

MERCENARY BREED



CORE SETTING GUIDE



Mercenary Breed is a science fiction action and adventure toolkit and sandbox setting for Savage Worlds. The core setting set is broken into three rulebooks: *Mercenary's Handbook*, *Galaxy Guide*, and *Xenopedia*. This core setting guide combines *Mercenary's Handbook* and *Galaxy Guide* into a single release, providing everything needed to create characters, settings, and missions across a multitude of science fiction themes including space opera, sci-fi horror, and pulp sci-fi. Characters could be bounty hunters, scouts, helmsmen, demolitions experts, biohackers, neuromancers, scientists, engineers, and a whole lot more!

Mercenary Breed is designed to embrace all styles of science fiction setting and campaign design with a number of toolkits and discussions to make that happen. This core setting guide provides the character options players can choose from to create all manner of characters including those utilizing Tech Backgrounds - the sci-fi equivalent of Arcane Backgrounds, but based on technology - and whatever science fiction themed setting or campaign desired.

Mercenary Breed includes:

- 6 xeno templates representing different species for the characters to choose from.
- Reputation-based equipment requisition.
- Character options including Hindrances, Edges, and equipment.
- Information on how to apply different sci-fi themes.
- 6 Tech Backgrounds.
- Details about the Argo Galaxy and how to build your own.
- Megacorporations and a toolkit to create new ones.
- GM advice and creating and running sci-fi mission.
- Same adventures.
- Savage Tales.
- ... and much more!

Mercenary Breed is not a standalone book and requires use of the **Savage Worlds** core rulebook. GM's will also want a copy of the *Xenopedia*.



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INFESTATION: UNKNOWN

Geremiah pushed forward through the cramped corridor, comfortably knowing his fellow mercenaries were protecting his rear. The walkway grew cold; a mist began to form around his feet. Movement flashed from the corner of his eye. Shouldering his assault rifle, he unsheathed a molecular sword. Someone, or something, was stalking them nearby.

"Geremiah, what do you see?" came a voice from his comlink.

"Movement, Malakai," replied Geremiah. "The way ahead is growing dark. Everyone put on your night vision." The team donned their goggles. "Heavy weapons away. I believe we'll be in close quarters."

The mercenaries continued to shuffle down the corridor being led by Geremiah, followed by Malakai, Dahn'tyu, Theth, and Sthol. The team was an odd mixture: two gemini, one festoon, one hhlachi, and one l'nel (respectively). Being their second year together, the team was accustomed to each other and knew how to act as a coordinated unit.

The mission was supposed to be simple: recover Genesis Holdings' mining ship and return it to Coursian. So far, it had been anything but simple. The crew had been slaughtered; the corpses were emaciated. It was as if something had been drinking their fluids. The stench was overwhelming. The mercenaries made sure to keep their helmets on despite the presence of oxygen.

Geremiah could see something moving in the mist, then a blur passed across his vision. His arm began to burn - a large gash had appeared, cut cleanly through his body glove. "It's right in front of us!" he exclaimed. "It's too dark to see. We must be moving into an open room."

The room opened wide and the remaining mercenaries fell into a line, one next to the other. As their goggles adjusted to the lighting, four figures appeared, each one towered above the mercenaries with a hideous face and blood running down its lips. A deep throated growl came as the beasts lowered their heads to look the mercenaries in the eyes.

Geremiah smiled. "Showtime." With a quick move of his arm, Geremiah plunged his molecular sword into the throat of the creature staring him down.

The other mercenaries wasted no time and burst into action. Sthol let loose a burst of flame from a hand flamethrower while uttering a war cry in his native language while Dahn'tyu tapped into his psychic implant and hurled another beast across the room, smashing it into the steel wall behind. Malakai and Theth worked in tandem with an artistic display of sword and axe play, cutting down the remaining beast.

The mercenaries stood tall, satisfaction masked beneath their helmets. The four beasts - as the mercenaries didn't know what they were - lay dead in the mist-filled room. "I do not feel these were the only creatures aboard the ship, my companions." Dahn'tyu's voice was soothing, but then he always spoke in calm tones.

"What is this room?" Sthol asked.

"It appears to be a storage room for supplies," replied Malakai. "There are some broken crates in the corner. I think Dahn'tyu's right; we need to keep moving. There's a door to the left and a larger one ahead, near the crates."

"I think the room ahead is the warehouse. If so, it'll be five times the size of this," said Jeremiah. "If four of those creatures were in this room, I don't want to see what twenty of them looks like. We'll need to draw them out in small groups. Assuming there are more."

"There are definitely more," said Theth. "I think I can smell them."

Malakai pointed to the smaller door on the left. The mercenaries nodded their agreement and let Jeremiah take point. The mists would not let up, and the red glow of the emergency lights gave the ship a deathly glow.

The door opened into another corridor, this one with larger maintenance doors on both sides. *If the creatures know we're here*, Jeremiah thought, *why wouldn't they flood out of the warehouse and overwhelm us? Maybe they can't open the large door. Maybe they can't open any door. But how would they get into the storage room?*

Jeremiah put a hand into the air to stop the others. They were in front of the first maintenance door on the left side. Sthol moved to Jeremiah's side, handflamer primed for action. Jeremiah pressed the button on the keypad to open the door; the mists from within coalesced with those in the corridor. A deep growl could be heard from within.

Sthol nodded his head, confirming the sound. He primed his handflamer and sent a burst of flame shooting into the maintenance room. Satisfied with his attack, Sthol stopped, finding no xenos on fire. The growling continued; Sthol slowly looked up as one of the creatures dropped and toppled him, sending Sthol's handflamer skittering down the corridor.

Dahn'tyu responded quickly, grabbing the beast with a psionic force. While it remained suspended off its feet, Malakai and Theth moved in to cut the beast down, spraying Sthol with blood and xeno organs.

Jeremiah moved quickly as the action went down, knowing another creature was bound to attack. He ducked into the room anticipating an attack and a second creature went flying overhead, landing in a roll before coming quickly to its feet. Unlike the four creatures from before, these two were fighting. Jeremiah wasn't sure if the other four were trying to scare the mercenaries, but the creatures were obviously learning quickly.

The beast carried no weapon, nor did it need to. Its fingers ended in massive claws; not finger nails, but an extension of the bone. The claws were long, and sharp enough to easily cut through Jeremiah's body glove. Its teeth were much like its claws: long and sharp. It stood staring at Jeremiah with its gaping maw extending to show its teeth and amplify its growls. Without flinching from this display of aggression, Jeremiah moved to attack.

The molecular sword swung quickly, aiming for the creature's stomach. The creature easily jumped back and out of the way, swiping at Jeremiah with its claws. Jeremiah ducked and rolled away from the attack, sword still in hand. He heard his rifle skitter away, but luckily it slid toward the door. It didn't matter, as Jeremiah was trying to draw the creature forward.

As the beast followed Jeremiah's roll, flames engulfed its body. Sthol had recovered and primed his flamethrower for another attack. The creature fell, thoroughly charred, leaving the room clear.

Dahn'tyu inspected the room's control pad. "It is still intact. I do not understand how these creatures were able to get into the room. It is as if they were trapped inside."

Geremiah nodded in agreement, and then pointed to the maintenance room across the corridor. "We need to see what's inside that room. It's not large enough for four, so there should only be two at the most; maybe three."

Malakai and Theth stepped forward, nodding to each other in agreement. Dahn'tyu stepped to the control panel and opened the door. Malakai and Theth both ducked in with their weapons ready, not finding what they expected. They both looked ahead and above, seeing nothing. Malakai spied two small, scorpion-like creatures in the corner. They were small and scared, attempting to scramble up the wall and get away. Malakai and Theth stepped into the room and cut the two creatures down with a single swing.

Malakai inspected the creatures. "These aren't the same as the last ones. Do we have two infestations?"

Geremiah shrugged. "I don't know; we'll just have to keep searching and purging." He nodded toward the last door.

The mercenaries prepped their weapons for another attack, but upon opening the door, no attack was needed. This room was empty. They continued the short way down the corridor, coming upon another door. "This leads to the other long corridor," Geremiah said. He punched the code into the control box and cautiously checked the corridor for targets. There were none.

Geremiah pointed to his right. "That door leads to the cafeteria and then the warehouse. We'll check that last." He pointed to his left. "That door leads to the bridge. We should check the ship's computer to see if anything is still functioning." The other mercenaries nodded their agreement and followed Geremiah down the corridor.

The mist began to dissipate as they drew nearer to the bridge. The ship specifications stated that the bridge was manned by four individuals at all times. Given the body count down below and how many were listed on the crew manifest, there should be four more inside the bridge. Dahn'tyu relayed this to the team and reminded them of the stench in the loading dock.

Upon reaching the door, Sthol took point, flanked by Malakai and Theth on his left, Geremiah and Dahn'tyu on his right. Dahn'tyu used the control box to open the door, allowing Geremiah to keep his sword at the ready. When the door opened, horrible screams rang out and Sthol was grabbed by the head before he could bring his handflamer to bear. Something was expected them.

Malakai and Theth ran in, cutting off the hands wrapped around Sthol's helmet. The creature screamed out and kicked off the ceiling, landed on Sthol and dug its claws into his tactical jacket. Blood dripped on the floor from Sthol's torn jacket. Geremiah and Dahn'tyu burst in after their companions with Dahn'tyu reaching out a psionic blast to destroy the creature inside. The team quickly checked their surroundings. There were eight creatures in the bridge, including the one on the floor. Three more leapt to assault the mercenaries.

Geremiah ducked down, and then brought his shoulder up to crash into the stomach of one of the creatures. The move didn't do much, other than prevent the creature from knocking Geremiah to the ground. The beast quickly recovered after landing on the floor, turning to strike. The creature swiped fiercely with its claws, but Geremiah met its claws with his sword. The molecular-honed edge sliced deep into the claw, cutting it in half. The creature screamed and reached out with its

other claw, but Jeremiah was faster. Expecting the maneuver, Jeremiah reacted quickly and cut the creature's arm off. The beast fell, reeling in pain, as Jeremiah drove his sword into its throat.

Two creatures made an attempt at Malakai and Theth. The beasts were quite large and slammed both mercenaries against the wall. The creatures drove their claws into the wall, pinning the mercenaries. They moved to snap at the mercenaries, but their helmets proved too hard. Malakai and Theth head-butted the creatures to little effect. The creatures quickly shook off the attack and attempted another bite. Yet, both beasts were blown sideways by a psionic blast from Dahn'tyu, throwing them into a series of computer stations.

The unexpected psionic assault sheared off the creatures' claws. As the dazed creatures attempted to recover from the attack, two of their kin took the chance to strike Malakai and Theth, leaving the dazed ones to attack Dahn'tyu. Malakai and Theth saw the attack coming and spun opposite ways, allowing the creatures to crash into the wall behind them. They continued their artistic spin, bringing an axe and sword across the creatures' necks.

Dahn'tyu threw the dazed creatures into another wall, causing them to slump over. Probably not dead, but they could be dealt with momentarily. The two remaining creatures ran toward Jeremiah and Sthol, howling like wolves and swinging violently. They swatted Sthol's handflamer aside and managed to rip Jeremiah's sword away with only a light cut. Unarmed, Jeremiah and Sthol were no match for these beasts, so both of them dropped down, grabbed a knife from their boot, and swept across the creatures' bodies.

The knives were only back-up weapons, and nothing capable of killing creatures like these with one swipe. However, it distracted the creatures long enough for the mercenaries to get in a second slash. The creatures were strong, and their tough hide resisted the knives. With a third swipe, the creatures grabbed the mercenaries by the arms, locking them in a battle of strength. Dahn'tyu turned to see his fellow mercenaries being overpowered and threw a psionic onslaught in their direction.

The creatures were thrown backward, but Jeremiah and Sthol held onto their knives. Each one took their remaining weapons and threw them at the surprisingly large throats of the creatures. Both blades found their targets and the creatures stopped moving.

Malakai and Theth stepped over to the slumped-over creatures, delivering a final blow to each. The room became quiet. Dahn'tyu walked to the front of the ship.

Jeremiah glanced toward Dahn'tyu. "What is it, Dahn?"

"The four crew members... or what is left of them. It appears they too have been drained of their internal fluids. Judging by the blood dripping down the chest of these creatures, I would say they are the culprits."

The team nodded their agreement and checked the rest of the bridge. The computer systems were down and nothing seemed recoverable. It appeared the creatures had gone on a rampage, destroying everything they found. The ship's guidance systems were unrecoverable.

Sthol looked toward Jeremiah. "Is there any way to control the ship outside the bridge?"

Jeremiah shook his head. "Not on this ship. We'll have to arrange for it to be towed back to Coursian. We need to clean it first."

The mercenaries nodded, turning toward the door leading back to the corridor. One by one they funneled out of the bridge and down the corridor until coming to the door leading to the cafeteria. The closer they got, the thicker the mist became.

The mercenaries stepped into formation around the door as Jeremiah tapped the control box. The door opened much slower than the others, but the room was empty. Sthol inspected the door's opening and found mold forming, highlighting the culprit. The room was extremely thick with mist and sat quietly.

The tables in the cafeteria were mostly untouched. The floor and walls contained no blood and food was still in the cabinets. It was as if the creatures never entered.

This is quite odd, thought Jeremiah. If the creatures made it to the bridge, they surely should have gone through the cafeteria if they are in the warehouse. Preliminary scans showed a high concentration of biological matter in the warehouse, but it could be from the mining activity. Where are these creatures, and how are they moving throughout the ship?

The mercenaries spied a small door to their right which led into the warehouse. The mist only became thicker the closer they approached the door. Assuming their regular positions, Jeremiah tapped the control box. The mercenaries froze as they stared into the creatures' nest. Sthol reached out and tapped the control box again, closing the door. The mercenaries stepped back, staring at each other with discerning looks.

Sthol looked deeply at the others. "Did you see that?"

Geremiah nodded his head. "It looks like the nest. There was some giant, bulbous creature on the far side, probably a hundred of those skittering, scorpion things, and a handful of the larger ones. This must be the mother, and those little ones must be her offspring. I'm assuming they grow into the larger creatures we've already fought." Geremiah glanced toward the far wall. Using his night vision goggles, he could see vents along the way. "The small ones must be traversing the ship through the vents. They must fall into the rooms, get stuck, and grow into the larger ones. That explains why the control boxes are all intact."

The mercenaries all nodded their agreement. Dahn'tyu spoke up. "Maybe we can lure the big ones out, into this cafeteria. If we can take them out in small groups, we should prevail. The smaller ones do not seem to be much of a threat, but I am uncertain about the bloated one."

Dahn'tyu reached out with his psionic powers. "I do not detect any movement throughout that ventilation system, nor do I hear any scratching on the other side of the door. I do not believe they are aware of our presence. We should proceed with the plan and take out as many as we can in this room. The bloated one did not look small enough to fit through the door."

The mercenaries nodded their agreement. "I can lure them out with my handflamer. It should startle them enough to at least investigate," said Sthol.

Geremiah walked toward the door. "Let's do it then." He tapped on the control box to open the door, then stepped back to allow Sthol to fire through.

Sthol let out a long burst of flames to cut through the mist. The noise had its intended effect as the larger creatures turned to investigate. Sthol released his handflamer and waited for them to approach. Upon seeing the first creature in the doorway, he pulled the trigger again, dousing the creature with flames.

Malakai and Theth flanked Sthol, cutting down the enflamed creature with precision. Dahn'tyu and Geremiah held back, should any get through. Two more creatures appeared and Sthol repeated the process. Only one fell from the handflamer, but the other was quickly dispatched by axe and sword. However, the creatures did not relent.

Four more quickly jumped through the doorway, grabbing onto the ceiling to crawl across. Geremiah yelled for Sthol to keep trained on the door while the

others dealt with those who made it past. Sthol brought down another creature, but four of them were now hanging from the ceiling.

Dahn'tyu psionically picked up a table and threw it at two of the creatures, hitting them hard. Both were stunned and dropped to the floor, ready to be cut down by Malakai and Theth. Another one leapt at Geremiah, but was easily stopped by his molecular sword cutting into its shoulder. The fourth one followed its kin and knocked Geremiah to the floor.

Geremiah quickly grabbed his rifle that had fallen next to him and put six bullets into the creature's stomach. The creature went limp and Dahn'tyu psionically picked it up and off of Geremiah. Sthol continued his onslaught of the doorway, dropping yet another creature, but more continued to show.

The doorway was jammed with bodies, and Sthol put his handflamer away. He retrieved a railgun from his back and aimed at the pile of bodies. He sent a hyper-accelerated bullet racing, and the pile of bodies exploded backward, knocking another four creatures onto the ground. With the doorway cleared, he put the railgun away and grabbed his chain sword.

The mercenaries stood, primed for combat with melee weapons in hand – except for Dahn'tyu, who needed no weapons. They could see eight more creatures rushing the door with four on the ground from Sthol's blast. They quickly entered the room, being forced to funnel through the doorway.

The mercenaries' weapons were at the ready, and each one made a precision strike at the throat or stomach of the creatures. Dahn'tyu threw tables and chairs at the creatures to throw them off balance, knowing that his psionic strikes would otherwise hit his fellow mercenaries. Whenever a creature hit the floor, they were quickly struck with a blow from Sthol's chain sword.

The bodies were stacking up, over twenty, but the mercenaries stood their ground. The doorway ceased to be filled with creatures as a deafening screech emitted from the bulbous creature beyond.

