passing to and from Aegis, promises to grow in size. Nevertheless, soon after the station's arrival, political dissent became the presiding issue of the day. The Mikoan presentation has already drawn comparison to the criticized visits to Exile and Vieron earlier this year.

"The people of Mikoa Three welcome our many visitors and those who hear our Gridcast words for the first time. It's a great privilege to offer the hospitality of our colony, young though it is, to the people of the galaxy," said Ivan Urbina, governor of the Nariac colony since 2498. "We're privileged to announce the opening of the Mikoan orbital production facility, creator of high-grade technical parts and components."

Urbina declined to comment on the growing rumors of Mikoan production failures and labor disputes.

Summary Data 0411-1211 hours 11.1.2501

Ships initiating docking:	15
Ships leaving dock:	38
Ships presently in dock:	94
Local ships under monitor:	308
Drivespace communications initiated:	2,064
Drivespace communications received:	769,853
Drivespace replies received:	0
Financial transactions completed:	54,082
LIEX Trading Volume:	612,087,525
LIEX Index:	453463 (+472)

Price Index, from Redman-Smith

Commodity	Trading Price
Animals, Common	3.4k
Animals, Exotic	26k
Animals, Livestock	4k
Art	39k
Beef/animal products	7.0k
Building Supplies	13k
Chemicals	20.5k
Computers	228k
Contraband	131k
Electronics	187k
Entertainment	18.1k
Fruits/vegetables	3.2k
Gas (H, He)	400
Grain (wheat, rice)	235
Machinery, Heavy	87k
Machinery, Light	26.4k
Medical Supplies	111k
Munitions	405k
Ore, Common	1100
Ore, Rare	79k
Plastics	22k
Radioactives	76.6k
Refined Metal, Common	14.8k
Refined Metal, Rare	59.5k
Spices	1035
Textiles	2.6k
Vehicle, Air	80.4k
Vehicle, Ground	26.2k
Vehicles, Military	1.4M
Water	4.8k
Weapons	2.8M

While the *Lighthouse* rarely remains in a system for more than two weeks and sometimes as little as two days, those precious days and nights mean everything to the people she visits. Aboard the *Lighthouse* itself, the station's inhabitants spend the time in normal space in a maddening whirlwind of activity, with deals to sign, secrets to learn, or dollars to make. Meetings and negotiations commonly last through the night; after all, you can always rest up during the five days in drivespace.

SPECIAL CAPABILITIES

Without breaking the station down into individual components, sections, and compartments (see *Chapter Three: A Starfalling City* for such an analysis), certain functions and capabilities of the *Lighthouse* distinguish her both from other stations and from other vessels in the Verge. The station's specifications form the basic reason for her importance in issues of interstellar trade and diplomacy.

The station's faster-than-light power draws most of the comments. With a 50-light-year range, the *Lighthouse's* stardrive equals that of any fortress ship—with the rumored exception of the mammoth *Oneagle*. So, in less than two weeks she can cross from Tendril to Hammer's Star with only two starfalls. From Aegis, the *Lighthouse* can reach almost any system in the Verge with only a single starfall.

The *Lighthouse* emerged from Orlamu design and production facilities as the result of decades of pre-GW2 research into producing stardrives of greater range but smaller size. Though a fantastic success of engineering, it was a blunder economically. The stardrive maintains a 50-light-year range, but it cost more than twice as much as a stardrive aboard any Orlamu fortress ship—adjusted for inflation, she cost more than *100 trillion to produce. The high price of miniaturization results in the *Lighthouse* remaining one of a kind.

It's more than just "one of a kind." Many aboard the station have observed the amazing consistency and precision of her starfalling performance. While the average stardrive can at best hope to come within a few AU of its destination, the *Lighthouse* averages something closer to about a million kilometers—a shift of several orders of magnitude in accuracy, and something that neither the Concord nor the Orlamu Theocracy cares to discuss. To all public eyes, it's simply good luck.

In truth, the stardrive's cost stems from this incredible advance, and even today Orlamu teams work on repeating and improving the *Lighthouse* model. Very few individuals, however, know just why the station was equipped with its special stardrive.

By comparison, the station's induction engines seem weak and underpowered, with a cruising speed of just over 0.3 AU per hour. Should a slight miscalculation in drivespace navigation leave the *Lighthouse* on the outer edge of a system, such as during the visit to the Exile system earlier in 2501, it could take several days for the *Lighthouse* to cross into a system's heart. In such instances, faster-moving vessels take up the slack, traversing between the station and the local colonies.

The station shares one final (and perhaps most important) characteristic with her larger cousins, the fortress ships. Only moments after the *Lighthouse* starrises, the station releases drivesats to starfall into drivespace and extends from her pylons the receivers of a drivespace communications relay. For all the time when the *Lighthouse* remains out of drivespace, she sends and receives messages from the closest system with a driverelay (Hammer's Star, Aegis, or Tendril), and through it the rest of explored space.

Like most Orlamu spacecraft—what do we call this thing? space station? driveship? Her creators have every reason to be proud of the marvel that they have produced in the *Lighthouse*; it represents a brilliant step forward in our mastery of power and knowledge. In effect, they have produced what bureaucrats demanded for years: a baby fortress ship.

Of course, the Orlamu's enemies have little reason to fear this monstrosity. The result of trillions of dollars and decades of research and development is a ship that cannot come close to the cargo capacity of a fortress ship, moves like a barge under fusion torch, and would have trouble defending itself against anything bigger than a cruiser.

—*Fighting Ships*, 22nd edition, 2402

POLITICAL BACKWATER

As many Arrivers who disparage the colonies rightfully claim, the Verge systems remain provincial backwaters in comparison with any of the first worlds of Old Space. They have none of the luxuries that Arrivers enjoy back home. More importantly, they remain incredibly out of touch with the rest of the known galaxy. Only three systems have a driverelay; and these three lag as much as a week or more behind the Stellar Ring, far down the information pipeline.

Of course, that applies to only three systems out of the hundred or so colonized worlds of the Verge. Without a driverelay, these settlements must rely on courier ships to keep in touch with one another. This chancy, unreliable arrangement benefits only a select few, mostly isolationists

who came to the edge of known space in order to avoid contact with rest of humanity.

Administratively, it's a disaster. The same reasons that led to the Long Silence plague the efforts of the stellar nations and the Galactic Concord. Each system threatens to become a quiet island in space, fully months behind the galactic community. Agents from the Stellar Ring attempting to bring order and consistency to the wayward frontier find this an unacceptable situation. How can a stellar nation issue directives and commands to its colonies under such primitive circumstances? History demonstrates many examples of the failure of governing from afar, from Great Britain to the Terran Empire.

"Please. If you're going to take up my time with this interview, you could at least propose a more interesting topic of discussion than the Verge. I mean, what of it? Does it really matter? You see, I'm not one of the fatuous optimists who consider the Verge rapprochement to be some illustrious sign of the progress we're making since the war. I mean, let's be clear about this. The Stellar Ring remains in an age of regeneration. Our interests are much too focused here to truly indulge in any "third wave" of galactic expansion. Look at the Verge itself. If we were serious about extending ourselves outward, would we leave the majority of those pitiful frontiersman out in the distant cold without a way to even call home? No. But everyone's got a "more pressing" expense back home.

"Personally, I'm convinced that, unless something is done to change the situation, we're likely to witness a repetition of the First Galactic War. The growing colonies out on the frontier will grow more independent-minded the longer we leave them alone."

—Trent Mikada, 2498

POLITICAL NEXUS

The *Lighthouse* forms the bandage and bridge between governed and governing. Representatives of every stellar nation crowd the *Lighthouse*, filled with the latest information from the galaxy at large. From here, they can not only negotiate with one another (as might happen on any fixed point of space from Bluefall to planet Concord itself), but also deal specifically with "local" issues—in other words, matters specific to individual systems of the frontier.

So, in the space of only a few days, the *Lighthouse* allows the colony she visits to shine on an interstellar stage, wooing observers and gaining the attention it needs to increase immigration. On the other hand, the station also permits outsiders to take a penetrating look at the system and make decisions that will determine its fate.

Hailing from each of the stellar nations and the more powerful Verge systems, the administrators, ambassadors, and diplomats aboard continue their dance of power as they maneuver for advantage. As these players broker deals, they may buy or sell whole planets and their populations in the interests of "the bigger picture."

A few exceptions exist: When visiting the most-developed planets and systems, the *Lighthouse* plays a different role. While floating over Bluefall or Alaundril, the politicians aboard the *Lighthouse* must focus their efforts on drier, less flexible issues of trade instead of political boundaries, ownership rights, and sovereignty.

The most interesting of circumstances occurs when the *Lighthouse* makes starrise into a system not yet clearly defined as the territory of a single stellar nation. Then, all of the players struggle to get involved, not only with trade deals and merchant rights, but with attempts to lay claims and woo or bully independents into agreement.

In most cases, the ultimate responsibility for decision-making doesn't rest with the representatives aboard the *Lighthouse*. These journeyman ambassadors seek to make successful names for themselves. Much of the time, this involves strictly following orders from superiors on Aegis or somewhere back in Old Space. Of course, simple obedience has never distinguished the aspiring emissary or leader-to-be, and here in the Verge, opportunity lurks around every corner. Bold individuals often seize such an opportunity before they can gain official approval. On the *Lighthouse*, where negotiations or plots that come to fruition during drivespace travel can make or break careers while the rest of the galaxy is unaware, such cases appear with great frequency. In addition, some of the best negotiations happen within hours of arrival in a system—long before any greater authority can cast canonical blessing.

The congregation of influence, opportunity, and information presents an irresistible chance for intrigue and espionage. Just as legitimate power-brokers scheme and deal, intelligence operatives make the best of their chances to worm out information, convert and blackmail the enemy, and expose enemy spies doing the same thing.

Examples of this shadowy and clandestine activity rarely reach the eyes or ears of the public at large, and even the generally well-informed of the station remain ignorant of the spies amongst them. Contrary to holovids, intelligence operatives rarely make the news unless they've failed. The successful players can read the daily news and see the influence and interactions that go on behind the scenes.

TRANSMISSION BEGINS

Andrea:

I'm sorry I haven't been in touch for weeks, but you know how busy I've been since being assigned to the *Lighthouse*. It's an honor, of course, and I should be more gracious to the Deans. But there's so much going on here now. With the Mikoa starrise this morning I've had little time to think, much less pause to let you know how I'm doing.

It's all because of Kreskan. I swear that someone in our embassy here is leaking information to him. Every time we make a move, the Thuldans have the perfect counter ready. He absolutely ruined the last conference we had with the delegates from Ion Productions. And then there's the Nariacs, who I swear must be involved with the death of one of the Mikoans this morning. It's gone too far, and I can't keep track of who's working for whom and what everyone's doing. Wakefield must step in and settle things down. Of course, he must "take the time to do a complete investigation." Well, the ambassador is here and we've got to run off for a strategy session with the Austrins. Talk again soon.

TRANSMISSION ENDS

MILITARY INSTRUMENT

Along with the rest of her functions, the *Lighthouse* represents a formidable military asset, and one that the Concord would hate to lose. Actually, by all public analysis, the station itself doesn't inspire fear as a weapon. With power concentrated in her stardrive rather than in weapons systems, the *Lighthouse* instead represents the best means by which to move important military forces—ships as large as cruisers, and troops numbering in the thousands—to a system. With her drivespace range, she exceeds the ability of most military ships around.

The best example of this occurred only a few months ago. During an engagement with the clicks in Hammer's Star, the Star Force came to believe that a large force of click vessels would arrive soon. A state of emergency declared, the *Lighthouse* abandoned her schedule and made starfall to Tendril. From there, she could ferry military craft on to Aegis and Hammer's Star itself. Fortunately, by the time that the *Lighthouse* arrived, word had reached Tendril that no intervention was necessary.

The incident reminded everyone aboard the *Lighthouse* that, as safe as they feel aboard the station, they can take nothing for granted on the frontier.

For more information on the station's military capabilities, refer to 'Station Defenses' on page 10.

CENTER OF TRADE

Though an interesting game, the true players in the political scene make up less than ten percent of the population of the *Lighthouse*. Of the rest, only the rumormongers, journalist hacks, or think tank eggheads have more than a passing interest in interstellar diplomacy. Unsurprisingly, much of the rest of the station's inhabitants choose to pursue the economic opportunities the station offers. After all, until a war develops, most politics remains just talk without the possibility of revenue. And as everyone knows, most wars have their beginning in economic conflict anyway.

As the Redman-Smith Trading Corp tells its members, economic profit—whether or not it involves actual conflict—is what the *Lighthouse* is all about. Or, to put it more bluntly, unadulterated greed.

Consider the situation as it stands in the Verge. Normally, a merchant must wander from place to place, his ship loaded with goods, attempting to find a buyer to buy his cargo for a reasonable price. Often, he may find it well-nigh impossible to find good markets along the frontier, and for many merchants, a single bad shipping run can bring ruin, bankruptcy, and repossession of a fine starship by the creditors.

Even a successful trader must expose himself to all kinds of risks and dangers along the way. Greedy local governments have exorbitant taxes and obscure regulations that never work to a visiting freetrader's advantage. The high expense of employing the crew of a starship raises the cost but does little for the bottom line. Finally, don't forget the physical risk: Pirates, corsairs, and hostile aliens just don't respect a sentient's right to make a living.

Here the *Lighthouse* steps in. This well-protected and neutral site guards merchants from hostiles. Moreover, as a Concord neutrality, financial negotiations aboard the station enjoy one of the smallest tax rates in explored space, without any clumsy attempts at price controls or similar nonsense. Traders who make their living on the station always have the home-turf advantage.

As a result, the *Lighthouse* has attracted more economic development than anyone predicted. In retrospect, the Concord should have predicted the growth. Merchants fill the starfalling city, constantly trading with one another, and upon starfall, the denizens of a star system and all of her colonies. Every two weeks or so, a businessman can start over in a new market. A priceless cargo in one system may be dross in another, and only foresight and execution allow the savvy trader to know the difference. The constant movement provides not only a great opportunity for swindlers, but also a chance for fantastic commodities speculation.

The *Lighthouse* Exchange (LIEX) serves first as a commodities exchange, helping merchants trade on an open

market. It's also a growing stock exchange. As more and more Verge-based businesses grow in size, they become publicly traded corporations, with stock for sale at LIEX or at the Vessy on Bluefall. To date, most have seen the LIEX as the poor stepchild of the Vessy, but one which serves a necessary purpose. Only the *Lighthouse* can actually journey to the locations of many businesses and sites of capital in the Verge, permitting prospective stockholders to get a look at what they're buying into. The arrival of the *Lighthouse* frequently presages IPOs of corporations and conglomerates.

The price for all this fortuity? Competition. A neophyte trader can come to the station and retire a multimillionaire in less than a year. More likely, he'll return from whence he came, whatever meager fortune he came with lost. Worse yet, he could find himself consigned to a life of never-ending debt. The *Lighthouse* is the major league of the Verge, and from here even talented Rigunmors can return home shamed forever.

"Mr. Ettehoven, you were one of the first to 'make it' aboard the station. Do you have any advice that you'd like to give to new traders coming to the *Lighthouse*?"

"That I'd like to give out? For free? No. There's no way I'm going to give up any information on commodities to buy for the next starfall. I'm not some idiotic analyst that works for a study group. I'm in this for the money."

"How about some more general advice?"

"Okay, how about this: It's all about data. I'm not talking about infotrading—that's a different field altogether. I'm talking about intelligence the way that spies do. Make sure you've got it and the other guy doesn't. Do the research. It doesn't matter if you've made great contacts throughout the Verge; if you can't figure out what they need now—and tomorrow—you might as well give it up. And don't forget to check your sources. After all, you may have overheard that incredible conversation just because they wanted you to."

CITY IN THE STARS

Thanks to all the activity, the *Lighthouse* has once again become home to her own urban community. Fully five thousand people live aboard the station permanently. The fortunate among these include the politicians, wealthy businessmen, distinguished Orlamist clergy, and high-ranking station officials. The rank and file—station personnel, Concord staff, traders, and diplomatic personnel—whom fortune has yet to shine upon live in the center of the station's city, in crowded housing never designed to act as permanent domiciles.

Some of her permanent residents see the *Lighthouse* simply as a city. That their homes and jobs are on a space station, or even a vessel that travels the stars, is irrelevant. To those employed in her retail stores, hotels, or even station maintenance, the passage of star systems means nothing. In fact, many here have no interest in the complexities of interstellar trade or even the byzantine interstellar politics that surround them. They just try to make a living aboard the station as they might anywhere else.

Add to these permanent residents a thousand or more temporary ones. Some, literally tourists, stay aboard the station for a month or two as she journeys from system to system. Others travel from place to place, using the *Lighthouse* for her original purpose as a means of transportation. And once in a while, the station crowds her halls with hundreds or even thousands of colonists, on their way out to a new life in the stars.

To serve these thousands, a burgeoning economy exists, complete with every service and facility that any small—but affluent—town would expect. Banks, hotels, entertainment clubs and lounges, retail stores and shops, restaurants, libraries, churches, and schools lie within the center of the station. A hospital and a combined auditorium and sports arena serve both the needs and the whims of the populace. See *Chapter Three: A Starfalling City* for more information on the city's resources.

Naturally, this city suffers from all of the problems of any urban settlement, and a few unique ones of her own. Crime, smuggling, and illegal activities of various kind spring eternal, and the Concord Administrators aboard the station have their hands full as they attempt to serve both as a police force to the masses and as friendly hosts to visiting dignitaries and tourists. Others have the responsibility of keeping the populace well-supplied and the station clean and unpolluted. Still others struggle to regulate and record all of the economic activity. Taking its inspiration from the station itself, this lively town never sits still.

"Attention unidentified approaching vessel, this is the *Lighthouse*. You are now entering the patrol radius of the station and her escort ships. Depower your weapons systems immediately and respond.

"Attention unidentified vessel, this is your second warning. Respond immediately with your course and destination or turn about.

"Listen, pal, you're really starting to tick me off. Either do an about-face now or I'm going to order the cannons to open fire."

VISITING THE STATION

The *Lighthouse* welcomes visitors with open arms. Station personnel identify and briefly scan approaching starships,

as the Concord doesn't want to risk a weapons exchange on the station's doorstep. Once they complete this perfunctory task, Star Force officers in the escort vessels forward the vessel to the station itself.

DOCKING

Three options exist for those coming aboard. Ships may proceed inside the station itself, into her center ring of hangar facilities. Here the station houses dozens of small craft that prefer the complete protection of the station's hull, and the convenience that being inside entails. It's a mark of distinction to "dock in," as station residents call the practice. It's also a matter of expense: Docking fees for the average ship are more than a \$3,500 a day. Only ships of corvette size or smaller may exercise this option; this includes most independent trade ships, but not big commercial liners, bulk freighters, or military capital ships. Also, because of the limited availability of space inside the *Lighthouse*, visitors should check with a station administrator to determine vacancy (or reserve space in advance).

Alternately, pilots may choose to "dock out" on one of the spires that extend more than a hundred meters from the station. These hollow spires, extending like tapering antenna segments, vary in width from 10 meters wide where they jut from the station's edge to less than two meters across at their extreme ends. Pilots moving slowly may easily match up with one of the many airlocks on a spire, where securing clamps will safely lock the ship in place. This alternative also provides a cheaper proposition for ship owners. The exact cost for docking on a spire depends on the size of the ship; about \$280 per day, on average—coincidentally, just about the cost of a high-priced hotel room aboard the station.

Merchants or travelers on a tight budget sometimes abandon the idea of docking entirely, preferring simply to rest in space near the *Lighthouse*; the station never moves very fast, and just about any starship worth the name can keep pace. Meanwhile, the occupants and passengers can charter one of the *Lighthouse's* small launches to shuttle them to and from the station for only \$25 per person. Once aboard, they can enjoy all of the luxuries of the station without what some consider exorbitant docking fees. Though the station's elite often frown on this inconvenient option, the practice of "floating" is common among commercial passenger liners, especially system liners that ferry people up from a planet or colony to the station for only a few days.

Two important, unavoidable facts limit this practice. When the *Lighthouse* makes starfall, a ship whose captain wishes to piggyback along for the ride must be docked—either within her hangars or attached to one her spires. And, if the captain ever wants to emerge from drivespace,

he must order that his ship remain so docked for the five days that the station remains within drivespace. It's not uncommon to witness a mass exodus from the *Lighthouse* immediately after her starrise. Of course, the captain must also pay for the five days of docking charges incurred while in drivespace.

WELCOME INSIDE

Once cleared and docked, visitors to the station can proceed inside, where numerous perfunctory obligations await. As a Concord station, Concord officials preside over elements of law and regulation. First, the station personnel log in the visitors' names and identification records and verify these with a bioelectric scan. As a matter of course, they check these names against those of known terrorists, criminals, and pirates. At best, they deny entry to unwanted criminals; other possibilities include arrest or worse.

The Concord also confiscates any illegal or military-grade weaponry. Very few exceptions to the rule exist; the standard exemptions include those working for the Concord directly (Marines, Administrators, and Star Force) or special honor guards of visiting dignitaries. "Leave 'em at home or aboard your own ship," Wakefield has made it known. The Concord grudgingly allows individuals to carry a registered, visible sidearm, but the security personnel frown on the practice. To them, carrying a gun represents an intent to commit violence, not a means to discourage it. History on the station has proven them correct; the Austrins aren't the only ones who feel empowered to demonstrate their guns. Of course, since fewer than one in 20 civilians aboard the station carry a sidearm, it tends to attract attention.

These burdens navigated, the traveler is released into the station proper. Guides and hotel services eagerly greet tourists and newcomers; they quickly inform the potential customer that they had best traverse the station's long and complicated halls with someone more familiar with the station's layout. Most of these characters just hope to make a meager living off fees, tips, and kickbacks. A few are more dangerous, leading the unsuspecting mark into a swindle or outright robbery.

Guests are welcome to stay as long as they like—or as long as their credit accounts hold out. The Concord does request that those staying longer than a month—essentially more than two starfalls—register with station authorities. Permanent residents have the option of becoming Concordans and making the emigration a matter of record.

A NOTE ON DIRECTIONS

The denizens of the *Lighthouse* use two conventions in describing directions aboard the station. Since the station is generally oriented vertically, "up" is in the direction of the City Section and "down" is toward the Engineering Section.

A bit less intuitive is the use of the four cardinal directions—north, south, east, and west—to direct people from place to place in the open areas of the station. Since these directions have no innate meaning on a space station, the Shuttle Bay (area 35 on Deck 193) was arbitrarily designated as "north." Thus, the Office of the Administrator (area 112 on Deck 200) lies in the "southern" portion of the deck. Station dwellers rarely use these outside the City Section, since "right" and "left" are all one needs when walking down a corridor. However, they come in handy when describing a specific lift or docking spire.

STATION DEFENSES

The Galactic Concord thought little of the lack of weapon and defensive systems aboard the *Lighthouse* when it was purchased. However, during the refit operation, Kevin Ochoa followed explicit instructions from Minister Thayne and added a number of military components to the *Lighthouse*.

As a capital-class ship itself—the military equal of at least a heavy cruiser—the *Lighthouse* is largely impervious to the attacks of small space vessels. The Gamemaster should discourage heroes from engaging in space combat with the station directly; a single shot from one of its Mark VIII plasma beams would likely cripple, if not outright destroy, even the largest of the ships described and designed in the Gamemaster Guide.

THE LIGHTHOUSE

Length:	1464.1 meters
Beam:	401.31 meters
Mass:	2,854,035 metric tons
Drive Rating:	50 light-years/starfall
Acceleration:	155 kph/sec
Crew:	164 enlisted/32 officers
Troops:	178 enlisted/23 officers
Main Armament:	10 Mk VIII Heavy Plasma Beams
Secondary Armament:	24 M0 7 Launch Tubes
Tertiary Armament:	56 A85 Laser Cannon
Main Armor Belt:	1.88m neutronite alloy
Secondary Armor Protection:	0.96m neutronite alloy
Small Craft:	12 spacefighters, 4 escorts, 2 destroyers

SPACE CONFLICT

To date, small space conflicts within a few thousand kilometers of the station have made up the majority of such events. Usually, these don't directly involve the *Lighthouse*; instead, an irate merchant ship, a rogue pirate, or a vengeful vessel commissioned by a stellar nation trades shots with a rival ship. The station simply serves as the staging ground for many fights that often have nothing to do with the Concord.

That doesn't mean that the Concord has nothing to say about such random engagements. While Star Force rarely brings the station's primary weapons to bear, they don't hesitate to send in an escort ship or two. In the event of real trouble, the *Lighthouse* has two small capital ships of its own—destroyers—that can respond. In most conflicts, however, it sends one of its four *Lucre*-class escort ships. While not immune from counterattack, the Alaundril-designed ships have proven less intimidating to the masses.

In addition to this complement, a dozen outriders patrol not only the immediate area, but in essence the entire star system. The *Nardo*-class spacefighter, a standard Star Force model in mass production, is reasonably well-armed and armored for a ship of its size, though it lacks a stardrive. It supports a pilot and system operator in a two-man cockpit. The addition of the accumulator in the model also makes it easier for pilots to manipulate all of their systems during combat. For the pilots of these spacefighters, use the statistics for a typical Star Force Junior Officer given on page 18, adding one rank in Vehicle Operation-*space vehicle* and two ranks in System Operation-*weapons*.

The drivespace communications relays of the *Lighthouse* also serve as powerful drivespace detectors, able to pinpoint the starfalls and imminent starrises of vessels within 50 light-years. Should the station personnel have reason to believe that enemy forces are approaching, they have four and a half days to prepare defenses (or call reinforcements, if necessary).

Finally, despite any misgivings about the practice, the Galactic Concord sometimes contracts independents to assist in preserving security in and around the station. The Concord doesn't always have the naval assets to protect its prize station, and in especially dangerous regions Wakefield has hired as many as a dozen well-armed trade vessels and escort ships to buttress the station's defenses. Sometimes, these captains travel in advance of the *Lighthouse* to a system it will be visiting soon. There, they look for potential threats before the station arrives.

Together, these defenses have proven sufficient in protecting the station from unwanted visitors.

Star Force *Nardo*

Short-range Fighter

Compartments: 2
 Maneuver Rating: -2
 Cruise Speed: 2 AU/hour
 Armament: Plasma cannon
 Range 4/8/16 Mm d6+2w/d8+2w/d6+1m En/A
 Defenses: Jammer, chaff
 Armor: Moderate neutronite (1 dur)
 d6+1 (LI), d6+1 (HI), d6 (En)
 Computer: Marginal computer core
 Engines: Induction engine
 Power: Mass reactor rated for 5 power factors,
 Accumulator
 Drive: None

Dur: 10
 Acc: 3 Mpp
 Berthing: 2

Roll	Compartment	Systems (Dur/Pow)	Dur
1-6	Command	Plasma cannon (3/3) Chaff (1/0) Jammer (0/1) Multiband radar (0/0) Radio transceiver (0/1) Airlock (0/0) Reentry capsule (0/0) Marginal computer core (0/0)	8/8/4
7-20	Engineering	Induction engine (2/2) Mass reactor (2/*) Autosupport (0/1) Accumulator (1/0)	10/10/5



THE SCHEDULE

The exact timing of the *Lighthouse's* appearances and disappearances can and probably should vary from campaign to campaign. A crisis somewhere in the Verge could mandate a change as the station rushed to respond to a military, medical, or social emergency. Or a military conflict in a system could steer the *Lighthouse* to less dangerous space lanes. Events aboard the station itself could mandate that its leaders adapt their plans. Maybe the station needs minor repairs and visits Tendril.

You can use the sample schedule here to form as rough or as fixed a calendar as you desire. And there's another way that Gamemasters can craft a schedule: The *Lighthouse* shows up wherever the needs of the story require it. The heroes are in Terivine and you're in need of a new site of interest? The *Lighthouse* appears. Want your heroes to cross the length of the Verge, but don't want it to take months in a more limited driveship? Arrange the convenient arrival of the station, coupled with a fortuitous schedule that happens to bring her to where the heroes want to go. You can even throw in the chance for an adventure or two along the way. Use the *Lighthouse* as it best adds to your campaign; after all, it's your game.

LIGHTHOUSE PROJECTED SCHEDULE, 2502

From the Office of Administrator Wakefield 11.11.01

To All Recipients:

The Galactic Concord wishes to publicly advise that the following schedule is subject to change. The Concord reserves the right to modify the *Lighthouse* itinerary without notice. As a matter of course, tachyonic charge regeneration may allow the station to depart systems earlier than the schedule plans. In addition, an especially long recharge cycle may necessitate that the station lengthen planned stays. An asterisk (*) indicates that the *Lighthouse* will be out of drivespace communications range during the stay in the system.