As the mercenaries regained their senses, they could see that the warehouse beyond held no more of the larger creatures, just hundreds of the little ones. The scorpion-like creatures were hesitant to move, mostly preferring to stay close to the bulbous one beyond. The screech came again, and the small creatures started to scatter.

"Let's move!" yelled Geremiah.

"Dahn'tyu and I will take care of the children, you guys take the bloated one!" yelled Sthol. He and Dahn'tyu went through the doorway and moved left to isolate the small, skittering creatures. Malakai, Theth, and Geremiah went through and moved right to assault the mother.

The children gave little resistance to the attacks of Dahn'tyu and Sthol. With such an open area, Sthol's handflamer and Dahn'tyu's psionic assaults dispatched dozens at a time. The other three moved through the mist to avoid the gaze of the mother, but she wasn't deceived.

The bloated mother could not move, or at least not move fast enough. However, she was five times the size of her larger offspring with six massive arms ending in sword-like appendages. She swung at the mercenaries with three arms, but they all ducked, jumped, and rolled out of the way.

"If we cut off her fingers, we may be safe!" yelled Malakai.

Theth and Geremiah nodded, taking a swing at its ivory swords. They both made contact and the bloated mother screamed, but the fingers remained. Theth and Geremiah took two more swings, hacking their way through the bone, before they

finally broke. Malakai followed suit and hacked his way through the third finger. The bloated mother bellowed another deafening screech, sending the mercenaries to the ground.

Sthol came around with his chain sword in the air, dropping it down hard on the bloated mother's arm. The chain sword easily cut the arm off and the entire ship began to shake. The bloated mother's body convulsed as its scream deepened. Dahn'tyu finished ridding the warehouse of the last of the skittering children and sent a psionic scream hurtling at the bloated mother. It reeled back in obvious pain, bringing its other three arms to attack the mercenaries.

Sthol went flying into the air, hitting the far wall hard. Dahn'tyu psionically caught him before hitting the ground, but left him in the corner for safety. Theth, Malakai, and Geremiah ducked around the flailing arms to attack the other side of the bloated mother. They each took an arm, priming for an attack. Dahn'tyu sent another psionic scream toward the bloated mother, causing her to convulse again. Theth, Malakai, and Geremiah exploited the opportunity and hacked off the remaining three fingers. The bloated mother sat mostly helpless.

"I need to rest," Dahn'tyu said through the comlink. "I will go see to Sthol's wounds."

Geremiah stopped his assault. "What do we do with her once she's dead?"

Malakai replied, "We could let her live, bringing her back so the Academy can study her."

"If we let her live, she'll reproduce and more of these creatures will infest the ship. Plus, we don't know if she can regrow her limbs." Geremiah looked around the warehouse. "There's no way to get her down to the loading dock. The elevators are much too small for her bloated body. Maybe we should burn her dead body."

The mercenaries nodded their agreement and grabbed Sthol's handflamer and backpack. Malakai and Theth dealt the final blows to the bloated mother and Geremiah doused her in flames.

The flames died down and Theth looked on approvingly. "Is that it?"

"No," Geremiah replied. "We must search the ship again and check the entire ventilation system for any of those small creatures. This shipped must be fully purged before being towed back."

The mercenary force had spent another hour searching the ship and killing any of the skittering children that remained. With the creatures fully expunged, they returned to the loading dock and boarded their landing craft. They left the mining ship and sent a message for a tug ship to tow the now empty vessel back to Coursian.

They returned to headquarters and entered the office of Lord Khevel, the Master of the Mercenary Force.

"Your mission was successful I presume?" asked Lord Khevel.

"Yes and no," replied Dahn'tyu. "The ship has been purged and secured, but the cargo appeared to have been devoured or destroyed by the creatures. Additionally, many repairs will be needed."

Lord Khevel nodded his head and shrugged. "At least the ship was recovered. The cargo was probably worth less than replacing a ship, although it saddens me that the entire crew was killed."

"Eaten, my lord."

"Well, yes, Jeremiah. I simply didn't want to use that term. What type of xeno was it?"

"We do not know," replied Dahn'tyu. "This was one we have never seen, nor have I ever seen it in any of the House's repositories."

"Hmm... The House won't be happy about that. They'll want to study this xeno, but you killed them all. Did it look like a large invasion force?"

"No. It appeared to be an infestation. I would guess that the mother, of whom we burned for the safety of all, boarded the ship, probably with a small force. They probably slaughtered most of the crew members while in the loading dock. The problem is none of them seemed capable of opening the doors.

"What we found were hundreds of small, skittering creatures, much like scorpions on Coursian, which appeared to be children. They were most likely bred from this large, bloated mother. Upon growing, they became large creatures capable of killing untrained warriors. I say this because they were quite sloppy in their attacks. However, if they were unable to open the doors, I do not know how they could possibly enter the warehouse."

"What is your best theory, Dahn'tyu?"

"My lord, my best theory is that the creatures entered the ship as these small, skittering children while it was loading planet-side. They then entered the ventilation system, staying there until the ship left. The female, for there only appeared to be one, dropped into the warehouse. A group of males, the warriors, stayed in the ventilation shafts until growing large enough to attack. When they were big enough, they dropped into the loading dock and bridge, killing everyone there. They also appeared to have dropped into a couple maintenance rooms, unable to get out.

"After killing the crewmembers, they drank their fluids, although I have no idea why. The mother continued to grow until it became large enough to produce more offspring. The earliest offspring protected the mother in the warehouse while others were found in the supply storage room. However, there were hundreds of new offspring that had not grown.

"I do not know if the creatures simply grow or if they needed the fluids of the crewmembers to do so. I believe they are simply an extremely fast-growing xeno breed. We burned the mother as we did not know if she was capable of regenerating. By burning her, we assured the ship was safe for towing back to Coursian. We also purged the ship of all remaining offspring. The House is free to study the remains."

Lord Khevel nodded his approval. "Well, that's about the best I can ask for then. Your information will be relayed to the House for permanent retention."

"My lord," said Jeremiah, "do you have anything further for us?"

"Why yes! I already have your next mission ready. This one will be much easier though. Genesis Holdings has been the victim of a string of thefts from its distributors here on Coursian. I need you to investigate, although I have no leads for you at this time."

The mercenary force nodded their heads and took their leave. Lord Khevel was a good Master of the Mercenary Force, and always rewarded his mercenaries well. Each one lived in a luxurious house and drove a luxurious hovercar. Due to the fatigue of their last mission, they decided to sleep for the night before starting their next mission. They would meet the next morning at headquarters and prepare their investigation.

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to Mercenary Breed, a *Savage Worlds* sci-fi action and adventure setting in a distant galaxy where interplanetary corporations hire mercenaries to do their dirty work. Players assume the roles of mercenaries hired by one of the many, interplanetary mega-corporations seeking to protect their assets and resources at any cost. These mercenaries are commanded by a Master of the Mercenary Force, a role typically assumed by a noble or executive within the corporation.

Mercenary Breed is set within the galaxy locally referred to as the Argo Galaxy. This galaxy houses a large collection of life-sustaining planets with multiple xeno races, including a human-like race known as gemini. Each planet maintains its own government, laws, and military while appointing three senators to sit upon the House of the Alliance – a governing body for the entire galaxy. Xeno cultures and races that wish to have friendly dealings with others join the Alliance. This allows them to participate in the general dealings of the other planets including merchant access, ease of immigration, and general starport access. Generally, joining the Alliance benefits a society socially, politically, and financially. By opening their arms to the rest of the galaxy, they are inviting new opportunities to increase their wealth.

The House sets laws and precedents that govern how the different cultures and races interact with each other. This includes open trade, commerce, immigration, and agreements between planets. However, the House is easily influenced by the myriad interplanetary corporations that do business throughout the galaxy. The wealth these corporations provide to the House and the rest of the Alliance often causes attention to turn the other direction while various deeds of ill-repute are being performed. Thus, a corporation is only as powerful as its ability to control the holdings used to generate the wealth necessary to keep them operating (economically, politically, and lawfully); this is where the mercenaries come in.

The book you are reading is the new Mercenary Breed (referred to as Mercenary Breed 2.0). Some of you may be familiar with Mercenary Breed and know that it is a toolkit as much as it is a setting. So what's different? When the original core setting guide was designed, it was meant to serve as a simple framework for developing a sci-fi action and adventure campaign setting or use the ideas already presented. A mostly blank galaxy was given, the Argo Galaxy, ready to be populated by the worlds of the PCs and whatever locations the GM deemed necessary for running missions. However, there was one major flaw: it was too simple.

As Mercenary Breed has grown, it seems as though it's time to take this simple toolkit and create something awesome that provides numerous options to pick and choose from in creating the ultimate campaign setting, expand on the Argo Galaxy, or just run straight out of the book. This book, *Mercenary's Breed*, is the core setting guide containing two sections: *Mercenary's Handbook* and *Galaxy Guide*. It contains the entire setting and all the toolkits in one book for playing a Mercenary Breed game or creating your own universe. However, no sci-fi campaign is complete without a host of aliens to throw at the players, which is found in the *Xenopedia*. As an added bonus, the *Xenopedia* is written so that it is usable across all sci-fi settings for *Savage Worlds*, homebrewed or published. Of course, it wouldn't be a part of the core books if it wasn't tied to Mercenary Breed, so everything is there to bring those aliens into your Mercenary Breed adventures and campaigns.

WHAT'S NEW?

For those coming into this book after utilizing the previous core setting guide, you may be wondering what's been added to Mercenary Breed. Instead of just offering an expansion supplement to the existing core setting guide, everything has been looked at, expanded, revised, improved, and renewed to create what we believe is the ultimate guide for building awesome sci-fi action and adventure settings and campaigns. Here's a brief look at some of the changes:

- Renown has become Reputation.
- New Hindrances and Edges.
- Additional character races.
- Full descriptions of equipment.
- A look at how to create settings and campaigns within different sci-fi genres.
- Archetypes are presented for use within those different genres.
- A look at creating different mission themes.
- A look at altering your campaigns for specific sci-fi genre flavors.
- A collection of Tech Backgrounds.
- An expanded guide to the Argo Galaxy and how to create your own.
- New Savage Tales.
- And of course, a large sci-fi bestiary.

A new question may arise: Does this render my previous core setting guide obsolete? It does not. Instead, Mercenary Breed 2.0 expands on what was already presented and adds A LOT more options. The only change that needs to be made is the term Renown has been replaced by Reputation (this is explained in **Character Creation**).

One thing to note is that the core concept of Mercenary Breed as a toolkit for building a setting along with providing the framework for a setting has not changed. It is designed to provide the tools necessary to create extraordinary adventures within a sci-fi setting without confining the players and GM to a defined technology level or setting design. To do this requires a lot more tools and options than previously provided. These concepts may have been discussed before, but little was provided to accommodate it. Mercenary Breed 2.0 aims to remedy this by giving both players and GMs the ability to mix and match the options provided as they please, along with adding their own, to create whatever type of setting and campaign they desire. If you don't want to create your own setting or campaign, check-out the **Hastilion Expanse** campaign from Mystical Throne Entertainment.

WHAT IS MERCENARY BREED?

For those unfamiliar with Mercenary Breed, it is imperative to understand the toolkit and setting before creating a mercenary. Player characters take on the role

of a mercenary working for one of the galaxy's major corporations – Mercenary Breed 2.0 also discusses working for organizations other than corporations. In the sci-fi settings and campaigns Mercenary Breed is designed for, the corporations work outside of local authorities to take care of the things they are otherwise unable to handle. This could be within legal limits, or completely illegal, while corporate executives make sure the local authorities look the other direction.

At its core, this is meant to create sci-fi action and adventure games. However, this action and adventure could range drastically from simple investigations into street thugs who have broken into a corporate facility all the way to xeno armies that have invaded a faraway mining facility. One of the best parts of working for a major corporation is that these mercenaries don't need to purchase the equipment needed to get the job done. Thus, whatever mission is thrown at you, the corporation supplies the right tools to get the job done.

Some may call this type of game space opera. While you can add many dramatic issues to your campaigns, it's not necessary. The original core setting guide aimed to create that space opera feel, but it became obvious that more than that was possible. Mercenary Breed 2.0 embraces space opera along with space travel, space western, military sci-fi, and a plethora of possible subgenres and flavor combinations. In the end, the setting and campaign you create will always be the one you want to play.

WHAT IS A MERCENARY?

Besides being the PCs, mercenaries are the trained warriors of the corporations who perform missions to support the corporation's desires. They are well-versed in the ways of combat, act as foreign dignitaries, uphold diplomatic relations, explore uncharted territories, and protect the interests of their employers. All of this is in the interest of personal gain (monetary, housing, vehicles, land, etc.) with little regard to who their employer is.

However, the PCs aren't the only mercenaries. Every major corporation, sometimes even smaller ones, has a mercenary force to perform various missions. They are the first level of protection a corporation has, even when dealing with rival corporations or radical groups.

Mercenaries may live a good life from the eyes of the standard employees of the corporation, but it is fraught with danger and never-ending responsibilities. The better a mercenary performs, the better they are rewarded by their employers. Cars, houses, and luxuries are all part of their benefits package, but pay for personal interests are relatively low. The corporations aim to take care of all a mercenary's necessities, but at the price of dedicated employment and not the freedom to come and go as they please. It is thus that mercenaries are expected to dedicate a large portion of their lives to serving their employer.

MERCENARY FORCES

PCs need very little reason to be brought together as a fluid mercenary force. Each corporation hires their own mercenaries or conscripts them from a block of available candidates. Upon being hired by a corporation, each mercenary is then assigned to an applicable force.

Available positions within these mercenary forces do not appear often. They are typically a product of death, retirement, reassignment, or part of a newly created force. Mercenaries do not simply quit their job as they know too many corporate secrets and have knowledge of possible conspiracies. To avoid a public disaster, corporations reassign mercenaries who are becoming bored with their current force or desire a higher seat within the company. Those who become bothersome

to the corporation are sent on extremely dangerous missions in the hope that they will not survive. Mercenary deaths are quite common.

Upon the creation of the now complete force, typically consisting of five to ten mercenaries, all members report directly to the Master of the Mercenary Force for immediate deployment. By the time one is assigned to a mercenary force, they have already finished all required training, thus deployment is immediate. If the force is lucky, they will be deployed planet-side and given room and board within a corporate apartment, townhouse, or condominium. If they are not as lucky, the team will spend their time on a capital ship, living in confined spaces and sharing all common areas with hundreds, sometimes thousands, of other people.

SCIENCE FICTION SANDBOX

Mercenary Breed 2.0 has grown away from the mini-setting that was presented in the original core setting guide. However, at its core, it is still a sandbox with an accompanying toolkit to fill that sandbox. This means that many aspects of the Argo Galaxy are either loosely defined, undefined, or vague enough to allow the GM to make whatever changes they deem necessary. When thinking of a sci-fi sandbox, players and GMs are presented with a basic framework of how the galaxy works and who lives there, but the galaxy is such a big place that there is bound to be unexplored territories.

With that in mind, consider what comprises an entire galaxy. A galaxy houses millions to trillions of stars. For simplicity sake, the Argo Galaxy houses ten billion stars. For ease of calculations, 1% of those stars have planets revolving around them (that's one hundred million). Continuing that idea, 1% of those planets are inhabitable (That's one million). Once again, let's say that 1% of those planets have been documented. The result is that the players and GM can choose from 10,000 planets to create their setting or campaign.

As you can see, it would be a daunting task to create every one of those planets. Additionally, it would mostly be pointless as PCs will probably only encounter a few dozen at the most during their careers. This is why Mercenary Breed is presented as a sandbox setting with an accompanying toolkit to fill that sandbox. Instead of defining what every single planet looks like within YOUR Argo Galaxy, we'll give you the tools to create that when it's necessary. Some planets are provided herein, and more can be found in **Hastilion Expanse**, but creating the right planets, to correspond with the missions that are to be performed, can be just as fun as succeeding in those missions.

Science fiction should be about exploring opportunities of grand creativity rather than conforming to simple templates. After all, would different xeno races really come from planets that have developed exactly the same way?

ARGO GALAXY

The Argo Galaxy is the base sandbox setting for Mercenary Breed. It is a spiral galaxy, roughly 55,000 light-years in diameter, and located around 60 million light-years from Earth. It is an unbarred, flocculent spiral galaxy with eight short spiral segments. Of course, this is our description and you may want to alter that to fit your setting or campaign. However, all Mercenary Breed books correspond to this design.

The Argo Galaxy is governed by the House of the Alliance, a gemini-assembled body to watch over the galaxy. With the development of the House, the gemini people formed a central language called Argosian and renamed the galaxy to the Argo Galaxy. Although this was in support of the House of the Alliance and the

allied xeno races the gemini had befriended, there were still a countless number of planets in the galaxy that had yet to be explored. Due to the governing and military power of the House of the Alliance, all new xeno races that join the Alliance accepted the term Argo Galaxy and learn to speak the Argosian language to trade with other xeno races.

Like any other galaxy, the Argo Galaxy is extremely large with the potential to house any number of hostile or friendly xeno races. The House of the Alliance is always on the look out to find new allies and document hostilities. But as is to be expected in an entire galaxy, it will take hundreds of generations before the entire galaxy is documented. Because of this, it is feasible that not only can the PCs come from any location within the galaxy, but so can their adversaries.

The gemini home world of Coursian, the location of the House of the Alliance, is located 16,000 light years from the Galactic Center, within the Penta (fifth) arm. It is considered to be the political center of the galaxy.

BASIC TERMINOLOGY

Mercenary Breed utilizes some standard terminology throughout all of its books. It may be important to understand them and why they have been chosen.

Academy of Interstellar Studies and Ecologies: Maintaining a peaceful co-existence with thousands of intelligent civilizations across the Argo Galaxy requires an understanding of cultures, physiology, and viewpoints. The Academy of Interstellar Studies and Ecologies (or the Academy) is an institution of xenobiologists, explorers, and other academics charged by the Houses of the Alliance with the study and understanding of all species in Alliance space.

Allied Navy: The Allied Navy is a large space faring navy commanded by the House of the Alliance. They are the largest military body in the galaxy and serve as a line of defense for major xeno incursions. When space warfare occurs, the Allied Navy comes in to protect all members of the Alliance. However, their size is so large that minor incursions or crimes against corporate properties are strictly dealt with by the corporations. The Allied Navy is simply too large to muster for such small ordeals, and they instead rely on the corporations to protect their holdings. If the incursion is planet-wide, the Allied Navy always answers the call.

Campaigns: Campaigns are long-term careers of the PCs. These campaigns could be constructed with a large collection of linked missions, contain fewer, but much longer missions, or contain a single back story that only appears once every few game sessions. The main focus of a campaign should be that it is a full career for the PCs and not just snapshots in time. This is their employment with the corporation from their first days to what you could consider as retirement. Campaigns may take many months or even years of gaming sessions to complete.

Faster-than-Light (FTL): Being a sci-fi setting, Mercenary Breed incorporates faster-than-light (or FTL) travel throughout the galaxy. This technology could be plausible, or far-fetched. How this travel method is possible is not explained; instead, it's just accepted as the preferred method. Traveling between solar systems could take decades if not centuries; FTL travel eliminates that and reduces travel time to days, weeks, or possibly months.

Gemini: A gemini is the Argo Galaxy's equivalent of a human. This term was chosen to disconnect the base setting of Mercenary Breed, the Argo Galaxy, from the Milky Way. It was also chosen to serve as a way of creating a unique history and not worry about what is feasible in regards to what Earth's near- or far-future may look like.

House of the Alliance: The Argo Galaxy has a single governing body that ensures there is peace, open negotiations, free trade, and naval protection between all friendly xeno races. This body is referred to as the House of the Alliance who has the ultimate authority over the major decisions made across the galaxy. The House of the Alliance, often referred to simply as "the House", is also in charge of keeping track of all the xeno races that are members of the Alliance.

Home World: Someone's home world can either be where they live or where they were born. By allowing players to create a home world to accommodate their mercenary, they are given the ability to influence the creation of the galaxy. This can create new adventure seeds, but ultimately allows the player the freedom to create their mercenary using whatever template they desire (and is agreed upon by the GM). In Mercenary Breed, one should never feel limited in their options while creating their mercenary's background.

Mercenary: Player characters (PCs) are referred to as mercenaries because they are employed by the corporations to serve as a militant and political body. They protect the corporation's interests and seek out anyone that would do the corporation wrong.

Mercenary Force: A mercenary force is the term given to a group of mercenaries working together for a single corporation. The PCs are collectively called a mercenary force.

Master of the Mercenary Force (MMF): Every mercenary force receives orders from a single commander referred to as the Master of the Mercenary Force, or MMF. This commander may be an executive within the corporation, a high-level manager brought on to command the mercenary forces, or even an outside liaison with ties to the House of the Alliance. Masters of the Mercenary Force may even command more than one mercenary force.

Missions: Missions are individual adventures or scenarios that PCs go on, according to the orders from their MMF. Each mission could be linked or completely unique. When creating a campaign for Mercenary Breed, some missions may be filler, only offer advancement of the characters, or tied to a greater back story that is the driving force behind the campaign. Each mission should take between one to five gaming sessions to complete.

Space Lanes: Space lanes are areas of the void marked for shipping traffic throughout the galaxy. These are the areas determined to be the safest to avoid planetary contact. Space lanes with the most traffic are typically used by the Allied Navy, and thus are typically free from pirate activity. However, space lanes with the most traffic may not be the fastest route, they are simply the safest.

The Void: The void is the empty space between solar systems. It is used for traveling throughout the galaxy to avoid coming into contact with a planet.

Xeno: Every race within Mercenary Breed is alien to other races. They come from a different home world and have a much different appearance. Instead, the term "xeno" is used to symbolize that races may view other races as strange or different, not just foreign. Each race may view others in a different way; treating them as though they are not equal or possibly superior. This could create a natural tension between a group of PCs, or produce a friendship based on what each offers to the group given their unique features.

CHARACTER CREATION

Characters within Mercenary Breed not only carry their own concepts that vary widely, they may also come from different planets with completely different backgrounds and races. The possibilities are endless and *Mercenary Breed* even includes a toolkit for creating your own unique xeno race. When creating a character, the standard Savage Worlds character sheets are usable, as well as the one in the back of this book or downloaded from our website at mysticalthrone-ent.com.

RACE

Humans do not exist in Mercenary Breed. Gemini is the human equivalent and the basic gemini still gains one free Edge. If your gemini has a unique background, this may be chosen instead of the single free Edge. If your character is not a gemini, choose one of the Xeno Templates provided herein, create your own race using our Random Xeno Generator, or choose one provided by the GM.

TRAITS

Now it's time to choose your mercenary's attributes and skills. Unless otherwise specified by a Xeno Template, each character begins with a d4 in each of his five attributes: Agility, Smarts, Spirit, Strength, and Vigor. You have 5 points to distribute among those attributes. It costs 1 point to raise each attribute a single die type, and none may be raised above a d12.

You have 15 points for purchasing skills. It costs 1 point to purchase a skill and raise it a single die type, as long as it doesn't exceed its linked attribute. To raise a skill die type above the linked attribute's die type costs 2 points per die type. Like attributes, skills may not be raised above a d12, even those offered for free by a Xeno Template.

All standard skills from Savage Worlds are usable in Mercenary Breed.

LANGUAGES

All races of the House of the Alliance have adopted the Argosian language for purposes of trading with other races and when dealing with the House itself. Thus, all mercenaries start with Knowledge in the Argosian language along with whatever language is native to their race (as defined by their Xeno Template).

When choosing a Xeno Template for a race that is not part of the Alliance, the mercenary gains the Outside Hindrance and must purchase the Knowledge (Argosian) skill to make themselves understood. When choosing to learn an additional language, you must also purchase an applicable Knowledge skill.

SECONDARY STATISTICS

The following stats are based on the value of the traits above or are common to each character, unless altered by an Edge or Hindrance.

Charisma is +0, unless modified by an Edge or Hindrance.

Reputation is 0 and increases as missions are completed. If creating a character higher than Novice, add +10 Reputation for each character rank. Otherwise, Reputation must be earned and cannot be gained through Edges.

Face is equal to 6" unless otherwise specified by a Xeno Template, or modified by an Edge or Hindrance.

Parry is equal to 2 plus half your Fighting die. If you don't have the Fighting skill, your Parry is just 2.

Toughness is equal to 2 plus half your Vigor die.

CHARACTERISTICS

Edges and Hindrances in Mercenary Breed work the same as they do in standard Savage Worlds. Major Hindrances are worth 2 points and Minor ones are worth 1 point. You can spend those points in the same manner to increase attributes or skills, gain an Edge, or increase your starting funds by 500c.

EQUIPMENT

Working for a multi-trillion credit corporation has its definite benefits. Mercenaries quickly learn they do not purchase their equipment. It is received through standard issue. A corporation's pockets are very deep, but they are limited in the type of gear allowed according to Alliance laws.

Before reaching planet-side for a new mission, mercenaries take a trip to the armory and acquire their gear. Each mercenary is granted up to the following (actual gear availability is based upon their Reputation):

- 3 Standard Issue weapons
- 2 Standard Issue explosive devices
- 1 Standard Issue armor (mix and match to create a desired armor set)
- 4 Standard Issue sets of ammo (weapon dependent)
- All necessary mundane items

Anyone seeking to use exotic weapons, armor, ammunition, or other devices must do so with their own money. The corporations will outfit their mercenaries as dictated by the House, but any unregulated gear must never be possessed by the corporation itself.

Additionally, each mercenary starts with 500c (Alliance Credits or just "credits") that are accepted at every planet supported by the House of the Alliance. There may be a conversion factor for each planet as some races use their own currency. However, if they are part of the Alliance, they are required to accept Alliance Credits.

BENEFITS

Mercenary forces are always given the most basic housing. As one's Reputation increases, they may be able to requisition better housing. When mercenaries first start, they are each given a small room to call home. This varies greatly depending on the corporation the mercenaries work for, where they are stationed, and what type of housing is available. This could range from a small room within a spaceship to a full apartment in an urban setting.

During missions, mercenaries are also provided housing at the mission's location along with being given a small room aboard the spaceship. Additionally, mercenaries are provided free meals either at the corporate building or on a starship during transit. If they wish to eat elsewhere, it is at their own cost. While on a mission, they

are given a number of provisional credits equivalent to the cost of eating during the course of their mission (like an expense account). GMs are not required to maintain this type of accounting, but just know that the mercenaries should never have to pay for their meals and housing unless they choose to live outside of the corporate standards.

Because the corporation pays for so much of the mercenaries' lives, they are only paid 250c per month. This allows them to purchase any luxury items not covered by the corporation. (All necessities such as utilities and basic clothing are paid as part of the mercenaries' housing.)

BACKGROUND

A mercenary's Xeno Template may define where they're from and what they look like, but what did they do before becoming a mercenary? Once your character is built, take some time to put together a character background that defines how they gained their skills and what they did before choosing to become a mercenary. Were they part of the Allied Navy and yearned for something more? Did they train as a warrior from their home world and are now looking to become one of the elite? Or was their environment devastated by a corporation and they now seek retribution through that corporation's rival? This may help in fleshing out the details as to why a character has the skills they have.

MOTIVATIONS

Motivations are important within Mercenary Breed as they define what drives the character throughout their career. This can lead to what decisions they make regarding the missions they perform, how they treat their fellow mercenaries, and how they view the deeds of their employer. These motivations can be turned into adventure hooks for the GM to weave into a campaign and use to make the game more interesting. Another possibility is that the character has secret motivations and yearns to overthrow a corrupt corporation by exposing its secrets. This may also help in planning what advances are chosen throughout the mercenary's career.

SKILLS

XENOLOGY

At its roots, Xenology is the study of determining what else is "out there." To be more specific, and from the perspective of the House of the Alliance, Xenology is the study of determining what other xeno races exist within the Argo Galaxy to determine which ones are friendly and which ones are hostile. This is an extremely important measure for the House and all mercenaries as it established a baseline for how to approach a threat.

This type of knowledge is common knowledge to all mercenaries and is a part of a galactic database that all mercenary forces have access to through whatever means are provided by the Master of the Mercenary Force. This includes linked databases at corporate offices that provide download capabilities to handheld devices the mercenaries can use in the field.

For in-game terms, this means that information about any xeno identified and documented by the House of the Alliance, or more specifically the Academy of Interstellar Studies and Ecologies, is readily available to the mercenaries during

the course of their missions. Tapping into this information does not require a Common Knowledge roll as long as the mercenaries have the information on-hand (through a handheld device, on-board computer, or network database). If the mercenaries do not have a device available, it should be determined that they studied the information leading up to their deployment and thus can recall that information through a standard Common Knowledge roll.

All adversaries found within the *Xenopedia* fall under this Xenology Common Knowledge rule. These are races already investigated and documented by the Academy of Interstellar Studies and Ecologies (simply known as the Academy) and thus do not require a special skill to recall information about. Knowledge (Xenos), for example, should only be used to understand more about xeno races that have not been investigated or documented. This would be an attempt to discern more about an undocumented race using career knowledge. This could include guessing what type of armor the race wears, attempting to understand their battle tactics, or mentally disassembling their technology.

SKILL CHANGES

There are a handful of minor changes and additions to what skills are available and how they are used within Mercenary Breed compared to standard Savage Worlds.

GUTS (SPIRIT)

As a standard rule, Guts is not used within Mercenary Breed. However, if you choose to run a sci-fi horror or gothic sci-fi game, then Guts may be an appropriate addition. This is strictly setting and campaign dependent.

HACKING (SMARTS)

Due to the high-technology base in the Argo Galaxy, standard computer use is not sufficient to demonstrate how difficult it is to navigate through a highly-secured network, bypass a sophisticated security system, or break into an executive's computer. For that, the Hacking skill has been added to signify the more difficult means of navigating through a computer, computer system, network, and computer-powered security systems.

INVESTIGATION (SMARTS)

Investigation doesn't change from its standard Savage Worlds entry, but it is imperative to understand that it only encompasses the most basic use of computers. This includes public computer systems, library databases, the equivalent of an Internet, and anything that is readily available for everyone to use.

KNOWLEDGE (SMARTS)

Knowledge specialties come in two basic forms within Mercenary Breed.

Language (Choose): Language specialties are for speaking something other than your native language and Argosian, if you are from a race that is part of the Alliance. Languages of undocumented xeno races would not be available unless the player can truly explain why their mercenary should know that language. Otherwise, all languages known by the House of the Alliance are available.

Xenos: Xenos knowledge is the ability to discern information about a foe being faced that has never been investigated or documented by the Academy of Interstellar Studies and Ecologies. Any xeno that has been investigated and documented falls under Common Knowledge.

NAVIGATION (SMARTS)

Navigating the stars is much more difficult in outer space than doing so planet-side. There is an advanced requirement of understanding distances and locations

The term **Renown** has been replaced by **Reputation**. The former had the effect that completing missions earned some type of fame either within the corporation or in the eyes of the general populace. This was not the design purpose and thus the term **Reputation** is now used. **Reputation** is meant to represent how well the corporation views a mercenary's achievements, thus earning them the right to requisition better equipment and housing.

that is much harder to discern in outer space. To represent the difficulties of navigating through space, the Navigation skill has been created. Although this skill is not required planet-side, it can be used as a supporting skill for Piloting. Otherwise, it is an absolute must while traveling through space.

PILOTING (AGILITY)

Due to advancements in technology, flying an airplane is extremely similar to flying a helicopter or spacecraft. The general controls are the same and all trained pilots are taught to fly all types of craft. When looking at the cockpit of an airplane, it is almost replicated for spacecraft. Capital ships may be another story, but for simplicity sake, the actual controls to fly them are similar enough that any pilot can do it.

REPAIR (SMARTS)

Repair is a catch-all skill for all types of repair, even on unfamiliar or xeno vehicles. However, there are additional penalties besides not having the right tools. Repairs made on technology developed by Alliance races are well-documented and incur no penalties. Repairs made on technology developed by xenos that have been investigated and documented by the Academy, but are not part of the House of the Alliance, incur a (-2) penalty. Repairs made on technology developed by undocumented xenos incur a (-4) penalty. This penalty stacks with the penalty for not having the right tools.

REPUTATION

Reputation is a measurement of how well your character performs during each mercenary mission. It is gained during official, corporate-funded missions, but not side missions. Reputation can also be earned for fantastic role-playing or extraordinary feats during game-play. However, do not throw around Reputation as a free gift or treasure: it is designed to measure a character's strength, bravery, determination and overall success as a mercenary. Characters should earn Reputation, not simply be gifted it.

Reputation is an integral part of Mercenary Breed as it determines a character's standard of living and level of equipment they can requisition. Due to the nature of working for a powerful corporation, the characters should be able to easily acquire the equipment necessary to complete a mission. Adding mechanics for Reputation justifies a character's ability to acquire better weapons and armor along with sustaining a much higher standard of living.

Each character gains an amount of Reputation upon completion of a mission, depending on how difficult the mission was. Please note, Reputation is only earned at the end of a mission, not at the end of each gaming session.

- **Standard:** Standard missions are those which the characters are able to easily complete. They do not require much time, nor do they test a character's limits. Upon completion of a standard mission, each character is awarded +1 Reputation.
- **Difficult:** Difficult missions are those that span two to three game sessions and consist of several character challenges. They require characters to properly use their skills and Edges to achieve success. Upon completion of a difficult mission, each character is awarded +3 Reputation.

- **Brutal:** Brutal missions are extremely difficult and should span four or more game sessions filled with multiple character challenges. Failure is extremely possible. Near-death experiences should be common. Upon completion of a brutal mission, each character is awarded +5 Reputation.

Remember, combat is not the only way to measure a mission's difficulty. Missions that consist of complex investigations are just as difficult as a particularly strong foe.

Reputation is expressed as x RP within cost tables where x equals the amount of Reputation required to requisition that item. Standard Issue equipment is requisitioned using Reputation while exotic equipment must be purchased. A character's standard of living can also be increased when their Reputation increases; this is dependent on the corporation as each one is different.

Characters cannot requisition anything higher than their current Reputation, but can requisition anything lower. However, they are still limited to the amount of equipment allowed during requisition and by how much weight they can carry (using standard encumbrance mechanics).

Higher quality equipment should be created within Reputation brackets of five. Thus, new equipment would become available at 5 RP, 10 RP, 15 RP, etc. Don't feel obligated to offer complete packages at each Reputation bracket – such as offering a new line of melee and ranged weapons along with ammo and armor sets. Higher quality equipment should be spread across to balance their stats with what a character should feasibly have access to.

A simple mechanic for deciding Reputation ranks for new equipment is to compare the new equipment with the old equipment and how the strength of that equipment increases. Every 2 increases could be treated as a 5 RP bracket.