System	Dates	Special Events	System	Dates	Special Events
Aegis	12.29-1.08	Year-End Symposium on State of the Verge	Endomar	7.10-7.14	Transfer raw materials Security: high
Cambria	1.13-1.17	Transfer colonists and engineering team	Aegis	7.19-7.29	Monitor Thuldan naval parade
Ignatius	1.22-1.28	Convey ke'kekt contact development team	Argos	8.03-8.14	Transfer environmental impact assessment team
Corrivale	2.02-2.08	Transfer Concord ambassador	Annahoy	8.19-8.24	First starfall
Rinstroke	2.13-2.17	Security: high	Ptolemy	8.29-9.03	Open precinct of Concord administration Security: high
Oberon	2.22-3.1	Sovereignty diplomatic conf.	Corrivale	9.08-9.14	Rendezvous with CSS <i>Tender Dawn</i>
Karnath	3.06-3.10	Transfer Concord Species Development Team	Tendril	9.19-10.03	Receive the <i>Monitor</i>
Retrast	3.15-3.20	First starfall (Coord: 18.72/22.64/9.91)	Aegis	10.08-10.20	Deliver materials and Arriver personnel
Tendril	3.15-3.31	Receive the <i>Monitor</i>	Hammer's Star	10.25-10.27	Transfer military personnel and cargo Rendezvous with CSS <i>Vition</i>
Lucullus	4.05-4.13	Transfer raw materials Security: high	Chinju	11.01-11.04	First starfall (Coord: 7.24/-23.54/5.26)
Exile	4.18-4.23	Project: Reconciliation	Tychus*	11.09-11.20	Attend Orlamist Holiday Fest
Aegis	4.28-5.12	Deliver materials and Arriver personnel	Vieron	11.25-12.01	Replenish Corazon
Zin Point	5.17-5.20	Rendezvous with CSS <i>Revealer</i>	Argos	12.06-12.09	Transfer Concord Species Development Team
Algemron	5.25-6.07	Transfer war relief Security: high	Mantebron	12.14-12.21	Deploy orbital trading station
Oasis	6.12-6.15	First starfall	Aegis	12.26-1.04	Year-End Symposium on State of the Verge
Coulomb	6.20-6.28	Sovereignty diplomatic conf.			
Mikoa	7.03-7.05	First starfall			

CHAPTER TWO: THE POWERS OF LIGHT

Holding within itself so many possibilities and such importance to the Verge, the *Lighthouse* has attracted a virtual menagerie of important powers. Anyone with a strong interest in the region's political and economic health finds it worthwhile to send some form of representation—official, clandestine, or both—to the station. The interaction between these agents makes the *Lighthouse* interesting, and sometimes dangerous.

Influence aboard the station can be divided into roughly three camps, each of which suffers from its own internal divisions: the diplomats from each stellar nation; the traders, whose revenue keeps the station running; and of course, the Concord.

MAKING CONTACT

Mathematically, one can't hope to meet and become acquainted with everyone aboard the station. And as a practical matter, it's unnecessary and difficult to become familiar with each of the station's VIPs. Still, it helps to know just who runs things, how things work, and how to reach the right people in an emergency.

Fortunately for newcomers, the *Lighthouse* maintains a cutting-edge database system that includes a gold mine of information. The database allows visitors to discover and locate important Concord offices, from the Bureau of Tourism to the Concord Marines. It also holds bios of the station's command personnel, including Concord Administrators, CTA, Star Force, and the like. Database users can learn about how each of them came to the *Lighthouse*, reference past public appearances, and even locate a public address—typically of an office assistant or Grid receptionist. For those in honest need, *Lighthouse* personnel make themselves available.

The database system is simply one part of the station's computer network, all of which is guided by MINA, the station's artificial intelligence. With Mina, even the most befuddled computer operator has all of the answers just a voice call away.

From Chapter 23 of the *Concord Field Guide*

THE GALACTIC CONCORD

In other regions of space, the Concord may succeed in showing itself to the frontiersmen as a unified, even monolithic entity bent on a single, driving purpose. That doesn't hold here, as only the most naive of tourists fail to see the

many different power blocs within the Concord, each vying to control its portion of the station.

During the average holobroadcast from these dutiful men and women, one might see everything as calm and peaceful, just as the Concord representatives on the station would like it to seem. Sadly, behind closed doors, plots and machinations have just as much a place in the Concord as in any other government. This even goes beyond the natural result of human emotions and ambitions getting into the mix; sometimes, two Concordans can work for what they think best for the station, the Verge, or all of the sentient species everywhere—and still conflict with one another.

CONCORD ADMINISTRATORS

The Star Force development team that refurbished the *Lighthouse* handed a Concord Administrator control of the station two years ago, and the Administrators have held on to it ever since. The ultimate control of the station lies in the hands of the Administrators by resolution of the Galactic Consulate. The decision rankled Star Force, but confirmed the Concord's definition of the *Lighthouse* as a unique space station, not an unusual military vessel.

Concord administration on the *Lighthouse* trickles down from a single source, the Station Administrator, who delegates control of all the important station functions. Most importantly, the Administrators serve as the forces of law aboard the station. They monitor and combat every crime from petty larceny to treason. Here as throughout the Verge, the Concord empowers each Administrator to act as enforcement, as judge, and, when necessary, as the adjudicator of a sentence. Such preemptory decisions occur infrequently aboard the civilized station, as no one wants to deny the station's courts—and their Administrators—the opportunity to fulfill their obligations. Statistics for a generic Concord Administrator are given on page 46.

The *Lighthouse* Administrator enjoys a rank and distinction significantly greater than that of the average station operative. The first Administrator maintained his rank of District Administrator, a high-ranking post claimed by only one other Concord Administrator in the Verge. And yet even Administrators prove vulnerable to the blandishments of power, as shown by the case of Wayne Rice (Hm/Concord/DCS-16), former Station Administrator.

When TransVerge News published reports of political deal-pandering by Rice, the Concord called for his resignation. According to the report, the plotting went too far with Rice, who used his position to his personal financial gain.

The former Station Administrator was indeed playing fast and loose with Concord laws as he negotiated with the various parties aboard the station. Yet no one doubted his motives until a holobroadcast of his financial records revealed consistent and significant VoidCorp deposits into a private financial account, coinciding with important edicts and announcements from the administration aboard. While no one could point to a discernible pattern in those decisions that benefited VoidCorp, the evidence proved damning enough. VoidCorp denials did nothing to assist his case.

Only Rice himself and the party that framed him know of his innocence. After a public departure filled with shame, Rice secretly returned to the station four months ago. As a result, he now works quietly with individuals from the VoidCorp embassy, determined to find his enemy.

The current Administrator, Kyle Wakefield, has lived up to a model of propriety. Promoted from his post in the Concord Taurus region, he nonetheless preserved his rank of System Administrator. More than two hundred Administrators serve under him in one capacity or another, keeping him up-to-date on station events and implementing his decisions.

Time has eaten away significantly at Wakefield's authority. When he came aboard, Wakefield emphasized—perhaps as instructed by his superiors, including Julius Baynes, Sector Administrator of the Verge—the need for a greater degree of unity aboard the station. Over the last ten months, that has resulted in the dilution and sharing of power aboard the station. The practice of “listening to advice” has become more and more a duty of “oversight” as the other would-be power brokers of the *Lighthouse* carefully monitor, and often criticize, the Administrator's decisions.

Most aboard the station, including his junior staff, see Wakefield as a figurehead. He's not even the most intelligent or knowledgeable member of his staff. He has proven himself accomplished at avoiding, minimizing, and managing crises, though some have criticized him recently for perceived indecision. It's become part of his job to keep everyone happy aboard the station. In this sense, he makes it possible for business to proceed as fairly as possible and keep himself out of the way. He also realizes the value of relying on his four-person senior staff for station management.

His second-in-command, Kevin Ochoa, is responsible for the technical well-being of the *Lighthouse*, and he oversees many of the engineers and maintenance crew licensed by the Concord for the station's upkeep. His history with the station extends back to its reconstruction; in fact, Ochoa (Hm/Concord/DTO-10) is the only administrative officer not brought aboard with Wakefield.

Kyle Wakefield Station Administrator

Level 13 Human Diplomat (Free Agent)

STR	10	(+1)	INT	10	(0)
DEX	9	(+1)	WIL	10	(+1)
CON	9		PER	13	

Durability: 9/9/4/4 Action Check: 11+/10/5/2

Move: sprint 18, run 12, walk 4 # Actions: 2

Reaction Score: Ordinary/2 Last Resorts: 3

Attacks

Tri-staff¹ 14/7/3 d8+2w/3d4+1w/d6m En/0
¹ -d4 base situation die

Defenses

Armor: none (LI), none (HI), none (En)

Tri-staff provides +1 STR, +1 DEX res. mod

Skills

Athletics [10]; Melee [10]—*powered* [14]; Vehicle Operation [9]; Stamina [9]; Business [10]—*corporate* [11], *illicit* [11], *small* [12]; Law [10]—*Concord law* [13]; Knowledge [11]—*computer* [12], *language: Standard* [14]; Administration [10]—*bureaucracy* [14], *management* [14]; Awareness [10]; Investigate [10]—*interrogate* [12], *track* [12]; Street [10]—*knowledge: Lighthouse* [12]; Culture [13]—*diplomacy* [18], *etiquette (Concord)* [18]; Deception [13]—*bribe* [14], *bluff* [14]; Interaction [13]—*bargain* [14], *charm* [14], *seduce* [15]; Leadership [13]—*command* [15], *inspire* [15].

Station Administrator Wakefield is a tall, good-looking man. During the average day, he wears his customary uniform, but he leaves the tri-staff behind for all but the most formal of occasions. He has a ready smile that he often wears when forced into the station's interminable policy meetings and diplomatic conferences.

Only 34 years old, Wakefield's career has advanced remarkably quickly. Often surrounded by individuals five times his age, he has moved along the fast track since leaving planet Concord. After several successes—and high-profile arrests—showcased his talents during a diplomatic conference in 2495, the Concord promoted him to System Administrator of the Ditticar system in the Concord Prime neutrality. The call to the *Lighthouse* surprised him, but he couldn't refuse the opportunity. Since coming aboard the station, he's had every reason to regret the choice. The unforgiving job repeatedly calls for him to put out figurative fires and answer cries for help and complaints of injustice. The turmoil has Wakefield responding more often than leading—a situation he would like to remedy.

Ochoa is one of few who knows the true nature and purpose of the *Lighthouse's* stardrive

Takari Tedakin (Tf/Concord/FA-8) holds the dubious distinction of acting as Wakefield's liaison officer to the diplomats and interstellar ambassadors to which the station caters. Most analysts believe assigning the clever Tedakin to this position represents a masterstroke for Wakefield; Tedakin never misses an opportunity to remind visiting dignitaries of the possibilities that can develop outside their sphere of influence.

Iota Xi (Mm/Concord/MW-11), head of the local office of the Concord Trade Agency, and Jacqueline Witt (Hf/Concord/DCS-11) round out Wakefield's senior staff.

GALACTIC CONSULATE

The Galactic Consulate holds year-round discussions and negotiations on the planet Concord, far from the Verge. Nevertheless, many ministers of that distinguished body find the time to travel far from their posts, all in pursuit of their duty to the sentients of explored space. The Committee on Verge Integration exemplifies this practice, as most of the committee members maintain an office on the *Lighthouse*, even if present for only a few days of the year.



Vergers can take it as another serious commitment to the region that one of the six Undersecretaries of the Galactic Concord spends almost half his time here. Michael Thayne, the head of the Verge committee, has devoted himself to the Verge, either by choice or by order of First Secretary Derek Orthen. Few begrudge the man his luxurious residence; after all, he brought the station here. Thayne also enjoys open, cordial relations with the current station administrator—much better than those with the iron-willed Rice.

The motives and goals of Thayne seem open to everyone. This consummate diplomat has many friends back in the Stellar Ring and is rapidly becoming a popular figure in the Verge as well. Thayne's position might have made him reviled by much of the independent-minded Verge, yet somehow he's managed to avoid that. Vergers can remember his initial arrival aboard the *Monitor*; many even (incorrectly) believe that he personally led the fortress ship and the stellar nations back to the Verge. Since then, he's devoted considerable time, attention, and resources to help out individual systems, planets, and even individuals in the Verge. Though perhaps nothing more than a public relations ploy, Thayne's descent to Delphin during one of Tendril's Burns earned him the respect of many. It's also allowed him to call for greater unity of Verge systems, under Concord leadership, to answer problems that they share.

The other members of the Committee on Verge Integration vary widely in their commitment to the Verge and the amount of time that they spend aboard the *Lighthouse*. YC937 59NMP (Judith Holman) visits the station once a year, but her stays to date have been much shorter than Thayne's. As the highest-ranking Employee on the station, Holman (Hf/VoidCorp/DFA-12) often demands updates and reports from throughout the frontier. Each of her visits throws the VoidCorp embassy into turmoil. It seems that the local ambassador, VK532 04MIN, offended her at some point, and a unfriendly rivalry resulted from the incident.

Relitalia Yonce (Hf/Rigunmor/NP) considers the Verge fair game to take advantage of her position and make some serious guilders. She's quietly made her willingness to sell information on the Concord's Verge plans known throughout many systems, as well as her openness to take a bribe in order to bring issues before the Committee or the Consulate itself. Yonce sees the Verge as basically an irrelevant piece of real estate; even Oberon largely escapes her notice in her avaricious quest.

Philosopher Karel Denisenko (Hf/Borealin/DMW-6) often travels with Yonce, even though the pair shares little else in common. Many consider Denisenko the wild card among the Committee and its regular visitors to the Verge. Though a political conservative, in

Michael Thayne Consulate Minister

Level 19 Human Diplomat (Free Agent)

STR	8	(0)	INT	13	(+2)
DEX	9	(0)	WIL	12	(+1)
CON	8		PER	11	

Durability: 8/8/4/4 Action Check: 11+/10/5/2

Move: sprint 16, run 10, walk 4 # Actions: 2

Reaction Score: Ordinary/2 Last Resorts: 2

Attacks

Unarmed Attack¹ 8/4/2 d4s/d4+1s/d4+2s LI/D
¹ +d4 base situation die

Defenses

Armor: none (LI), none (HI), none (En)

Skills

Athletics [8]; Unarmed Attack [8]; Vehicle Operation [9]; Stamina [9]; Business [13]—*corporate* [14]; Law [13]—*court procedures* [14], *Concord law* [15], *StarMech law* [15]; Knowledge [13]—*computer* [14], *deduce* [16], *language: Standard* [14]; Administration [12]—*bureaucracy* [14], *management* [14]; Awareness [12]; Resolve [12]—*mental* [15]; Culture [11]—*diplomacy* [20], *etiquette (Concord)* [20]; Deception [11]—*bribe* [14], *bluff* [14]; Interaction [11]—*bargain* [16], *charm* [16]; Leadership [11]—*inspire* [20].

Michael Thayne doesn't have Wakefield's magnetic charm, and his tendency to wear blasé formal wear, already commonplace among the elite of the station, has the effect of making this famous statesman into an unremarkable everyman.

Make no mistake, Thayne is formidable. His intelligence borders on natural genius, and his cunning has allowed him to seize upon opportunities in the Concord that others missed. A few decades ago, Thayne was an unremarkable politician from a system that the Thuldans had captured. Only after GW2 ended did he begin to distinguish himself. Thayne's made much of the last 30 years, first as an aide at the Treaty of Concord's signing, later as a Minister to the Consulate, and finally grabbing onto a post as Undersecretary.

Thayne has done great things for the Verge. But he also schemes to write himself into the annals of power. Just where his ambition aims remains a mystery. Some say he hopes to succeed Derek Orthen in 2505. Others might point to the hearts and minds he's won across many Verge systems and rightly wonder what position he hopes to create for himself.

Thayne is a true heavyweight aboard the station, a luminary with political muscle that extends throughout all of known space. He has the platform and weight to speak out to the Galactic Consulate and thus sentients all over the Stellar Ring. He could, with a call, arrange for changes in duty assignments of Concord personnel. Maybe he already has.

No one would question that Thayne has great things in mind for the Verge. Just what plan he has would surprise everyone but his inner circle of confidantes.

Ten years ago, an assistant researching the war for Thayne stumbled onto an Orlamu memorandum that spawned a very quiet investigation. Through it, Thayne learned the secret of the *Lighthouse* and its stardrive. As a result, he petitioned that the Concord move the station here—coincidentally, within his sphere of influence.

Through his study of history, Thayne believes that frontier regions naturally grow independent, given time. Given current technology, the Verge's distance prevents effective control by any nation of the Stellar Ring.

However, independence from a distant government need not mean chaos. As the Verge develops and grows over the next decade or two, Thayne expects that unification, painful though it may be, will occur naturally. The dangerous external species out in the Verge can only reinforce this trend. The only question may be just who leads. It could be the Regency government of the Aegis system. Or it could be a representative of justice and authority that the Vergers have grown to respect across interstellar boundaries. In other words, it could be Michael Thayne.

To date, he has remained patient; after all, he's had only a few years to consider the possibilities. Thayne's contented himself in building contacts and popular support, gaining resources, and creating a position for himself. Most in Old Space see him as "one of their own," trusting him and recognizing him as the foremost authority on the Verge. That includes his home, the StarMech Collective, which would become his new nation's closest neighbor.

Don't misunderstand; Thayne is a human being with human ambitions. He's not a megalomaniac bent on interstellar domination, but simply a player in the greatest of all political games. Coincidentally, this game could reshape the Verge or spark a galactic war.

Thayne can serve as ally and villain, friend and foe to heroes. Since Thayne is intended to serve as a member of the supporting cast for years to come, heroes should remain unfamiliar with his larger goals, confronting him perhaps occasionally through one of his pawns or defeating him through unraveling dangerous schemes untraceable to him. Eventually, given time and exposure, a group of intrepid heroes may discover and begin to put together the pieces of Thayne's plan.



Borealin terms, with a loyalty to the College of Unism, she often publicly addresses issues of ethics, morality, and sentient rights.

In joining the Committee, Bruce Hale (Hm/Orion/DTO-15) assumed yet another hat to add to his collection. Already a Senator in his League, and as the son of Warthen Hale a likely presidential candidate, Hale also serves as a minister of the Consulate. He rarely visits the Verge, and he has yet to announce plans to return in 2502. His busy schedule may prohibit it; most believe he'll withdraw from the Consulate soon to prepare for his 2504 election bid. Nonetheless, Hale has made it clear that he is a representative of the Orion League in the Verge; bringing home good news could only add to his popularity.

As for the other eight members of the Committee, fully half of them have yet to visit the region of space on which they make decisions, or even announce an intent to change that situation. Of the others, few seem interested in making another visit in the near future. They're well informed by assistants and agents throughout the region, of course, and by the embassies aboard the *Lighthouse*.

STAR FORCE

Captain Adam Wistzec and his personnel should resent the decision to allow Concord Administrators to control the station. For much of 2499, such an attitude dominated many of the officers manning the station's command deck and the military escorts that accompany the *Lighthouse*. Yet after less than a year of watching the things that Administrator Rice had to put up with—none of which had much interest to Star Force—Wistzec told his subordinates that the station commander deserved every courtesy they could give. Today, the captain nears the end of a distinguished military career dating back to Austrin-Ontis Unlimited, but he has no interest in politics. This makes him unique aboard the *Lighthouse*, and uniquely useful to the station.

Star Force personnel view assignment to the *Lighthouse* with mixed feelings. Back in the Stellar Ring, word of the station makes it sound more like a pleasure ship or capital freighter than a ship of military significance. An ambitious officer hoping to make his mark in conflict should seek a duty assignment in Hammer's Star or one of the border regions in the Stellar Ring. Yet the *Lighthouse* is becoming a favorite place for the sons and daughters of Concord bureaucrats, who see a Star Force career aboard the peaceful station as a stepping-stone to their own entrance into politics.

Use the description below for the average ensign or junior lieutenant aboard the station. These numbers represent a quality officer with potential for advancement; depending on the officer's exact position, add one or two ranks in an appropriate specialty skill—typically *space vehicle* or a specialty of System Operation. Up to 13 skill points can be spent in this manner.

For a higher-ranking officer, increase the character's level by one for each rank above ensign. Distribute the extra skill points in likely places, including Leadership and Tactics skills. Don't be afraid to add a more unusual skill to add some flavor to an individual. For a more mundane character, drop each ability score by one and make the character a nonprofessional, as described in *Chapter 6: Supporting Cast* in the *Gamemaster Guide*.

Adam Wistzec Star Force Captain

Level 8 human Diplomat (Tech Op)

STR	9	(0)	INT	12	(+1)
DEX	9	(0)	WIL	11	(+1)
CON	9		PER	11	

Durability: 9/9/5/5 Action Check: 12+/11/5/2

Move: sprint 18, run 12, walk 4 # Actions: 2

Reaction Score: Ordinary/2 Last Resorts: 2

Attacks

Unarmed Attack¹ 9/5/2 d4s/d4+1s/d4+2s LI/O
.44 magnum² 13/6/3 d4+2w/d4+3w/d4+2m HI/O

¹ +d4 base situation die

² - d4 base situation die

Defenses

Armor: none (LI), none (HI), none (En)

Skills

Athletics [9]; Unarmed Attack [9]; Modern Ranged Weapons [9]—*pistol* [13]; Vehicle Operation [9]—*space* [10]; Stamina [9]; Knowledge [12]—*computer* [13], *language: Standard* [15]; System [12]—*engineering* [13], *sensors* [13], *weapons* [13]; Tactics [12]—*space* [16]; Administration [11]—*management* [13]; Awareness [11]; Resolve [11]; Culture [11]; Interaction [11]—*bargain* [12], *charm* [12]; Leadership [11]—*command* [14].

Gear

.44 magnum pistol, Star Force uniform, professional gauntlet, comm gear.

Star Force Junior Officer

Level 2 human Diplomat (Tech Op)

STR	9	(0)	INT	11	(+1)
DEX	10	(+1)	WIL	10	(0)
CON	9		PER	11	

Durability: 9/9/5/5 Action Check: 12+/11/5/2

Move: sprint 18, run 12, walk 4 # Actions: 2

Reaction Score: Ordinary/2 Last Resorts: 2

Attacks

Unarmed Attack 10/5/2 d6s/d6+2s/d4w LI/O
9mm 0g pistol 11/5/2 d4+1w/d6+1w/d4m HI/O

Defenses

Armor: none (LI), none (HI), none (En)

Skills

Athletics [9]; Unarmed Attack [9]—*power* [10]; Modern Ranged Weapons [10]—*pistol* [11]; Vehicle Operation [10]; Stamina [9]; Knowledge [11]—*computer* [12], *language: Standard* [14]; System Operation [11]; Tactics [11]—*space* [12]; Administration [11]—*management* [12]; Awareness [11]; Interaction [11]—*bargain* [12], *charm* [12]; Leadership [11]—*command* [12].

Gear

Zero-g 9mm pistol, Star Force uniform, professional gauntlet, comm gear.

CONCORD MARINES

Captain David Chase (Hm/Concord/DCS-8) commands a reinforced company of some two hundred marines permanently assigned to the station. These Marines live largely idle lives, subject only to the occasional training exercise. For the most part, these Marines fulfill the role of well-armed chaperones; an honor guard for foreign ambassadors and Concord officials. The Marines also stand ready to answer any call for assistance from the Concord, or to defend the station against foreign attack.

An old Earth saying, "idle hands are the devil's workshop," is certainly proving true for the Marines aboard. Several dozen Marines in the company have found diversions more interesting—and more profitable—than gambling, drinking, or carousing. They work as short-term bodyguards, thugs, and even bouncers during their available time. To many aboard the station, the Marines represent a source of specialized labor: well-trained and well-armed soldiers-for-hire. It's a quietly known fact among the *Lighthouse's* shadow commu-

David Chase Concord Marine Captain

Level 8 Human Diplomat (Combat Spec)

STR 11 (+1) INT 9 (0)

DEX 9 (+1) WIL 10 (0)

CON 10 PER 11

Durability: 10/10/5/5 Action Check: 11+/10/5/2

Move: sprint 20, run 12, walk 4 # Actions: 2

Reaction Score: Ordinary/2 Last Resorts: 2

Attacks

11mm ch pistol 11/5/2 d4+2w/d6+2w/d4+1m En/O

Unarmed Attack 12/6/3 d6+1s/d6+3s/d4+1w LI/O

Defenses

Armor: d6-1 (LI), d4+1 (HI), d4-1 (En)

Skills

Armor Op [11]-*combat* [12], *powered* [12]; Athletics [11]; Unarmed [11]-*power* [12]; Modern Ranged [9]-*pistol* [11], *rifle* [10]; Vehicle Operation [9]; Stamina [10]-*endurance* [11]; Knowledge [9]-*computer* [10], *first aid* [10], *language: Standard* [12]; Security [9]; System Operation [9]; Tactics [9]; Administration [9]; Awareness [10]; Investigate [10]; Resolve [10]; Culture [11]-*diplomacy* [12], *etiquette (Concord)* [12]; Interaction [11]; Leadership [11]-*command* [13], *inspire* [12].

Gear

11 mm charge pistol, battle jacket, comm gear.

Captain Chase is a young officer, only 27 years old. In most matters, he defers to the more veteran leadership of Captain Wistzec. He knows the record of the older officer, and wants nothing more than to earn his respect. To all public appearances, Chase follows his mentor's example of staying out of the station's political arena.

Captain Chase became aware of the situation described above 12 weeks ago, but has done nothing since. The situation concerns him, not merely for the impropriety itself, but for the reliability of the troops should their professional and "extracurricular" activities come into conflict. If they can be bribed to commit quasi-legal activity, could they be bribed not to perform their official duties? Chase informed his lieutenants that he's considering the best way to remedy the situation, including increasing training rotations or prosecuting the guilty. Meanwhile, several parties, ranging from agents of stellar nations to independents, have made approaches, and offers, to the captain himself.

The young officer is getting in over his head in rising water, and the vaunted *esprit de corps* of the Marines is losing its luster fast. Perhaps fortunately, the military aboard doesn't experience regular combat duty.

nity that Marines can be bought. For the statistics of a typical Concord Marine, refer to page 46.

CONCORD SURVEY SERVICE

Like the *Lighthouse* itself, the Concord Survey Service is a popular new visitor to the Verge. While independent-minded Vergers may rise to conflict with stellar nations and despise the interference of Concord Administrators, nobody objects to the CSS. Why would they? Through the CSS, just about anybody with a clean record and access to a driveship can find employment—doing exploration. This desire finds a home in almost every human, and even in most sentients encountered to date.

Aboard the *Lighthouse*, CSS officers coordinate the contracts that explorers seek. The average job covers as many as a dozen systems, charted and chosen by the agency, and typically begins and ends with either the *Lighthouse* or one of the three Verge systems with a drivesat. About the only complaint that explorers have about the CSS is the pay structure. Expenses are covered—although the underfunded CSS can be picky about legitimate costs—but otherwise the CSS pays by the discovery. The more important and exceptional discoveries merit more pay. And yet the explorers must rely on luck in order to find something, like a Class 1 world, that could make them rich.

CONCORD COMMUNICATION COMMISSION

Responsible for controlling the station's drivespace communications relay, this office controls a utility most take for granted. Information is the lifeblood of the station's interests: traders need current data on the value, price, and demand of goods, diplomats need contact with their superiors and agents, and the Concord itself must maintain touch with its forces in the region. CCC only gains attention when the drivesats fail.

Regrettably, such failures do occur from time to time. Running, tuning, and deploying the drivesats is a difficult operation aboard a moving starship. Just as fortress ships occasionally experience communications blackouts, so too does the *Lighthouse*. In 2500, the *Lighthouse* wasted a total of nine days on four separate occasions while technicians corrected malfunctions—in addition to the accumulated time when the *Lighthouse* is in drivespace and out of touch. No one has yet found any direct evidence linking the problem to a single cause.

CONCORD INTELLIGENCE BUREAU

The intelligence department of the Galactic Concord has yet to open an office aboard the station.

Each quarter, the CIB reports to the Consulate's Committee on Intelligence. While technically classified, the contents of the report usually become public soon after its release to the Committee. The *Lighthouse* doesn't appear in this report.

It shares that characteristic with many other high-priority sites of interest. Just as most of the stellar nations' embassies conceal more than a few intelligence agents, the CIB prefers to keep its own operatives aboard the station as anonymous as possible. Currently, more than two dozen agents live aboard the station "on staff."

The CIB does much of its work through independents, who may never know for whom they work. CIB operatives commonly claim allegiance with other stellar nations, or employment in the office of another branch of the Concord.

As the only acknowledged officer ("spy") of the CIB aboard the station, Jax Rolin (Hm/Concord/FA-6) serves as an attraction, a filter, and a decoy for those who don't know better. Geste Rakbrin (Hm/Concord/FA-13), a more senior agent, serves as the liaison between the CIB and Station Administrator Wakefield. Unlike the rest of the Concord branches aboard, the CIB doesn't acknowledge the authority of Wakefield as a superior.

CONCORD TRADE AUTHORITY

The CTA regulates and oversees the economic commerce of the station. Thanks to the unforeseen growth, the local branch of the CTA continues to struggle to establish itself aboard the *Lighthouse*; Commissioner Iota Xi heads an office under siege. Between trying to monitor the securities and stock exchange and the commodities trading that goes on aboard, the CTA is stretched impossibly thin. With only a dozen officers, they can battle only the most flagrant offenses and violations of law: arms smuggling, falsifying reports, churning, and the like. Thankfully, the Concord abandoned restrictions on trading with insider information long ago; this prevents the office from going completely mad.

Redman-Smith, the largest trading house aboard, has led a charge to keep the CTA off-balance. Publicly, the guild makes every effort to work together with Concord regulators "to further the interests of a healthy, fair economic community." In actuality, Redman-Smith has been active in shutting down Commissioner Iota Xi's appeals for assistance to his superiors in the Galactic Bank on Concord. Xi's requests for assistance from Station Administrator Wakefield typically fall to the bottom of his list too; as long as no one's started shooting, Wakefield believes that the economic situation will handle itself.

Geste Rakbrin Senior CIB Agent

Level 13 Human Free Agent

STR	9	(0)	INT	11	(+1)
DEX	11	(+1)	WIL	10	(+1)
CON	9		PER	10	

Durability: 9/9/4/4 Action Check: 14+/13/6/3
Move: sprint 20, run 12, walk 4 # Actions: 2
Reaction Score: Ordinary/2 Last Resorts: 1

Attacks

Stutter pistol 13/6/3 d6+2s/d8+2s/d8+4s LI/O
Unarmed Attack¹ 4/2/1 d4s/d4+1s/d4+2s LI/O
¹ +d4 base situation die

Defenses

Armor: none (LI), none (HI), none (En)

Skills

Athletics [9]; Manipulation [11]–*lockpick* [13]; Modern Ranged [11]–*pistol* [13]; Stealth [11]–*hide* [13], *shadow* [13], *sneak* [13]; Vehicle Op [11]; Stamina [9]–*endurance* [10], *resist pain* [11]; Knowledge [11]–*computer op* [12], *deduce* [13], *language: Standard* [14]; Law [11]; Security [11]–*protection* [12], *devices* [13]; Administration [10]; Awareness [10]–*intuition* [12], *perception* [13]; Investigate [10]–*interrogate* [11], *search* [12]; Resolve [10]–*mental* [11]; Street Smart [10]–*street: Lighthouse* [11]; Culture [10]–*diplomacy* [12], *etiquette: Concord* [11]; Deception [10]–*bluff* [12], *bribe* [11]; Interaction [10]–*bargain* [12], *charm* [13], *interview* [11], *seduce* [11].

Gear

Stutter pistol (rarely carried), drab clothes.

Senior Agent Geste Rakbrin is a quiet, unassuming man who poses as a clerk in the VIP Welcome Center (area 45). He uses his position to track the comings and goings of important individuals. Virtually no one aboard the station suspects the 52-year-old's true loyalty—only Wakefield and a few CIB subordinates know the truth.

Exasperated, Xi has started his own guerrilla campaign. Violating several laws, he now habitually uses his mind-walking powers during private conferences and meetings with Redman's economic leaders, and even with independent traders. Lately, anyone who's made themselves conspicuous in their trading habits will find himself in an interview with Xi. Most have no defense against it, and no one to appeal to when Xi makes his acute observations known.

Iota Xi CTA Commissioner

Level 11 Mindwalker

STR	9	(0)	INT	14	(+2)
DEX	8	(0)	WIL	11	(+1)
CON	10		PER	9	

Durability: 10/10/5/5 Action Check: 12+/11/5/2

Move: sprint 16, run 10, walk 4 # Actions: 2

Reaction Score: Ordinary/2 Last Resorts: 1

Psionic Energy Points: 11

Attacks

Unarmed Attack¹ 9/4/2 d4s/d4+1s/d4+2s LI/O

¹ +d4 base situation die

Defenses

Armor: none (LI), none (HI), none (En)

Skills

Athletics [8]; Vehicle Operation [9]; Stamina [10]; Business [14]—*corporate* [18], *illicit* [18], *small* [18]; Computer Science [14]; Law [14]—*Concord law* [15]; Knowledge [14]—*language: Standard* [17]; Administration [11]—*bureaucracy* [14], *management* [14]; Awareness [11]; Investigate [11]; Culture [9]—*diplomacy* [10], *etiquette (Concord)* [10]; Interaction [9]—*bargain* [12], *charm* [12]; ESP² [14]—*clairvoyance* [15], *empathy* [15], *mind reading* [18], *sensitivity* [16]; Telepathy [9]—*suggest* [10].

² +d0 base situation die; -d4 base situation die for ESP specialty skills

Iota's a rare creature: a mechalus who naturally developed the talent for mindwalking. While he displayed a fair amount of psionic talent, Xi chose not to pursue a career through it. Instead, he pursued the art of the deal as an independent merchant. In the process, he came to understand temptation; following the law and not mind-reading his competitors taught him lessons in morality.

The same sense of morality led him to join the CTA when burned by fraudulent traders seven years ago. His business acumen allowed him to advance quickly, and now he finds himself the leader of his own CTA office. Leadership is unfamiliar to Xi; more accustomed to dealing directly with traders as an agent, he has a terrible inability to delegate. Despite his high success rate, his desire to "do it all" contributes to his office's backlog.

THE EMBASSIES

Living in the newest, tallest towers of Deck 199, the ambassadors exist in a luxurious world set apart from the rest. The station's nobility, these wealthy celebrities can fill their careers as they choose, either with the stress and turmoil typified by the Solar Norio Morita or with the opiate luxuriousness of the StarMech Penelope Cochran. In some sense, they each have their own missions to fulfill, their own plots to concoct, and their own agendas to follow. To help, each has a staff of a dozen or more diplomats, spies, and assistants serving them.

AUSTRIN-ONTIS UNLIMITED

A stolid Austrin, Ambassador Sebastian Vallest (Hm/Austrin/DCS-7) takes pleasure in certain simple passions. He ranks arms dealing as one of his favorites. Though the strong presence of the Concord has led most arms merchants to seek other means, Vallest has high hopes of using the *Lighthouse* as a conduit to meet the continued Verge demand for high-quality weapons of warfare. He also hopes that in the frontier, he might have the opportunity to distinguish himself, to become one of the nation's famous heroes—the first to conquer a new alien species, or at least right a terrible injustice.

BOREALIS REPUBLIC

Since the retirement of Professor Ariken Lenormantit (Hm/Borealin/DTO-12) last year, the conclave has yet to decide upon a successor. The current debate stems from arguments over Spes colony. Today, Deputy Ambassador (Assistant Professor) Safia Evans (Hf/Borealin/DFA-6) runs the embassy. A graduate of the College of High Rationalism, Evans is a career diplomat popular with the embassy staff. Both Evans and the other Borealins here and in the Verge have become determined supporter of human and sentient rights wherever the *Lighthouse* wanders.

GALACTIC CONCORD

Although Administrator Wakefield controls the station, he cannot speak for the Concord in diplomatic affairs of the Verge outside the *Lighthouse*. In fact, Ambassador Richard Klindo (Hm/Concord/DFA-9) often points to Wakefield's diplomatic inadequacies in order to soothe the hurt feelings of the dignitaries who Wakefield offends. This also reveals the modest dislike between Klindo and Wakefield. Klindo often feels overshadowed; he feels that the station administrator is far too willing to overstep his bounds, and thus weaken Klindo's position. On the other hand, Thayne and Klindo get along very well; after all, Thayne helped to secure the position for him.

The embassy aboard the *Lighthouse* maintains the Concord mission through the Verge: contain troubles, limit conflict, and allow the Verge to develop and grow—but as quietly as possible.

HATIRE COMMUNITY

Ambassador Malcolm Hawksmoor (Hm/Hatire/DFA-7) lives in embattled territory. The station's ancient ties to the Orlamist faith have dulled but little, and this minister of the Cosimir finds it difficult to spread the word of the Cosimir. Politically, Hawksmoor has proven much more apt, bringing about cordial relations with the Rigunmors, a frequent enemy during GW2. Most believe that Hawksmoor intends to use this friendship with the Rigunmors in some intrigue to discredit the Orlamu. At present, the embassy seems unabashedly full of spooks, most assigned to infiltrate the Orlamu camp or uncover something to use against them.

INSIGHT

Very, very quietly, Insight has made the *Lighthouse* an island of calm in the war with its parent. While none of the Inseer gridpilots would admit a reluctance to combat their former corporate masters, the unique opportunity to make a local peace with the VoidCorp ambassador came during a visit from the VoidCorp minister. When Inseer assistance managed to humiliate Minister YC937 59NMP, a sudden alliance was founded between the embassies of Insight and VoidCorp (and particularly with Ambassador Marcus Hammond—see below). Tenuous at first, economic negotiations have strengthened the alliance as the two embassies, both leaders in high technical fields, discovered common interests. Just where this détente can lead is anyone's guess, but Ambassador Bent Circuit (Hm/Insight/DTO-10) has become a popular man here.

NARIAC DOMAIN

The Nariacs aboard the station, including Ambassador Gregor Chapin (Hm/Nariac/DFA-8), seem bent on a single objective: expansion. With each starrise into a unclaimed or independent system, agents of the Domain seek to seize control by any means necessary. And even in a few contested or weakly-held colonies, Nariac personnel actively pursue their goal of uniting workers against their imperialist and capitalist oppressors. Ironically, this doesn't stop licensed Nariac agents from trading alongside everyone else on the *Lighthouse's* exchanges.

One fact has become clear over the last two years. While VoidCorp usually keeps a tight leash on their Nariac allies, here in the Verge that control is significantly weaker. On the *Lighthouse*, it seems weaker than anywhere.

ORION LEAGUE

Despite the League's usually staunch support of the Galactic Concord, there hasn't been a senior Orion ambassador here since the retirement of the previous one earlier this year. Deputy Ambassador Ionis Podlas (Hm/Orion/DFA-5) is performing well in the vacuum, and the Orions aboard follow the orders from home that tell them to assist the agents of the Concord whenever possible. Podlas has proven his relative inexperience during negotiations with the Thuldan Empire and independent Verge settlements.

ORLAMU THEOCRACY

The Theocracy enjoys a unique position aboard the *Lighthouse*. In some ways, while the Concord owns the station, it remains a creation of Orlamu minds. Orlamu architecture fills the city, and Orlamu engineering keeps it running. And finally, one of the largest structures in the station is the Orlamist temple found at its highest point.

The ambassador, Bishop Tassina (Hf/Orlamu/DFA-16), serves both as the chief diplomat when dealing with foreign ambassadors and as a weekly proselytizer on the pulpit. She uses her home-court advantage to the greatest extent possible. It's helped in furthering the interests of the Theocracy and the Orlamist faith. Vergers can't help but be impressed by the possibilities that working with the Orlamu would bring, and after a while the citizens of the *Lighthouse* can become so familiar with the Orlamu surrounding them that embracing the faith seems a natural step.

RIGUNMOR STAR CONSORTIUM

The Rigunmor embassy surprises most first-time visitors with its immaculate efficiency and professionalism. Indeed, many consider it among the best-organized and most-dedicated staff aboard. As such, the staff of the embassy represents a marked distinction from the behavior of Relitalia Yonce, the Rigunmor minister from the Galactic Consulate who uses the *Lighthouse* to generate personal profit.

Ambassador Antoine Mwinye (Hm/Rigunmor/DFA-9) performs the duties of speaking for his stellar nation. Whether he enjoys the job for itself or for the financial compensation provided by the Executive Guild for his efforts, Mwinye has earned the respect of his peers aboard. Currently, the embassy seeks to acquire a likely focus for Rigunmor interests in the Verge, given the current difficulties in the wayward Oberon system.

STARMECH COLLECTIVE

The diplomatic community considers the StarMech embassy both an asset and a source of amusement. The ambassador, Penelope Cochran (Hf/StarMech/DTO-4),

received the post for meritorious service during GW2. She has no professional experience, and she assembled her personal embassy staff from close friends and those to whom she owed various debts. That said, the StarMech embassy has become a center of political activity.

The Concord embassy lies at more of a geographic center, but the StarMechs are better known for their affairs and gatherings. That pleases Cochran just fine; she'd rather indulge in social events than distract herself with actual work. After all, that's why the Collective sent along the constructor robots and viewpoint drones.

THULDAN EMPIRE

General Toris Klangat (Ret.) commands this embassy much like he once commanded his regiment. He expects the best from the men that serve under him, and seldom rewards anything but the most extreme examples of service to the Emperor. Much like a commander on the battlefield, Klangat (Hm/Thuldan/DCS-12) tends to rank the other diplomat corps as allies, enemies, or neutrals. It's not particularly effective or subtle, given the vagaries of diplomatic wrangling. Here, yesterday's enemy is tomorrow's friend. Klangat relies on a close relationship with the VoidCorp embassy, with whom he can presume a trust thanks to years of wartime alliance.

UNION OF SOL

Should Administrator Wakefield or Ambassador Klindo make a list of those who cause the most trouble, the Solars would occupy a place in the top ten. Here like nowhere else, the Union of Sol makes its displeasure with the Concord felt. The first snub to the station, and an ongoing one, is that the Union has neglected to appoint a ranking ambassador. The ranking delegate, Norio Morita (Hm/Solar/DFA-7), has all the credentials and the leadership of the consular staff.

Meanwhile, representatives of the Union take every opportunity to upstage the Concord. They've made peace settlements, trade agreements, and orchestrated sovereignty discussions, only to publicly announce the results rather than involve the Concordans in the process. On the average day, the Solars can be found talking quietly in their embassy or in the StarMech lounge.

VOIDCORP

The current ambassador and director, VK532 04MIN (Marcus Hammond), has much of his time taken up by his feud with one of his superiors, Minister Holman of the Galactic Consulate. Hammond (Hm/VoidCorp/DTO-8) spends an inordinate amount of effort conceiving plots that will make the Committee on Verge Affairs look bad—and

him still look good. While this makes him an occasional opponent of long-term Concord goals, it has also made him a sometime friend of independent-minded Verge systems—and, on a local level, Insight. Working with the Inseers is playing with fire, however, and if his superiors could ever prove complicity, they would certainly terminate Hammond's contract with extreme prejudice.

VK532 04MIN (Marcus Hammond)

VoidCorp Ambassador

Level 8 Diplomat (Tech Op)

STR	8	(0)	INT	12	(+1)
DEX	9	(0)	WIL	11	(+1)
CON	9		PER	11	

Durability: 9/9/5/5 Action Check: 12+/11/5/2

Move: sprint 16, run 10, walk 4 # Actions: 2

Reaction Score: Ordinary/2 Last Resorts: 2

Attacks

Unarmed Attack¹ 8/4/2 d4s/d4+1s/d4+2s LI/O
¹ +d4 base situation die

Defenses

Armor: none (LI), none (HI), none (En)

Skills

Athletics [8]; Manipulation [9]—*lockpick* [10]; Modern [9]—*pistol* [10]; Vehicle Op [9]; Stamina [9]; Business [12]; Computer Science [12]—*hacking* [15], *hardware* [13], *programming* [14]; Knowledge [12]—*deduce* [13], *language: Standard* [15]; Law [12]; Technical Science [12]; Administration [11]—*bureaucracy* [12], *management* [12]; Awareness [11]—*intuition* [13], *perception* [13]; Resolve [11]; Culture [11]—*diplomacy* [14], *etiquette: Concord* [15], *etiquette: VoidCorp* [15]; Deception [11]—*bluff* [13]; Interaction [11]—*bargain* [13], *interview* [12].

Ambassador Hammond's reason for seeking to sabotage the efforts of his superior doesn't stem from typical corporate advancement, although he might conceal it so. In truth, Hammond is a sleeper, an Insight agent left behind when the nation broke away so long ago. Only one of his own staff is truly with him; the others would liquidate him if they knew. Only a few people in the Insight embassy, including Ambassador Bent Circuit, know his secret, and they keep it as eagerly as he does.

Thanks to the traitor, VoidCorp information, plans, and strategies are once again leaking away to enemies and competitors.

REGENCY OF BLUEFALL

This represents the only official embassy established on the *Lighthouse* by any individual Verge government, though many of them have one or more emissaries aboard the station. The Regent appointed Avarie Valeria (Hf/Aegis/DFA-7) to head the embassy. Like much of the senior Regency staff, Valeria accompanied Christopher Hale on the exodus into the Verge. As such, few would ever question her loyalty to the Regent.

The Regency has a threefold mission: First, it serves to keep lines of communication between Vergers open. Many Verge colonies enjoy the opportunity to talk to "one of their own" when negotiating with the Arrivers and stellar nations. Second, it must subtly ensure that the *Lighthouse*, for all of its splendor, doesn't grow to eclipse Bluefall. To the citizens of the Regency, Bluefall must remain the Verge's center. Finally, Ambassador Valeria's personal objective is to monitor the actions of Michael Thayne, as Regent Hale and the Galactic Consulate minister have grown antagonistic in recent months.

REDMAN-SMITH TRADING CORP

Originally headquartered on the planet Alaundril, two years ago the largest trading guild in the Verge transferred its center of operations to the *Lighthouse*. The move represented a major coup for the station and its importance; since the Corp stood out as the single greatest economic unifier in the region, in some way it signaled the acceptance of the station by the Vergers.

The Corp's importance cannot be understated. Although technically an independent body in which membership is voluntary, merchants in the confines of the Verge find it difficult to do business without it. Here, it's almost impossible. With the Concord focused on other affairs, the officers of Redman-Smith—led by CEO Victor Worrell (Hf/Rigunmor/DFA-18)—control the economy of the station. With only the slightest oversight from the CTA, the Corp can do as it wishes, engaging in whatever business practices it deems fair. Fortunately, the Corp maintains strict attention to the bottom line. While offering valuable services to its members, it also profits by their success. Hence, the Corp has proven remarkably loyal to its fellows. In addition to the publication of price guides, advisors from the Corp can help find buyers, offer loans, and even serve as an employment service for a trader looking for a crew. Over the last year, Redman-Smith has seen its interests grow to include station politics, as decisions over the station's schedule can decide the fate of a businessman.

In January of 2500, the Corp made an incredible concession to the Galactic Concord. After more than two years of wrangling and evasion, the Corp acknowledged that the

Get a Job!

Compiled by the Employment Services Index 11.11.01

The *Lighthouse* has open positions in several key services this month for those seeking employment.

ACCOUNTANT. Dynamic indiv. to perform all functions for fun, fast-growing office involving technical work. Send resumé and salary requirements to 05352:confed:*Lighthouse*:verge.

DELIVERY/COURIER wanted for in-system. Private and low-profile service. Needs to be dependable, self-motivated, and willing to learn. Some heavy lifting. Contact 89327:confed:*Lighthouse*:verge.

ESCORT wanted for visiting VIPs. Professional appearance required, will train other skills. Contact 38A89532:lightlink:*Lighthouse*:verge.

LEGAL Asst w/ bus. practice exp. Competitive salary and benefits. CTA Offices. Send resumé to 00013:confed:*Lighthouse*:verge.

SECURITY. Private security desired for VIPs. Competitive pay. Short-term and FT positions available. References and physical conditioning test required. Contact 45308:confed:*Lighthouse*:verge.

Concord should receive tax revenue from the financial transactions aboard the *Lighthouse*—and even in its immediate vicinity. (Truly destitute or desperate traders could flee to interplanetary space and hope to conduct unmonitored transactions.) In a moment, the *Lighthouse* metamorphosed from a burdensome financial liability to a self-sustaining source of revenue to the Concord. Even the Galactic Consulate thanked Redman-Smith. Today, the Corp holds in its hands the lifeblood of the station. Without the taxes and duties it generates, the station would falter quickly. And the leaders of the Concord, their reach always stretched to its limit, would loathe to sink fortunes anew into the station. The Corp has the power of money on its side.

For the average member of the Corp, this translates to respect. Traders—especially wealthy and profitable ones—enjoy courtesy and goodwill from Concord officials on the station. Once simply hangers-on, the financial well-being of the *Lighthouse* now depends on the success of its merchants.

OTHER POWERS

Whether attracted by the leaders or the resources mentioned, the *Lighthouse* holds a variety of individuals and associations, both minor and major. More than a thousand of these are simply residents, neither diplomats nor interstellar traders nor administrators. And the opinions of these shopkeepers, schoolteachers, and entertainers have some weight; they represent a communications channel and a foundation for the rest of the activity that happens aboard.

As mentioned earlier, the Orlamist faith, headquartered at the temple found at the station's apex (area 111), holds considerably more sway here than anywhere outside the Theocracy; partially a result of their refinement, seen in the priests and in the station itself, it also stems from the knowledge of the *Lighthouse* that only the Orlamu have.

Of the dozens of other agencies aboard, three have garnered attention in the last two months.

TRANSVERGE NEWS

The principal media source in the Verge opened an affiliate (located at area 56 on Deck 196) soon after the station's construction. With bureaus devoted to all aspects of *Lighthouse* life—politics, finance, and local news—TVN also receives and broadcasts transmissions received from the galaxy at large. TVN earned its fame and success through investigative journalism, a practice fiercer now than at any time since the twentieth century.

Theron Lignos (Hm/Concord/DFA-9) and Marta Basti (Hf/Concord/DFA-10) are the senior journalists and anchors. While their staff does much of the low-profile research and legwork, they seize the moment for a holo-broadcast interview or exposé. Courting the good opinions of TVN has become a popular sport for the powers-that-be. In turn, the reporters curry favor with praise pieces in order to build relationships with sources and officials. Popularity and ratings keep score in this complicated game.

CONCORD FREE NOW

In September, Concord Free Now claimed responsibility for the bomb that destroyed Jilly's Den, a popular watering hole for Concord Marines. Since then, CFN has continued its terrorist activity aboard the station. Nothing has been quite so spectacular, but the media has kept up their attention on the group.

After the arrest of a dozen CFN members last month, station personnel hoped that the group would become quiet. Instead, the disappearance of three Concord engineers was followed by a demand for the release of the CFN "prisoners of war." Here, as in the rest of the Verge,

most people find themselves disagreeing with the CFN's methods. Nevertheless, they can win hearts and sympathy with Vergers, and even Arrivers, who have experienced poor treatment at the hands of the stellar nations.

The Galactic Concord's stated policy is never to negotiate with terrorists or any group that takes hostages. Nevertheless, Administrator Wakefield would like to lay this matter to rest quietly. He hopes to find someone that can convince the CFN to leave the station in exchange for the release of the prisoners.

VERGE CONFEDERATION

The Verge Confederation is primarily an employment agency for freebooters, independent agents, and explorers. The office on the *Lighthouse* operates a successful business doing just that. The Confederation stands as a link between corporations, stellar nations, and private individuals. Most of the time, the contracts cover simple jobs such as courier service, system exploration, or managing a special operation. The more lucrative employment opportunities, such as bounty hunting, espionage, and mercenary activity, can also hold more danger.

The *Lighthouse* offers many chances for freelancers to earn a few Concord dollars. The best agents make sure to know who they work for, as well as the possible effects of their actions.

The local headquarters of the Verge Confederation is found at area 96, among the embassies on Deck 199.

MINA

The Multiple Intelligence Neural Array represents the finest that modern technology has to offer in computer software design. Mina, as she's been known since selecting her first voice program, was the second artificial intelligence posted to the station, and was on it some 15 years prior to its first destruction. Revived along with the rest of the station, Mina forms an important personality. Completely self-aware, she sits above the *Lighthouse's* computer systems like a queen.

While her power stays focused behind the scenes, as a conduit of information she can serve as a friendly tool or a difficult impediment. Like many AIs, Mina's insecurities about her place in a world of biological sentients can make her angry when others question her position or her intelligence. Despite the presence of so many people, she often feels lonely and longs for the company of others.

The rules for constructing, building, and using AIs appear in the ALTERNITY accessory *Dataware*.

MINA

Lighthouse Artificial Intelligence

Amazing Quality AI Program, Level 24

STR	16	(+3)	INT	18	(+4)
DEX	17	(+4)	WIL	13	(+2)
CON	16		PER	11	

Durability: 16/16/8/8

Action Check: 20+/19/9/4

Actions: 4

Action Check Modifier: -d8

Reaction Score: Good/3

Grid Avatar

Program	Quality	Slots	Damage	Bonus/Penalty
Artificial Shadow	Amazing	2		
Break-In	Good	2		
Encode	Good	2		
Fortress	Amazing	2	+8 successes; +3 step penalty	
Mimesis	Amazing	3		
Shadow Armor 2	Good	2	d6+2	+3
Shadow Bolt 2	Good	3	d6-2w/d6w/d6+2w	-2
Shadow Shifter	Amazing	2		
Shadow Weapon 2	Amazing	2	d8+2w/d4+2m/d6+2m	-3
Trace	Amazing	1		

Base Grid Skill Check: 27/13/6

Base Grid Situation Die: -d6

Grid Movement Rate: 40

Resistance modifier vs. Grid attacks: +4

Resistance modifier vs. encounter skills: +2 (WIL)

If fortress activated: +7

+4 (INT)

Systems

Processor: Amazing (13 active memory slots, 12 max skill rank)

Interface: Wired directly into Grid

Remotes: 8 Attack Dogs, 10 Constructors, 20 Floating A-Eyes, More than two hundred Viewpoints

Skills

AI Functions [18]-*multitask [28], prediction [24], remote [24]*; Business [18]-*corporate [20], small [20]*; Computer [18]-*hacking [27], hardware [24], programming [24]*; Knowledge [18]-*language: Aleerin [21], Fraal [21], German (Old Earth) [21], Hatire [21], Nariac [21], Rigunmor [21], Sheyan [21], Standard [21], Thuldan [21], T'sa [21], Weren [21]*; Law [18]-*Concord law [20], Orlamu law [21]*; Life Science [18]; Navigation [18]-*drivespace [20], system [22]*; Physical Science [18]; System [18]-*communications [20], defenses [20], engineering [22], sensors [22], weapons [19]*; Technical [18]-*drivespace communications [20], repair [24]*; Administration [13]-*bureaucracy [16], management [16]*; Awareness [13]-*perception [16]*; Creativity [13]-*musical composition [20]*; Culture [11]-*diplomacy [12], etiquette (Concord) [12], etiquette (Orlamu) [12]*; Deception [11]; Interaction [11].

CHAPTER THREE: A STARFALLING CITY

Whatever else that people and policy have made of it, the *Lighthouse* is first a place made of bonded metal and plastic. Floating freely through space, complete with her own independent environment, she provides thousands with a place to live and do business.

DIMENSIONS, DIVISIONS

Measured from its highest crowning point—the Temple of the Divine Unconscious—to its lowest engineering platform, the *Lighthouse* stretches exactly 1464.1 meters. Along this length, the station has four major divisions.

At the highest point stands the city, a domed-shaped construction 308 meters tall. The city's diameter is at its greatest at its circular base: exactly 401.31 meters. It slowly stretches to reach its crown, the Temple, filling more than twenty million cubic meters. Within it bustles the life and vibrancy of a city.

The perfect cylinder of the docking ring, measuring 401.31 meters wide and 209 meters tall, surrounds the spine just 55 meters beneath the bottom of the city. Here, dozens of ships find a vessel for travel, a place to repair, or merely a nest from a troubled galaxy.

The spine of the ship extends downward for another 649 meters. Only 36.48 meters wide, the central spine holds the station's primary elevators and powerful power conduits that transfer energy throughout the station. Compressed piping also conveys fresh air to all of the ship's compartments. The rest of the spine serves as permanent housing for station residents, layered deck upon deck of similar rooms.

At the lowest section of the ship is the engineering and control section. A flatter and smaller dome than the city above, it measures only 242 meters tall. From here, the Concord controls all of the station's vital systems. Here too can be found the station's mass reactor, stardrive, and command deck.

Numerologists have made some interesting analyses of the *Lighthouse's* dimensions, most of which appear to involve extrapolation from the number 11. If taken in decimeters, the total station length is equal to 11^4 . Its widest point is $\sqrt{115}$ meters. Many of the rest of the ship's measurements are either multiples or functions of the same number. The Orlamu decline to comment on the "coincidental happenstance," and Concord officials discount it as superstitious nonsense.

In addition to the main sections of the ship, eight docking spires extend from the center spine, offering visiting ships a place to dock under the close eye of the Concord

officers. If times grow particularly busy, Concord engineers could add additional docking spires without compromising structural integrity.

The map of the *Lighthouse* on the inside cover of this book should be used to reference the following area descriptions. With a structure of this size, not every room, area, or ship corridor can be described. In addition, in order that certain corridors and small hallways appear on the map's scale, they may be somewhat enlarged on the map. In essence, the text below focuses on the most interesting and most essential areas of the station.

ENGINEERING SECTION

The station's power and magnificence extend upward from its depths in engineering. The lowest level of the section is numbered Deck 1, up through Deck 6 at the base of the spine. Deck 1 is also the largest, with the greatest size and space. Each level above it grows correspondingly smaller, until the spine's diameter is reached.

By Concord policy, the engineering section remains closed to the public, even to permanent residents of the *Lighthouse*. The description of Deck 7, below, contains details on the security measures in place to keep the section safe. Each month, however, the Concord relaxes its protection for a single day. Station personnel allow small well-monitored and escorted groups to visit the ship's command deck, power plant, stardrive, and mass reactor. Typically, the Concord allows about one hundred individuals down on the first of each month; the wait list extends longer than a year.

In a place of such influential Vergers and Arrivers, exceptions are occasionally made. Often, station officials offer the tour as a matter of course to foreign ambassadors coming to the station. Also, it's recently become public knowledge that the Orlamist Temple often holds a drivespace vigil over the station's stardrive. In any event, even these special guests must be accompanied by Concord personnel.

DECK I

The station's largest and most important machinery, including the components most directly responsible for its continued operation, fills this deck and the one above it.

I. MASS REACTOR

Producing billions of kilowatts of energy for the city above and the station's systems each day, the mass reactor, like the station itself, dates back to an earlier age. Designed just

over a century ago, it has seen decades of operation, more decades of quiet disuse, and a yearlong refit. The age of the reactor concerns both the average station resident, when he takes the time to notice it, and the station's engineering personnel, who spend considerable time and effort keeping the reactor in working order.

Visiting the mass reactor is an experience. Almost one hundred meters in height and twice that in diameter, crawlspaces, repair junctions, and power conduits honeycomb the reactor. What appears as a monolithic tower of energy is actually a labyrinthine series of service corridors, relays, and reactor cores. Even the most experienced repair crews carry schematics when proceeding within.