EXAMPLE: A Survival Knife is $\text{Str}+d4$ while a Molecular Knife is $\text{Str}+d4+2$, AP 2. There are a total of 4 increases between the two knives: $d4$ to $d4+2 = 2$ increases; AP 0 to AP 2 = 2 increases. Thus, a Survival Knife is 0 RP while a Molecular Knife is 10 RP.

If the equipment appears too easy to obtain, increase the Reputation brackets to 5 RP per 1 increase. Using the above example, the Molecular Knife now becomes 20 RP instead of 10. Increases could consist of augmenting damage with a given number (such as +2) or increasing the AP. However, this is simply a guideline and GMs are free to create their own Reputation brackets.

HINDRANCES

Mercenaries may be the equivalent of a sci-fi hero, but heroes and heroines always have some type of flaw. To increase the options already available, here is a selection of Hindrances to choose from, particularly designed for Mercenary Breed.

ARCHAIC (MINOR)

Your mercenary enjoys technology of the past and feels a type of comfort when around it. However, current technology frightens him. Whenever he handles, operates, or interfaces with high-technology equipment (including weapons), he incurs a (-2) penalty to all associated skill rolls (including Shooting). For reference, the Gemini would view Earth's current technology as archaic.

HEAVY BREATHER (MAJOR)

For some reason, your mercenary requires a better supply of oxygen than the standard member of its race. In environments where the atmosphere is thin or oxygen is less prevalent, they must make a Vigor test every day or gain 1 level of Fatigue.

POOR REPUTATION (MAJOR)

For some reason, your mercenary always does things to make the corporation angry. Either the way missions are resolved or just a show-off type attitude, the executives often question why the mercenary is still around. Because of this, the mercenary gains 1 less Reputation point per mission completed. Thus, if they should have earned +3 Reputation, the mercenary only earns +2.

STARGAZER (MAJOR)

Your mercenary loves to look at stars through a telescope, but hates to get near them. They prefer a life planet-side and fear the vacuum of space. When traveling through space or performing a mission on a moon or asteroid, the mercenary must make a Fear test and suffer the regular penalties for failing, due to their anxiety.

STRICT ORDERS (MINOR)

Your mercenary adheres very strictly to whatever orders were given to the mercenary force by their Master. Because of this, he will not deviate from those orders. To change his mind or attempt to enforce different orders, a Persuasion roll is necessary. Otherwise the mercenary maintains his already ordered course of action.

XENOPHOBIC (MAJOR)

Xenophobia is the general fear of unknown xenos. Your mercenary does not subscribe to the idea of exploring the unknown and prefers to only deal with that which others have already encountered.

When encountering an undocumented xeno, the mercenary must make a Fear test and suffer the regular penalties for failing. If the xeno already has a Fear rating, the mercenary incurs a (-1) penalty. This does not affect rolling on the Fright Table or rolling a natural 1 on the Fear test.

EDGES

To bolster the mercenary ranks, here is an offering of new and modified Edges to correspond with Mercenary Breed. However, before getting into that, here's a list of Edges that do not apply to the core setting (your setting or campaign may be slightly different):

FORBIDDEN EDGES

NOBLE, RICH, AND FILTHY RICH

Mercenaries must adhere to a specific corporate culture and salary structure. Anything outside of that could be threatening to the corporation (such as a wealthy mercenary who purchases equipment they are not entitled to). As such, these three Edges are not allowed (or at least discouraged).

ALL POWER EDGES

There are no fantasy-like powers in Mercenary Breed, thus all Edges listed under Power Edges may not apply. Each Tech Background handles things like New Powers, Power Points, and Rapid Recharge differently. Refer to each indi-

vidual Tech Background entry for further details.

ADEPT, CHAMPION, HOLY/UNHOLY WARRIOR, AND WIZARD

Again, as there are no fantasy-like powers, these Professional Edges do not apply.

ALTERED EDGES

ARCANE BACKGROUND

The Arcane Background Edge is replaced with Tech Background. The mechanics for each Tech Background are described later.

ARCANE RESISTANCE

The Arcane Resistance Edge is replaced with Tech Resistance. This rep-

resents a natural ability toward shrugging off attacks from technologically developed bodily enhancements. This only pertains to weapons and attacks associated with a Tech Background. The remaining mechanics function the same.

GADGETEER

Because Mercenary Breed has numerous Tech Backgrounds covering different technology types, the Gadgeteer Professional Edge applies to Cybernetics, Nanotechnology, and Science along with their applicable Tech Skills. Weird Science is not used.

MENTALIST

The Arcane Background (Psionics) requirement is changed to Tech Background (Psionics).

MR. FIX IT

As with Gadgeteer, the Mr. Fix It Professional Edge can be used with Cybernetics, Nanotechnology, and Science along with their applicable Tech Skills.

NEW EDGES

ADAPTIVE GILLS

Type: Racial

Requirements: Novice, Hhilachi

Some hhilachi get an implant called adaptive gills. This implant allows them to breathe underwater longer. This implant increases the amount of time they can hold their breath to 60 minutes before testing for Fatigue.

BOUNTY HUNTER

Type: Professional

Requirements: Novice, Smarts d8+, Investigation d8+ or Streetwise d8+, Tracking d8+

Some mercenaries are skilled at tracking a target across the galaxy. They know how to find the right information either electronically or on the streets, always attempting to stay one step ahead of their target.

When following a target across space or planet-side, the mercenary gains a +2 bonus to all rolls associated with finding the target.

CLAWS

Type: Racial

Requirements: Novice, L'Nel

Some l'nel warriors have a mutation that produces longer claws that can be used as weapons. They gain a Natural Weapon that does Str+d6 damage.

COMPUTER SPECIALIST

Type: Professional

Requirements: Novice, Smarts d8+, Hacking d8+, Investigation d8+

Your mercenary is skilled with computers and knows how to design them, set up networks, and navigate through vast computer systems. He probably spent many years of his youth taking apart computers or other electronic devices, only to figure out how they work.

When working with computers and computer-related systems and devices, he gains a +2 bonus to all Hacking and Investigation rolls.

DIGGING HANDS

Type: Racial

Requirements: Novice, Hhilachi

Some hhilachi have hands and feet adapted for digging. Those with this adaptation are very important in the wetlands to make holes for collecting water. They gain the Burrowing ability with a Burrowing Pace of half their regular Pace (rounded up).

GOOD REPUTATION

Type: Social

Requirements: Novice, Charisma 0+

For some reason, your mercenary knows how to please the corporate executives or the Master of the Mercenary Force, always remaining on their good side. For this, they tend to favor his actions and are quick to overlook ones that may be less-than-desirable.

When receiving Reputation for completing a mission, he gains an additional +1 RP. A mercenary cannot take the Poor Reputation Hindrance and the Good Reputation Edge.

HIND LEG PROFICIENCY

Type: Racial

Requirements: Novice, Primas

Some primas warriors have perfected the ability to run on their hind legs while attacking. Although their running is limited, they can still attack while running. The primas mercenary may attack in the same round they run. However, their running die is reduced to d4 (even with the Fleet-footed Edge).

HOUSE POLITICIAN

Type: Racial

Requirements: Novice, Gemini, Charisma 0+, Persuasion d6+

Many Gemini are part of the House of the Alliance and its politics in some form. Maybe they were born into it or maybe they serve in an administrative role. Either way, they are learned in the politics of the House of the Alliance.

Gain a +2 bonus to Persuasion when dealing with the House of the Alliance, government officials (from any planet), or corporate executives.

JUNGLE IMMUNITY

Type: Racial

Requirements: Novice, Primas

Some primas come from extremely dangerous jungles. If the predators do not kill them, the insects that spread diseases or the poisonous plants might. Primas warriors from these types of jungles have an incredible immune system and are immune to poison or disease (choose one). This Edge may be taken twice to gain both immunities.

LORE MASTER

Type: Racial

Requirements: Novice, Festoon

Some Festoon mercenaries are extremely adept in learning and remembering rare information. They have heard stories about creatures across the entire galaxy and know something about almost every xeno out there.

Lore master Festoons do not need the Knowledge (Xenos) skill and instead treat all xeno knowledge as Common Knowledge.

MARINE'S LIFE

Type: Racial

Requirements: Novice, L'Nel, Piloting d6+, Navigating d6+

The strength of the l'Nel race comes from its navy. Those who have grown up being an integral part of this navy are said to have a marine's life. When in outer space, they gain a +2 bonus to all Piloting and Navigating rolls.

MEDIC

Type: Professional

Requirements: Novice, Smarts d8+, Knowledge (Medicine) d8+

Medics are extremely important to mercenary forces. When a force is pinned down by gunfire or delving deep into unknown territory, healing is essential and needs to be done quickly.

Medics are mercenaries trained in treating wounds from combat or the dangers of entering unknown environments. They gain a +2 bonus to all Healing rolls and ignore up to 1 point of penalties from being wounded themselves. Additionally, their Healing rolls can be done during combat, requiring 10 rounds to perform; neither the medic nor the wounded mercenary can move during this time. However, these bonuses do not apply to Natural Healing rolls. Please note that this bonus only applies if the medic is carrying a field medic kit.

POTENT POISON

Type: Racial

Requirements: Novice, Schrilang

The poisonous protrusions of the schrilang range in potency. Some of them are more potent than others, resulting in the victim incurring a (-1) penalty to their Vigor roll.

PSYCHE STRENGTH

Type: Racial

Requirements: Novice, Festoon, Tech Background (Psionics), Smarts d6+, Psionics d6+

Festoons are natural masters of the mind. Their minds are incredibly powerful and those who wield psionic powers do so with ease.

Psions with psyche strength are able to tap into the power of their minds much easier than others. Each raise they get on their Psionic roll reduces the cost of the power by 1 Power Point. However, they must first have enough points available to activate the power in the first place before rolling.

SHARPENED BONE

Type: Racial

Requirements: Novice, Schrilang

Some schrilang warriors sharpen their hand protrusions for increased effectiveness. Their Natural Weapon gains AP 2.

SHOCK TROOPER

Type: Professional

Requirements: Novice, Agility d8+, Fighting d8+

Your mercenary always leads from the front and isn't afraid to bring the fight directly into the face of their target. They specialize in close combat weapons and often train for quicker reflexes.

When charging a target (closing in and making a melee attack in the same round), the mercenary gains a +2 bonus to Fighting rolls for that attack.

TECH JUNKIE

Type: Background

Requirements: Novice, Smarts d8+, Repair d8+

Your mercenary has a natural talent for dealing with technology from all walks of life. It doesn't matter if it's something he's handled, seen, or simply read about, he can almost reverse engineer it on the spot. He is always called upon to deal with xeno technology.

When making a Repair roll dealing with xeno technology, he ignores up to 2 points of penalties.

TECHNICIAN

Type: Professional

Requirements: Novice, Smarts d8+, Repair d8+

Your mercenary has been trained to repair electronic and mechanical devices common to his race and home world. He can quickly determine what has caused a failure and make an optimal repair.

The mercenary gains a +2 bonus to Repair rolls when attempting to fix military, corporate, and civilian technology. This includes spacecraft that he travels aboard.



XENO TEMPLATES

Xenos come in many shapes and sizes, all with unique features and qualities. One of the major toolkits within Mercenary Breed is the ability to create your own xeno from any of the scattered and possibly undiscovered sections of space. As previously stated, there are probably 10,000 inhabitable planets within the Argo Galaxy, ready to be populated by whatever the players and GM can dream of.

To establish a baseline of available xenos and continue developing the basic framework of the Argo Galaxy sandbox setting, we are including a handful of xeno templates here along with discussing what makes each one unique.

FESTOON (FES-TUNE)

Festoons – as pronounced in the Argosian language because the native pronunciation is not feasible by other races – are the eldest known race in the Argo galaxy. They are humanoid but differ from their Gemini allies in many ways. Their bodies are tall and slender with a head that juts out at the back of the skull. They age significantly slower than gemini and live considerably longer with an average life expectancy between 250 and 300 years. However, it is believed that some festoons have mastered the art of near immortality. Rumors abound of those who are over 1,000 years old.

Their size varies little and their height averages between 7 ft. and 7 ft. 6 in. Even with this towering height, their body mass is so low that their weight does not seem comparable. Although they are slender, festoons are not fragile and have a very solid bone structure. Each one has eight long fingers, eight long toes and ears that come to a very slight point. Their skin tone tends to be dark with dark hair and vibrantly colored eyes.

The festoon loathes violence and typically look for the most diplomatic solution, which led to their immediate friendship with the gemini race. Their central government contains many levels of administration. The main governing body consists of a group of appointed elders. Their language is called Bah'hala and is often deemed as unpronounceable, or at least confusing, by many within the gemini race. For this purpose, the festoons use the Argosian language when interacting with other races.

HISTORY

The festoon race dates back an estimated 100,000 years, although this is a best-guess estimate. Their history is one of turmoil, disaster and rebirth. It has been philosophized that the festoons were responsible for the birth and advancement of the gemini race. While this is plausible, it's only partially correct. The truth is much more tragic.

Around 4,000 years ago, the festoon race was living in the far side of the galaxy, thousands and thousands of light-years from their current home world of Lak'husa. They lived a particularly fearful life as their docile nature made them targets for particularly hostile alien races. The elders spoke to the oracles and deemed that a possible solution lay on the other side of the galaxy. Plans were laid to move the race elsewhere and flee their degrading situation. They had the technology to get there, but keeping their assailants from following was a problem. So the elders laid out a plan.

The festoons, small in numbers due to continued raids, loaded their entire population onto a dozen galactic vessels and planted the seeds for the apocalypse within their home planet. They lay in wait as the last devastating raid came crashing down on the planet. The invaders found empty homes and abandoned buildings. By entering space on the opposite side of the planet and using their two moons to shield the escape, the festoons were able to unleash a massive bio-weapon upon the entire planet and launch nuclear weapons toward their antagonist's docked vessels. The invading force was annihilated. Most of the planet was destroyed, but eventually the flora and fauna would find a way to rebuild.

Following the oracles' lead, they traveled across the galaxy to find a new, safe home world. The oracles had foretold a race of sentient beings in their youthful stages that may be key allies in the distant future. Contact was forbidden until the race reached the stars, so the festoons made planet-fall on a neighboring planet they named Lak'husa. Life sustainability was low so terraforming occurred immediately and bio-tech was installed to allow them to survive. With a new home, the festoons began life anew and watched their neighboring alien race.

After many centuries, the alien race sent satellites into the skies allowing the festoons to tap into their communications. They learned the alien race referred to themselves as gemini and focused heavily upon democracy. The festoons began to learn and master the gemini's language for hope of future diplomatic relations. When that day came, it was a joyous occasion.

The gemini race was mysteriously drawn to the planet of Lak'husa and welcomed with open arms. The two races found common ground and a desire to help each other out. The festoons desired the military safety the gemini were willing to provide while in-turn they provided new technologies for further inter-planetary travel. The future of the House of the Alliance was born, rooted deeply in democracy.

GOVERNMENT

The festoon race has an extremely convoluted system of government. Their administrative groups have multiple levels of "management" with red-tape running deep. There seems to be no end to the amount of requests needed and sign-offs required just to get a simple requisition completed. Sitting atop everything is an appointed group of elders who make the most important decisions.

Decisions concerning the festoon way of life and interaction with alien races are strictly performed by this group of elders. Appointed to the Elder Circle are the most powerful oracles and psions. They weigh these decisions heavily upon how they affect their race and the races around them before making a final decision. They do not concern themselves with day-to-day activities, leaving that to the administration. However, anything that affects the race as a whole must be first considered by the Elder Circle.



Festoon members of the House of the Alliance are part of the administration, but ultimately report to the Elder Circle. They are given a sense of freedom until the festoon race is put in jeopardy. The elders are appointed by others within the Elder Circle and not by the general population.

MILITARY

Festoons loathe violence and do not possess an actual military. There are pockets of organized volunteers who can muster in a minute's notice, but they prefer stealth tactics and the use of camouflage. The festoons instead rely upon the Allied Navy for planetary defense and only build diplomatic, civilian and space-faring exploration vessels of their own. This is one reason why they stay very close to their gemini allies and rarely populate planets on their own.

Although the festoons avoid violence as a species, they do send their handful of most capable warriors to train with the gemini to become capable mercenaries. In their eyes, even though diplomacy is a preferred route, sometimes it's not enough. If their warriors can become part of the mercenary forces, maybe they can spread their influence farther across the galaxy.

SPACE TRAVEL

Space travel has been an integral part of the festoon life for many millennia. It is not known when they first reached the stars as much of their past has been destroyed, but their technology has been forever retained. Festoons build the most capable space-faring vessels including some of the best ships for long-distance, galactic travel.

In addition, the festoons created and maintain the various space lanes throughout the galaxy with the help of the Allied Navy. It is said that without festoon technology, the gemini race would never have left the solar system. As such, the festoons are relied heavily upon for their technology, research and especially space travel. Their civilian designs are the most popular in the galaxy.

XENO RELATIONS

Since the festoons delegate any type of combat, they have made very few enemies. Enemies are more often formed due to an unwillingness to work together. Festoons have a difficult time understanding alien races that aren't interested in technology and diplomacy, rather looking for trade and resources. While the gemini can assist and make new allies, the festoons become confused and usually end regular discussions. While this is not meant to be an antagonistic move, it is sometimes viewed that way.

For this, the festoons have made a few other races angry, but none have initiated combat. Besides, if they do, the weight of the Allied Navy would come bearing down upon them.