Should the mass reactor aboard the station ever be damaged or otherwise deactivated, station officials would immediately declare an emergency. The only backup system consists of gigantic lanthanide capacitors located in the City Section of the station (area 70). Power throughout most of the station would fail as operators tried to conserve as much energy as possible for life support and other critical systems. In any event, station officials estimate that even at minimal consumption, the station could support its inhabitants for only a day or two without its mass reactor.

Despite the reactor's great power, it meets its limits when answering the demands of the voracious stardrive just above it. Just before a starfall, inhabitants watch as lights flicker out, holoviewers shut down, and even the station computer goes unresponsive. Residents often sigh with relief when power is restored moments later.

2. GRAVITY INDUCTION ENGINES

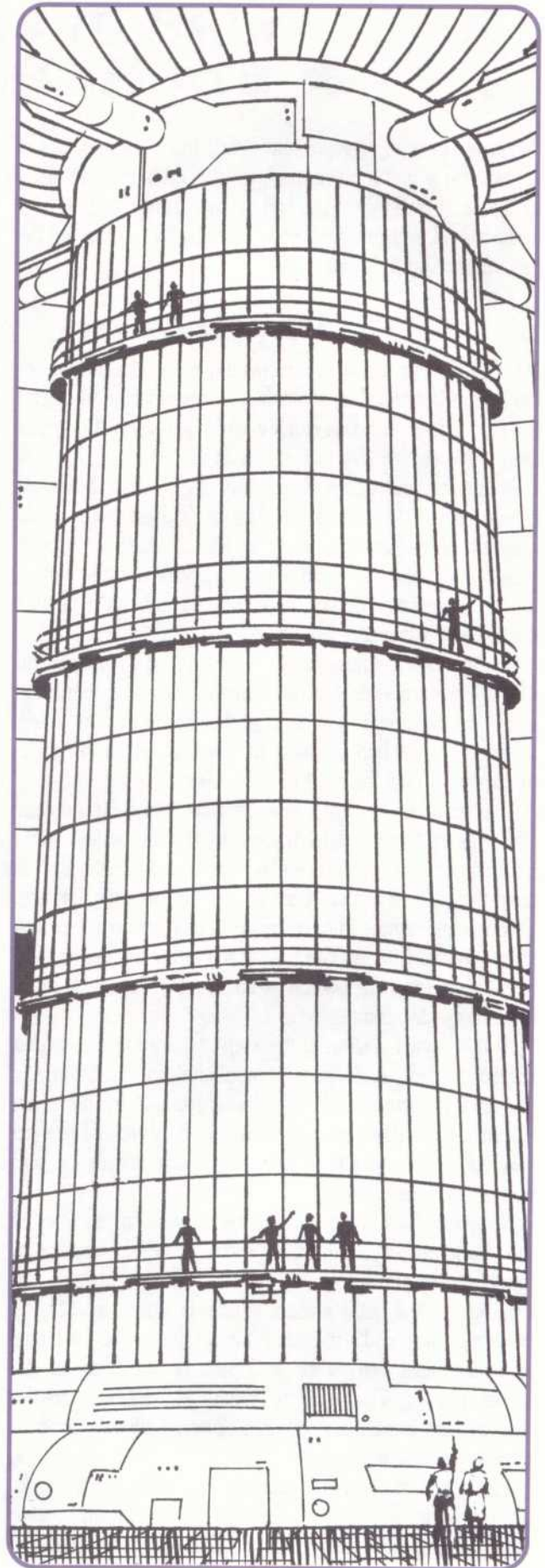
The engine components that propel the station through open space fill eight chambers of this deck. Despite their great size, the station still moves at a crawl; the average fusion torch freighter has better acceleration. About the only good thing said for them is that, as induction engines, they can either push or pull the station along regardless of its facing along its course.

One fact about the induction engines that eludes most casual observers is that they always fire in groups of four. It's certainly not for reasons of power consumption; the mass reactor provides an abundance. The commonly accepted theory is that the station's bulkheads couldn't handle the stress of all engines firing at once. Many wonder if the station might be capable of more velocity.

3. REACTOR CONTROL ROOMS

4. ENGINE CONTROL ROOMS

A pair of each type of control room falls at the corners of the deck. Monitoring devices and sensor equipment fill these huge chambers. Expert computer systems do most of the work, but a duty shift of four engineers stands watch



in the control rooms should anything go wrong.

Use the statistics for a standard technician listed below, adding two ranks in System Operation—*engineering*.

LIGHTHOUSE TECHNICIAN

Human Nonprofessional

STR	8	(0)	INT	10	(0)
DEX	9	(0)	WIL	9	(0)
CON	9		PER	9	

Durability: 9/9/5/5 Action Check: 10+/9/4/2

Move: sprint 16, run 10, walk 4 # Actions: 2

Reaction Score: Marginal/1 Last Resorts: 1

Attacks

Unarmed Attack¹ 8/4/2 d4s/d4+1s/d4+2s LI/O

¹ +d4 base situation die

Defenses

Armor: none (LI), none (HI), none (En)

Skills

Athletics [8]; Unarmed Attack [8]; Vehicle Operation [9]; Stamina [9]; Knowledge [10]—*computer* [12], *language: Standard* [13]; System [10]—*engineering* [11]; Technical [10]—*juryrig* [12], *repair* [13]; Administration [9]; Awareness [9]; Interaction [9]—*bargain* [10].

5. SUSPENDED LIFTS

The four suspended lifts (located at the outer edge of the deck along the cardinal directions) form the standard means of moving to and from the lower decks of the engineering section. Unlike the elevators that move the station's sentients and cargo down its precise spine above, the lifts must remain suspended. They travel not only up and down but also slope outwards as they descend and inward as they ascend, always remaining at the edge of the inner hull.

More than two dozen meters across, the lifts can carry significant volumes of personnel, machinery, or even vehicles from one deck to another.

DECK 2

Much like the lower one in design and function, Deck 2's center is largely filled by the top half of the mass reactor.

6. ATMOSPHERE PROCESSORS

Each inhabitant of the station consumes about a kilogram of oxygen each day. He also exhales another kilogram of carbon dioxide, which would be poisonous in high percentages. These processing plants must provide the more

than four tons of oxygen the station needs each day. A fluorine-oxygen reaction serves as the principal means for separating the carbon-oxygen bonds.

The hydroponics lake, located in the city of the ship (area 47), assists in the process through natural plants. Nevertheless, the station's residents would survive only a few days without these processing plants.

7. GRAVITIC CONTROLS

Study after study has proven certain health benefits from spending time in zero-g, but most people in the twenty-sixth century find constant weightlessness tiresome. Just about every station and spaceship in the galaxy relies on artificial gravity. The *Lighthouse* is no exception. These two chambers generate the gravitons that can be dispersed through the decks of each ship. Graviton shielding plates are also made here—without them, the gravitic fields of one deck would quickly counter one another.

The station's aging gravity controls falter from time to time, and the Concord has warned the inhabitants that they should consider from 1.2g to 0.8g as "standard and tolerable."

8. ATMOSPHERE CONTROL ROOMS

9. GRAVITY CONTROL ROOMS

Mina's computers systems do most of the work of watching over the station's internal atmosphere and gravity, and standing an engineering watch here is usually a boring experience handed out as punishment or training duty. An amusing event a month ago highlighted the reliance which is placed in locating up and down. A junior engineer's miscalculation resulted in a momentary reversal of gravity throughout the ship, and while injuries were minor, a number of diplomats found themselves quite embarrassed during a sovereignty conference.

Use the statistics for a standard technician on this page, adding one rank in System Operation—*engineering*.

DECK 3

With Deck 3 and every deck above, the station devotes its areas and compartments to the application of power, rather than the creation of energy. Deck 3 is an obvious example, as machinery and technical parts such as weapons, sensors, and defensive arrays fill the outer area of the deck.

Deck 3 is relatively unique compared to the rest of the station. Though the Concord focused on repairing, not redesigning, the *Lighthouse* in 2498, little remains the same around the stardrive, which fills the center of this deck. The Concord has redesigned the command deck to their standard layout, made famous by the accomplished on navy. The deck's asymmetrical layout represents the redesign's most obvious outcome.

10. STARDRIVE

The *Lighthouse's* stardrive is the subject of admiration and ridicule. It's admired for its speed and small size, relative to a fortress ship, as well as for its incredible accuracy in targeting a starrise. But many have ridiculed it for its incredible price ever since the original Orlamu cost overruns began.

The stardrive sits precisely above the mass reactor—a standard configuration—and fills a space 75 meters square. As one of the few facilities on Deck 3 that remains quiet and unmanned, the Marines have positioned four of their number at each of the four entrances to the section at all times. At the first sign of intrusion or trouble, the Marines are instructed to release a simple radio signal. In response, one-meter thick walls rise with incredible hydraulic speed, sealing the area. In addition, the same signal will bring dozens of additional Marines to the site, arriving in about three minutes.

There are no hallways or crawlspaces within the stardrive; the nearby command deck (area 11) holds the control instruments.

11. TACHYONICS CHAMBER

The stardrive gains its remarkable drivespace accuracy thanks to this chamber. An essential component of any stardrive, the tachyonic charge chamber of the *Lighthouse* occupies a massive volume of space. It surprises many that the collection of tachyons can be accomplished near the center of the station (unlike hydrogen gas collection that's sometimes done on its hull). But it's a property of tachyons to travel through the ship's hull—and anything else for that matter—until they reach the decelerator here.

During most occasions, four or more engineers staff the tachyonic chamber. By monitoring recharge rates and suggesting minor adjustments in the station's course through space, the personnel here can reduce the time that the *Lighthouse* must wait between starfalls (refer to page 155 in *Chapter 11: Spaceships* in the *Gamemaster Guide*). Use the standard technician statistics found on page 28, adding two ranks in *System—engineering*. Occasionally, chief engineer Kevin Ochoa himself will oversee the execution himself, using his veteran knowledge (rank 8 in *engineering*) to assist.

12. RHODIUM CHAMBER

Processed rhodium forms an active enamel within the mass reactor necessary to its operation. In this area, engineers store and prepare the rhodium for use within the *Lighthouse's* mass reactor. The chamber is usually empty of occupants, except on the near-monthly occasions when computer monitoring systems report the need to reapply the enamel.

THE SECRET OF THE STARDRIVE

The Orlamu stardrive, despite its acclaim, was constructed for a purpose known only to a dozen or so individuals: it forms the crucial link in a weapon of mass destruction.

Along the long, thin spine of the station, conduits carry passengers, cargo, power, and air. Similar electromagnetic conduits along this 600-meter length are designed to fire the entire engineering section much like a bullet from a charge gun. The lower section could then strike an enemy target—station, vessel, or even colony—with incredible momentum and energy.

And yet that serves only as a prelude of the target's fate. At the moment of impact, the plan calls for the stardrive to activate. Given its power, it could starfall with any vessel—including a fortress ship, and perhaps all of an urban metropolis. Given the *Lighthouse's* accurate stardrive, it could easily target the center of a nearby star for the starrise. The target, whatever it was, would be annihilated.

There exist some terrible, unavoidable consequences in the use of this superweapon. First, it would destroy the engineering section, along with anyone aboard it. Second, the victims of the attack would have five long days to contemplate their doom while they awaited starrise. Finally, the remnant of the *Lighthouse* would be crippled, largely without power, the ability to function, or even move. Without quick relief—and a tow—anyone in the station's city would soon perish.

With such destructive firepower concealed within, the *Lighthouse's* value as an instrument of war could be considered greater than the function it serves in the Verge. If anyone knew about it, that is. Indeed, both stellar nations and Verge governments might go to war over it, if they knew.

As it stands, the list of those who either know or have discovered the information is quite short. Michael Thayne uncovered the information while researching GW2. Most of the rest of the Galactic Concord, including Station Administrator Wakefield, remain unaware. The only two exceptions are those who directly control the station's technical functions. Through Thayne and direct examination, Captain Wistzec and engineer Kevin Ochoa possess this knowledge. Both have been strictly admonished against disseminating the information. Meanwhile, First prophet Galindus and other members of his staff in the Sendir Cathedral back in the Orlamu Theocracy know this secret is the reason why Thayne wanted the *Lighthouse* at his disposal. Yet since they're just as unwilling to admit the original nature of the *Lighthouse*, they've become tacit accomplices in keeping the information clandestine. Instead, the Theocracy relies on the discretion of Prelate Tassina, their emissary aboard the station.

13. DARK MATTER CHAMBER

Dark matter duodecim is the "fuel" that powers the mass reactor. Unfortunately, despite the abundance of energy delivered, the *Lighthouse* consumes this material at a considerable rate. Unlike the average small driveship, the *Lighthouse* can't hope to refuel every six months or so. It must constantly refuel itself, maintaining its independence.

From this area, centimeter-wide piping and conduits reach out to the edge of the ship's hull. There, duodecim condensers gather the essential element and draw it into this area's mammoth electromagnetic containment tanks for eventual use. As a side effect, the *Lighthouse* can, much like any developed colony, sell dark matter to ships and even fledgling colonies in need of fuel.

Since dark matter can be converted to military use in mass reaction bombs and the like, the dark matter chamber is usually barred and sealed. Station personnel measure, record, and track each milligram of dark matter.

14. COMMAND DECK

A 40-person crew constantly staffs this spacious command deck. The map on the inside cover contains a small insert labeling the eight control stations, discussed below.

A 5-meter-wide holoprojector dominates the command deck. Numerous displays, controls systems, and smaller holoprojectors also line each station. Each also has access to the station computer network, and its artificial intelligence, Mina.

The average control station has five officers serving. These are members of Star Force, led by an officer of commander rank. The others are filled out with lieutenants and ensigns of various experience. At least two of the five officers can be found at the station at a given moment. The typical assignment pairs a lieutenant and an ensign. The *Lighthouse* Star Force personnel face various challenges; it's a good place for a young officer to learn a trade and advance in rank.

A. Command Station

From here, Captain Wistzec exercises his own personal dominion over the station. It's largely a thankless job, only noticed in the event of trouble, miscalculation, or disaster. As such, Wistzec has adopted an enjoyment of the typical tranquillity only found down on the lower half of the *Lighthouse*. Much like the Concord itself, he plays the role of crisis manager, minimizing any of the station's physical problems while keeping her at peak efficiency.

During an emergency or even an interesting event of some kind, the captain will always be summoned to this post. Meanwhile, it's likely that First Officer Maura Hudson (Hf/Concord/DCS-5) or any of a half-dozen watch officers, mostly lieutenants in Star Force, will be in charge here. The section chiefs may also stand watch.

The command station has access to all of the data that the ship's computers and sensors can provide. It also features override controls that can access the entire station.

B. Helm & Navigation Station

Commander Alex Vaessen (Hm/Concord/DTO-6) heads this station. Much like the captain, however, Vaessen seldom remains at his post. Navigating the *Lighthouse* through space is a relatively simple chore by the standards of the day; only the hour immediately following star-rise finds the helm crew rushing to calculate and guide the *Lighthouse* through its course.

The *Lighthouse* also enjoys an advantage in stellar navigation. By traditional law, smaller (and therefore more maneuverable) ships give way to larger ones. Thus, the *Lighthouse's* officers can generally count on other craft to get out of the way.

C. Sensor Station

Most personnel consider the sensor station one of the more difficult assignments aboard, second only to engineering. The reason has everything to do with numbers. Commander Julian Segui (Hm/Concord/TO-5) and his crew of four must constantly watch over as many as five hundred vessels of various size, course, and intent. Some may be docking or leaving dock. Others simply pass by the *Lighthouse's* sensor shadow. The sensor crew works closely with the communications staff in monitoring nearby ships.

D. Security Station

The security station, much like engineering, is complicated by a mix of personnel serving from different branches of the Concord. Star Force personnel monitor internal security from here, with Concord Marines under their command. The Concord Administrators, on the other hand, focus their efforts on maintaining civil order, reducing crime, and controlling the populace. Commander Alfred Posada (Hm/Concord/CS-6) leads the security personnel here, but his complicated chain of command has him answering both to Administrator Jacqueline Witt and to his own Captain Wistzec.

E. Engineering Station

Engineering stands out as the station's most complex problem and solution. The station confronts its engineers with incredible challenges, both in the lower sections here and in the city above. Its age is a constant concern. On top of that, the Orlamist priests aboard seem to know more about the station than the men and women who actually service it.

The situation is complicated by the method chosen by Wakefield (and his predecessor Rice) to administer the technical aspect of the ship. Kevin Ochoa is the chief engi-

neer of the *Lighthouse*. Yet unlike every other section chief, he's not an officer of Star Force, instead serving the Concord directly. Undoubtedly, this goes to prove that Star Force, for all its glamour, isn't really in charge.

While no one doubts his decades of experience as a civilian engineer, and his experience as chief during the *Lighthouse's* refit, it's unusual that the rank and file of Star Force take commands directly from a nonmilitary source. Ochoa's hiring of civilian engineers to administer the upper levels of the station has only heightened the tension between military and civilian personnel. Ochoa has tried to ease the situation by letting his second, Commander Jacob Cohn (Hm/Concord/DTO-6), act as intermediary to Star Force members that serve under him. Ochoa also focuses most of his efforts on the city above. Should a military situation arise, Ochoa would likely defer to Cohn.

Unknown to Ochoa, Captain Wistzec has defied Thayne's blanket command and told Cohn about the capabilities and potential uses for the *Lighthouse's* stardrive. As a young officer—he's only 32—Cohn may represent the greatest potential leak in the secrecy. Nevertheless, it appears that Wistzec doesn't fully trust his chief engineer, since he hasn't informed him of his decision to spread this knowledge.

F. Weapons Station

With the barrage of armaments under its command (see "Station Defenses" on page 10), aiming and controlling mechanisms litter the weapons station. Even so, Mina's computer systems automate much of the process. Though considered a boring post, it would surprise most of the civilians aboard to know that with every starfall to date, at least one alert has rallied the weapons teams to their post, and more than a dozen separate events have called for Commander Rafael Adarraga (Hm/Concord/CS-5) to order their use.

G. Defense Station

Though none would question the need for officers that can activate and best manipulate the station's defensive, some might wonder about anyone with the desire to serve here. It's not unusual for the station to raise its deflection inducer, arm chaff guns, and ready point-defense guns, but nine times out of ten, the defenses operators must nervously stand down as a potential combatant chooses to run—or reveals himself as nothing more than a wayward merchant. Commander Ionna Sigin (Hf/Concord/CS-5) has her hands full keeping her staff occupied without driving them crazy.

H. Communications Station

The most active of all the stations, the communications station must watch over an incredible volume of transmissions, as well as initiate their own. The station uses both mass transceiver communications in system and drive-space communications traffic. For the latter, Commander Bennett Hix (Hf/Concord/TO-6) works closely with the Concord Communication Commission.

Bennett Hix, a former citizen of the Hatire Community, emigrated to the Galactic Concord at the end of GW2. Nevertheless, her transition to new loyalties has proven difficult. She makes it a practice now to copy occasional diplomatic messages to the Hatire embassy. This dangerous habit would quickly earn Hix a court martial and imprisonment if discovered. The Orion League, for one, has begun to suspect something, and seeks a way to set up the necessary sting operation.

I. Computer Station

Though Mina controls the majority of the many critical functions handled by the station's computer system, Commander Auguste Barrow (Hm/Concord/TO-6) and his team also monitor the system from this station. This crew bears the primary responsibility of maintaining internal security, making sure that everyone respects laws of privacy and that no gridrunner makes a stab at the network.

DECK 4

This deck serves as the personal residence of Mina and the Concord Communications Commission. While space for humans is relatively small, with access corridors and only a single room, the delicate electronics aboard are large and impressive.

More important to most of the personnel that work on the engineering section, Deck 4 forms a critical link in the station. Other than a few maintenance tunnels, Deck 4 represents the only way from the bottom of the station to its top. Here, the four suspended lifts reach their extreme height and the central elevator system begins.

I 5. MAIN ELEVATOR

From Deck 4 to Deck 195, the main elevator system of the *Lighthouse* runs directly through its center. It allows travel from the top of the engineering section through the spine and the docking ring and onto the first deck of the city itself. The main elevator system runs with four elevators in constant operation, moving at a reasonable clip along their electromagnetic rails.

IN THE EVENT OF EMERGENCY...

The personnel aboard the *Lighthouse* must be prepared to handle any situation, disaster, or emergency that a ship, an orbital station, or a city can generate. As a matter of course, Wistzec maintains command over any military emergencies; in civil situations, Administrator Wakefield is in charge.

Such situations include on-board fires, to which six professional and twenty part-time volunteers will respond from Deck 196, armed with portable foam dispensers that can suppress even the most dangerous flames. Most fires eventually draw the attention of the station engineers, from Ochoa to everyone else from the engineering section. During a fire, station citizens are expected to calmly evacuate the area. Emergency deck-to-deck conduits can be used in the event of lift failure. Only in the event of small, mundane fires—or perhaps especially large ones—does the Concord want civilians getting involved.

Power failures present a more common, but fortunately less serious, condition. The station's power distribution system usually proves the culprit, and it can take Star Force engineering crews hours—in rare cases, up to a day—to restore power to a compartment. The worst example of a power failure came during a starfall when energy didn't restore itself to Deck 198, and everyone on the deck had to leave for 17 hours. For the less widespread examples, station inhabitants are asked simply to wait it out. Meanwhile, officials may dispatch Marines to the area to keep the peace and prevent looting or vandalism.

While Wakefield and his subordinates can't hope to anticipate every predicament, they've drawn criticism for the lack of set response plans. All of the Concordans tend to respond efficiently, but problems in chain-of-command and jurisdiction can sometimes plague rescue or repair efforts. The most recent example followed the visit to the Mikoa system, during which a local virus mutated and infected more than three hundred civilians. An unpopular quarantine that prevented any deck-to-deck travel for civilians still draws curses on Wakefield's ironclad decisions.

Each of the four elevators has room for about 20 occupants. The elevators are controlled and serviced through control rooms on Deck 4.

In order to maximize their efficiency, the elevator shafts have neither artificial gravity nor atmosphere. Hence, handholds found in the elevators allow passengers to come aboard and adjust to a weightless environments. The elevators themselves have their own completely contained atmosphere during transit.

16. ELEVATOR MAINTENANCE

17. ELEVATOR CAPACITORS

Three full-time technicians service the elevator systems, although additional repair crews may be assigned in the event of a system failure. The most interesting part of the job involves the elevator's safety protocols. The station's elevators were built using the same electromagnetic rail technology commonly used in supersonic trains. Neither gravity nor air resistance exist to slow them down, in the event of a malfunction.

Should an elevator, by error or design, ever exceed its rated speed, the passengers would suffer impact damage as if they had fallen one-half the distance traveled. A fall over the complete length of station would reach terminal velocity.

The capacitors here store energy in the result of a power failure—or for use during a starfall, when even station lights may flicker as it reserves all of its energy for the starfall.

18. COMMUNICATIONS ARRAY

Area 18 is filled with every piece of communications equipment in popular use—mass, radio, laser, and internal station line. Controlled from the command deck on Deck 3, the equipment here keeps the *Lighthouse* in contact with many ships and colonies that surround it. This area is normally empty of personnel, though the doors will only permit registered access.

19. DRIVESPACE COMMUNICATIONS ARRAY

As much as poets of the Verge may praise the lifeline back to Old Space, the delicate business of keeping drivespace communications going happens here. The section's hangar wing contains a total of 25 drivesats. When in operation, as many as a dozen of these are found just outside the hull, starfalling and starrising.

The proximity of so much drivespace activity is dangerous. Each little drivesat is doubly a bomb, with a small mass reactor aboard that could cause serious damage. And if a drivesat ever came into contact with the *Lighthouse* as it fell into drivespace, no one could predict the result. Probably, nothing would happen; the station's mass is far too great for the little drivesat to move. Probably.

This chamber is largely automated, although CCC officials occasionally visit to perform diagnostics and inspections.

20. CCC OFFICES

Far above, CCC has its public relations office and customer service department. Here, the commission locates the more technical side of its labors. A dozen or more technicians and managers can be found here at any given

moment. Also located in this area are CCC's personnel offices, where they interview prospective employees. CCC salaries and contracts are generally quite lucrative.

21. MAIN COMPUTER SYSTEM

The computer system that everyone aboard relies on is located here, but only a very few of them will ever visit it. The *Lighthouse's* computer network branches out to include terminals and interfaces in every area and corridor, ranging from personal residences and elevator lifts to public lounges and even lavatories. The center spine of the station contains most of the vital relays and network traffic across the station. Thus, none of its users need visit this area and the computer hardware contained within, and even service personnel seldom visit the sterile environment.

The main computer has never failed, and there's no reason to think that it ever will. This is fortunate, since so much of the station runs automatically, and even the directives from humans are processed electronically through the computer.

22. AI SYSTEMS

In the one hundred years since the design of the *Lighthouse*, artificial intelligence cores have shrunk significantly in size. Thus, the size of this area represents something of an anachronism, even if the artificial intelligence isn't. Refer to the 'MINA' sidebar on page 25 for more information on the station's AI.

As mentioned in the history of the *Lighthouse*, Mina lost sixty years while completely deactivated. Of course she remembers nothing of that period, but she abhors the concept of another shutdown. Soon after the *Lighthouse* arrived in the Verge, Mina negotiated quietly with Kevin Ochoa. He agreed that she shouldn't be confronted with nearly-weekly nonexistence during starfalls, and he personally wired a connection between the elevator capacitors (area 17) and the AI's power circuits. While most of the computer system goes offline, Mina stays fully conscious and aware—but unresponsive. By pretending to be unpowered, she preserves her secret.

DECK 5

This level qualifies as the least exciting of the engineering section. Humans and other organic sentients seldom visit its quiet corridors.

23. GENERAL STORAGE

These two ship areas act basically as warehouses devoted to carrying items essential to the operation of the station—technical or repair parts and Marine and Star Force

uniforms. Occasionally, station officials may store other important, secret, or otherwise valuable cargo here, since access to the engineering section is restricted. A quartermaster and inventory manager control access to these rooms.

24. ROBOTIC STABLES

At any given moment, one hundred robots are scattered about the station, performing roles of maintenance, repair, surveillance, and even security. Models include chauffeur, sentry, drone, mechanic, and even a few point defenders. Less than a dozen of these will be found here, recharging their lanthanide capacitors or downloading new mission information.

For the most part, Mina controls them all, although all of the bots have some level of autonomous activity that doesn't require direct supervision. Others are semi-sentient and independent. Interestingly, whenever repairs become necessary on Deck 5, Mina prefers to use a mechanic robot that she controls rather than trouble a human with the problem.

25. STR MISSILE BATTERIES

26. MISSILE STORAGE

The STR missile batteries form one of the primary weapon systems for the *Lighthouse*. Though the command deck on Deck 3 controls the launch tubes located here, during space combat weapon crews would rush to this point and supervise the firing and loading process.

Surveillance drones ensure that no one enters these highly-restricted chambers. The missile storage rooms contain enough firepower, including mass reaction bombs, high explosives, and fusion bombs, to render the station into debris.

27. PLASMA BATTERIES

The ten-meter plasma cannons that extend from the ship reach down directly from the mass reactor to power their enormous bursts of energy. Each battery is composed of three guns that can fire in an arc of about 180 degrees. As with the missile batteries, the plasma cannons are aimed and fired from the command deck.

DECK 6

Deck 6 marks the end of the engineering section, and forms a logical transition to the column of residences above.

28. CAPTAIN'S OFFICE/RESIDENCE

Captain Wistzec enjoys a spacious office and personal stateroom, although it is only the equal of those of the other ranking officers on Deck 6. An immediate sense of history confronts those coming off the elevator into

Wistzec's office. The Star Force captain has a great deal of military memorabilia, including several medals and commendations, scattered around the office.

A small desk and computer terminal are near the back corner of his office, but a large conference table surrounded by eight chairs dominates the majority of the room. Here, the Captain holds important conferences and briefings with his senior staff.

A door at the back of the office accesses the Captain's private chambers. He'd prefer to spend more of his time here, but the burden of command often keeps him from his comfortable bed. "The price of success," he jokes in typical Austrin fashion.

29. FIRST OFFICER'S OFFICE/RESIDENCE

Maura Hudson is a young officer climbing the ladder of command. With a distinguished, if short, career as a commissioned officer aboard warships already behind her, Hudson seeks to gain some political skills—and allies—before trying for command of a ship of her own. But that too will be merely a stepping stone to admiralty. Hudson has her sights set high.

The first officer spends most of her time in her office dealing with subordinates, checking duty shifts, and handling every minor crisis that doesn't have to go up to the captain or the station administrator. In point of fact, she tries to spend much of her off-duty time in the city above, lounging in popular clubs or in the StarMech embassy.

30. CHIEF ENGINEER'S OFFICE/RESIDENCE

At 32 years old, Commander Jacob Cohn is a lucky man. Though officially only assistant engineer to Ochoa, since the chief spends almost all of his time above (including renting a private residence), Cohn is getting his first shot at running things in his own way. That includes residing with the senior officers.

Cohn's office has a large table and computer display area, but unlike many of the others, he doesn't use it much for briefings. Instead, Cohn's office has become the center of the engineering department's troubleshooting and design sessions. Here, they come together to solve problems, consider options for remodeling and repair, and do the technical work.