MODERN TIMES

The festoon race has become an integral part of the House of the Alliance and all the alien races involved. They travel confidently between allied planets and even enjoy a sense of safety no matter where they go. As a race, they are welcomed as an intelligent species with the greatest technology. In addition, they are sought for their wisdom and teaching abilities. However, not all festoons spend their time teaching and designing.

As integral members of the Alliance, the festoons have learned to further harness and enhance their spiritual and psionic abilities. Mercenary forces seek them out for protection against supernatural creatures and many types of unknown species.

They may not be apt to use guns, but their psionic powers carry some of the most deadly effects as targets cannot see, nor expect, that power. A festoon's mental strength more than makes up for their lanky bodies and is as important as a projectile weapon.

In addition to psionic powers, there are festoons known to harness the mysterious power of the void. It is not truly known or understood how this is possible, but this mental connection can produce incredible effects. While psionic powers tend to be destructive, these divine-like powers tend toward defensive and protective.

XENO TEMPLATE

- **Feeble:** Festoons are thin creatures who spend more time concerning themselves with knowledge and inner-spirit. Festoon mercenaries can never take the Brawny Edge.
- **Intelligent:** Festoons are known for their mental prowess and excel in all areas of knowledge and lore. Mercenaries gain +1 die type to Smarts and can never take the Clueless or Illiterate Hindrances.
- **Language:** Festoons are fluent in the Bah'hala and Argosian languages.
- **Lore:** The festoon race has spent much time studying many areas of knowledge and lore. Gain a free d6 in a single Knowledge specialty.
- **Loyalty:** The festoon race is extremely loyal to everyone within their society, especially their elders. Gain the Loyal (Minor) hindrance.

GEMINI (JEM-ih-NYE)

Gemini are the dominate species in the Argo galaxy and formally named it as such. They are equivalent to slowly aging real-world humans, resulting in a life expectancy of 120 years (150 years for those who can afford regular medical upkeep). Their average height is between 5 ft. 10 in. and 6 ft. 4 in. for males and 5 ft. 6 in. and 6 ft. for females. Skin color, hair color and eye color vary widely. For in-game purposes, treat a gemini character the same as a human character. This means they gain the standard extra Edge during character creation.

The gemini are relatively peaceful and are not currently waging any major wars. Minor conflicts occur from time-to-time, but nothing of substantial purpose has happened for several centuries. They are responsible for forming the House of the Alliance and currently sit at its head, negotiating peace between all new alien races and themselves. Their central language is Argosian, in reference to the name they gave the galaxy, but dozens of dialects exist.

There is no single, central government, but there are central governments for each galactic region. Each planet is expected to properly govern itself under the watchful eye of the Alliance.

HISTORY

The gemini's history started roughly ten millennia ago. Their home world, Cour-sian, sits in a spiral arm of the Argo galaxy. As with many races, they spent centuries growing and developing their society until reaching the stars 7,500 years later. They began exploring their solar system, discovering an intelligent alien race, the festoon, on a neighboring planet. The two races quickly became, allies, trading partners and friends.

The festoons taught the gemini to achieve faster-than-light travel while the gemini taught the festoons about diplomacy and democracy, upon which the gemini culture is built. With their new technology, the gemini expanded their presence throughout the Argo galaxy.

With each new discovery, the gemini race sought only diplomacy and the opportunity to make new allies. After expanding to claim five planets in 500 years, the gemini announced the formation of the House of the Alliance and the development of a central language – Argosian. From this they “renamed” the galaxy, in their own eyes, to Argo and sought to ally every alien race possible. For them, a grand democracy where everyone shares in the profit is the key to societal growth.

To this day, the gemini race inhabits over 30 planets with an Alliance that covers around 100 alien races. Their trade routes are plentiful and profitable with inter-planetary corporations dominating proceedings. Antagonistic alien races have all been thwarted and most regions of the galaxy remain in peace; at least from the outside. Minor skirmishes between corporations often occur and many planets are unable to completely rid themselves of crime. For this, the House of the Alliance has deemed that all corporations may maintain a set of regulated mercenary forces to combat crime against and within their holdings.

GOVERNMENT

Coursian spent many millennia with tribal, feudal, and imperial societies. Upon the fall of the last emperor, the central powers joined together to form a democratic society to rule the world fairly with equal representation given to all. While not everyone on Coursian conformed to these ideals, the majority agreed to this democracy. From that point forward, democracy kept the world thriving, except for those who opted not to comply, and eventually allowed the gemini to form strong ties with alien races.

At present, inter-planetary dealings are handled by the House of the Alliance while planetary decisions are handled by local governments. However, the Alliance maintains a central navy for protection across the galaxy. Local governments are expected to guard their planets, but are not allowed to form military strengths to combat the masses (like antagonistic alien races). This responsibility falls onto the shoulders of the Allied Navy, a massive fleet of space-faring vessels, fighters and carriers.

Gemini hold the highest seats in the Alliance including President, Vice-President and Galactic Defense Secretary. Other less powerful administrative positions are also held by gemini. Local governments typically have similar seats to the House of the Alliance, and many tailor their positions to accommodate how the citizens vote.

MILITARY

Planetary defense is managed by the local guards. These military forces go by many names such as Planetary Defense Force, The World Army or Planetary Guard (the Coursian planetary defense led by the Commanding Guardian). They hold small fleets of fighters capable of near space flight while large batteries of surface-to-air cannons are scattered across the planet. The majority of these forces are equipped for planetary fighting including planet-side air fighters and tanks.



Space warfare, when necessary, is handled strictly by the Allied Navy with its large fleets of vessels, fighters and carriers. Each fleet is led by a commander. Regional command is dictated by a general. The Galactic Defense Secretary within the House of the Alliance holds the ultimate power over all sectors of the Allied Navy.

The Allied Navy has so many sector and regional fleets that calls for help are serviced within a day or two. A large network of satellites and inter-planetary communications means the Alliance sectors of the galaxy are monitored every second of every day. If any hostile alien races enter a sector, the Allied Navy is immediately called to action. It is quite rare for combat to actually reach planet-side, but precautions are necessary.

Mercenary forces are given the okay to work within the space commanded by the Allied Navy as long as they comply with regulations. This provides them with an easily accessed array of standard equipment and allies. Due to its size, the Allied Navy cannot police the corporations' holdings and thus rely upon the mercenary forces to do the job. The Allied Navy may be able to stop an alien carrier, but they cannot stop a jewel thief.

SPACE TRAVEL

The gemini race builds fairly standard space-faring vessels. Most are designed for transport, exploration and recreational use and while these ships are extremely expensive, they are available to common citizens. They must register their ships and pass a rigorous inspection of their personal and professional holdings. This reduces the chances of criminal activities. Unfortunately, a black market does exist and spaceships are available, unregulated, on non-gemini planets. While the government recognizes this, they have not experienced enough problems to consider it a threat.

All space-faring vessels carry faster-than-light drives allowing them to travel from planet to planet, but to travel quickly throughout the galaxy requires more than citizen-class vessels. These are significantly more expensive and typically owned by the Allied Navy or inter-planetary corporations. Space lanes are setup for this type of travel. Government officials travel on navy vessels while mercenaries travel on corporate vessels. After gaining enough Renown, mercenaries have been known to purchase their own spacecraft.

XENO RELATIONS

Being a very diplomatic race, gemini have neutral or good relations with all races within the House of the Alliance. While they may encounter a hostile alien race in the depths of space, none have returned to wage war. However, some have decided to join the Alliance instead of combat it.

While their diplomatic nature may create tension with other alien races, this has not led to military engagements. Rather, it leads to simple disagreements during committee discussions and votes and is considered to be a neutral relationship.

MODERN TIMES

Within the current time frame, the gemini race holds the most power and influence throughout the sectors of the galaxy controlled by the House of the Alliance. They continue to expand their holdings while their population grows at exponential rates. With over 30 planets populated, they are still looking for additional, inhabitable planets to house their people. While this may seem noble, much of their desires are two-fold. Gemini are often motivated by money and resources.

They seek new planets for food, precious metals, valuable gems, resources, trade avenues and possibly new customers to hawk their wares to. This has produced greedy inter-planetary corporations who try to persuade the Alliance to explore new regions and sectors. Not only do they need resources to sustain their ever-growing population, they also want to mine these planets for anything they can sell or use.

XENO TEMPLATE

- All gemini are fluent in the Argosian language.
- Gain one free Edge.

HHILACHI (HIH-LAH-CHEE)

Hhilachis are a misunderstood race that hails from Travall, a warm planet covered mostly by wetlands, swamps, and fresh water lakes. They are humanoid and amphibious, but lack any appearance resembling a gemini. Their features appear threatening, but they are far from. They are instead a fairly gentle species that stands strong in defense, but have never made an offensive strike. Although they don't strike first, they are a force to be reckoned with in a battle as their warriors fight brutally to keep their families safe.

Hhilachis are able to adapt to a variety of warm climates, but once the environment drops near the freezing point, they are either forced into hibernation or face dying. They are cold-blooded and need the heat to keep their bodies from freezing. Within optimal environments, they can live up to 95 years. If trapped in a cold environment, it can be a matter of days before they perish.

Their sizes vary little between males and females, ranging from 6 ft. 4 in. to 6 ft. 10 in. The males are typically larger than the females. Their skin feels soft and oily, and they can all produce mucus that allows them to climb walls. This allows the hhilachis to live on the top of the bluffs while their children are born in the water below. Living atop the bluffs keeps them safe from water-born predators. Their feet are webbed like a frog and are used for swimming quickly.

HISTORY

The hhilachis have passed down stories of their history through stories told from generation to generation. Very little was written down, preferring to use a pictographic language. Pictures written on trees, cave walls, and rocks help retell the stories. These stories tell of a history that dates back thousands of years. However, no one truly knows how many thousands of years.

The hhilachis were an early applicant to the House of the Alliance, coming into contact with the gemini 450 years ago. Their appearance seemed threatening at first, but they quickly assured their gemini guests that the hhilachi race meant no harm to any race that wasn't a threat. After spending many months with their hosts, learning their language, the gemini heard many historical stories and began teaching the hhilachi how to write. Although passing down stories is a tradition, it can get quickly lost or misinterpreted.

The hhilachis were a unique race in that the idea of traveling through the frozen space was not only frightful, it was dangerous. Without the right environment, their people would die.

With this dilemma, the gemini spent the next five years developing spacecraft that could properly accommodate the hhilachi during space travel. Each one pro-

vides a large atrium that resembles the wetlands on Travall and the climate was specially controlled for a warm, humid environment. To allow the gemini to travel on those same spacecraft, special rooms were built to reduce the humidity and provide a cooler environment. Although hhlilachi could still survive in those rooms, special suits were developed to make them feel more comfortable.

Once these spacecraft went into full production, the hhlilachi became an integral part of the House of the Alliance and were able to travel throughout the galaxy. Their warriors were found to be quite formidable and soon they became a regular part of the mercenary culture.

GOVERNMENT

The hhlilachi have a tribal government. Each tribe consists of up to two dozen families attached to a single location. Villages are built amongst the thick woods always near a wetland, swamp, or fresh water lake. Each tribe is led by a single chieftain, appointed according to their diplomatic prowess. The chieftain must be extremely charismatic and able to lead their people when defending their village.

Each hhlilachi village is located within a mile of at least one other village. During times of war, these villages band together to form loosely organized militias. If threatened by large armies, hhlilachi villages from hundreds of miles around ally to hold back the invaders.

There is little social ranking within a hhlilachi tribe as everyone has a purpose and those duties are no more or less important than anyone else's. If there is a regular task to be performed, it is assigned on an as-needed basis. Nothing goes ignored and everyone is treated as equals. The only ones not required to perform regular duties are the children. Even the chieftain helps out as much as he or she can.

Decision making, along with enforcement of those decisions (such as basic laws), is done on a full tribal basis. While the law of majority is enforced, every decision is discussed during a tribal gathering. The tribal chieftain arbitrates all decisions and only votes in the case of a tie.

When assigned to a mercenary force, this form of group decision making is maintained and hhlilachi always listen to everyone's opinion before proceeding with that decision. However, in times of absolute need, they are not afraid to make quick decisions that benefit the team. Their main concern is always the protection of the entire team.

MILITARY

Hhlilachis do not have an organized military. They operate much like a militia and everyone that can wield a weapon does so for the defense of the entire tribe. When these militias are formed,



however, they are extremely disciplined and always plan their maneuvers to ensure the best results. The Allied Navy has found them to be optimal soldiers as they take orders extremely well and always execute them flawlessly, as long as they benefit the navy. If the orders received would throw the navy, or a particular regime, into a dangerous situation, the hhilachi soldier speaks up and offers alternate solutions.

Hhilachis have never formed their own navy and avoid creating a formal army. They rely solely on the Allied Navy for protection and keep their large, combined militias as a form of defense. Because of their dedication to the House of the Alliance, the Allied Navy always has a force nearby for quick deployment. If any hostile race gets near Travall, the Allied Navy arrives quickly to quell the threat.

SPACE TRAVEL

Hhilachis have never created their own means of space travel. They do not build spacecraft nor do they have the technology to do so. They rely on the gemini to provide them with spacecraft, although they are more than willing to pay for them, either through earned credits or dedicated work in the Allied Navy. They do not eschew space travel, but they would rather spend their days tending to the resources they have available instead of developing the technology necessary to build those specialized spacecraft.

XENO RELATIONS

Hhilachis are extremely friendly with as many Alliance species as possible. They tend to avoid aggressive ones, such as the l'nel, but are not against diplomatic relations with them. Due to being dedicated allies of the gemini, they are well protected against anyone that would attempt to threaten their way of life.

Besides the gemini, the hhilachi have become extremely friendly with the festoons. Both have similar qualities and the festoons strive to document the hhilachis spoken history. Because of their trust in each other, the hhilachis allow the festoons to probe their memories through psionic means.

MODERN TIMES

Hhilachi warriors have become a very valuable asset to the Allied Navy. Specialized armor allows them to function within any environment and they are often ceremoniously honored by their superiors for excellence in the field. Their chieftains serve as important political figures and arbitrators within the House of the Alliance, always finding ways to open and maintain discussions between multiple xeno races.

Because of this dedication to the House of the Alliance and the Allied Navy, the gemini continue their protection of Travall and the production of spacecraft for the hhilachi people. In return, the hhilachi have also opened their home world to the corporations, allowing them to mine whatever resources are trapped beneath the surface.

XENO TEMPLATE

- **Amphibious:** Hhilachis are semi-aquatic creatures. They can hold their breath underwater for up to 15 minutes before gaining Fatigue, move at their full Swimming skill, and gain a free d6 in Swimming.

- **Cold-blooded:** Hhilachis are cold-blooded and can barely survive without heat. They incur a (-4) penalty to resist the effects of a cold environment.
- **Language:** Hhilachis are fluent in the Hhilachin and Argosian languages.
- **Sticky Hands:** Hhilachis can produce mucus that allows them to stick to walls. This gives them the Wall Walker ability.

L'NEL (LUH-NEL)

L'Nels are an aggressive race living in large spaceships throughout the Argo galaxy. They are humanoid but lack any resemblance to the gemini race. Their faces are more serpent-like and their skin has a leathery feel. Their bodies are tall and lean with long heads. Their bodies do not adapt well to environments outside of tropical areas and thus the average life-span is only 65 years. Those who spend their entire lives in tropical environments have been known to live for up to 100 years.

Their sizes vary significantly with the shortest l'nels measuring 4 1/2 ft., and the tallest 6 1/2 ft. Shorter l'nels rarely achieve high ranks and are typically used as expendable guards or assigned to perform the duties no one else will. They have 8 fingers with each one ending in claws. While they are not long enough to cause significant damage, their claws can provide unarmed protection in combat.

L'Nels are a fairly violent race and honor all military effort. This has created few allies within the Alliance outside of their strong partnership with the gemini. Civilizations with no military are typically considered to be weak while those with strong militaries are seen as worthy allies or opponents. Although they are aggressive, the l'nel honor code states they never attack a race lacking an organized military.

HISTORY

The history of the l'nel race is mostly unknown as they have never bothered to track their timeline. For them, history is in the past and is of no concern. This has ultimately led their race to lack medical evolution, preventing them from living longer lives. Instead, they focus their efforts on building and maintaining a space fleet that sustains the entire race. Approximately 100 years ago the l'nel emperor constructed a grand fleet and ordered the entire population to leave their dismal planet and live their lives out in the stars. The l'nels no longer have a home world and only live within their fleet of spaceships.

Around 25 years ago, the l'nel fleet came upon the Allied Navy. They quickly recognized the military-styled ships and initiated combat. Unfortunately for the l'nels, the Allied Navy out-gunned and out-numbered their aggressors. Instead of destroying the entire fleet, as they came to realize it held the very essence of the race's population, the Allied Navy attempted a truce. Upon boarding the main ship and speaking to the l'nel emperor, a bond of honor was formed and all aggressions were ended.

The l'nels were given a choice to either flee all gemini-held sectors or join the House of the Alliance and become an ally. The l'nels had no interest in becoming a part of gemini society and were thus offered an alternative solution. The Allied Navy recognized the strength in the l'nel fleet and instead asked them to be an ally of the Allied Navy, a very valuable arm of the House of the Alliance. The l'nels quickly agreed and joined the allied ranks.

Throughout the past 25 years, the l'nel fleet has been an integral part of the protection of the Alliance. They have found a method of channeling their aggression in a way that satisfies their urges and assists the entire Alliance. In addition, they have acquired new technology from the Allied Navy to increase the integrity of their ships and make them better in combat. However, the Allied Navy remains wary of l'nel intentions and ensures the technology can be disabled should a rebellion occur. While the l'nels are not aware of this, the gemini understand it completely.