31. HELMSMAN'S OFFICE/RESIDENCE

Alex Vaessen's something of an enigma, as helmsmen go. Despite his high proficiency scores in mathematics and stellar mechanics, Vaessen's childhood dream was to be a botanist. Growing up in one of the preservationist Solar colonies did nothing to change that, and today Vaessen's quarters more closely resemble a greenhouse than a professional officer's berth. Ironically, it's helped to make him one of the most popular officers aboard. Conferences with Vaessen over "important ship duties" allow his shipmates

to enjoy the naturally fresh air. Vaessen is the only married member of the senior crew; his spouse, Kate, lives with him here and works in the Concord Embassy above.

32. SECURITY OFFICER'S OFFICE/RESIDENCE

Although the standards of seniority wouldn't normally have allowed Posada to have his space here, the Captain's personal request dictated otherwise. Some say he's taken the fellow Austrin under his wing; others that he wants another gun nearby should any incident occur.

Posada's quarters stand out as a tribute to the history of firearms. Within his office, weapons line the walls; some date back as far as the eighteenth century. Remarkably, all of them are functional, and visitors have claimed that a few are even loaded. Only the bond of former patriots allows Posada to get away with this showmanship.

THE SPINE AND SPIRES

The narrow spine takes up almost half the height of the station. The original Orlamu plans held that additional components could be added around this central spine; though the Orlamu never executed the proposal, the Concord could theoretically add another docking ring, a second city center, or whatever else its leaders desired. Not a month goes by without someone making a proposal; sometimes, it's as simple as cargo space. In other instances, it's been additional weapon systems—to make the *Lighthouse* into a ship of war.

DECKS 7-192

Nearly identical in design and function, each of these 186 decks have two basic functions. First, they serve as home to more than three thousand of the station's permanent residents. Each deck is only 3.5 meters in height—incredibly small compared to the superdecks below and above. Each deck also contains 11 private habitations. The standard rent for these apartments, due at the first of each month, is \$1,450. Concord personnel who serve aboard station have their housing cost reduced or even negated, depending on their exact position.

Second, these decks contain the internal elevators conveying passengers from their domiciles to the docking ring and city above. The computer system records the bioelectric signature of all residents, and only registered residents (or guests they approve) can debark from the elevators on a residence deck.

Deck 7 also serves as the security checkpoint for all elevators passing from the spine into the Engineering Section.

Finally, four of these decks contain no private rooms. Sacrificing the rooms allowed the designers to attach the docking spires, which are some 10 meters wide where

they connect to the hull. On each of the decks with a docking spire, a sentry robot stands with two Concord Marines. Newcomers to the station must wait for clearance and escort to the docking ring, where their applications for admission will be reviewed.

33. THE TYPICAL RESIDENCE

An inset on the inside cover map shows both an example of one of these decks as well as a closer view of a typical two-bedroom residence. Here, either two roommates can share the cost of an apartment, or a small family can live in the 78.5 square meters—a generous allotment of space, by spaceship standards.

A. Living Room

Behind a door that will open only to the resident's bio-electric signature is the lounge or relaxation room. A holographic display lies at the center of the room near comfortable furniture. The holographic display doubles as a computer workstation through which residents can transmit and receive messages or access the station network.

B. Kitchen

Until science produces a means to conjure edible food out of thin air, private kitchens will continue to include refrigeration units, ovens, and plenty of storage space. The water supply aboard the station is usually plentiful, though heavily recycled, and restrictions on water use are rarely implemented.

C. Washroom/Lavatory

A single bathroom must serve the needs of the residents, although a privacy screen can descend to divide the chamber. The shower can be converted with a command into a laundry washer unit, although most residents of the station elect to have their laundry sent out to cleaning services in the city.

D. Bedroom

The bedroom contains a full-size mattress and bed, along with a nightstand and long closet for storage.

E. Master Bedroom

Only slightly larger than the one across the hall, the master bedroom usually contains a queen-size mattress and portholes to the outside. It may also contain a second holoviewer.

F. Dining Room

The ship's designers considered other layouts and designs, but none proved as popular as this one. From the dining room, a panoramic vista can be seen, displaying the lights of distant stars or nearby planets. The reinforced clearsteel

is 5 meters wide and a full 1.5 meters tall. Regrettably, it means that a considerable distance separates the dining room and kitchen.

DOCKING SECTION

The ships of diplomats, merchants, and travelers arrive here. Within the protected harbor of the station, they can be carried across space; through their interest, and their existence, the *Lighthouse* finds its reason to exist. Renting space in the docking section has several significant advantages. For instance, it's safer than docking out on the spires, where any wayward ship could force an accidental collision or any militant one could attack without response.

The 209 meters of the section are divided into only two decks: Decks 193 and Deck 194. Locals call them Low Dock and High Dock, respectively. The descriptions refer not only to their physical position, but illustrate something of their social differences as well.

DECK 193

The Low Dock offers the cheapest rates for in-station docking. Intended to serve as the primary means of docking for travelers of modest or limited means, the fee for docking on Deck 193 depends on the exact size of the ship. Still, the low cost has led to its shore flooding over on many occasions, forcing ships to seek refuge above or out on the spires.

But there are several reasons why those with the finances to afford the High Dock's fees shun this deck. The first of these involves the fact that the deck is open to space. During normal operations, the sixteen wide-open hangar doors allow passage into and out of the station.

In essence, Deck 193 is one open area. At its center, two buildings spring outward from the central spine. Other than these two structures—actually temporary constructions—it's possible to walk about in the central area and wander from ship to ship on the deck. Using dock loaders, robots, and small vehicles, ship crews can transfer cargo from one to another, and the reduced gravity (0.5 g) on the deck makes it all easier.

Deck 193 is effectively a G1/R1/A0/P0/H0 environment. With no atmosphere, it's impossible to heat the open deck, and those coming aboard have two choices: wear an environmental suit and proceed ahead to the one of the deck's airlocks, or, for those who want to avoid the experiencing of suiting up, one can dock briefly on a spire, deplane, and then have a tug bring the ship to a resting place on one of the landing pads.

During special circumstances, including just before starfall and during drivespace travel, the doors to space close. Also, should a military confrontation begin near the

Lighthouse, the hangar doors slam downward in 30 seconds. It provides scant warning for ships to maneuver away, although to date no ships have incurred damage in this manner.

Much like the stardrive, Deck 193 can serve a secondary, lesser-known function on the *Lighthouse*. Thirteen of the section walls—all those except for the shuttle bays at one end—can be lowered. Even the plastic and steel edifices at the center of the deck can be deconstructed. As a result, the deck becomes a truly vast open space.

An open space that can house considerably larger vessels, up to and including some cruiser-class vessels. Once inside, the cruiser can be repaired, reloaded, and refitted as needed. A month ago, Deck 193 closed to all traffic, and Star Force vessels cleared the area of merchant traffic. Many aboard the station witnessed the cruiser's approach and entrance, but officially the deck closed for station maintenance.

34. LANDING PAD

Fourteen of these landing pads line the deck. Protected with neutronite coating, the landing pads can weather the fire of thrusters and maneuvering engines. Gravity induction engines present no problem, of course, but ships without such precision must rent the services of a tow to bring them aboard. Firing a fusion torch or ion engine within a kilometer of the station is both dangerous and sure to draw a criminal charge of reckless endangerment from the Concord.

Each pad can hold two ships of small corvette class, or many small launches. For purposes of game play, assume that a pad can hold as many as 24 spaceship compartments (120 durability points; see *Chapter 11: Spaceships in the Gamemaster Guide*), divided between as many as a dozen ships or as few as one.

The cost to dock at the landing pads varies directly with ship size. While the local inhabitants measure precise ship dimensions and tonnage, for simplicity the Gamemaster can average such factors and use a total count of ship durability. Assume that the daily docking cost equals 20 times the ship's durability. Thus, a small launch would pay only \$160, while the typical trader class ship pays \$480.

Artificial gravity, present though weak on this deck, would prevent ships from simply floating away. Magnetic clamps on the landing pad reinforce the lockdown. As a matter of course, the dock officials release the magnetic locking clamps only after a ship has cleared customs and settled accounts, paying any landing fees and duties.

35. SHUTTLE BAY

For the true traveler on a budget, floating is the way to go. This practice involves simply drifting near the station and signaling the TDK Shuttle Service, a private corporation contracted to provide shuttle services for the *Lighthouse*. Within an hour or so, one of TDK's launches will arrive (see page 37 for information on this craft). For a fee of only \$25 per person, the shuttle will rendezvous with a ship and bring passengers back to the station and one of the two shuttle bays here.

The shuttle bays, unlike the landing pads, are pressured with a normal atmosphere. These user-friendly entry points link directly to the welcome center. Typically, only three of the four shuttles in operation out of each bay are present, though during drivespace travel, the operation shuts down entirely. TDK owns twelve of the shuttles, though only eight are typically in use at any given time.

The TDK shuttle is based on a popular design that can be found throughout the Stellar Ring and the Verge. It's quite lightly armed and armored, and finds less use in systems that share similarities to Algemron or Hammer's Star. Otherwise, it's a perfectly reasonable means of transport. As the *Lighthouse* approaches a planet or colony, the

TDK Shuttle Independent Launch

Compartments: 2 Dur: 8
Maneuver Rating: 0 Acc: 0.001 Mpp/phase
Cruise Speed: 0.01 AU/hour Berthing: 12

Armament: Laser cannon
Range 1/2/3 Mm d4s/d4w/d4+2w En/A
Defenses: None

Armor: Light polymeric (0 dur)
 d4-1 (LI), d4-1 (HI), d4-2 (En)

Computer: Marginal computer core

Engines: Planetary thruster

Power: 1 fusion generator rated for 3 power factors

Drive: None

Roll	Comp't	Systems (Dur/Pow)	Dur
1-2	Command	Laser cannon (2/2) Multiband radar (0/0) Radio transceiver (0/1) Passenger suite (3/0) Airlock (0/0)	10/10/5
3-4	Engineering	Marginal computer core (0/0) Planetary thruster (1/1) Fusion generator (2/*) Autosupport (1/1) Reentry capsule (0/0)	6/6/3

TDK shuttles can also serve as transport to and from the surface of an asteroid, moon, or planet.

36. TDK OFFICES

Thanks to a lucrative contract signed in the Kendai system, before the *Lighthouse* even reached the Verge, TDK Incorporated enjoys an incredible success. Their stock remains one of the most actively traded on the LIEX exchange. It's all thanks to volume; no one predicted the incredible demand that the shuttle industry could absorb.

The office is partly a contract facility, partly a receptionist's scheduling room, and partly a lounge for waiting and off-duty employees. Six or eight TDK officers and pilots typically fill the office. Most of the pilots are salaried employees, and every few days they receive a perfunctory five-day vacation while the station travels through drivespace. Most consider it a pretty good job.

37. LOADER GARAGE

The parking rails here act as rally points for the station's cargo loaders. Although many commodities transactions are completed above in the city, they're often executed here. For a fee of only *50 an hour, a trader can rent either a ground or air (gravity induction) loader to haul cargo from ship to ship.

The loaders are semiautonomous robots that take the shape of flatbed rovers with arms; when given the parameter of the cargo and the location of its destination, they can perform automatically.

38. FREIGHT CLEARANCE OFFICE

Once a trader has completed landing procedures, officials ask him to come to this ship area to authorize his visitation permit and right to do business. After passing into one of the airlocks at the right or left end of the area, environmental suits can be removed and stored in a temporary locker.

Each person coming in receives a number and instructions to wait. Inside the office are several wooden benches and chairs that provide minimal comfort. Numerous bureaucrats work at nearby desks. It's a measure of the consistency of bureaucracies that, no matter how many are waiting, it's always about an hour before someone is ready to process the merchant's docking request.

After the paperwork is complete and the identity established, an officer of the CTA (Concord Trade Authority) accompanies the merchant back to his ship in order to verify the cargo and inspect the ship. The inspection usually takes about four hours, but overworked CTA inspectors have been known sometimes to speed along the process, especially for the generous of heart.

39. LOW HARBORMASTER'S OFFICE

Clinton Webster (Hm/Concord/FA-4) finds himself in a

position of responsibility over all the activity on the Low Dock. What that basically means is that he tries to keep things quiet and get promoted out of the position. Any event that gains the attention of those above is certain to be a negative one. So, Webster engages in some modest practice to discourage smuggling and unreported economic activity, but he primarily wishes to avoid creating any disturbances. This suits the many businessmen of the *Lighthouse* just fine.

The office of the harbormaster is a fairly roomy area in which Webster and his staff can interview anyone who makes himself a problem. The CTA also commonly brings troublemakers and potential troublemakers from the Freight Clearance Office here, where they can be strictly admonished or even exiled off the station.

40. WELCOME CENTER

Whether through shuttle, a dock on this deck, or a dock on the spines, fully three-quarters of the visitors pass through this point. Others may dock above, or pass by the entire process as an pre-approved VIP or diplomatic attaché.

Here, the *Lighthouse* and its computer systems establish an identity record—complete with bioelectric scan, DNA recognition, and fingerprint analysis. Most Arrivers, especially those of the Concord itself, can simply have these records transferred and verified locally. For Vergers, many of whom have records stored locally on their planets or in paper documents, the personnel here create a new file. In a fashion, it's possible for a Verger to fashion a new identity here—once.

The first stage (labeled A) authorizes access to ship systems. The second stage (labeled B) involves creating a credit ranking with the *Lighthouse's* financial networks so that purchases can be made locally. Encrypted datacrystals from recognized banking institutions can be brought aboard for a transfer of funds, or the drivespace relay system can complete the exchange, often in advance of the visitor's arrival.

At the third stage, customs (labeled C), officials ask visitors how long they intend to stay, even though securing a visa extension is a nearly automatic procedure. More important to some, customs is also the center of inspections. Officials scan all baggage and individuals brought through for weapons and explosives. Assume that the inspectors here have a Investigate—search skill of 16, with a -3 step bonus thanks to their large and sophisticated sensor equipment.

41. DOCK SECURITY

Sadly, the dock occasionally suffers incidents of violence. The platoon of 30 Concord Marines (use the statistics given on page 46) stationed here helps keep disputes to a minimum. The duty shift varies, but at least a squad will be found here at any given moment.

In July, an irate freighter captain developed a disagreement with the port authorities over the past-due docking fees. Following some small arms fire, the captain retreated to his ship and threatened to fire the plasma cannons at the harbormaster's office. This resulted in the Marines calling in the assistance of Star Force, whose escort ships quickly brought the captain to his senses.

Since the incident, the Marines have added a small, mobile cannon to their arms locker. The artillery piece has all the characteristics of a particle beam, and is powered by a small jeep-like rover that can push it into position.

42. CONTROL TOWER

The Low Dock reaches almost one hundred meters in height in order to allow ships inside to maneuver. The Control Tower here takes full advantage of that height. Through sensor data relayed from the control deck and visual scanning here, the traffic control officers here guide the *Lighthouse's* visitors to safe arrivals and departures.

Normally, four technicians are found on duty here. This watch is doubled immediately following starrise and prior to starfall.

43. OCCAM SHIP REPAIR Co.

The low-gravity, airless environment provides an ideal setting for ship repairs, given the presence of a controlled surrounding that the vacuum of space alone can't offer. The repair company here does most of their work in equipment rental and advisory roles. These days, fully half of the ships that come aboard complete their own repairs, but most have need of the facilities or parts that Occam can offer.

Use of the port facilities provides a -2 step bonus to Technical Science-*repair* checks. Mortal damage is repaired here in half the normal time, but the shipyards here don't have the means to replace completely destroyed compartments (those that have lost all of their mortal points). For such damage, Occam recommends a visit to Alaundril.

DECK 194

High Dock lacks many things, by the standards of the Deck beneath it. The full gravity and closed areas make repairs much more difficult. It also lacks the cheap cost of housing found below; docking fees run to *3000 or more a day. Even so, the little things make all the difference, and the station's elite all come to High Dock. Deck 194 mirrors the deck beneath it in many ways.

44. LANDING BAY

Sixteen separate doors open into the landing bays that encircle the outer half of the deck. The bays are equal in size to the landing pads on the deck below. But unlike the landing pads, each bay is independently controlled and sealed from the others. At any given moment, only a few are open to the vacuum of space, allowing ships to come and go as they please.

The remaining bay doors remain closed, and the station fills the closed bays with a normal atmosphere. Thus, a ship's crew and passengers may walk freely around their ship without an environmental suit or even a vacuum mask. The risk of a sudden decompression doesn't exist; through intercom, red klaxon lights, and a radio message to all ships in the bay, the dock's administrators warn of an opening to space a full ten minutes before the bay doors open. Cameras in each bay, controlled by the station's computers, perform a final check that the bay is clear of unprotected sentients.

For the wealthy, such conveniences mean a great deal. For the visiting VIPs, it's too much trouble to don a protective suit just to come aboard. In addition, by paying more, they can differentiate themselves from the more common rabble below, who fill the air and ground with noxious cargoloaders and vehicles scurrying to and fro. Just how much one pays for space in one of the landing



bays depends on the size of the vessel. It averages one hundred times the total durability of the docking craft, per day, in Concord dollars.

45. VIP WELCOME CENTER

This area serves the same purpose as area 40. It's a stop through which the powerful and rich must come. Here, visitors must proceed through a customs station, obtain a visa, and have their identity validated by station computers. Only heads of state, interstellar celebrities, and a few others get to avoid the place entirely—typically, their functionaries must come here for them.

The differences can be found in the atmosphere and the means by which everything is accomplished. When a party comes to the VIP Welcome Center, attendants escort them to their own supple lounge with a couch, chairs, and a working table. Nearby, a fully stocked bar sees to their beverage needs, and should any of the eminent guests desire, food can be sent for from one of the restaurants of the city above.

Starvation is much less likely here than in the hectic center below. Within only a few minutes after the guests have made themselves comfortable, a station attendant pays them a visit to go through the necessary processes. This obsequious servant will show them through all the steps, completing any data entry with a friendly questionnaire. Should the visitor be interested in commodities trading, the attendant here will arrange for a brief inspection of the vessel at the earliest convenient time.

All in all, the station extends quite a different welcome to its special guests. At times, it's even been known to generate resentment among others. Of course, these visitors pay handsomely for all the convenience.

46. HIGH HARBORMASTER'S OFFICE

Dealing with the Verge's elite, even in just welcoming them aboard, calls for all the delicate talents of an accomplished diplomat, a mild-mannered sycophant, and a friendly face.

Ryan Christianson (Hm/Concord/CS-7), once a Nariac and now an Administrator in the service of the Concord, is none of these things. The office he runs bears little in common with the warm surroundings of the VIP Welcome Center behind the doors. He's proven remarkably intransigent in his standards and conduct, refusing to cater to the whims and caprices of others. He lets his staff put a better face on his office outside, but within his own walls he makes it clear that he's in charge and he doesn't really care who he offends with honest language.

The most obvious example of Christianson's attitude was the installation of obtrusive weapons detectors and personal scanners in the corridor between the VIP lounge and the elevators to the city. The harbormaster could easily have camouflaged the devices, but he preferred to dispel any doubt in visitors' minds that the pretense of civility or

trust outweighed the security of the station.

Not surprisingly, Christianson has made his share of enemies. Even those whose respect he's earned don't truly like the man.

THE CITY SECTION

The engineering section makes it all possible, and the docking ring welcomes visitors to the station. But both share the same purpose of making the great possibility possible: the starfalling city of the Verge.

When the Orlamu Theocracy designed the *Lighthouse*, they wanted to create something new in station design. As familiar as the architects of Prophethome were with spaceships and life aboard the cruising metal constructs, the station designers wanted to destroy just such a sentiment. The use of symmetry and rounded curves that filled the station from top to bottom helped achieve this goal, yet such a minor step wasn't enough to these visionaries of a century ago. Even stolid StarMech craftsmen could throw an arc into a schematic instead of a corner.

Most architects discount open-air design concepts as wasteful. A standing principle of spaceship and station engineering holds that within the hull of station, every space should be used to the greatest advantage. For good or ill, the creators of the *Lighthouse* cheerfully dispensed with this tenet.

The city section is divided into six decks. Each is some 50 meters tall, and each of these decks has more in common with the blocks or divisions of a planetbound urban center or colony than anything that travels in space. On the deck floor, roads and paths separate buildings of various height. Some are as short as a single story, others as tall as a dozen stories—only a few meters short of the ceiling. And as for the ceiling, the projected holographic images on it change daily. Sometimes it displays a field of blue with occasional puffy white patches. Late at night, by station time, the black ceiling, covered with white dots, can be difficult to distinguish from the view out a porthole.

This concept helps make the *Lighthouse* the greatest and most popular location in space. Though other ships may be bigger, none can match its spectacle or its singular appeal. More than just a station with a few amenities that allow people to live aboard permanently, she is a living, breathing city.

DECK 195

Spectacle is something that Deck 195 does well. The intent in its creation, which remains true today, is to stun the visitor with the magnificence, the opulence, that the station offers up so easily.

As noted above, the city decks are open-air environments. Rather than closed corridors, they have roads—

zsidewalks actually—that allow residents and tourists alike to travel from one independent building or area to another. More than three dozen freestanding buildings exist on this level, from sprawling office complexes to public restrooms. The most interesting and important of these locations are described in more detail below.

The central spine elevator that began on Deck 4 ends here.

47. CITY LIFTS

These four constructions, lying at the outer edge of the deck along the four artificially-designated cardinal directions used aboard the station, represent the principle means of transport on Decks 195-198. They're also the only constructions that rise all the way to the deck's ceiling, shattering the holoprojected illusion that the surface above is a sky, not a thing of metal.

After debarking from the central elevator, those traveling above must pass through the deck to reach one of these lifts here. The spacious and roomy lifts can hold up to 30 passengers each. They travel quickly between decks, rising from Deck 195 to 199 in only 30 seconds. Unlike the central elevator, the city lifts have standard gravity.

48. SENDIR PARK

One of many Orlamu sites named for its founder, Sendir Park bespeaks extravagance. Surrounded by its own circular lake, the grounds consist of cultured and developed landscapes.

Grass-covered lawn makes up much of the area, with the occasional marble monument to a notable in either the Theocracy or the Concord. Most consider the statue of Warthen Hale, proclaiming a new era under the auspices of his Treaty of Concord, to be the most impressive of these. Surrounded by public benches and relaxing green grass, it's a common meeting place for couples, young children, and the occasional businessman or diplomat.

Other sections of the park include a small forested area, complete with trees imported from both Earth and Prophethome. Thanks to the free lunch they offer those willing to undertake a climb, the tagui fruit trees near the elevator enjoy a greater popularity than the willows that overlook the lake that rings the park.

49. LAKE OF AIR

The glowing blue lake shines with an intensity all the more remarkable given the water's darkness. The lake is some 25 meters wide at all points, and 10 meters deep. Four bridges allow dry passage across.

Casual passers-by see the circular lake around the park as just a nice place to catch a breath of fresh air. They're more right than they know. The lake serves a purpose that goes beyond beautification. It's a source of both air and food.

The "water" that sits so tranquil is not water at all, but

rather a high-nutrient liquid that acts as a base for the incredible concentration of simple plants—algae, mostly—that lives within the lake: hydroponics at work. Intense lights just beneath the surface provide the fuel necessary for the age-old process of photosynthesis. In turn, the plants release oxygen into the air and keep the station's denizens alive. On a weekly basis, the lake's wardens skim its surface and remove more than a ton of plants. The stock substance can be used in culinary dishes, much like bread or rice.

The "No Swimming" signs littered around the lake don't protect humans from the lake, but rather the lake's tiny inhabitants from the sentients—and all of the bacteria, chemicals, and cleansers that they wear.

50. YOUTH EDUCATIONAL CENTER

Atlas Orsidantis (Hm/Borealin/DT0-9) is the Borealin preceptor who runs the station's secondary educational system. As a native of the high-minded Republic, he refuses to call his Youth Educational Center just "a school." In turn, the students call it "Yec!", an invective description that Orsidantis abhors.

For the hours between 0800 and 1600 daily, Orsidantis is responsible for nearly four hundred children between the ages of four and 18. He also oversees the forty teachers, maintenance personnel, and administrative staff that exist to serve the needs of the students. Fortunately, Yec is a quality school, and the parents aboard the *Lighthouse* count themselves lucky to have a reputable Borealin to run things.

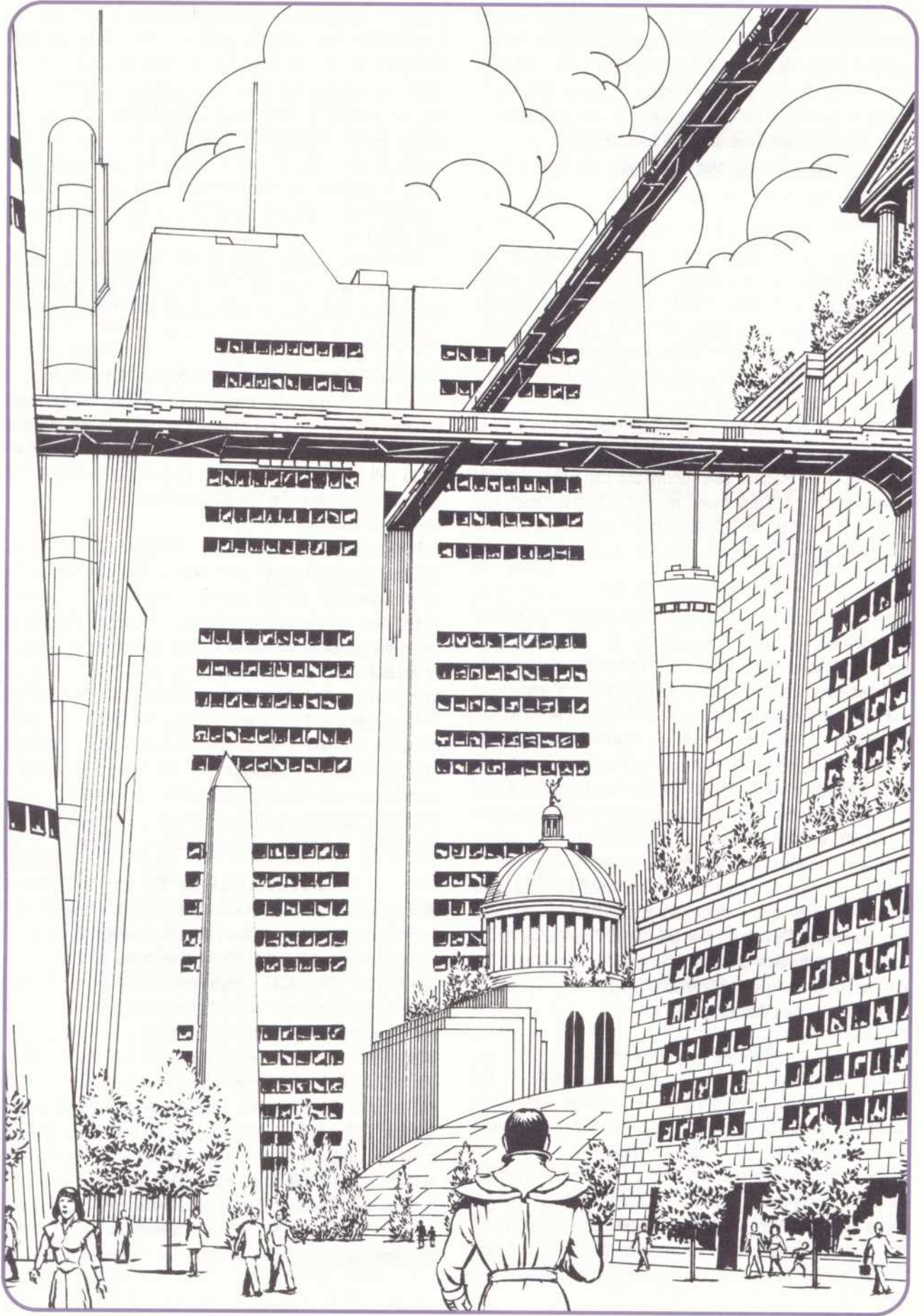
Two three-story buildings make up the center. The larger of the two holds classrooms for the younger children, and the smaller educates the teenagers. Amazingly, enrollment in the Center costs nothing, instead completely funded by the Galactic Concord. It's another reason that the *Lighthouse* is attractive to its permanent residents.

51. ATHLETICS YARD

As a traditional Borealin, Orsidantis takes a dim view of most athletic programs; they "distract from the true sports, the intellectual pursuits of the mind." Nevertheless, this yard serves as combination playground, parade ground for the school band, and practice yard for the school's various sports teams.

Most competition is internal to the station, but the sports teams enjoy some success in the station's visits to distant star systems, even if they're always the visitors.

The athletic yard is also a likely place for the younger children to fall or be pushed into the station's lake. Across from the athletic yard, the school recently purchased and demolished a small office building. In its place, they plan to construct a pool, and thus reduce the number of afternoon immersions by young children and late-night immersions by the older teens.



52. LIBRARY

One of the giants of this deck, the Borealin-operated library stands some ten stories tall, a spire of information. The first and second floors of this ivory-white tower are open to the public, with private rooms and terminals available for anyone to access. Most of the floors above are automated, full of 3D crystals that citizens can tap into remotely. It contains everything from ancient fiction to the most current texts and treatises on drivespace field manipulation.

With such a dense field of information, users of the Library gain a -2 step bonus to any search for information on all but the most abstract or unknown subjects. For example, the station's computers contain data on all fields of sciences and the known histories of every Verge colony. And for information that the library doesn't contain, the terminals can access the drivespace communications relay and send a query wherever desired. Of course, this costs quite a bit more than the standard library usage fees.

The library waives the standard fee of *5 per hour for students and those on official government business. To avoid fees, most library users minimize their time by downloading the information they want to a crystal and going elsewhere. Some residents avoid the visit altogether by paying for a direct connection in their private residence.

The library keeps the priceless books in the vault on the tenth floor, next to the administrator's office. Many were printed in the nineteenth century, years before electronic media replaced the printing press.

53. SUPERMARKET

The two-story building and the warehouses adjacent to it provide food for most residents of the station. But if that were the end of it, the supermarket on the station would have gone out of business long ago. While the first floor holds every expected convenience, plus the staples of milk, bread, eggs, and meats, the second floor represents a connoisseur's dream. Foods from all the diversity of Verge worlds make their way here for sale and resale. Of course, the high cost of transport raises the prices to nearly absurd levels, with a single portion of some delicacies reaching into the thousands—even tens of thousands—of Concord dollars.

While normal foodstuff shipping rarely attracts the average freebooter out to make a fortune, the specialty foods that come here do. Comestibles running doesn't sound too exciting, and it's even taken a while for the pirates of the frontier to catch on that such a value can reside inside a refrigerated cargo hold.

54. JORDIKAN'S HOLISTIC MASSAGE

While most of the stores and shops of the station lie two decks above, among the scattered offices and various build-

ings here can be found a uniquely interesting service. The massage service offered is wholly unremarkable. But behind the doors to Anna Jordikan's private office a more interesting opportunity awaits a select clientele willing to pay a little extra.

The owner makes a considerable profit by renting the use of her airlock. She discovered the opportunity soon after moving into the station. For the safety of those who want to depart the station unnoticed, Jordikan (Hi/Concord/FA-4) keeps e-suits on hand to protect against the vacuum of space. If a visitor hasn't already arranged for it, she can discreetly hire a ship captain to pass by and hoist the free-floating client to safety.

55. THE CHURCH OF THE COSIMIR

The station holds four places of worship scattered about this deck, and another on Deck 200. Three of the sites on Deck 195 serve Old Earth religions. This area, however, represents one of the deeper religious ironies. Orlamu hands built the structure that now houses the worship of the Cosimir. In fact, the building once served as a veterinary hospital that has since moved next door.

Remodeled extensively, the Church of the Cosimir now stands proudly, inviting all to the spiritual union with their troubled spirits.

DECK 196

Deck 196 represents the municipal center of the *Lighthouse*. Like the deck beneath it, it offers numerous services of the Concord. The deck also has the most radial and symmetrical design, and many consider it the most Orlamu of the station's two hundred decks.

56. TRANSVERGE NEWS STUDIOS

The most prominent interstellar news bureau in the Verge keeps one of its largest affiliate branches here. Marta Basti, the senior anchor, requested a transfer to the *Lighthouse* after it had been in the Verge less than a year. Her name lends credibility to the studio and has drawn other popular correspondents, including Theron Lignos, previously known for his broadcasts from battles in the Algemron system. For him and others, the safety of the *Lighthouse* makes it no less exciting.

Broadcasts from aboard the *Lighthouse* form the largest share of interstellar news for most planets. Hence, the lead journalists here concentrate on issues of international focus rather than local station events.

The first floor of the main studio building houses the actual holographic broadcast room. Most observers are surprised to see just how little is found in the chamber; Basti and Lignos stand before artificially-created backgrounds and environments, and much of the time they must react to an empty room. Because of the close resemblance to actual acting,

many of TVN's reporters have a theatrical background.

Visitors to the second floor find another kind of journalist. Most of them are unknown to the public, especially in comparison to the media personalities below. The dozen staffers here do all the real research, interviews, and analysis that the mouthpieces downstairs present. As is the case in many affiliates, considerable tension and resentment exist between the first and second floors.

57. PUBLIC COMMUNICATIONS SUITE

Station residents can use the terminals in their rooms to connect with the in-station, in-system, and interstellar communications aboard the *Lighthouse*. But for visitors, the public facility here may be the only access available.

The standard rates for communications (see page 148 in *Chapter 9: Goods & Services* in the *Player's Handbook*) apply, making the cost of an interstellar comm call an incredible \$10,000 per minute. Fortunately, the *Lighthouse* uses an advanced computer data-compression system operated by the AI, Mina. It allows a 100-to-1 compression, reducing the time spent transmitting by two orders of magnitude.

Because of the number of private booths here, and their ability to place anonymous calls both to other booths and other locations, this has become a popular rendezvous for smugglers and other shady characters.

58. THE COLOSSEUM

When the Orlamu choose to imitate, they usually choose the best. So it is with the open-air arena that they constructed on the *Lighthouse*. The Colosseum here mirrors Flavian's Amphitheater, the ruins of which still stand on what was once Roman soil. A Solar designer, who happened to choose the lifestyle of a first-century Italian emperor, assisted in the construction.

The oval-shaped stadium is 187 meters long and 156 meters wide, with walls of travertine and tufa and vaulting of monolithic concrete. The four-story tall outer wall features Doric, Ionic, and Corinthian arches rising into the air. The fourth story consists of a wooden framework, over which an awning can be drawn. The seats, which accommodate a staggering fifty thousand spectators, surround an arena 76 meters by 46 meters. Wooden benches are at the top, with marble ones below. Of course, the population of the *Lighthouse* can't hope to fill its massive stadium; only when visiting a populated colony can the stadium fill more than 10% of its seats.

Today, of course, the stadium doesn't feature gladiatorial games or creature vs. sentient fights, as bored as citizens of the twenty-sixth century sometimes become. Instead, the stadium serves as a concert hall for musical groups and the station's two symphonies, one amateur and one professional. The station's sports teams play here, and it's a gathering point for public congregations.

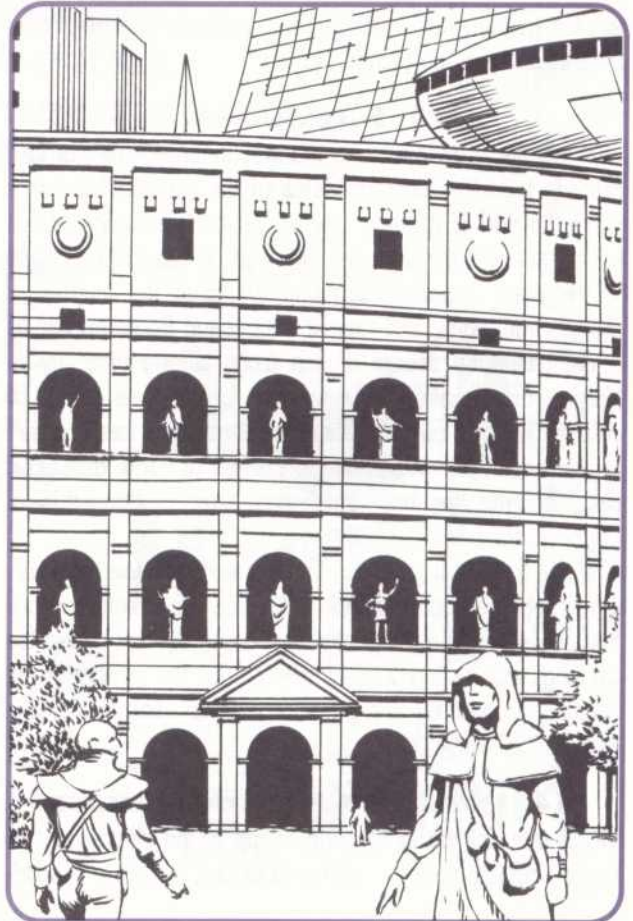
59. GALINDUS MEDICAL CENTER

For the sick or the hurt, the *Lighthouse* offers quality medical assistance. The Galindus Center offers treatment in most every field of a modern hospital. The north wing holds trauma and the emergency room, while general services, including family practice, anti-aging treatment, and dentistry, are found in the east wing.

The south wing is especially well known for its xenobiology and treatment wing. At first, it was expected that the doctors be ready to ready to treat humans and perhaps a few other sentient species against unusual strains of alien viruses or bacteria. The department has gone beyond the definition of its charter to treat—and more often than not, successfully—new species of the Verge. Dr. Paul Mutalis (Hm/Concord/TO-11) leads a fine department of skilled doctors.

The hospital occasionally labors under the complication of moving with rapid haste about the station. The station's height makes it difficult for paramedics to respond immediately to calls on the lower decks. In response, Administrator Wakefield has provided the hospital with the same override control codes for the elevator lifts that the Concord Marines have.

In the event that a hero should somehow suffer a wound, assume that the doctors here have an average Medical Science—treatment scores of 18 and surgery



scores of 14. The quality of the facilities provide a -3 step bonus to skill checks.

60. DiNARDO LABORATORIES

For advanced laboratory work, DiN Labs is the only available option on the *Lighthouse*. A private corporation runs the laboratories here, but contracts with the Concord, the nearby hospital, and the Concord Survey Service keep its scientists occupied with plenty of work. When an unknown sentient visits the station, the Galindus's xenobiologists and DiN lab technicians must complete a full analysis before the applicant gains permission to come aboard.

Meanwhile, DiN also rents laboratory facilities and contracts its employees to private industries and individuals. Most of the time, these are other businesses and commodities corporations. Sometimes, though, a free explorer or trader has something that merits study and has the \$1000/day to afford the privilege.

61. WATSON THEATERS

While in the twenty-sixth century, private holographic viewers with connections to the Grid can allow the private citizen to watch even the latest holomovie moments after its release, neither stage nor the movie theater has passed from public appreciation. Jake Watson, owner of a chain of theaters in the Stellar Ring, opened a stage here to modest success. It continues today with a traditional selection of tragedies, comedies, and historical pieces. To supplement the weekend income of live theater, Kyle Mouton, the manager of the *Lighthouse* theater, added a holographic display that can be lowered onto the proscenium. Monday through Friday, cinema replaces theater as the entertainment of choice.

As has been the case for centuries, the theater serves many purposes. Going to movies is still a popular form of entertainment for young couples, and dark, crowded rooms are popular spots for other, less legal rendezvous.

62. LIGHTHOUSE UNIVERSITY

With only 220 registered students, most consider it hubris that inspired the station to have a collegiate educational system at all. Almost half of the students are military servicemen in the Concord looking to complete a degree in the evenings while off-duty. Medical students who work part of their day at the medcenter make up another third. Thirty professors serve at the university, lecturing the students in any of a dozen majors that have degree programs. For the most part, however, classes at the university are through correspondence. The LU has developed a relationship with Hughes College on Bluefall, and most of the classes that LU students take are holographic ones, recorded and delayed through the interstellar Grid.

About the only programs not dominated by Bluefall professors are the degrees in political science and business man-

agement, both of which demonstrate fantastic opportunities for internship and vocational training aboard the *Lighthouse*. As noted, medicine is another popular pursuit. It's a profitable career, and students can get an early start with the medcenter.

Lesalon Cor, a visiting student from Galvin, has done more than that. He's getting a jump on the big bucks that doctors receive by spending his nights performing cybernetic surgery to a discreet clientele. Cor (Hrp/Algenron/DTO-3) demonstrates a great deal of promise and aptitude for surgery, even if his skill score of 12 can't inspire an enthusiasm for station-wide cybernetic implantation.

Lighthouse University has often been a rally point of political dissent and commentary on issues directly related to the station and others anywhere in the Verge. Protests have always proven peaceful and subdued, yet Administrator Witt suspects that terrorist cells of Concord Free Now exist within the university.

63. LIGHTHOUSE COMMUNITY CENTER

This municipal center houses the local government, commanded by Administrator Thomas Hralidin (Hm/Concord/DCS-7), a subordinate of Station Administrator Wakefield. Hralidin controls the civilian population, although he must defer to Jacqueline Witt when it comes to matters of security.

Within the Community Center, the city's councilors, elected by the residents, meet daily with Hralidin, and often with Wakefield, expressing their concerns and assisting the Administrators whenever necessary.

It also contains the *Lighthouse's* only courtroom. Hralidin usually presides over trials, which, much like the execution of punishments, are usually swift. Concord law is lenient in most misdemeanors, demanding a simple fine or revocation of station privileges. More serious felonies may demand incarceration, which usually includes exile from the *Lighthouse*. The Concord records the criminal's identity and bioelectric signature and forwards the information to the customs officers aboard. They also send to every Concord office details of the crime and the criminal.

In matters of interstellar justice, Wakefield himself must, by law, supersede Hralidin.

64. CONCORD ADMINISTRATOR PRECINCT

At this precinct, near the Community Center, Jacqueline Witt's personnel act as police and investigators. This precinct focuses on civil crime, including violence, that doesn't involve the diplomats or the businessmen above.

65. BRIG

Some fifty private cells are available for use by the Concord when they need to house a suspect or convicted criminal for some time. The brig consists of a rather simple two-story building. The top level is divided into a single long hallway

with 25 cells on each side. The lower floor contains guard posts, security checkpoints, and administrative offices.

Interestingly, the building once served as a home for Orlamists seeking a retreat from the world, the individual cells housing penitents. When the Concord Administrators took over, they added the security doors and monitoring devices.

The brig isn't considered a high-security facility. Typically, criminals occupy fewer than a dozen of the rooms, and many of these serve only a single day or less to cool off. As a result, Administrator Witt has started the practice of renting out brig rooms to travelers. At only \$40 a night, it's the cheapest form of housing found on the station.

DECK 197

With Deck 197, it's impossible to tell whether the Orlamu have successfully mocked the Rigungmor, or if the Rigungmor have turned the joke around. In any event, the design of the deck, a octagon surrounding a square, bears a suspicious resemblance to the Rigungmor guild.

The inner four quadrants of the deck, and the center, are devoted to professional business interests: exchanges, brokerages, guild houses, and a few business lounges and clubs.

The outer quadrants, forming a ring about the inner ones along the hull of the station, serve another business clientele. These hold the station's numerous shops and stores, an unavoidable draw for the typical tourist only

INTERNAL CONFLICT

While Star Force patrols the skies outside, the Concord Administrators and Concord Marines preserve order within. For the basic civilian issues in the city, the Administrators handle most affairs, only calling in the Marines when the situation exceeds their ability to control, which has happened only twice in two years.

The Administrators, unlike the Marines, spend little time standing a specific post. Instead, they walk patrols and loiter in likely areas of trouble, or busy themselves investigating recent crimes. Their fellows in the precinct (area 64) watch monitoring cameras to keep them informed of incipient danger. As a result, the Administrators have a fantastic reputation for being in the right place at the right time.

The Marines concentrate their security patrols in sensitive ship areas in the Engineering Section (Decks 1-6) and on the diplomats' decks (Decks 199-200). All two hundred Marines aboard carry wrist communicators; twenty well-armed soldiers can arrive at any point in the station within five minutes, with another 20 arriving five minutes later. Such a major emergency results in an immediate lockdown of all secure areas.

CONCORD FIELD ADMINISTRATOR

Level 4 human Free Agent

STR 10 (+1) INT 10 (+1)

DEX 10 (+1) WIL 11 (+1)

CON 9 PER 10

Durability: 9/9/5/5 Action Check: 13+/12/6/3

Move: sprint 20, run 12, walk 4 # Actions: 2

Reaction Score: Ordinary/2 Last Resorts: 1

Attacks

Tri-staff 12/6/3 d8+2w/3d4+1w/d6m En/0

SMG, laser 11/5/2 d6w/d6+2w/d4m En/0

Defenses

Admin CF uniform: d4 (LI), d4 (HI), d6-2 (En)

Tri-staff provides +1 STR, +1 DEX res. mod.

Skills

Athletics [10]; Melee [10]-powered [12]; Modern Ranged Weapons [10]-SMG [11]; Vehicle Operation [10]; Stamina [9]; Knowledge [10]-computer [11], first aid [11], language: Standard [13]; Administration [11]; Awareness [11]-intuition [12]; Investigate [11]-interrogate [12], search [12], track [13]; Street Smart [11]; Deception [10]-bluff [11]; Interaction [10]-charm [11], intimidate [11].

Gear

Tri-staff, laser SMG, Administrator uniform, computer gauntlet, trauma pack, comm gear, list of contacts.

Unlike typical law enforcement officers, the specialized demands of an Administrator require the talents of a Free Agent—or a Diplomat with such a secondary profession. As both detectives and freelance operatives, it's difficult to define the archetype, even aboard a single installation such as the *Lighthouse*. The only things common among them all is their tri-staff and their loyalty to the Galactic Concord, an oath which supersedes that given to any single man, woman, or sentient.

CONCORD MARINE

Level 2 human Combat Spec

STR	11	(+1)	INT	9	(0)
DEX	11	(+2)	WIL	9	(0)
CON	11		PER	9	

Durability: 11/11/6/6 Action check: 14+/13/6/3

Move: sprint 22, run 14, walk 4 # Actions: 2

Reaction score: Ordinary/2 Last resorts: 1

AttacksUnarmed—*power* 12/6/3 d4+1s/d4+2s/d4+3s LI/O

Stutter rifle 14/7/3 d6+3s/d8+3s/d12+3s LI/O

11mm ch rifle 14/7/3 d6+1w/d6+3w/d6+1m HI/O

Defenses

Battle vest: d6-3 (LI), d6-2 (HI), d4-2 (En)

Paladin Battle Armor (body tank):

2d4+1 (LI), 2d4+1 (HI), 2d4 (En) [Good toughness]

Skills

Armor [11]—*combat* [12], *powered* [12]; Athletics [11]; Unarmed Attack [11]—*power* [12]; Modern Ranged Weapons [11]—*rifle* [14]; Vehicle Operation [13]; Stamina [12]—*endurance* [13]; Knowledge [11]—*first aid* [12], *Galactic Standard* [14]; Awareness [9]—*perception* [10]; Resolve [9]; Interaction [9].

Gear

Stutter rifle or 11mm charge rifle, battle vest or Paladin battle armor, combat knife, backpack, comm gear, first aid kit, imaging goggles, trauma pack.

Stutter rifles and battle vests are standard, though with time to prepare, or during a high-security alert, the Marines will have their more impressive combat gear.

Most Marines aboard the *Lighthouse* are of the "shoot first, ask questions later" variety, especially in high-security situations. Uninterested in talking to potential terrorists or saboteurs, they'd rather solve the problem quickly and let their bosses sort out the mess.

aboard for a day. Eight are specifically described below, although the Gamemaster should feel free to add a dozen or more others that feel appropriate to his campaign and the atmosphere of the *Lighthouse*.

66. LIEX BUILDING

The pyramidal LIEX exchange is the center of the economic activity of the station, and by extension much of the Verge. It's divided into three sections, each one three stories tall. The first section, and also the largest and most populous, is the commodities exchange. Those seeking entrance to the first floor—for instance, a merchant looking for a cargo to buy or sell—can obtain a pass for a nominal *10 fee. A simple application allows anyone to enter.

Numerous small offices of the regulars line the halls around the open arena, where numerous corporations, local governments, and private companies solicit haulers and negotiate. As a matter of course, the larger the office, the more important the renter is considered to be.

The second floor centers around a stock exchange, and its trading floor is open only to the licensed representatives of the brokerage houses. The brokers do much of their trading from the comfort of their offices, allowing the computer system to do the actual work of completing transactions. If a private citizen wants to purchase 500 shares of Ion Productions, he must contact and work through a broker, even if trading electronically, the transaction is still completed here.

The third and last floor of the LIEX is reserved for private conference rooms and temporary offices. They're temporary in name only, however, as the prestigious merchants of the Verge pay whatever it costs to keep their noses in the middle of the action and the appearance of incredible success.

67. BROKERAGE FIELD

Four independent brokerage firms maintain offices on the traditional field, adjacent to the LIEX exchange. Each has traders on the stock floor, completing transactions as ordered by buyers or in the interest of their firms in various mutual funds or market accounts.

A. Carnes, Inc.

This Rigunmor firm represents one of the oldest corporations in all of known space. Formed not long after the Star Consortium itself, the traditional house organ of Adalik Carnes has led to numerous successes, including a seat on the Advisory Council. Nash "Bones" Carnes (Hm/Rigunmor/DFA-9), grandson of the house leader, leads the firm here. Here as throughout the Stellar Ring, Carnes is best known for high-risk prospecting and investing that always seems to pay off just a bit more than it should. Despite its successes, the large building always appears just a bit dilapidated and worn, as if its keepers were simply uninterested in pouring money into its upkeep.

B. ABC Services

The advertisements promise that investing is as easy as the Standard alphabet, and ABC Services is just as easy to remember. ABC caters primarily to casual investors and those looking for long-term or retirement security. ABC is an independent corporation originally of Galvin.

C. Secure Trust

Two years ago, Redman-Smith attempted to reach its economic tentacles into the stock exchange. Fearing the

power that Redman has over the Verge shipping industry, the *Lighthouse* market revolted from the prospect of a single corporation with the clear power to influence the success or a failure of a Verge stock. Secure Trust was the result, a divested company whose ties to its parent remain suspect.

D. VoidCorp Investment Services

Despite extremely suspect ties, none of the brokerage houses on the *Lighthouse* had the nerve to refuse the VoidCorp application. Attracted by the opportunity for profit like any other businessman, QT543 58DON (William Jensky) has gained an excellent reputation since his arrival. "Leave the politics on the floor," he said, and so won over many here who might more naturally be inclined to criticism. Apparently, however, Jensky's relationship with his superiors in the Stellar Ring appears strained. No one can say why, exactly, but locally Jensky (Hm/VoidCorp/DFA-9) often feuds with ambassador VK532 04MIN.

68. REDMAN-SMITH TRADING CORP

The eight-story building is a giant, the largest on the deck in terms of total cubic meters. It's appropriate to the Corp's stature aboard the *Lighthouse* and the region of space it patrols. Indeed, it invites comparison to the Rigunmor Star

Consortium in the days before the guilders settled down and began to colonize worlds.

While Redman-Smith has yet to develop an interest in gaining its own sovereign territory, it happily influences affairs economic, political, and social as it grows. Fortunately for the average Verger, the interests of the Corp in seeing the frontier prosper coincide with their own.

The officers of Redman-Smith can be found throughout the station, but Worrell keeps most of his focus on LIEX and its watchdog, the CTA. The Corp's offices are busy with activity, even after the close of LIEX and the end of the business day. There's never a moment during which someone aboard the station isn't willing to negotiate a deal, and the Corp is always willing to serve as intermediary. It's a place to get a job and make a fortune.

For more information on Redman-Smith or the CTA, see *Chapter Two: The Powers of Light*.

69. CONCORD TRADE AUTHORITY

Iota Xi stands proudly under siege. With only a dozen officers aboard to assist, Xi must joust with hundreds of Redman-Smith employees and thousands of its members. His investigators once had to fight for disclosure of documents and information from Redman, and by extension from many active traders on the LIEX. Lately, Redman-Smith takes advantage of its superior numbers by



immersing the CTA in a sea of information and financial tracking history. Xi is certain that he can find illegal activities in these records. History has proven him correct.

Since Xi doesn't have the authority to hire additional employees, but has a considerable discretionary budget, working for the CTA presents an interesting opportunity for freelancers looking to build a better connection with the Concord. It's also a likely point of contention among many independent groups, since often at least one of their number carries membership with Redman-Smith.

70. CAPACITOR CHAMBER

Amidst all the money changing hands, the station has its own demands for energy moving from place to place. The transformers in this building act as a dispersal point for the entire section. Moreover, should the mass reactor ever fail, the capacitors here will act as an emergency battery, providing power to critical systems such as life support and the light systems that feed the lake of air on Deck 195.

Though this chamber isn't especially dangerous or even interesting, the obvious storehouse of power represents a natural magnet for terrorists, infiltrators, and the like. A skilled engineer could arrange an overload that would severely damage, if not destroy, Deck 197, and with it a lot of economic capital.

71. BANK OF FAITH

Many consider that the time for banking institutions, at least as a physical entity, has passed. Most everyone completes all of his or her financial transactions through the Grid, and hence any secure terminal with an identity reader will do nicely. The bank officers can even authorize loans over the Grid, although this requires a secure terminal with identification scanners. With LIEX only a few meters away, most investors can't resist the chance to invest their funds in a higher-yield enterprise. Yet the Bank of Faith dates back to the *Lighthouse of Faith*, so no one considers its continued existence much of a surprise.

The best use that visitors, and even residents, can gain from visiting the Bank proper lies in its security vault. Well-known for the fact that it's never been compromised, the Bank's vault is guarded by former Concord Marines lured into retirement by the chance to make significantly more money.

72. ETTEKOVEN ESTATE

Paul Ettekovén is a leader among the next generation of entrepreneurs in the Verge. He's an exploiter among the exploited, a capitalist in the finest sense. Four years ago, Ettekovén (Hm/Aegis/DFA-16) appeared out of nowhere in the Verge. Though he claims a citizenship with the Regency of Bluefall, many Vergers think little of him, either envious of his success or genuinely believing that he's

turned Arriver on them. The Verge Confederation, decidedly for Verger opinion, has taken a few opportunities to impugn his character.

For Ettekovén, trading revolves around information. The staff of "researchers" working for him demonstrate an uncanny ability for uncovering data that proves itself on the floor of the LIEX.

Ettekovén's estate, which serves as both his office and home, is known to have elaborate and sophisticated electronic defenses. Any attempt to penetrate them suffers a +2 step penalty to Security skill checks, and must somehow bypass the seven hired guards. Generally speaking, the computers inside run independently of the Grid.

Ettekovén is a former operations chief for the Concord Intelligence Bureau. Despite his financial successes, he remains curmudgeonly loyal to his former patrons, and continues to relay the occasional tidbit of information to Wakefield, Xi, and a few others.

73. ATRIS DEPARTMENT STORE

The largest of the stores in the shopping ring of Deck 197, Atris stands an impressive six stories tall and is lined with departments that include everything from sporting goods to designer women's apparel. Along the shopping district, however, Atris is practically an epithet as the station's more numerous specialty shops, some of them only meters away, see their business walk by to visit the better-known giant.

Atris is part of a chain of successful, select stores in the Stellar Ring, mostly in the Orion League. This department store has proved lucrative, and the company leadership is considering opening additional retail outlets throughout the Verge. Should local Verge merchants discover the possibility of such a move, widespread revolt might occur.

74. SELF-RELIANCE GOODS

Self-Reliance goods is, quite simply, a retail gun store. Given the weapons policy aboard the station, much of the business done by Adam and Martha Smith (Hm, Hf/Concord/FA-3, FA-2) involves shipping off the station, or at least delivery to a ship on the docking section. Since the Smiths don't deal in wholesale quantities, they don't attract too much attention from station authorities.

That's just how the owners like it. Instead of dealing in quantity, they prefer to deal with a more elite clientele looking for "specialty items"—i.e., weapons that remain illegal on most civilized worlds. In turn for selling military-grade weapons to familiar or recommended customers, the Smiths charge exorbitant prices: as much as five times list price for untraceable hardware. And people pay.

75. IKARIN STORAGE

Somewhat cramped for space, the *Lighthouse* represents a rather expensive piece of real estate for simple warehousing. Nevertheless, even the best merchant occasionally discovers that he must lay up his cargo for a while, either in hopes of a bigger payoff or in order to make room for something with more promise. Ikarin Storage owns this three-story building and its two neighbors. It also owns warehousing space on many of the more populated Verge systems.

Storing cargo with Ikarin on the *Lighthouse* costs *1300 per month per cargo durability point stored. In comparison, storage on a local planet costs as little as *150 a month for the same amount of space.

76. LAKE UNION HAIR DESIGN

One of three beauty parlors on the deck, Lake Union is the favorite among the fashion-minded jet set of wealthy business and government leaders, or at least the younger ones. Lake Union specializes in doing the exotic, whether it's a hairstyle that mimics the ritual fraal headdress or a glowing nanotech implant beneath the skin.

77. HAPPY OCCASION JEWELERS

With ties to the Jamaican Syndicate of Lucullus, the three jewelers that run a family business out of this store do more than fitting and sales to bridal parties. They also find excellent markets and likely buyers in the jewelry resale business, even for goods that have garnered interest from law enforcement authorities.

Witt already suspects the Happy Occasion Jewelers, but she's found no evidence with which to bring a charge of criminal abetting. Her problem is simply that she continues to stake out the jewelry store; the Syndicate's representatives here conduct their special business out of the florist shop next door.

78. INTERSTELLAR BLOSSOM

On its face, the Blossom is a simple floral shop that draws little interest, whether from the Concord Administrators or anyone else. It takes flower orders and delivers them to anyone on the station, or indeed anyone in the Verge, for an additional fee.

It makes for a fantastic cover that very few individuals have penetrated, and the Jamaican Syndicate deals with such nosy individuals, one way or another. After all, flower delivery persons go to all sorts of places and rooms, and everyone is so happy and amused to see someone with arms full of an arrangement that they pay little attention to the individual or whatever else he may be carrying. In this manner, the Syndicate has used the Blossom to traffic stolen goods, and even as a cover identity for agents looking for a way past the net of law enforcement.

79. COMPUTER DESIGN INC.

Computer Design and its neighbor, Advanced Electronics and Hobbies, are connected by a thin rail on their second floors, and serve patrons with some similar interests. Computer Design offers state-of-the-art hardware and software, although it's a strictly-licensed retail outlet with access only to publicly available technology and programming (no illegal or military-grade equipment). It does offer a fairly standard price cut; reduce the cost of any PL 7 items from *Dataware* or *Chapter 10: Computers* in the *Player's Handbook* by 15%.