The l'nel emperor does not plot rebellion nor does he feel the gemini can be overcome by the l'nel fleet. Rather, he enjoys the ability to continue their aggressive behavior and the luxuries received by working with the Allied Navy. Greed is becoming a part of the l'nel culture as they acquire more and more gemini luxuries and learn to survive amongst the stars. They still have not bothered to find a way to live longer.

GOVERNMENT

The l'nel race recognizes a caste-like system led by a dictator-like emperor. An individual's social rank is based upon their strength, willpower and fortitude. The one with the greatest commanding presence gains the position of emperor until someone else comes along that can overwhelm the current emperor. Underneath the emperor is a large grouping of lords with no royal connections. Their title of "lord" is self-imposed and recognized as a title of honor, not purpose. Those of a social rank beneath the lords are required to show respect while ultimately taking orders from whomever their direct superior is (depending upon the job). While these lords do not necessarily hold any power, they are looked upon for guidance when the emperor needs to make important decisions.

Beneath the social rank of lord is everyone else in the l'nel race. Within this level, there are assigned duties which have imposed ranks (such as worker and supervisor), but everyone is essentially treated as equal. The only exception is particularly short l'nels who are treated as being beneath everyone. They are given duties that no one else wants or put on the front lines during combat, only to be used as a shield for those behind them.

The end result of this caste-like system is that the l'nels do not have a formal government. Their emperor makes all the racial and societal decisions while the lords make all the tedious and repetitive decisions. Everything outside of this is left to the House of the Alliance to manage such as interracial and public relations

MILITARY

L'Nels have a very strong and well-organized military, albeit somewhat small compared to other alien races. They are properly equipped for space combat and small land invasions, but lack the artillery for planet-side warfare. This is partially due to their hesitance to live within a planet's atmosphere and their inability to adapt to different climates.

The l'nel race focuses their technological advancements on naval ships that are able to withstand bombardment and infiltration. While their largest drawback has always been small size of their fleet, they are capable of standing toe-to-toe with larger naval fleets. L'Nel fleets contain very structured military ranks start-



ing with an admiral and ending with grunts (who pilot the vulnerable fighters). Soldiers never disobey their superior officers and strive to become superiors someday.

SPACE TRAVEL

Space travel is all the l'nel race truly understands. They do not know how to explore and colonize planets nor do they understand diplomacy. They are driven by aggression and honor and feel their survival is only possible by maintaining their naval strength.

They live and die amongst the stars and children know very little outside of their home vessel. While they may be educated on what a planet is, the purpose of that education is military oriented should one need to survive planet-side during combat.

XENO RELATIONS

Due to their aggressive nature, the l'nel race is disliked by almost every race outside of the Gemini. While many races have come to rely upon the l'nels for naval protection, they still loathe the methodology employed and their lack of diplomatic desires. However, everyone prefers to have the l'nels as an ally rather than an enemy and thus these relationships remain calm with a friendly façade, even though it's primarily false.

Many believe that the allied relationship between the l'nels and the gemini is one of convenience. The belief is if the l'nel were to leave, they would be obliterated by the Allied Navy. While this is plausible, it's simply not true. The l'nel are free to leave the Alliance at any time, assuming they do not attack an allied race. Should this happen, they would be quickly dispatched. As is the nature of the gemini race, they do not wish this to happen and prefer to do what they can to keep things peaceful. As long as the l'nel are contributing to the Alliance in some fashion, the gemini are satisfied.

MODERN TIMES

The l'nel race continues to be an integral part of the Allied Navy and a valuable piece of the House of the Alliance. While they do not get involved in political affairs, they always voice their opinion in military matters. They gladly protect the space lanes and provide escorts for powerful figures. Because their fleet is smaller and a bit faster, they are able to engage hostile enemies quicker than the Gemini naval fleets and thus enjoy the aphrodisiac they call combat.

Due to this lust for fighting, l'nels are taught from a very young age the art of combat. The most promising students join the ranks of the elite and perform boarding and infiltration missions. L'Nels are quite athletic and able to maneuver through an unknown vessel with great quickness.

Through advisement of other races, the l'nel have started to properly document their history using their native, runic language. While this has only occurred throughout the past 15 years, they are making evolutionary progress by learning from their mistakes.

XENO TEMPLATE

- **Aggression:** Due to their aggressive nature, l'nels are viewed by most races to be callous and malicious. Gain the Mean (Minor) hindrance.

- **Combat Training:** From birth, the l'nels train their children to be aggressive and understand the ins and outs of combat. Gain a free d6 in Fighting.
- **Language:** L'Nels are fluent in the L'Nel and Argosian languages.
- **Skilled:** The l'nels have bred physical abilities into their race. Those who are strongest are offered the greatest positions of power. Gain +1 die type to Agility.

PRIMAS (PREE-MAHS)

Primas are a relatively young race, discovered during gemini deep-space exploration. They did not possess much technology, but had evolved enough to create a language and establish a thriving society. Upon meeting the gemini, a peculiar bond formed and a peculiar kinship was born. This brought all sorts of new technology which the primas promptly adopted.

Primas are evolved primates with typical primate bodies. Their arms are long with 5 long and thick fingers on each hand, resulting in poor dexterity. These thick hands can be used as clubs for quick melee attacks (Str+d6 damage). Their bodies are thick and strength flows freely throughout the race. They are covered in hair except for patches on their hands, feet, faces and chests. Their average height is 6 ft. with females averaging approximately 6 in. shorter than males. As they are a young race and still evolving, the average life span is only 80 years.

Primas are not particularly violent, but they sometimes struggle to control their rage. While their demeanor is docile, continued provocation can throw them into a frenzy-like state. The more civilized primas attempt to control this rage through sheer will and meditation.

HISTORY

The primas race is quite young and only dates back around 2,000 years. Prior evolutions of the race potentially date back an additional 8,000 years, but no one truly knows. Many archaeological studies are being performed to properly date the primas and document their history, but ongoing efforts are very slow. There is very little written about this history and translating stories has proven to be mostly ineffective.

Around 2,000 years ago the primas developed (after millennia of evolution) the ability to communicate and think in ways outside of a primal state. Over the course of the next century, they began building communities with structures for protection from the elements, creating weapons for hunting local game and developing an understanding of growing and harvesting crops. Small tribes grew into larger tribes and the knowledge was passed on from family to family, and generation to generation.

As these communities grew, in size and strength, they discovered new technologies and developed an advanced, written language. They formalized education and soon small towns with homes, businesses and farms became commonplace. At this point, according to gemini scientists, the primas became truly civilized. Though the explanation is simple, the process was not. Decades of struggle were common and going from evolved to civilized is estimated to have taken 500 years.

From what the gemini have learned, the primas population started to grow significantly upon becoming "civilized". Their small town grew into a city surrounded by small tribal gatherings similar to a rural setting. This helped to further

enhance the discovery of technology and the continued formalization of education, but it neglected to address one major flaw within the primas race – their rage.

After another 500 years of evolution and growth, the primas still could not find a way to control their own rage. When scuffles would occur, the end result would be a large brawl. When a single primas becomes enraged, those around him or her often became enraged as well. Property damage was extremely common and considered a part of their society. The eldest of the tribes, often the chieftains, did not stop this from continuing. Those who knew the most about the outside world understood that rage is a weapon in the hands of the primas.

Throughout the following 1,000 years, until arrival of the gemini race, the chieftains and elders taught the male primas how to channel their rage, to develop warriors, which resulted in a small amount of control. When the gemini race first encountered the primas on their home world of Theta (named by the gemini), they spent countless days studying from afar so as not to endanger themselves. Upon learning pieces of Priman, the primas language, and gaining a small understanding of their culture, the gemini explorers entered the main town with extreme caution.

They were set upon by large, intimidating guards. Their limited use of Priman confused and frightened the squad. After a simple request to speak to the chieftain, the explorers were escorted to the main lodge. Doing their best to speak in short, simple and completely friendly statements, they assured the chieftain they meant no harm and were there only to help. While the chieftain was skeptical, the technology produced by the explorers was awe-inspiring and an alliance was made. The explorers continued to learn Priman, while teaching the Argosian language, and the primas finally set sail for the stars.

GOVERNMENT

The primas do not have any real government. Those who live in separate communities retain their tribal ways, and are led by a single chieftain. Those who are a part of non-primas communities leave the politics to more developed races.

Within each primas tribe is a chieftain, appointed through some form of determined royalty. This royalty could stem from the bloodline of the original settling family (being the dominate male), determined by a brutal battle to the death (the survivor becomes the chieftain) or appointed in recognition of some honorable or heroic deed (such as saving the tribe). The chieftain is the only one who can make decisions although they often seek the knowledge of their closest compatriots.



Primas members of the House of the Alliance are typically appointed to military or guard duty. This actually suits their society well as it avoids forcing them to conform to a more civilized standard or unwanted evolution. Primas officers in gemini squads are regarded highly by every tribe.

MILITARY

Primas do not have a military of their own. They have learned to protect their tribes, especially the women and children, through defensive measures, but this does not amount to any type of organized military. Instead they have opted to join the gemini military and become an integral piece of the Allied Navy. The military teaches them how to avoid raging by teaching self-control. They also teach when raging is appropriate and can help turn the tide in a losing battle.

A primas' strength is a major factor in their success within the gemini military. They are able to carry heavy weapons, which most gemini cannot, allowing the front lines to advance instead of relegating the heavy weapons to a single post providing cover fire. Primas are thus a large portion of any planet-side force, but not one designed for space combat. The primas do not find this to be a problem. They prefer to stay away from spaceships as much as possible.

SPACE TRAVEL

Primas have not developed their own spaceships nor do they desire to. They reluctantly travel with the gemini and other friendly races and feel developing their own means of space travel is a waste of time and effort. While they are not afraid to fly, they attempt to avoid it. A primas is most at home on the ground.

XENO RELATIONS

The primas do not interact with very many allied races outside of the gemini race and those who are actively teaching their kin. Military relations are strictly between them and the gemini, using a strict chain of command. Many allied races thus know very little about the primas and opt to not form any biased opinions. The gemini speak very highly of the primas and report to the Alliance that they continue to evolve and mature with each passing year.

MODERN TIMES

The primas have assimilated into much of the gemini culture. While they do not live in gemini communities, they take residence very near them in tribal societies. They stay close to gemini populated areas for food and building supplies along with the small bits of technology they keep. This is true across all gemini-populated planets.

As members of the Alliance and all arms of the Allied Navy, the primas continue to gain military strength and ability and train to become skilled fighters (including protectors of their own tribes). They look toward the gemini race for further training and rely upon other intelligent races for teaching and guidance (including the evolution of their own language). Each member of the race tries to be as peaceful as possible with all other allied races, even if they are viewed as unsophisticated brutes. While primas are not as evolved as other races, they are more than capable of ripping their enemies apart with simple weapons. Most races understand this and thus treat the primas with respect.

The primas have learned religion and the workings of modern society. While they still struggle with advanced technology, they have learned to use almost every military weapon available and are learning how to operate electronic equipment. The process is slow, but their teachers (such as the festoons) are very patient.

XENO TEMPLATE

- **Language:** Primas are fluent in the Priman and Argosian languages.
- **Large Hands:** The primas race is known for having large hands and lack fine dexterity skills. These big hands and thick fingers get in the way when attempting to work with smaller devices, tools, and especially electronics. Gain the All Thumbs (Minor) hindrance. In addition, mercenaries can never take the Ace, Gadgyteer or McGyver Edges.
- **Large Arms:** While large hands give them a definite disadvantage, their large arms are a product of increased strength. Gain +1 die type to Strength.
- **Long Arms:** While their arms may be large and strong, they are also long and used for running, but not walking. Mercenaries may not perform any combat action (other than defensive) during a round in which they also run.
- **Primate Nature:** The primas race is a primate race and accustomed to living in jungles and forests. Gain a free d6 in Climbing.

SCHRILANG (SHRIH-LAHNG)

The schrilang are an extremely violent race. Their inclusion into the House of the Alliance was far from diplomatic after they were first encountered during an invasion of a gemini outpost. They harbor advanced weaponry and are skilled in hand-to-hand combat, thanks to their training with their natural knife-like hand protrusions.

Schrlang bodies are like that of a scorpion, but they lack legs. Instead, they move about on a snake-like tail that allows them to stand upright (they do not slither on the ground). Their arms end in a large hand with four long fingers and two longer protrusions. Each of these protrusions has a knife-like surface on them made of extremely hard bone. Although the protrusions are about 2 ft. long, the knife edge is only half that. These are used as melee weapons and their warriors are taught from a young age how to properly wield them.

Schrlang are fairly tall, about 8 ft. total, but 2 ft. of that is curled at the end to allow them to move about. This curled end prevents them from walking as fast as a Gemini, but allows them to run at the same speed. Most schrlang live for 75 years, and there is little difference between the males and females. Both are equally aggressive and both are generally the same height.

Schrlang have grown into a very military-oriented species with almost everyone being a warrior, leader, or support soldier. Before joining the House of the Alliance, they were known to regularly raid outposts, moons, and sparsely-settled planets. The gemini thought this was an act of piracy, but the schrlang rarely stole from their victims. Instead, it appeared as though they craved the thrill of mass killings.

HISTORY

The schrlang have known little outside of violence and death since their earliest historical recordings 2,000 years ago. While the species has definitely been in existence well before that time, they have no knowledge of their life prior to these recordings. Their home world of Skrague is an extremely violent environment

where one needs to protect themselves even from the overgrown insects. For this, the schrilang have been fighting for their lives since day one.

Because of the violent environment across Skrague, the schrilang live within cave systems and only surface to hunt for food. Within these caves is an extremely long city-state that goes on for around 150 miles. Within the center of this city-state is the core of their knowledge center. Here, they perform all types of research, including how to leave their planet.

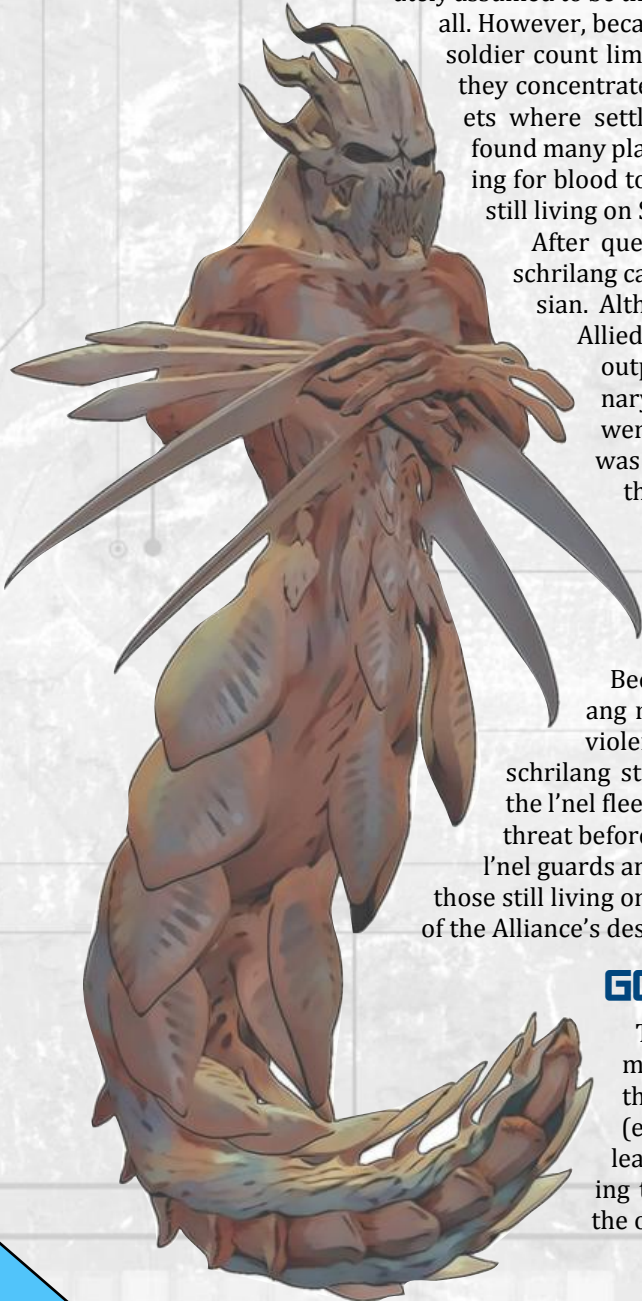
200 years ago, schrilang leaders made a breakthrough and discovered space flight. Their goal was originally to leave Skrague and find a new home world, but their violent tendencies took over once they left. The schrilang know very little outside of survival and violence and any xeno race they came across was immediately assumed to be threat and they moved into position to kill them all. However, because the schrilang fleets are so small and their soldier count limited, they cannot attack a full army. Instead, they concentrated on outposts, moon installments, and planets where settlement was very sparse. Even though they found many planets that could harbor their race, their yearning for blood took over and they never looked back at those still living on Skrague.

After questing across the cosmos for 150 years, the schrilang came upon a gemini outpost not far from Cour-sian. Although the outpost was seemingly small, the Allied Navy was nearby and the corporations on the outpost were extremely powerful with mercenary forces to match. The schrilang invaders were easily overwhelmed and their entire fleet was surrounded by the Allied Navy. They were then given an ultimatum: stop their raids and join the House of the Alliance or be permanently erased from the galaxy. Seeing no other choice, they relented by halting their raids across the galaxy and becoming a part of the House of the Alliance.