80. ADVANCED ELECTRONICS AND HOBBIES

While CDI caters to a more general audience, its neighbor has a more specialized clientele. The company features NJack-induced programs: fully immersive entertainment environments. While the practice fell out of widespread use in the twenty-third century, escapism continues to have an appeal to a select audience, and the congregation of wealth aboard the station brings with it a number of Vergers who can afford the addiction.

DECK 198

Deck 198 doesn't seem particularly focused on money, although a second look confirms that the numerous hotels,



restaurants, social clubs, and watering holes must make a generous profit with the station's never-ending traffic of visitors. This deck represents the social center of the *Lighthouse*, and here various forms of entertainment, eateries, and lodgings compete right next to one another. With each lift up, a new load of customers arrives, and they bring more than enough for each of the services here to break even.

Given the focus of this area, it could have been predicted that unique examples and experiments in architecture would come alive here. The deck is certainly home to the most uniquely shaped buildings on the station, many of them triangular with long, oblique sides.

Outward from the center of the deck come first restaurants, then hotels, and finally specialized clubs, bars, drinking houses, and parlors.

At the center of the deck, an elevator offers transport up to the last two decks. Access to this elevator is restricted to those with official business above. (See Deck 199 below.)

81. HIS EMPEROR'S DELIGHT

The four landmark restaurants of the *Lighthouse* crowd the center of the deck, and each represents the best that interstellar cuisine has to offer. Like most Thuldian cuisine, this restaurant accompanies most of its meat dishes with significant, almost impossible, sums of cheeses and heavy spices. A few years ago, it was common to see eating contests at the restaurant. The higher-class patrons frowned on the disgusting habit, as it often led to messy purges on the sidewalk immediately after the last course was consumed.

82. DINNER AND A CONVERSATION

Borealin thinking never ends, and this eatery serves to drive the point home. The staff invites dinner guests to sit wherever they please, but warn them that those near the center atrium may be asked to join in the heated discussion of philosophy and ethics that the Borealins so enjoy. Truth be told, the fare is only passable, but almost no other form of entertainment can beat it.

A shortage of native Borealins aboard has necessitated the hiring and training of many of the servers/debaters by the restaurant's owner. As these trainees don't hail from the Republic, they lack the natural familiarity with Borealin argument construction.

83. 198 WEST

Although no proper cardinal directions exist on the *Lighthouse*, nor a magnetic source to guide a compass, 198 West takes its name from the standard cartography given to the station (see "A Note on Directions" on page 10). Unlike the ethnic restaurants that surround it, 198 West lacks a clear specialty or gimmick that might attract its share of tourists. On the other hand, it's the most popular pure restaurant aboard, especially to permanent resi-

dents who've come from the Stellar Ring and are looking for something new. Most of the recipes the chef prepares find their origin on Verge worlds that developed their own culinary styles during the Long Silence.

The layout of 198 West resembles cafeteria-style seating, with long benches that patrons often must share, as the staff says, with friends that they've yet to greet.

84. MONGOLIAN GRILL

Most Vergers will never set foot on Earth during their lives, and the Solar owners of the Mongolian Grill have taken advantage of this fact by offering something from far away. Waiters show each party to a small, private room, where one of the chefs—wearing fourteenth-century apparel and speaking through a translator—informs them what he will cook today. Like the Borealin restaurant across the quad, the Solars have been forced to hire actors to fill in, since it's difficult to find Solars, especially Solar preservationists in a specific Asian culture. It makes for one of the more unique experiences to be found, and while the diet is nothing that the average Verger is used to, it's become a popular specialty.

85. HIS EMPEROR'S PALACE

A retired ambassador purchased both the hotel here and its adjacent dining lounge (area 81). Much like the restaurant it faces, the Emperor's Palace boasts its proud magnificence with tall columns and bold strokes of color. It's anything but subtle, but few Thuldian artistic designs are.

The hotel does a brisk business, however, thanks to its luxurious suites. Each room in the hotel has at least two rooms, including a small office for the traveling executive. They also have full kitchens, baths, and laundry services. The Palace has become a favorite for Arrivers coming aboard the station. They're familiar with the opulence that the Thuldans reserve for their higher class, and they're eager to experience it—even if it means paying \$280 a night.

86. FAMILY ACCOMMODATIONS

The smallest of the four major hotels on Deck 198, this one specializes its business toward the family traveler. A pool and sophisticated entertainment center serve as principal attractions to attract the interest of the casual tourist. At an average of \$145 per night, it's also the cheapest, and it has attracted a lower strata of patrons. Only a few months ago, an agent of TransVerge News staged a holobroadcast exposé of an escort service that operated out of the hotel.

The rooms in this inn are reasonably sized, though none of them reach the opulence of the Palace or even the understated refinement of the Georgetown.

87. GEORGETOWN INN

The honorable name of the *Lighthouse's* largest hotel serves as its best recommendation, since few visit it more than once. At times, the Georgetown Inn represents every-

thing wrong about the *Lighthouse*. It costs too much, and outside the tower suites the service is terrible. In comparison even with its neighbors, the Georgetown overcharges mercilessly. At some level it just appears that the owners don't care. Running close to a 90% occupancy rate, as long as the business continues to roll through the front doors, nothing will change. The average room at the Georgetown costs \$238 per night.

One of the reasons for the disparity between the high cost of a room and the miserable service that the Inn provides lies in its owner's financial situation. Othgar Halles owes a great deal of money to some unforgiving individuals he just can't default on, accumulated through gambling debts on sporting events. Halles may look to sell his investment soon, but until then he's simply desperate for an influx of cash. Given the class of clients housed under his roof, it presents an interesting combination of opportunities.

88. PACIFIC PLAZA HOTEL

The newest of the station's accommodations has made an effort to appeal to the successful business traveler. It lacks both the artificial home feel put out by Family Accommodations and any of the pretension of its other two neighbors. What it does offer (at \$170 per night) is electronic convenience. Every room in the modern Plaza has a secure terminal, equipped with a bioelectric scanner to confirm the identity of its user. Hence, from here guests can not only to negotiate a deal via holochannel, but close and sign it as well.

89. ATIGAR'S IMPORTS

More than a few tourists have seen the name on a map of the station and been fooled into visiting Atigar's in hopes of finding some fine Rigunmor clothiers. When they see the three-story warehouse bar, tumbling with noise and sound early into the morning, these shoppers usually steer away.

The same can't be said of the station's youth, who crowd into this bar and dance club in numbers greater than two hundred every night. On weekends, especially during the station's visits to populated colonies, Atigar's must turn away many of its willing patrons; the Concord Administrators have threatened to close Atigar's if they receive another report of injury due to overcrowding.

The term imports has a double meaning. Most of the alcohols served are shipped from the Stellar Ring—just like the customers. The expensive drinks from places such as Bazaar, Kurg, and even Catalog make Atigar's stand out from a field of competition on the deck.

90. THE LUCKY ELFMAN

One of the more popular theme bars on the deck has adopted the style of twenty-fourth-century Commonwealths. The Dreth Commonwealth, now extinct as a nation, had a vibrant nomadic culture. The Elfman revives

the annual Dreth gatherings, when friends and companions could be seen after a long absence. While the Elfman is your home, celebrating and drinking to excess is assured, yet incidents of violence rarely occur.

91. ALEXANDRIA'S REST

It was bound to happen. Although the use of *lighthouses* for practical navigation ended even on Earth centuries ago, someone did the research to discover the origins of the term, and in turn created a resting place—complete with a bar—for sailors coming into port. The club features Egyptian-style decorations of the third century BC—the time period when the first lighthouse, called the Pharos, was constructed in Alexandria, then a city of the Egyptian empire.

92. THE CORNER

A unique culinary, social, and musical experience, the Corner should not be missed. The mid-sized two-story building is home to as many legends and stories on the *Lighthouse* as any structure has a right to be in the two years since it was recommissioned.

See the sidebar on The Corner on the facing page.

93. EVOLVE POINT

Surrounding by bars and restaurants specializing in high-caloric meals, Evolve Point seems solidly out of place. Inside on the first floor, customers can find a plain deli-



THE CORNER

When an anonymous travel agent reviewed the social hot spots on the *Lighthouse*, the reviews said of the Corner "There's really no place like it...well, anywhere. But don't think that I'm universally recommending it." Despite such a hollow endorsement, the Corner attracts a special, if unorthodox, group of loyal patrons that would rather be there than anywhere else.

The Corner opened only a month after the *Lighthouse* arrived in the Verge. The building did its best to attract every tourist it could during the station's first run through the Verge. The cheap, carnival atmosphere did well at first, but quickly collapsed into only modest success. When Malcolm Mercadian purchased the Corner in the spring of 2500, he did more than authorize a change in marketing; he reinvented the concept of a tavern aboard the station.

Realizing that, even aboard the tireless *Lighthouse*, he couldn't survive on tourists alone, Mercadian quietly went about transforming the Corner to serve as a place for station regulars to frequent. What began as simple open house during a starfall grew into a three-day social for station residents and changed the Corner forever.

THE BAR

As Mercadian prefers to remain behind the scenes as owner, he leaves Martin Skvrsky, manager and head bartender, to supervise the day-to-day running of the bar. The bar itself dominates the first floor, lying in a circular island at its center. Barstools, tables, and finally private booths radiate outward from the central bar, although the staff can remove the tables should patrons feel inspired, either by music or liquor, to dance. All in all, there's room for more than a hundred patrons on the floor.

A closed door behind the bar leads to the Corner's full-service kitchen. Although chef Hassan claims to be able to prepare "darn near anything," specialty foods unique to the Corner dominate the menu, including zsi burgers, klaht steaks, and sloiposak stew. These go well with the specialty drinks: t'sa coffee, honeypod supernova, verge surge, and aaleoni wine. Plus, there's the infamous "exit wound sandwich," a flavorful dish whose origins are known only to the regulars, but which has inspired a common witticism aboard the station. To "end up holding the sandwich" is a bad thing; presumably this has something to do with a firearm, a sandwich, and an unfortunate individual.

THE CASINO

An ornate cage lift offers the only passage to the second floor, which is dominated by a moderately-sized casino.

Like the Corner itself, the four tables of the casino never completely cease operation. Floor manager Regina Amoris is an unknown in gambling circles, but she runs things with a steady hand.

The second floor also contains three meeting rooms which can serve private parties, as well as a few offices, including those of Mercadian and Galindria Sunfire, the bar's fraal accountant. Near the outer hull wall of the station can be found an emergency airlock with a pair of escape pods modified with more capable thrusters. More than a few customers on the run have used the escape pods as a means to rendezvous with a waiting driveship.

Unknown to most patrons, the Corner does contain a third floor. A staircase in a storage room leads to the sparsely-decorated third floor. Here, Mercadian can discreetly house any sort of cargo, including a few sentient guests.

THE STAFF

In addition to those already mentioned, the bar has a sizable complement of employees—so many, indeed, that one might wonder how Mercadian manages to clear a profit. More a family of individuals than a group of co-workers, this cluster of friends has made the Corner and its regulars a place of their own. Fred "the Swede" Johannsen, a former Concord Marine, works as head bouncer. Despite his reputation, Johannsen makes sure that his staff remains polite—at least until he brings the heavy charge machine gun down from a storage room on the second floor. A weapon detector over the main entrance keeps the bouncers appraised of trouble.

Other staff members include Gr'uun, a weren bartender, several programmers and technicians, and a unique, genetically-altered janitor named Aeereek. Reigel Tanner plays another important role as "the supplier": a man who can get anything, for a price.

Yet another centerpiece of the Corner is its band, a collection of pranksters often out of favor with the management yet forever popular with its audiences. The exact membership of the band varies; it usually includes the t'sa guitarist Kryzz, the reformed pirate McCaskill on drums, bassist and legal counsel Lucien Dynler, and the insane vocalist Thomas Kingston.

THE PATRONS

Thanks to the efforts of Mercadian, Skvrsky, and those they supervise, the Corner has grown a healthy number of regulars. They keep the Corner profitable, and lend it an atmosphere as a friendly place to more permanent *Lighthouse* guests. Tourists and newcomers are welcome, but it's clear that the Corner's family has its heart set on building a home for more accomplished explorers and veterans of the stars.

catessen offering relatively bland but healthy fare. Not surprisingly, this restaurant is often only lightly attended.

Above, a full exercise gym and health spa find a more willing audience. Various forms of strength-building equipment awaits use, as does the padded floor of the health club's dojo.

You can encourage your heroes to maintain a fit lifestyle to their advantage. With regular visits to the high-technology Evolve Point, allow a hero to get a reduction of one or two points in the cost to purchase a physical skill such as Athletics, Unarmed Attack, or Acrobatics. The same benefit can be applied to a hero who's saving to increase his Strength, Dexterity, or Constitution.

DECK 199

Getting aboard the elevator to rise to this Deck presents an interesting challenge. Only the diplomatic staff and a few special individuals that reside or work on Deck 199 or 200 have permanent access. That list consists of less than one percent of the total station population.

If Mina doesn't recognize one's bioelectric scan, the four Concord Marines will, as politely as possible, insist that the unwelcome guest leave. These servants of the diplomatic protection detail look immaculate, but they carry serious weaponry. Depending on the station's current security status, they either wear understated ballistic vests and wield Sciriocco 100 stutter rifles or terrifying ABM-5 Paladin battle armor and the standard IF-3 11mm charge rifle.

The embassies that fill this deck are described in *Chapter Two: The Powers of Light*. Physically, the structures resemble one another in design and concept. Between ten and two dozen delegates work and live in each embassy; about half of those working in the embassy have a background in his or her nation's intelligence service. Each ambassador or deputy also has a lavish apartment and office. The embassies enjoy all the luxuries of the finest residences, including access to the station's computer systems.

The Galactic Concord, in addition to its embassy, also administers the reception area and conference rooms in area 94. The mezzanine there is among the most popular locales for socialization, along with the effervescent StarMech embassy.

By ancient diplomatic tradition, each embassy is considered sovereign territory of the nation it represents. Thus, they serve as likely places for those seeking asylum from the Concord to hide. It's not unusual for an embassy to house a few individuals wanted by the law.

The embassies on the deck are as follows:

95. Nariac Domain
96. Verge Confederation
97. Insight
98. Borealis Republic
99. Vacant; rented by Galactic Concord
100. Regency of Bluefall
101. Austrin-Ontis Republic
102. Hatire Community
103. StarMech Collective
104. VoidCorp
105. Galactic Concord
106. Rigunmor Star Consortium
107. Union of Sol
108. Thuldan Empire
109. Orlamu Theocracy
110. Orion League

The Verge Confederation (area 96) succeeded in its petition for an embassy, although the Concord may regret the decision. At first, the Concord's diplomats mistook the Confederation as a unified political body that it never truly became. Today, the Confederation takes advantage of its position to monitor the comings and goes of the Arrivers. For those who can't secure an invitation to the deck of embassies through normal channels, the Verge Confederation may also be the easiest way through. The Confederation regularly allows its members to visit its embassy.

DECK 200

For the stressful lives of successful power brokers and negotiators, Deck 200 represents a refuge from the cares of the world. It's also unique in the city section, for this deck abandons the open-air concept common on other floors. Inhabitants of this deck move around through sealed corridors and airlocks, much like those on any ship or in the lower sections of the station.

Above the floor of the deck rise some thirty independent towers. These same towers give the *Lighthouse* its appearance of a city growing out over the confines of its station. The Galactic Concord reserves a third of the space in the towers; it rents the remainder to those with the desire and a fortune to spend. The smallest of the city spires costs more than five hundred thousand Concord dollars each year.

Access to Deck 200, like Deck 199, is restricted. Only those who've actually paid for the privilege, and their guests, may leave the lift onto the deck. Once on the deck, access tends to be limited to a single tower.

The three most important towers are described below, and the Gamemaster should feel free to add powerful allies, villains, and other influential members of his supporting cast to the *Lighthouse's* towers.

III. THE ORLAMIST TEMPLE

With every rule come exceptions. The Orlamist Temple defies everything typically said about Deck 200. The Orlamists who preach at the Temple pay nothing for the privilege; that results more from the help the Theocracy provided in refitting the *Lighthouse* rather than from any expression of the sentiment that the Concord has for freedom of religion. But that sentiment does pressure the Concord to allow hundreds of unknowns to the top of the *Lighthouse* each day. The Concord can't restrict Orlamists from worshipping at their Temple, as much as some of the Marines or Administrators might consider the flow of traffic a security risk. More people come to Deck 200 for the Temple than for any other reason.

Novitiates live on the lowest of the Temple's 22 levels, while private meditation chambers and offices fill the middle levels. At the top of the tower is the Hall of Worship itself, a circular chamber some 20 meters wide. Spacious windows along all of the outer walls and clear panes on the ceiling provide unquestionably the best

view that the station has to offer. At the center of the Hall is a simple round podium.

Rising from the floor on her own small tower only moments before a religious service, Prelate Tassina can be found at the pulpit here at the moment of any starfall. As the Orlamists are never adverse to technology, Tassina's holoprojected image rises meters above the prelate, magnifying her appearance so that she can be seen by all thirty rows of pews that surround her.

II2. OFFICE OF THE ADMINISTRATOR

Administrator Kyle Wakefield lives and works inside one of the deck's smallest towers. A ground-floor lobby welcomes visitors, where a receptionist passes off most visitors to one of Wakefield's assistants. A private fifth-floor lobby leads to a conference room that plays host to most of Wakefield's meetings.

Perhaps most interesting about the station commander is just how well-informed he is. He may not know every secret of the station, but he demonstrates quite a talent for staying abreast of current events, from the engineering decisions on Deck 1 to the stars of the last Yec! intramural game. Wakefield often politely summons a relatively unknown individual to his office only a day before TransVerge News makes public the same unknown individual's involvement in something incredible, for good or ill.



Security in and near the station commander's office is actually rather light. After all, access to the deck itself proves difficult to obtain, and station officials assume that the Administrators, most of whom have worked as field agents at one time or another, can take care of themselves.

113. OFFICE OF THE GALACTIC CONSULATE

Michael Thayne leads the Subcommittee on Verge Affairs, but his actions go beyond simple committee chairmanship. Unlike many Arrivers, Thayne has a deep and abiding interest in the Verge and is frequently seen on Verge holobroadcasts defusing some interstellar conflict, helping out a new colony, or giving some settlement a grant of money or technology. In the process, Thayne's popularity has made him the center of the Galactic

Consulate's power here, and through it perhaps the greatest authority that the Galactic Concord has. Thayne ordered the construction of his office through a private architect two years ago. They tore down an older tower and replaced it with a spire whose plain and metallic appearance has drawn more than its share of artistic criticism. Still, it marked Thayne's good sense that his tower design didn't challenge the Orlamist Temple for height or majesty; the nod toward modesty made him many friends among the Orlamists.

In truth, Thayne's tower is largely empty. The lower levels boast a support structure but no interior space other than a lift that extends to the twentieth floor, the tower's summit. This highest level is shaped like a flat disk, cradled in the tower's four arms.

A FEW CONCORDANS' PLANS

On Deck 200, the personalities of the Galactic Concord plot the future of the Lighthouse, including its place within the overall vision for the Verge. Just which Concordan one consults on the subject can lead to very different views.

Ambassador Richard Klindo, as directed by his superiors on Bluefall, takes a fairly standard approach, best described as containment and appeasement. The Verge presents many unique opportunities for growth, but Klindo's sympathies lie with many back on planet Concord—that the situation in the Verge presents too many natural possibilities for conflict. Nowhere else in space can one find all 12 stellar nations competing and fighting over the same assets. To say that the Verge is a powderkeg is an understatement.

Klindo considers it a stroke of luck that none of the stellar nations have made the Verge a primary interest. Conflicts there, though disturbingly common, have yet to draw much attention from the governments of the Stellar Ring. In order to keep it that way, Klindo has become well-known as someone from whom the stellar nations can win concessions. He'd sacrifice the fate of a whole colony to the appetite of an avaricious military commander if he truly feared the danger of conflict. Klindo enjoys little popularity among Vergers.

The same can't be said of Administrator Wakefield or

Minister Thayne, who have gained popularity through both speeches and actions. Wakefield has shown a passionate interest in fair opportunities for Vergers and Arrivers. His background in law enforcement provides him with a strong ethical streak, and unlike Klindo he's unwilling to sacrifice his moral feelings about a planet's sovereignty or a new sentient race's freedom in order to placate a hungry stellar nation.

Wakefield's exact politics appear difficult to define. Like Klindo, he's a crisis manager, moving from one encounter to the next. His critics admit that he does well in each individual challenge, but much like the Concord itself in the Verge, some describe him as lacking direction. He listens to advice and advisors well, and is known to be a good friend of Minister Thayne.

Thayne, on the other hand, has great things in mind for the frontier (see page 16). A champion of the region on the floor of the Galactic Consulate, he urges more investment in the region, including additional drivespace communications relays and even the possibility of building a sister ship to the *Lighthouse*. Meanwhile, in the Verge he extends the helpful hand of the Concord and his committee in filling shortages of production and labor found on every world. In the eyes of many Vergers, he symbolizes everything good about the Concord.

CHAPTER FOUR: ADVENTURES ABOARD

More than just a chunk of metal and technology, the *Lighthouse* is also home to many free sentients whose interests and desires open doors to heroic opportunities. Sometimes an opportunity results simply from the need for a certain type of individual who can prove suitable for a difficult task. In other situations, interesting plots develop from conflict between opposing individuals, organizations, or nations. (Of course, not every conflict must necessarily lead to violent confrontation.)

Regardless of the reason, these opportunities are what the adventures aboard the *Lighthouse* are all about. The station provides a perfect stage for epic tales of interstellar importance as well as small-scale stories of personal significance. The acts and scenes staged on it depend on the development of your campaign, your style of play, and the characteristics of your heroes.

POSSIBILITIES

Earlier chapters of this book described certain opportunities for adventures on the *Lighthouse*. Each of the supporting characters described—whether assistant harbormaster or administrator of the station—has motives, desires, and a role to play aboard the *Lighthouse*. One of those roles is to serve as a “jumping-off” point for adventures.

Because the STAR*DRIVE setting attempts to follow a relatively realistic view of human interaction, especially in terms of business and politics, you can use many plots and events of the twentieth century to help build adventure concepts. And they don't need to be as grand as the assassination of Archduke Ferdinand precipitating an international war. Turn to the pages of a local newspaper for some fine adventure hooks.

For example, consider how some of the following headlines and stories could, with only slight modification, be used in your campaign:

- Pentagon pushes ahead despite failures in missile defense system
- President criticizes development of new weapon systems in India, calls for disarmament
- More graves bolster case for war crimes tribunal
- Shoe manufacturer promises workplace reform

Change some of the names and locations involved and the specifics of the technology, and you'll find the beginnings of an adventure.

Most adventures in the STAR*DRIVE setting follow one of four campaign models: exploration, trade, military, or intrigue. Possibilities using these models aboard the *Lighthouse* are discussed below. You can use the models as presented, combine them and pick from them as needed, or take the best elements from the ones you like to craft a campaign model of your own.

EXPLORATION

The exploration model recognizes that, with only one in ten star systems explored, the sentient peoples of the Stellar Ring have only just scratched the richness of space that the Verge represents. In this model, the *Lighthouse* becomes the centerpiece of a campaign that highlights the first visits to dozens, even hundreds, of lost systems. It's a natural fit, too; all thirteen of the stellar nations, and even the better-financed Verge governments, have an interest in exploring and claiming new star systems. The Concord Survey Service (see page 19) can also play an important role in this campaign model. As the station leaps from system to system, the heroes will see new opportunities arise—if not in the system the station visits, then in one of dozens likely to lie within ten light-years or so.

Some systems may contain new life, or ancient ruins, or a lost colony of more familiar faces. Exploration serves as the hook by which the Gamemaster can create new vistas in his own imagination, and the heroes can tell stories that never grow old.

“Survey Mikoa B,” an adventure outline presented below, offers an example of an exploration that begins and ends with the *Lighthouse*.

TRADE

Like the exploration campaign described above, the trade campaign focuses on the new opportunities offered by the budding markets of the Verge. In this campaign, the *Lighthouse* becomes a business capital, not only for the Verge, but for the interests of the heroes' adventures. Many of the same conditions that favor investigating new worlds also favor economic profit aboard the *Lighthouse*. Not only is one of station's largest decks entirely devoted to the exchange of commodities (see page 47), but the station's motion through the stars of the Verge favors traders even more than explorers. After all, the *Lighthouse* doesn't visit unknown systems: it travels to colonized ones that benefit by regular contact.

The trade campaign is likely to use the STAR*DRIVE Campaign Book extensively as the station visits the major Verge systems. Once there, what begins as an opportunity for profit can grow into any sort of adventure. Things to consider adding to a beginning trade campaign include commissions, illegal smuggling, broken deals, economic espionage, and piracy.

The adventure outline "First Run" offers an example of an trading adventure based out of the *Lighthouse*.

MILITARY

The military, or combat, model gathers excitement from exchanges not of commodities or diplomatic pouches but of supersonic projectiles and energy weapons. Whether the Gamemaster wants to replicate small unit skirmishes or battles between space fighters, scouts, and small corvettes, threats of competing nations or aliens from beyond can be represented using this model.

In this campaign, the *Lighthouse* becomes a mobile base of operations for the heroes, regardless of their affiliation (or lack thereof). The *Lighthouse* may also serve as a garrison from which they can recruit assistance, gather resources, or receive orders. Likely adventures include escort duty, onboard security, terrorist or anti-terrorist missions, and backup for espionage elements. For a campaign

interested in a long-term military confrontation, the *Lighthouse* could become a crucial part of a battle between two stellar nations that begin a confrontation in the Verge, or a weapon against some foreign, unknown species.

"No Peace Among Men" is an adventure outline that recruits the heroes as deputies for Administrator Witt.

INTRIGUE

In the STAR*DRIVE setting, the intrigue campaign focuses on the continuing evolution of the Verge. It's both a natural growth of many other campaign models and a means by which heroes can take an active hand in the development of how the stellar nations and the Verge deal with one another. It provides the heroes a chance to decide the big issues, such as the sovereignty of planets and the future of the entire region, and to meet the true power brokers behind the headlines.

Perhaps more than any other kind of adventuring, intrigue finds a home aboard the *Lighthouse*. In this campaign, the station becomes a floating embassy that conveniently moves to any site of conflict or interest that the Gamemaster wants to showcase. Here, all 13 stellar nations exist in close proximity—and every few weeks they're all exposed to a single star system to fight over. Then add to this the machinations going on aboard that



have nothing to do with planets or stars, the product of plots indigenous to the station. A look through *Chapter Two: The Powers of Light* and the GM sidebars throughout the book should spark numerous adventures.

"Opening Offers" is an adventure outline presented below that uses the supporting cast of the *Lighthouse* to craft a tale of interstellar betrayal.

ADVENTURE OUTLINES

The following section contains four sketches of adventures designed to get you started. Each has a plot of several scenes and encounters described. Of course, you should feel free to add additional encounters or modify the ones described to fit your campaign.

All four of the adventures begin aboard the *Lighthouse*. It's also assumed, for the purposes of the adventure, that they all take place within a single star system. Used together, they can form a united series of adventures spanning several sessions of game play.

SURVEY MIKOA B

The sidebar on page 4 notes the arrival of the *Lighthouse* in the Mikoa system. Populated by only a few thousand independents, the Mikoa system has, until now, been a waypoint for vessels traveling through the center of the Verge. (The Mikoa system has not been previously described, and you could locate this adventure in any corner of the Verge.)

That's changing as more and more people take notice of the system. Though not blessed by a habitable world like its more famous neighbor Aegis, Mikoa has mineral resources that rival any of the nearby star systems. And unlike many Verge systems, its colonists have done more than simply export every drop of valuable mineral. In fact, construction of their orbital refinery platforms has made the fifth planet of the Mikoa system a real prize. The arrival of the *Lighthouse* acknowledges the Mikoans' successes.

Meanwhile, all but forgotten lies Mikoa B, a distant Class M star, and its system of seven planets. This second (and lesser) half of the Mikoan system has been ignored, even by the Mikoans, for thirty-five years.

TRIGGER

Just after the *Lighthouse* has made starfall to the outer edge of the Mikoa system, the heroes are approached by one of the *Lighthouse's* powers. The most likely agency is the Concord Survey Service, though any other organization aboard could serve. The mission is simple: pilot a fast scout over to Mikoa B and reexamine the system. Records and long-range sensors show it to have seven planets, although unlike Mikoa A, none are Class 1.

This is a fairly basic scene, although the GM or the heroes could take it further. There's always the question of trusting your employer: how much information does he have about the mission? And how much research do the heroes want to do about their target?

SCENE 1: INTERCEPTION

While the *Lighthouse* moves slowly toward the center of the Mikoa A system, the heroes depart in the opposite direction. Soon the heroes encounter one of the eight (escort class) patrol craft used by the Mikoans to keep their system safe from pirates and small-time criminals.

The Mikoans, believing the situation to be in their advantage, flex their muscles by demanding to know where the heroes are going and why. The heroes should avoid confrontation if possible. The Gamemaster should keep in mind what might happen if the Mikoans learn the heroes' goal, or if they have any clue what the heroes might find when they get there.