Because of their violent nature, the entire schrilang race is under the watchful eye of the equally violent l'nels (who have superior firepower). If the schrilang step out of their gemini-imposed boundaries, the l'nel fleets are ordered to fire at will and eliminate the threat before it can leave the solar system. A large force of l'nel guards are also stationed on Skrague's moon to ensure those still living on Skrague do not attempt to thwart the House of the Alliance's desires.

GOVERNMENT

The schrilang do not have a formal government. The majority of them are warriors and those who are not, either support the warriors (even the children support the warriors) or lead them. The leaders are responsible for creating the technology necessary to survive and are the ones who discovered space travel.



Schrilang warriors are divided into smaller forces with each one led by a single leader. Forces range in size from ten to fifty with the average size being twenty. These warriors not only protect their kin on Skrague from predators, they are also responsible for hunting food and finding sources of sustenance (such as locating water and foraging). It is imperative that these warriors bring food back to the city-state and thus they need to be trained to defend themselves. For this, all support schrilang are never allowed outside of the underground city-state or off their spacecraft.

This style of military-focused ranking has made the schrilang warriors optimal recruits in mercenary forces and even the Allied Navy. They are not only very skilled warriors; they always do whatever their leader says, without question. Many Masters of the Mercenary Forces have difficulties dealing with their violent nature, but in the end, the schrilang mercenaries always get the job done.

SPACE TRAVEL

The schrilang have developed spacecraft. Although these craft are low-tech compared to many species, they get the job done and allowed the schrilang to travel great distances, wreaking havoc everywhere they went. Due to the sanctions placed on their actions by the gemini, schrilang spacecraft must provide regular information to their l'nel watchers. If they reach a planet and intend to travel planet-side, they must first gain clearance. If they enter uncharted space, they must acquire proper authorization before establishing a settlement.

These sanctions are strictly enforced, but expire in 50 years. The gemini hope the schrilang realize the error of their ways by then and expect them to live a fruitful life within the Argo Galaxy. However, if they return to their predatory ways, the l'nel are once again ordered to open fire and eliminate any possible threats.

XENO RELATIONS

Almost every species within the House of the Alliance loathes the schrilang. The gemini are hopeful that their race will turn a new leaf and find a new home world with the possible goal of "restarting" their race. They are strong warriors and excellent soldiers, making them optimal additions to the Allied Navy, as long as they don't get out of line.

The festoons would love to learn about the schrilang, but they are too fearful of being attacked once their backs are turned. The l'nels treat the schrilang almost as slaves and love the idea of acting as their guardians (permission to keep the schrilang in line makes a l'nel smile). As such, they are dealt with cautiously.

MODERN TIMES

The schrilang are attempting to rebuild themselves; they are extremely interested in being an integral part of the House of the Alliance and would like to move from their violent life to a more prosperous one. They have no monetary desires as of yet, but do wish to see their race grow and thrive. However, it will take a lot of work to find a suitable home world and leave Skrague behind.

The schrilang are a member of the House of the Alliance, but they have no political representation. Their warriors have found homes within the Allied Navy and mercenary forces abroad, but their leaders still lack the ability to be diplomatic and address important matters without resorting to outright violence. They are a race dedicated to bettering themselves, but they have thousands of years of violence to overcome.

XENO TEMPLATE

- **Language:** Schrilangs are fluent in the Schril and Argosian languages.
- **Serpentine Body:** Schrilangs have a serpentine like body with no legs. They walk slowly, but can still run quickly. Their Pace is reduced to 5.
- **Bladed Hands:** Schrilang have long knife like growths protruding from their hands. These Natural Weapons cause Str+d6 damage.
- **Poisonous:** The knife-like protrusions on the schrilang are poisonous. Victims that suffer a Shaken result from their attack must make a Vigor roll or be paralyzed for 2d6 rounds.

RANDOM XENO GENERATOR

When creating a new race, a list of positive and negative abilities is attributed to the characteristics of that race. Gemini do not have a racial template and simply gain a new Edge. To keep the system and setting balanced, the net result of a racial template for any created race should be +2, the equivalent of a free Novice Edge.

Use the positive and negative abilities ranging from -3 to +3 in any combination that produces a net result of +2. A random generator is provided in the tables below. Use the **Making Races** guide within the *Savage Worlds Deluxe* core rulebook for further guidance.

This Random Xeno Generator toolkit can be used to randomly create a new xeno template before character creation, as guidance for players creating their own xeno race, or GMs looking to add new xeno races to their setting or campaign.

To create a new race, use the standard deck of playing cards and deal out a total of 3 cards. Each card’s suit and value define the different racial characteristics. Examples for creating the racial template are provided for guidance and are not meant as a decisive feature. Your net result should always be +2. If a Joker is dealt, place it back into the deck and deal a new card.

READING THE CARDS

The first card’s suit defines the type of race. This card’s value then defines a prominent characteristic of that race.

The second card’s suit defines the overall physicality of the race. This card’s value then defines a prominent characteristic associated with that type of physicality.

The third card’s suit defines a special trait exhibited by that race. This card’s value further defines that trait including its in-game effect.

CARD NUMBER ONE

Club	Gemini: The race is similar in structure to a gemini in that they are humanoid with skin.
Diamond	Mammal: The race is similar to that of a mammal with fur and animal instincts.
Heart	Avian: The race is similar to that of a bird with wings, talons, and a beak.
Spade	Reptile: The race is similar to that of a serpent or lizard with scales, claws, and a tail.

CARD VALUE

2	Short. (-2) Size becomes -1, imposing a -1 penalty to Toughness.
3	Tall. (+2) Size becomes +1, providing a +1 bonus to Toughness.
4	Long arms. (+1) They gain +1 Reach.
5	Three arms. (+2) Gain one extra non-movement action per limb with no multi-action penalty.
6	Large hands. (+1) Gain a free d6 in Climbing.
7	Pointed ears. (+1) Gain a +2 to Notice for sound.
8	Large eyes. (+1) Gain a +2 to Notice for sight.
9	Thick skin. (+2) Gain +2 to Armor.
10	Strong hands. (+2) Gain the Brawler Edge.
J	Increased brain capacity. (+2) Start with a d6 in Smarts.
Q	Heat/Cold tolerance. (+1) +4 bonus to Vigor to resist the effects of the chosen tolerance.
K	Resilient. (+1) Immune to either poison or disease.
A	Flight. (+2) Gain the Flight ability.

CARD NUMBER TWO

Club	Agility: The race is visibly more or less agile than the average gemini.
Diamond	Strength: The race is visibly stronger or weaker than the average gemini.
Heart	Speed: The race is visibly faster or slower than the average gemini.
Spade	Dexterity: The race visibly has better or worse motor skills than the average gemini.

CARD VALUE (CLUBS)

2-3	Athletic. (+2) Start with a d6 in Agility.
4-5	Sluggish. (-3) Agility requires two points per step to raise during character generation and two Advances must be dedicated to raising Agility during game play.
6-7	Acrobatic. (+1) Gain a +1 bonus to Agility when making any type of acrobatic maneuver.
8-9	Clumsy. (-2) Receive a -1 penalty to Agility when making any type of acrobatic maneuver.
10-J	Quick hands. (+2) Gain the Quick Draw Edge.
Q-K	Fumble. (-2) When dealt a 10 or higher in combat, discard and draw again until you get a card that is lower than 10.
A	Great reflexes. (+2) Gain the Quick Edge.

CARD VALUE (DIAMONDS)

2-3	Strong. (+2) Start with a d6 in Strength.
4-5	Weak. (-3) Strength requires two points per step to raise during character generation and two Advances must be dedicated to raising Strength during game play.
6-7	Solid. (+2) Gain a +1 bonus to Toughness.
8-9	Feeble. (-2) Receive a -1 penalty to Toughness.
10-J	Iron fists. (+2) Gain the Brawler Edge.
Q-K	Delicate. (-1) Unarmed attacks impose a -1 penalty to damage.
A	Firm grip. (+2) Gain the Steady Hands Edge.

CARD VALUE (HEARTS)

- 2-3 Fast. (+1) Start with a Pace of 8.
- 4-5 Slow. (-1) Start with a Pace of 5.
- 6-7 Quick. (+2) Gain a +1 bonus to Agility when evading an area effect attack.
- 8-9 Indolent. (-1) Receive a -1 penalty to Agility when evading an area effect attack.
- 10-J Quick attack. (+2) Gain the First Strike Edge.
- Q-K Slow attack. (-1) Gain the Pacifist (Minor) Hindrance.
- A Fast feet. (+2) Gain the Fleet-Footed Edge.

CARD VALUE (SPADES)

- 2-3 Steady hands. (+1) Gain a +1 bonus to Driving or Piloting.
- 4-5 Shaky hands. (-2) Receive a -1 penalty to Fighting, Shooting, and Throwing.
- 6-7 Supple fingers. (+1) Gain a free d6 in Healing or Repair.
- 8-9 Big fingers. (-1) Receive a -1 penalty to Shooting.
- 10-J Good balance. (+1) Reduce the Unstable Platform penalty to -1.
- Q-K Poor balance. (-1) Unstable Platforms impose an additional -1 penalty.
- A Coordinated. (+1) Gain a free d6 in Fighting or Throwing.

CARD NUMBER THREE

- | | |
|---------|---|
| Club | Physical: The race has a unique physical trait. |
| Diamond | Mental: The race has a unique mental trait. |
| Heart | Spiritual: The race has a unique spiritual trait. |
| Spade | Racial: The race has a unique trait that is inherent to their races home world or ecology. |

CARD VALUE (CLUBS)

- 2-3 Natural weapons. (+1) Gain a Str+d6 natural weapon.
- 4-5 Feral. (-3) Smarts requires two points per step to raise during character generation and two Advances must be dedicated to raising Smarts during game play.
- 6-7 Synthetic. (-3) Spirit requires two points per step to raise during character generation and two Advances must be dedicated to raising Spirit during game play.
- 8-9 Carnivore. (-2) Gain the Bloodthirsty Hindrance.
- 10-J Canine. (+2) Gain the Alertness Edge.
- Q-K Adaptive pigmentation. (+1) Gain a free d6 in Stealth.
- A Natural armor. (+2) Gain a +2 bonus to Armor.

CARD VALUE (DIAMONDS)

- 2-3 Aggressive. (-1) Gain the Mean Hindrance.
- 4-5 Corrupt. (-2) Opponents receive a +2 bonus to Persuasion rolls.
- 6-7 Vast Memory. (+2) Gain a +2 bonus to all Knowledge rolls to recall information.
- 8-9 Foolish. (-2) Gain the Curious Hindrance.
- 10-J Naïve. (-1) Receive a -1 penalty to all Common Knowledge rolls.
- Q-K Intelligent. (+2) Start with a d6 in Smarts.
- A Perceptive. (+1) Gain a +2 bonus to Investigation.

CARD VALUE (HEARTS)

- 2-3** Devout. (+2) Start with a d6 in Spirit.
- 4-5** Empathetic. (+2) Gain a +2 bonus to Charisma.
- 6-7** Immoral. (-1) Gain the Delusional Hindrance.
- 8-9** Honest. (-1) Receive a -1 penalty to Streetwise.
- 10-J** Dishonest. (-1) Receive a -2 penalty to Charisma.
- Q-K** Agnostic. (-3) Spirit requires two points per step to raise during character generation and two Advances must be dedicated to raising Spirit during game play.
- A** Aloof. (-1) Gain the Outsider Hindrance.

CARD VALUE (SPADES)

- 2-3** Aquatic. (+2) Cannot drown, gain a free d6 in Swimming, moves at full Swimming skill.
- 4-5** Jungle environment. (+1) Gain a free d6 in Tracking.
- 6-7** Toxic environment. (+2) Immune to poison and disease.
- 8-9** Spacefaring. (+1) gain a free d6 in Navigating.
- 10-J** Underground environment. (+1) Gain low light vision.
- Q-K** Tribal. (+1) Gain a free d6 in Survival.
- A** Sand environment. (+1) Gain burrowing.

CALCULATE THE TOTAL

Using the table as-is can easily produce a racial template with a net result higher than +2. To remedy this, choose negative attributes that reduce the total to +2 or change the characteristic of that attribute to a negative ability instead of a positive one.

EXAMPLE: *Large hands can give you the +1 attribute to gain a free d6 in Climbing. An alternative -1 attribute would be the loss of manual dexterity, gaining the All Thumbs Hindrance.*

CHARACTERISTIC DESCRIPTIONS

Now that you have a list of characteristics for your new race, describe how they manifest themselves. This helps to define what the new race looks like and why they exhibit these differences compared to the average gemini.

EXAMPLE: *The primas are physically strong and start with a d6 in Strength (or +1 to die type). This characteristic is manifested visually as large, bulging arms.*



EQUIPMENT

What mercenary would be complete without the right equipment to perform the job? They need the right weapons, armor, and gear to fulfill the mission according to the desires of their employer. It's also handy in keeping the mercenary alive.

Standard issue equipment is not purchased by the mercenaries; it is requisitioned from the corporation via a cache of weapons either on-hand or from resources available to all Masters of the Mercenary Forces. For in-game purposes, this equipment is requisitioned well ahead of time and available once the mercenaries are ready to deploy.

MELEE WEAPONS

Melee weapons are any weapon used in hand-to-hand combat. Each one has an associated RP, being the minimum amount of Reputation the mercenary must have before being able to requisition that weapon.

Battle Axe: a large axe designed for combat. These weigh less and are more easily wielded than a standard axe for splitting wood.

Brass Knuckles: a small hand weapon with metal ringlets that fit around the fingers. These are used to inflict more damage when punching.

Chain Axe: a chainsaw designed in the shape of an axe. These can be wielded with one hand and provide good armor penetration.

Chain Sword: a chainsaw designed in the shape of a sword. These can be wielded with one hand and provide good armor penetration.

Dagger: a well-balanced thrusting and stabbing weapon with edges on two sides. These can be used as throwing weapon, using the same stats as a knife.

Electrostick: a larger version of a shockstick. These utilize a large electrical discharge to incapacitate the target. Their damage is typically non-lethal.

Halberd: a pole weapon with an axe head and mounted spike.

Hand-forged Weapons: Most weapons are built in large volume, production facilities. Hand-forged ones are crafted by artisans for superior quality.

Katana: a light, precision-crafted sword designed for use against armor or thick skin.

Molecular Weapons: Some weapons built in large volumes travel to honing centers for post-production. From there, they're edges are laser sharpened to the molecular level.

Rapier: a light, artisan-crafted sword designed for traditional melee combat. These are more of a "gentleman's" sword and used in sword fighting shows.

Shockstick: a club-like weapon that utilizes a large electrical discharge to incapacitate the target. Their damage is typically nonlethal.

Spear: a pole weapon with a pointed head for stabbing. These are designed for thrusting in combat. Thrown spears are referred to as javelins.

Survival Knife: a knife with attachments used for survival. They make quick weapons when necessary and their weight is negligible.

Switchblade: a knife that folds in half for easier concealment. To accommodate this, their hilt is open.

Sword: a standard thrusting and stabbing weapon. These are not common, standard issue weapons, because they are larger and more difficult to conceal during a mission.

Vibro Weapons: an electrically powered version of molecular weapons for increased armor and bone penetration.

War Hammer: a handled weapon with a hammer head designed for use in combat. These are more useful against rigid armor.

MELEE WEAPONS TABLE

Type	DMG	WT	RP	Notes
AXES & CLUBS				
Axe, Battle	Str+d6	4	0	
Axe, Chain	Str+d6+4	6	15	AP 2, a natural 1 on the Fighting die (regardless of the Wild die) hits the user instead
Axe, Hand-forged	Str+d6	4	5	AP 2
Axe, Molecular	Str+d6+2	4	10	AP 2
Axe, Vibro	Str+d6+4	4	25	AP 6
Brass Knuckles	Str+d4	1	0	You are considered an Unarmed Attacker
Electrostick	3d6	2	5	Requires 1 action to reload, 50% chance of causing +1 level of Fatigue
Shockstick	2d6	2	0	Requires 1 action to reload
War Hammer	Str+d6	2	0	AP 1 vs. rigid armor
BLADES				
Dagger	Str+d4	1	0	
Dagger, Hand-forged	Str+d4	1	5	AP 2
Katana	Str+d6+2	3	10	AP 2
Knife, Molecular	Str+d4+2	1	10	AP 2
Knife, Survival	Str+2	-	0	+1 to Survival rolls
Knife, Vibro	Str+d4+4	1	20	AP 6
Rapier	Str+d4	2	0	Parry +1
Switchblade	Str+d4	1	0	-2 to be Noticed if hidden
Sword	Str+d8	4	0	
Sword, Chain	Str+d8+4	10	15	AP 2, a natural 1 on the Fighting die (regardless of the Wild die) hits the user instead
Sword, Hand-forged	Str+d8	4	5	AP 2
Sword, Molecular	Str+d8+2	4	15	AP 4
Sword, Vibro	Str+d8+4	4	30	AP 8
POLEARMS				
Halberd	Str+d8	6	0	Reach 1, 2 hands
Halberd, Hand-forged	Str+d8	6	5	AP 2, Reach 1, 2 hands
Halberd, Molecular	Str+d8+2	6	15	AP 4, Reach 1, 2 hands
Halberd, Vibro	Str+d8+4	6	30	AP 8, Reach 1, 2 hands
Spear	Str+d6	2	0	Parry +1, Reach 1, 2 hands
Spear, Molecular	Str+d4+2	2	10	AP 2, Parry +1, Reach 1, 2 hands
Spear, Vibro	Str+d4+4	2	25	AP 6, Parry +1, Reach 1, 2 hands

RANGED WEAPONS

Ranged weapons are anything that allows for an attack from a distance. This ranges from simple bows and thrown daggers to high-tech rifles like railguns and coilguns. Each one has an associated RP, being the minimum amount of Reputation the mercenary must have before being able to requisition that weapon. Minimum Strength has been abbreviated to Str.