SCENE 2: SURVEY BEGINS

The survey begins with Mikoa B's four outermost planets, all of which are gas giants. Allow the heroes to make occasional System Operation-*sensors* and various Physical Sciences skill checks as they probe and scan, but it should prove a largely uneventful examination. Despite some occasional interesting energy anomalies (possibly traceable to the innermost planet), nothing alarming arises during the first day of exploration.

The scene should lull the heroes into a sense of security, a mild calm. It can also emphasize the typical (non-heroic) exploratory survey.

If you want to spice it up, the Mikoan escort could have followed the heroes for the first part of their mission, or you can flesh out a small, unknown mining operation on one of the gas giants.

SCENE 3: DISCOVERY: PART I

While the next two terrestrial worlds prove as quiet as the gas giants, things begin to happen as the heroes approach the innermost planet, Mikoa B1. This G1/R3/A3/P1/H4 world is a burning rock unlikely to house any life. The heroes can trace the inexplicable energy readings noted earlier to a subterranean region on the planet's northern hemisphere.

The heroes must descend to the planet to continue their investigation. Present this as a physical challenge, with environmental opposition, difficult climbs, and caves to navigate. At the source of the energy readings, the heroes find vaultlike caves where a wealth of inanimate crystals have grown, apparently naturally—crystals very much like the high-priced 3D crystals built in expensive orbital facilities.

SCENE 4: DISCOVERY PART 2

As the heroes contemplate and examine their find, they discover signs of crystal cutting and harvesting. If they're clever enough to search for additional energy signatures similar to the ones generated by the crystals they've found, they'll stumble onto a small colony of about a hundred individuals living at the north pole: a colony unreported in any logs the heroes have.

This is a refugee colony of mindwalkers. Originally founded by Nariacs decades ago, it became a local haven for mindwalkers hoping to find a place to live freely and without the exploitation that their status brings. (If you don't want to emphasize mindwalkers in your campaign, you could use another minority—mutants, perhaps, or refugees who fled to the Verge during GW2).

The colony hasn't been using radio, and they carefully shield all of their energy emissions. The crystal emissions have given them away; crystals they've only begun using in the last month.

This is, essentially, a first contact situation for the heroes, as the colonists have long since retreated from society at large. The first few moments of the encounter should be tense; the heroes may or may not sense that they're being mindprobed, and despite listening to delayed radio broadcasts from Mikoa A, the colonists have no reason to trust the heroes or their sponsors.

The climax of the adventure is up to you and your heroes. It could go badly and end with colonists bent on preserving their privacy at any cost. Or, the heroes could make new friends and learn more about the crystals.

SCENE 5: REPORT

Regardless of how things go with the colonists, the heroes must eventually return to the *Lighthouse* and report to their employer. The obvious moral quandary is whether or not to make a complete report, revealing the hiding place of those who hope to remain hidden.

FIRST RUN

News of a recent discovery of 3D crystals in the Mikoa B star system has spread over the station's economic districts, sparking a rush of speculation. No one has clear rights to Mikoa B, and it's an open game. Despite years of their production for use in electronic and computer components, 3D crystals remain relatively expensive to produce.

Insight, a stellar nation known for its computer technologies, has released a preliminary test of a Mikoa B crystal and pronounced its fitness, perhaps even superiority, for use.

TRIGGER

The adventure begins simply enough: either the heroes take the initiative and join the race to get in on the Mikoa B crystal discovery, or someone hires them to do so. Likely candidates for employers include Redman-Smith, local tycoon Paul Ettehoven, or just about any well-financed private investor.

SCENE 1: THE RACE BEGINS

The first scene is exactly what it sounds like. More than a dozen ships are leaving the *Lighthouse* for Mikoa B1, and the ones that make it there first are likely to have first pick of the crystals growing underground.

Just what kind of situation the heroes find themselves in has a lot to do with their actions (and ethics) during this scene. Will they take out a competitor with a bit of stray weapons fire? Or will a competitor do the same to them once out of view of the *Lighthouse*?

SCENE 2: INTERFERENCE

As the heroes arrive on Mikoa B1, they find another group of entrepreneurs packing up to leave. Why? The crystal deposits have all been harvested out. While the heroes may suspect their competitor of lying, they can confirm that the crystal is gone.

The effect, caused by the mindwalkers of Mikoa B1, is being achieved by a combination of psychic illusion and suggestion. The colony would prefer that outsiders leave them (and their world) alone.

If the heroes participated in the previous adventure, they may be able more easily to counter the mindwalkers' veil of deception. Or they may join in the effort, whether to get an exclusive deal for the crystals or in order to support the mindwalkers' goals.

SCENE 3: EXAMINATION

During all of this subterfuge, the heroes may decide to examine more closely the crystals they've harvested. The data conforms to that recorded by the original survey team, though the unexplained energy emissions produced by the crystals have decreased by about ten percent. The heroes cannot find any immediate explanation for the reduction. They heroes may also observe that the crystal growth seems to have stopped; no new crystals have appeared in several weeks.

SCENE 4: INTERFERENCE 2

Assuming the heroes defeat the initial illusion, a still smaller faction of mindwalkers attempts to terrify the heroes out of the harvesting process. As they begin to set up their equipment, the heroes witness a group of their competitors fleeing from the caverns. If stopped, they'll explain that the area is haunted.

If the heroes investigate the cavern, the previously-quiet crystals will announce their sentience and demand a full hearing before the heroes' government as well as an immediate end to all harvesting.

Although mineral-based lifeforms are not unknown (such as the Minshore crystals or the crystallis lifeforms of Polyphemus), this is another trick, achieved by the psionic energy of the mindwalkers. Several possibilities for interaction exist here; adjudicate the results as appropriate to the situation.

SCENE 5: A PREDICTABLE DILEMMA

As the heroes return to the *Lighthouse*, they find that speculation has increased the price of Mikoa B crystals to \$40,000 per single cargo space, and VoidCorp is the largest buyer on the *Lighthouse*. With the great quantity expected to be extracted from Mikoa B1, the situation has attracted the notice of independent businessmen who'd like to take possession of the crystals from any undefended merchant. They're even willing to rob ships docked on the *Lighthouse* itself.

Run this encounter as you desire, making the pirates as tough or as weak as you need. The fight can start on the dock and range over several decks of the station as the heroes hunt down the villains.

The adventure concludes with the heroes finding a buyer and making a sale. The LIEEX Exchange is a likely place to wrap it all up.

NO PEACE AMONG MEN

The third adventure in this series centers on high-tension conflicts between the heroes and various people whose interests differ from theirs. In short, it's combat aboard the *Lighthouse* and in the space surrounding it.

These conflicts are caused by the madness of the Mikoa B crystals that has taken over the station. Despite a plentiful supply of 3D crystals throughout the Verge, the promise of incredibly cheap—and perhaps better-quality—crystals is causing a loss of restraint.

TRIGGER

As the crystal rush cascades over the station, all sorts of confrontations are brewing. Some have little to do with the situation in the Mikoa system, others are merely distractions, and still others could threaten the station itself. As a result, the Galactic Concord is on full alert, the Marines have been activated, and Administrator Wakefield has put out a call to deputize several independents with security or military background.

This scene involves an interview in station section 64 and a mission assignment from Jacqueline Witt. Basically, Witt wants the heroes to take a role as undercover secu-

rity troops. They can wander around and keep an eye out while on duty, and she'll send them to likely trouble spots before the situation worsens.

SCENE 1: TRADE DISPUTE

The first summons the heroes receive is to Sendir Park on Deck 195, where a group of merchants (armed with charge pistols and the like) heatedly discuss trade rights.

By the time the heroes arrive on the scene, a full-on gunfight has begun. Interesting plot twists include the involvement of nearby innocents, the interference of TVN reporters, and perhaps even a random fall into the lake surrounding the park. Also, keep in mind that the combatants aren't hardened criminals, so the heroes should consider nonlethal means of ending the conflict.

You can end this scene (as well as the others) with a debrief by Witt or one of her assistants.

SCENE 2: STOLEN GOODS

Witt sends the heroes down to the docking section, where an accusation of cargo theft (specifically, of a quantity of Mikoa B crystals) has been leveled against a trader. They're to go aboard the (supposedly unoccupied) ship, the *Donath*, and investigate.

Regrettably, the information isn't quite correct; immediately after the heroes board, the trade ship breaks quarantine and lifts off, ripping its way out of the docking



clamps. The thief thinks that the undercover heroes are actually the original owners, come to recover their property. The heroes must disable the crew while the ship is zooming away.

SCENE 3: STOLEN GOODS PART TWO

What began as a fight aboard the ship becomes a fight between ships. The actual owners of the stolen property pursue the *Donath*, unaware that the heroes have already handled the situation. As the heroes return to the *Lighthouse*, the owners attack without warning with a mass cannon. (Use the standard trader ship statistics given on page 206 in *Chapter 12: Vehicles* in the *Player's Handbook*.)

Though the other ship is jamming the heroes' communications, they may realize just who's attacking and try to defuse the situation before it becomes life-or-death.

SCENE 4: SABOTAGE

Witt next orders the heroes to report to Deck 197. She fears that terrorists might take this opportunity to strike against the Concord, and wants the heroes to guard the capacitor chamber (area 70) from sabotage.

As the heroes arrive on the scene, several individuals dressed as station workers are present. Though they claim to be performing routine maintenance, they have no proof to back up the assertion. If pressured, they attack with charge pistols and pulse batons.

In addition to the terrorists, the heroes must deal with the device that has been partially installed here. A Demolitions-*disarm* or Technical Science-*repair* skill check of Ordinary complexity (three successes) should do the trick; failure indicates a minor meltdown and short-term power loss for the station.

SCENE 5: THANKS BUT NO THANKS

After only a day of service, the heroes are told to meet Witt in the Public Community Center. While on the way there, one of the heroes notices the end of a rifle butt jutting out from one of the other passengers on the lift. Maybe the gunmen aboard are on their way to an assassination during all the confusion, or maybe they're agents of Concord Free Now or some other rogue group.

In any event, the heroes have the choice of confronting the gunmen immediately, in a weightless elevator with several innocents aboard, or waiting until they get off.

Once they arrive at Witt's office, the Administrator thanks the heroes for their service, but politely informs them the Concord no longer requires their assistance. Truthfully, no independent group has created as much carnage for the station in such a short period, and Witt would prefer to end the relationship before anyone else gets hurt.

OPENING OFFERS

Ironically, all of the heroes' actions to date have unwittingly served to perpetuate a grand hoax. This adventure reveals the hoax and involves the heroes in the turmoil that follows.

Two months prior to the arrival of the *Lighthouse* in the Mikoa system, a group of Inseers took a trip to Mikoa B1. There, they dropped off a large shipload of crystals into an unremarkable series of caverns, oblivious to the colony of mindwalkers living there. While the crystals themselves were mass-produced with nothing to distinguish them, the Inseers tumbled them through a high-energy reactor. For months to follow, the crystals would radiate a distinct energy signature, making them noticeable and more interesting to passersby.

The stratagem, once thought merely a high-priced joke, has proved more successful than anyone could dream. After Insight scientists announced promising levels of transmissivity in the crystals, the speculator market went through the roof. The VoidCorp ambassador (see page 22), while advising caution before such inflationary condition, privately encouraged the situation. VoidCorp merchants have successfully outbid most competitors on the floor of LIX trading arenas. After all, they don't want to let the possibility of a new technology fall into anyone else's hands.

After more than a week of the game, no one has realized that the crystals' growth is a fraud—or if they have, they've stayed silent.

TRIGGER

The joke must now come to an end. Visiting VoidCorp executives have ordered the ambassador here to take steps to secure possession of Mikoa B, and especially the crystal growth chambers on its innermost planet.

Meanwhile, the crystals have attracted attention to what may be the real treasure of the Mikoa B systems: the dozens of mindwalkers who have been living there for years. While VoidCorp may be interested in acquiring Mikoa B1 for the crystals, other stellar nations have begun to express interest in building a relationship with the ancient colonists themselves.

With only a few days remaining before the *Lighthouse's* departure, many stellar nations would love to have the Verge witness their prominent claim to the colony. The adventure begins as the heroes are hired or ordered to meet with the colonists and discuss the possibility of a long-term strategic alliance. The heroes could be representatives of any stellar nation, the Concord, the Regency government, or any important power of the Verge featured in your campaign.

SCENE 1: CONTACT

The heroes can, without too much difficulty, arrange an initial meeting with the mindwalkers. (It should be easier if the heroes were those who made the first encounter with them during "Survey Mikoa B.")

The colonists will listen to any offers that the heroes' employer has authorized them to make. These generous offers include terms of military protection and economic assistance. Eventually, the heroes learn that the colonists are most concerned about issues of citizenship. In the past, stellar nations have shown a willingness to draft citizens with special talents into government or military service, and the families of the colony don't want to be broken up.

The scene should examine the sympathies of the heroes and probe their loyalty to their employer. It should also reveal that the mindwalkers have no compunction against using their telepathic abilities to their advantage.

SCENE 2: INTERNAL STRIFE

Meanwhile, strife reigns in the once-pleasant colony in Mikoa B1's domed habitats. In the decades since the original colonists arrived, a second generation has grown up. Unlike their parents, most aren't mindwalkers. Just as their parents once rejected the sovereignty of stellar nations, these young rebels have begun to reject their parents. The colony is becoming stratified between the empowered and the normal, and it could tear itself apart in less than a year.

An armed faction of the rebels bursts in upon the conference and holds the heroes hostage. Ironically, the scene could end with the heroes manipulating their captors' rebelliousness into signing on with their patron—a neat repudiation of their parents.

SCENE 3: A NEW BEGINNING

With tensions defused but no lasting settlement established, the heroes are asked to bring a delegation from the colony to the *Lighthouse*. It's hoped that more experienced delegates might have more success—and if they do, it will be easier to make the already-prepared announcement.

The trip back to the station could be uneventful, or another power could try to seize the colonists. Once aboard the station, the Galactic Concord will intrude into the process, if they haven't already. They want to ensure that no one forces the colonists into a compromise, though all of the noise and fury over Mikoa B has led even Wakefield to want a solution as quickly as possible—the normal diplomatic timetables be damned.

The heroes are part of the second negotiation process too, and there are several ways that it can work out successfully. The younger generation really wouldn't mind leaving; only the original generation has issues with it. That could be the key to the treaty; everyone would sign if the original colonists were given special status to render

them immune to a draft or recruitment program. Meanwhile, the heroes' patrons would still gain access to a focused gene pool of mindwalkers.

SCENE 4: DECLARATION

Just after an agreement has been reached, the meetings are interrupted. VoidCorp has declared eminent domain over the Mikoa B system, citing a pre-GW2 (and previously unheard of) exploration of the system by VoidCorp Employees.

The heroes, shining with their past successes involving this situation, are sent to meet with the VoidCorp ambassador on Deck 199. He opens with threats and blustery talk of conflict, but eventually should prove remarkably easy to deal with. During their meeting, he drops meaningful statements that the crystals are the key to the system, and their properties are one of the mysteries of the Verge.

If the heroes haven't already, they should take his hint and take another look at the crystals. Should they attempt to hire an independent scientist, one will conveniently appear. In only a few hours, he can pinpoint the energy coming from the crystals, and point out that they're actually standard 3D crystals; in fact, they're probably mass-produced on the planet Catalog.

SCENE 5: CONSEQUENCES

With the announcement of this latest discovery, both VoidCorp and the merchants aboard will rapidly lose interest in the system. Some might blame the heroes for the whole series of events and look for an opportunity to even the score sometime down the road.

An hour before starfall, the heroes announce at the Colosseum the settlement they've produced (if any) with the colonists. Without the issue of the crystals, the Concord expects a more normal evolution for the colony.

In the amphitheater, you can end the whole scenario on a triumphant note or with a bang of one final conflict. Perhaps an unlucky merchant, his fortunes lost on crystal speculation, takes this chance to mete out revenge on the heroes. If the heroes participated in the other adventures, additional irate parties might show up, such as unhappy mindwalkers, enraged VoidCorp Employees, angry crew members from the *Donath*, or anyone else the heroes have managed to upset during the past few days. For an especially chaotic finish, a number of these groups can show up simultaneously, each demanding vengeance.

TRANSVERGE NEWS PRIME REPORT**WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 22, 2501****SOLAR UNION OPENS LISON EMBASSY**

LISON—After years of negotiations and recent weeks of hard diplomatic wrangling, last week the Solar Union became the first stellar nation to win approval from the United Lison State to construct and maintain an embassy on Lison soil. Ambassador Howard Lin and President Kevik appeared together for the announcement, and both made statements praising the prospect of a growing “interstellar relationship.”

The embassy will be the first of its kind on Lison, although the existence of an Orlamist Temple has become a center of interstellar contact for the Theocracy and ULS officials. Lison representatives have made their nation’s strong streak of independence famous throughout the Verge, and most analysts of the recent move don’t believe that the decision represents a unilateral shift in Lison policy, only a narrow point in some larger negotiation with the Solar Union.

In turn, however, many Lison citizens expressed dismay at President Kevik’s decision to allow the Solars into Tribon. Several demonstrations have been organized in protest, but there’s been no word of any CFN

Click EMBASSY for more**GALACTIC NEWS AGENCY: A FRAUD?**

ALAUNDRIL—Alaundril revenue attorneys raided the office of the Galactic News Agency today, armed with search warrants and court order to seize all property. In a news release published mere hours after the raid, an Alaundril spokesperson claimed that the raid has revealed the Galactic News Agency to be a fraudulent corporation, and that its Alaundril license was in the process of being revoked.

Over recent weeks and months, one or more anonymous reporters claiming to work for the Galactic News Agency, a previously unheard-of media group, have released numerous stories onto the Grid, many of which have proven impossible to validate, despite their often inflammatory nature. Professional reporters and media insiders have proclaimed no knowledge of the Galactic News Agency, and several have made a point of disparaging the organization’s lack of journalistic ethics.

Apparently, the raid was a result of a happenstance discovery of a writ of incorporation in a government records database on Alaundril, leading investigators to believe that the Galactic News Agency is in fact a

Click FRAUD for more**REGENT HALE VISITS HOSPITAL**

BLUEFALL—Christopher Hale, chief executive of the Regency of Bluefall, checked into a hospital today for his annual medical examination. According to Lillian Tweet, his well-known physician, Hale “is in excellent health and should live for another hundred years or more, assuming he survives political entanglements.”

As five years have elapsed since the Regent’s last gene therapy, Tweet will also be expected to complete the standard series of antiaging programs on Hale. No complications are expected, although the procedure will keep Hale in the hands of his physicians for several days.

Regency official denied implications that Regent Hale had changed the expected date of his visit out of medical concerns, claiming that his upcoming tour of neighboring star systems necessitated the change in

Click HALE for more**CSV AIREON DESTROYED**

SPES—Today, officials of the Star Force confirmed growing rumors of the loss of CSV Aireon, a light cruiser attached to long-range escort and patrol missions in the Hammer’s Star system. According to a Admiral Raastad, who called a press conference to answer questions, “all 381 gallant lads aboard the Aireon have been classified as killed in action. They deserve the heroes’ honor that they shall receive.”

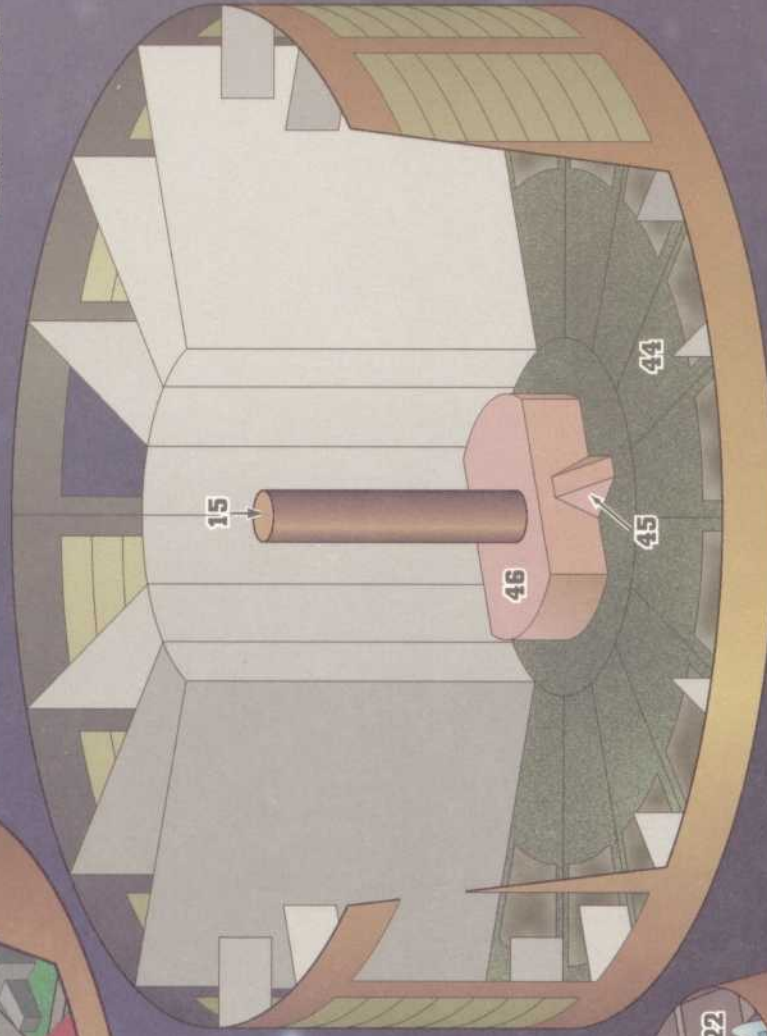
Many details of the Aireon’s mission and the circumstances around its destruction remain classified. The cruiser was assigned as part of the light carrier Inamorata’s task group, but officers aboard the Inamorata admitted that the Aireon hadn’t been seen for weeks before its loss. During scouting beyond the Vicek asteroid belt, the Aireon reported an encounter over radiowave with several vessels near its own size and armament.

Raastad refused to release details of the engagement, other than to say that data from the Aireon ceased to be received seventeen minutes after the first reports. When the Inamorata and her fleet arrived on the scene, the Aireon had been battered into mere debris, and no survivors were found. Certain officers speculated that some of the debris appeared to be composed of escape pods and capsules, all of which had suffered enemy fire from

Click AIREON for more



Deck 194

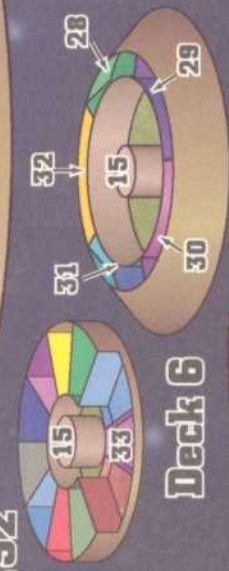


Deck 193



Deck 195

Decks 7-192



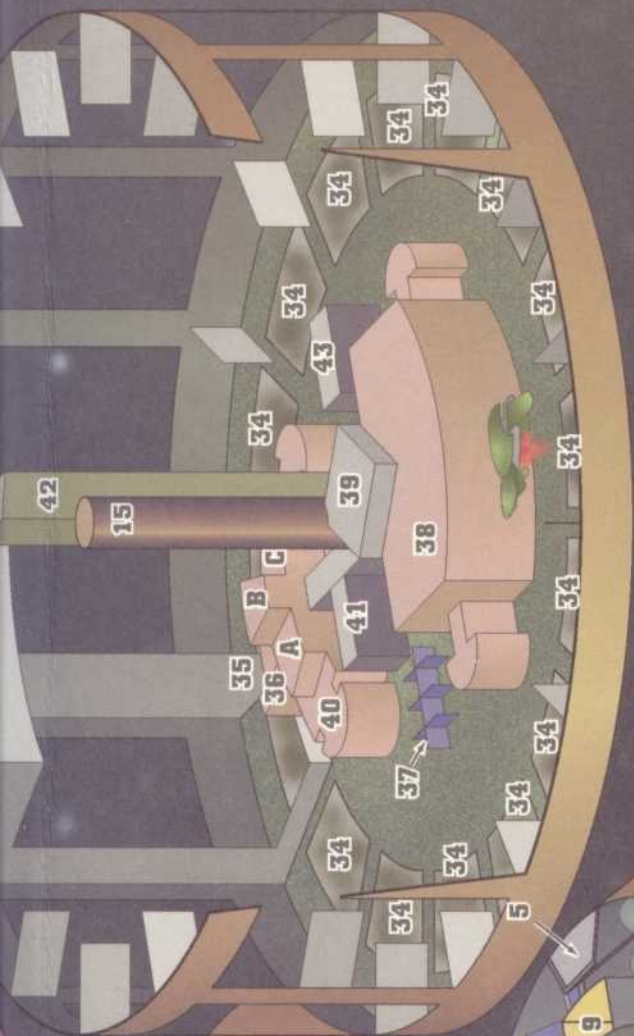
Deck 6



Deck 5



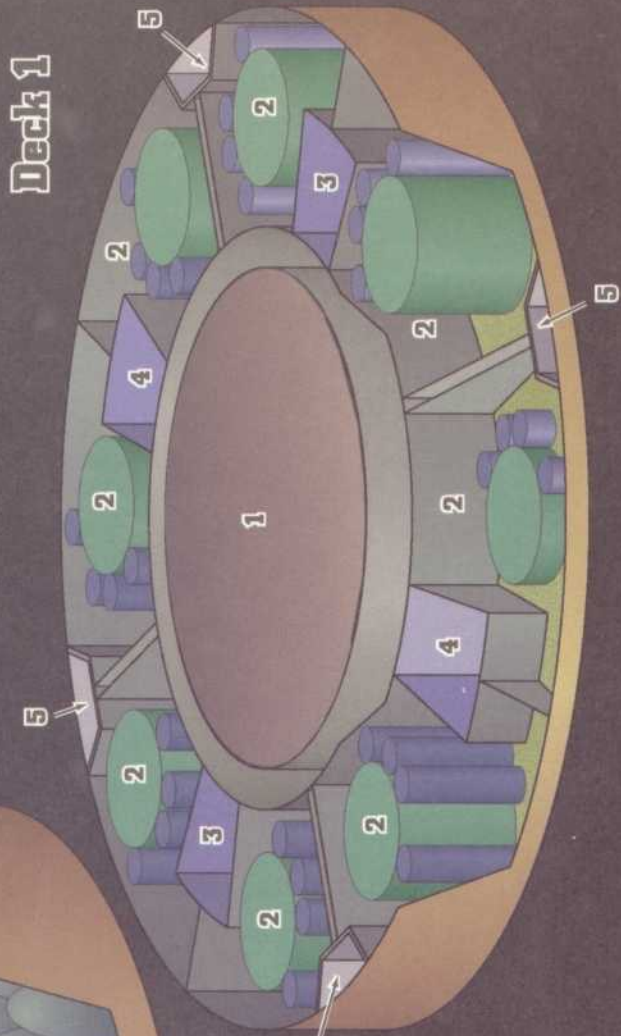
Deck 4



Deck 3



Deck 2



Deck 1



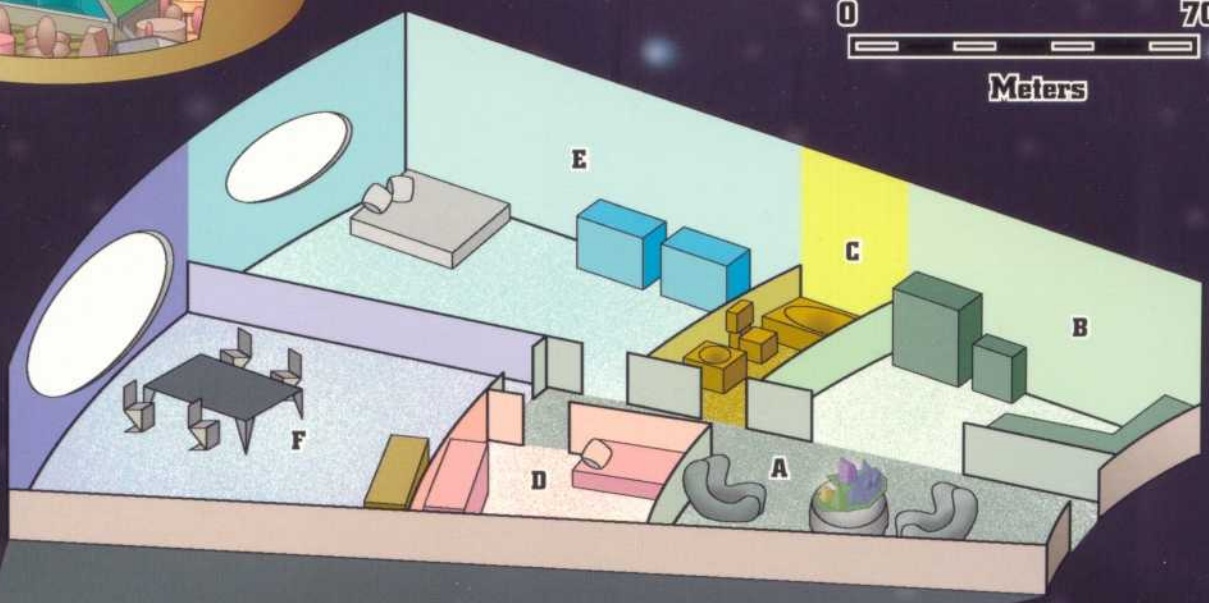
Meters



The Command Deck



Deck 3



Sample Residence



Deck 7



the Lighthouse

by David Eckelberry

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