PISTOLS

Hand Revolver: a small, easily concealed pistol that only holds six bullets. These are often used as throwaway guns or back-up should one run out of bullets at inopportune times. They are small enough to be concealed in a boot, pocket, or a secret compartment in some armor sets.

Hand Pistol: a standard-issue, semi-automatic pistol typical in close engagements. These are the preferred weapon for most mercenaries in urban settings and are chosen frequently as side-arms to augment those carrying rifles.

Plasma Pistol: a hand pistol with an attached canister that uses electrical energy to superheat plasma. These are extremely powerful weapons with projectiles that explode on impact. However, they are somewhat volatile and a jammed weapon can cause the pistol to overheat. When rolling a critical failure (a 1 on both Shooting and Wild dice), the weapon overheats. The wielder drops it and must make a Vigor roll or become Shaken. This can cause a wound. They can never be shot more than once a round as they require a few seconds to cool down before firing again.

Needle Pistol: a hand pistol designed to pierce armor. These fire bullets with needle-like points that more easily penetrate armor than standard bullets. However, the firing mechanism is more delicate and intricate, preventing a clip from holding as many rounds.

MACHINE GUNS

Machine Gun: a standard-issue, military machine gun. These are a typical squad support weapon for the Allied Navy. They require bracing to be utilized.

Submachine Gun: a standard-issue, military submachine gun, smaller than its machine gun counterpart. They can be fired without bracing.

RIFLES

Assassins Rifle: an extreme range rifle preferred by assassins. These are used for long range sniper fire and are typically equipped with an optical scope. They require bracing for proper accuracy.

Assault Rifle: a standard-issue, military assault rifle. These are a typical weapon from the Allied Navy.

Coilgun: a rifle with electromagnetic coils that accelerate the bullet. This acceleration causes the bullet to hit harder and break through armor easier. They require bracing for proper accuracy and can never be shot more than once a round as they require a few seconds to cool down before firing again.

Electrothermal Rifle: a rifle with an attached canister that uses electrical energy to superheat plasma in a focused beam. It is used for penetrating armor, but has a very limited range. They are somewhat volatile and a jammed weapon can cause the rifle to overheat. When rolling a critical failure (a 1 on both Shooting and Wild dice), the weapon overheats. The wielder drops it and must make a Vigor

or roll or become Shaken. This can cause a wound. They can never be shot more than once a round as they require a few seconds to cool down before firing again.

Hunting Rifle: a lesser version of the assassins rifle. They are a common sniper weapon used by young mercenaries, and are typically equipped with an optical scope. They require bracing for proper accuracy.

Plasma Rifle: a rifle with an attached canister that uses electrical energy to superheat plasma. Unlike the electrothermal rifle, they are used for explosive projectiles. They are somewhat volatile and a jammed weapon can cause the rifle to overheat. When rolling a critical failure (a 1 on both Shooting and Wild dice), the weapon overheats. The wielder drops it and must make a Vigor roll or become Shaken. This can cause a wound. They require bracing for proper accuracy and can never be shot more than once a round as they require a few seconds to cool down before firing again.

Railgun: a rifle with two parallel metal rails connected to a power supply. A conductive projectile is sent between the two rails, completing the circuit and accelerating the projectile to high speeds and great distances. The current that runs through the projectile also heats it, allowing it to punch through armor. The effect is a powerful weapon that can be used at long ranges with devastating force. They require bracing for proper accuracy and can never be shot more than once a round as they require a few seconds to cool down before firing again.

Scram Rifle: a sealed rifle that creates a supersonic combustion as a projectile passes through it. The energy created propels the projectile to velocities slightly higher than a railgun. However, the technology is lighter and a little more accurate. They require bracing for proper accuracy and can never be

shot more than once a round as they require a few seconds to cool down.

Semi-Auto Rifle: a standard-issue, military semi-automatic rifle. These are a typical weapon of the Allied Navy.

SHOTGUNS

Double-barrel: a standard-issue double-barrel shotgun. These are a typical weapon of many local authorities.

Pump Action: a standard-issue double-barrel shotgun. These are a typical weapon of mercenary forces.

SPECIAL

Flamethrower: a fire emitting weapon that uses the Cone Template. These require two hands to use and a large backpack to store the gas.

Grenade: an exploding projectile that is thrown at enemies. These house metal shrapnel that damages everything around using a Medium-Blast Template.

Hand Flamer: a smaller version of the flamethrower, it can be utilized with only one hand and requires a pack that can be carried on the hip.

Plasma Grenade: a grenade packed with superheated plasma. When the pin is removed, a stored electrical energy superheats the plasma within before it's allowed to explode. Unlike metal shrapnel, it can penetrate armor.

BOWS AND THROWN

Compound Bow: a bow that uses pulleys and cables to bend the limbs and project the arrow. These are a typical weapon of covert forces where firearms create unwanted attention.

Crossbow: a horizontal limb assembly mounted on a stock to shoot bolts. These can be carried like a pistol, but require two hands for reloading.

Javelin: a narrow spear designed for throwing. These are light enough that several can be strapped to the back.

Knife: a knife properly weighted for use as a thrown weapon. These can be used as regular melee weapons, using the same properties as a dagger.

Longbow: a traditional bow made from wood. These are more for looks than practical use as the compound bow is more efficient and requires less strength.

Tomahawk: a hatchet-like axe weighted for use as a thrown weapon. These can be used as regular melee weapons using the same damage rating.

RANGED WEAPONS TABLE

Type	Range	DMG	ROF	RP	WT	Shots	Min Str
PISTOLS							
Hand Pistol	12/24/48	2d6+1	1	0	4	17	-
<i>Notes: AP 1, Semi-Auto</i>							
Hand Revolver	12/24/48	2d6+1	1	0	3	6	-
<i>Notes: AP 1, Revolver</i>							
Needle Pistol	12/24/48	2d6	1	10	3	12	-
<i>Notes: AP 5</i>							
Plasma Pistol	12/24/48	2d6+1	1	15	5	6	-
<i>Notes: AP 4, SBT</i>							
MACHINE GUNS							
Machine Gun	30/60/120	2d10	3	0	30	250	d8
<i>Notes: AP 2, Auto, May not move</i>							
Submachine Gun	24/48/96	2d6	3	0	10	30	-
<i>Notes: AP 1, Auto</i>							
RIFLES							
Assassins Rifle	60/120/240	2d8+2	1	10	12	5	
<i>Notes: AP 4, Snapfire</i>							
Assault Rifle	24/48/96	2d8	3	5	10	30	d6
<i>Notes: AP 2, Auto, 3RB</i>							
Coilgun	30/60/120	2d8+3	1	15	8	2	d6
<i>Notes: AP 6, Snapfire, Heavy Weapon</i>							
Electrothermal Rifle	24/48/-	2d8+1	1	15	6	-	-
<i>Notes: AP 8, Heavy Weapon</i>							
Hunting Rifle	50/100/200	2d8	1	0	12	5	d6
<i>Notes: AP 2, Snapfire</i>							
Plasma Rifle	20/40/80	2d10	1	15	8	8	d6
<i>Notes: AP 4, Snapfire, MBT, Heavy Weapon</i>							
Railgun	50/100/200	2d8+3	1	20	10	2	d8
<i>Notes: AP 8, Snapfire, Heavy Weapon</i>							
Scram Rifle	60/120/240	2d8+3	1	25	8	2	d6
<i>Notes: AP 8, Snapfire, Heavy Weapon</i>							
Semi-Auto Rifle	24/48/96	2d8	1	0	10	8	d6
<i>Notes: AP 2, Semi-Auto</i>							
SHOTGUNS							
Double-Barrel	12/24/48	1-3d6	1-2	0	11	2	-
<i>Notes: See core rulebook regarding shotguns</i>							
Pump Action	12/24/48	1-3d6	1	0	8	6	-
<i>Notes: See core rulebook regarding shotguns</i>							

SPECIAL

Flamethrower	Cone	2d10	1	15	6	-	d6
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Notes: Ignores Armor

Hand Flamer	Cone	2d6	1	10	3	-	-
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Notes: Ignores Armor

Grenade	5/10/20	3d6	-	0	2	-	-
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Notes: MBT

Plasma Grenade	5/10/20	3d6	-	10	2	-	-
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Notes: AP 4, MBT, Heavy Weapon**BOWS AND THROWN**

Compound Bow	18/36/72	2d6	1	0	6	-	d6
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Crossbow	15/30/60	2d6	1	5	10	-	d6
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Notes: AP 2, 1 action to reload

Javelin	6/12/24	Str+d4	1	0	5	-	-
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Knife	3/6/12	Str+d4	1	0	1	-	-
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Longbow	15/30/60	2d6	1	0	5	-	d8
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Tomahawk	4/8/16	Str+d4	1	0	2	-	-
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ARMOR

Armor is essential for survival. It can not only protect against attackers, it can serve as a barrier between its wearer and the environment. Many armor suits also contain special pockets for storing or concealing weapons.

PERSONAL ARMOR

Battle Suit: the most popular and public armor suit. When mercenaries are depicted in the media, they are always wearing a battle suit. These are the best armor suits a mercenary can strive to receive.

Body Glove: a specially designed material that resists attacks. These are favored by infiltrators due to their lighter weight.

Clean Suit: a sealed suit with a strong filtration system for entering toxic environments.

Flak Jacket: a basic jacket that offers good protection. These are the first armor piece offered to mercenaries.

Kevlar Vest: a basic vest for use against firearms. These are favored by those in urban settings. Inserts can be added to increase their affectivity.

Leather: a basic suit that offers a small amount of protection, but appears as a regular jacket or clothing set. These

are favored when working under cover.

Pressure Suit: a sealed suit for use under water, specifically deep sea diving.

Space Suit: a sealed suit for use in outer space.

Tactical Helmet: a solid helmet that offers good protection.

Tactical Vest: an innovative jacket that offers good protection while being able to carry a large amount of weapons. These are favored during long expeditions away from weapon reserves.

SHIELDS

Blast Shield: a larger version of the riot shield for increased protection.

Riot Shield: a basic shield with clear material on the top 4 in. for viewing. These offer additional protection, especially from ranged attacks, but require one hand to use. These cannot be strapped to the arm.

ARMOR TABLE

Type	Armor	WT	RP	Notes
PERSONAL ARMOR				
Battle Suit	+6	20	20	Covers all
Body Glove	+4	10	15	Covers all
Clean Suit	+2	15	0	Covers all, only used for missions on planets with toxic atmospheres, provides 5 hours of oxygen
Flak Jacket	+2	5	0	Covers torso
Kevlar Vest	+2/+4	6	10	Covers torso, negates AP 4 from bullets
Kevlar Vest w/inserts	+4/+8	11	20	Covers torso, negates AP 4 from bullets
Leather	+2	10	5	Covers torso, arms, legs
Leather Trench Coat	+1	8	0	Covers torso, arms, legs
Pressure Suit	+2	20	0	Covers all, only used for missions under the water, provides 5 hours of oxygen and allows for deep sea diving
Space Suit	+2	30	0	Covers all, only used for space exploration and moon missions, provides 5 hours of oxygen, weight is listed as measured in outer space
Tactical Helmet	+4	4	5	Covers head. 50% versus called head shot.
Tactical Jacket	+4	15	5	Covers torso, can hold weapons, ammo, explosives, and water
SHIELDS				
Blast Shield	-	8	10	+2 Parry, +2 Armor vs. ranged shots
Riot Shield	-	6	5	+1 Parry, +2 Armor vs. ranged shots

BASIC GEAR

Basic gear includes the mundane items that mercenaries may need to succeed at their missions. None of these items require a Reputation rating as they are always available whenever the mission requires it. If the corporation is based on a capital ship, these items would be available from a central repository of mercenary gear. If the corporation is based planet-side, these items may be in inventory storage, requiring requisition, or even an offsite third-party supplier. If it's the latter, the mercenaries requisition it on corporate credit, never having to pay for it.

Air Compressor: a standard air compressor for using repair tools. These are portable, but are still heavy and require a power source.

All-Terrain Vehicle: a standard 4- or 6-wheeled ATV for use on land, light snow, mud, woods, and mountainous terrain. These are used to go places larger vehicles cannot.

Amphibious All-Terrain Vehicle: a standard 6-wheeled ATV with a sealed bottom that floats and an engine for traveling through water. These are used in wetlands and swamps.

Audio Jammer: a RF signal jammer that prevents communication in all directions within a 1-mile radius.

Auger: a portable device for creating holes in ice and earth. Stronger versions are available for rock.

Auto Voice Recorder: a small, concealable device that automatically records voices upon detection. These can either store the recordings on a removable card or transmit their data through a wireless connection.

Backpack: a pack for holding all types of gear. These are available for all environments including hiking, rock climbing, tundra expeditions, and trudging through wetlands.

Binoculars: a device for seeing long distances. These also have range indicators to determine how far away a target is and can be used for targets up to one mile away.

Bug Detector: a device to locate telephone and network taps and auto voice recorders.

Crampons: a pair of spiked sandals that clamp onto a hiking boots. These are used for ice climbing.

Climbing Harness: a harness for attaching ropes during rock and ice climbing.

Climbing Rope: a special rope designed for climbing that resists wear when rubbing against jagged surfaces. These can also be attached to a grappling hook pistol.

Cookware: standard cookware that is easily stored.

Cross-country Skis: a set of skis designed for cross-country use. These are long and narrow and extremely strong.

Digital Camera: a hand-sized camera for taking distant pictures. These are the highest quality pictures compared to other camera devices.

Downhill Skis: a set of skis designed for downhill use. These are long, but wider than cross-country skis and very flexible.

Explosives: a set of sticks with a fuse for large explosions. These are used for creating holes or with demolition.

Flashlight: a standard flashlight that runs on a portable power source. It provides light using the Cone Template. Everything within the template is considered dim lighting, everything one inch of the template is considered dark lighting, and everything outside of that is whatever the lighting of the location is.

Goggles: a thick pair of eye-protective gear for skiing and hiking.

GPS: a device that uses satellites, capital ships, or extensive computer networks to locate its position.

Grappling Hook Pistol: a handheld pistol that has a grappling hook attachment. These are the size of a crossbow and can be used for grappling hooks with rope or to fire hooks into the sides of rock and ice surfaces for climbing.

Handcuffs: a reinforced pair of handcuffs for restraining a target. They come in numerous sizes depending on the xeno species they are intended for.

Mundane equipment in *Mercenary Breed* doesn't have a cost. This is because characters should always have access to this type of equipment in order to get the job done. They should never have to guess what they might need and have to search for that possible item; that's a waste of time and can kill a mission quickly. These are mundane because they're readily available according to the location of the characters. High technology planets have this equipment sitting at the local store. Low technology planets should be able to procure it through Alliance channels. Otherwise, the characters could obtain them from a capital ship or by planning ahead before leaving for the mission.

Most mundane equipment has a described use but not a mechanical equivalent. This is because the GM is free to determine how the lack of that equipment affects the mission or the players are free to determine what equipment is necessary for their characters to perform certain actions (such as spying).

Handheld Computer: a basic computing tool for all mercenaries. These are the size of modern day smartphones but have the computing power of a desktop computer. Although these have a touchpad, a projected keypad can be activated for faster typing. These are standard issue for all missions.

Handheld Radio: a standard 2-way radio for communication between mercenaries. They have encrypted channels to avoid jamming or signal interception. They vary in size, with the larger the device, the farther away it can transmit and receive.

Headlamp: a flashlight attachment for helmets.

Helmet Camera: a digital camera attachment for helmets.

Hidden Camera Finder: a device for detecting hidden surveillance cameras.

Hiking Boots: a standard pair of rugged boots for hiking. They are designed for easy acceptance of crampons and have attachments to fit into cross country and downhill skis.

Ice Axe: a small axe used for ice climbing. It can be used as a weapon but is then treated as a survival knife.

Ice Vehicle: a modified plane-like vehicle with large skis the size of pontoons for skimming across ice and packed snow. They have a propeller for propulsion.

Kayak: a standard one-person boat with paddle for traveling on rivers and lakes.

Lantern: a standard lantern that runs on a portable power source. It provides light using the Large Blast Template. Everything within the template is considered dim lighting, everything within two inches of the template is considered dark lighting, and everything outside of that is whatever the lighting of the location is.

Lock Pick Tools: a set of tools for picking mechanical locks.

Medical Scanner: a scanner for detecting bio-signs including poison, disease, and general health.

Monocular: a smaller version of binoculars with only a single scope instead of two. These are easier to carry but lack the range finder and only work up to 1,000 yards.

Mountain Bike: a rugged bike for use within mountains, woods, and packed trails. While much slower than an ATV, these do not produce the additional noise.

Network Taps: a tap for breaking into or monitoring computer networks.

Night Vision Goggles: a customized set of binoculars for seeing at night. These have the range finder but only work up to 1,000 yards. They eliminate the penalties for Dim and Dark lighting.

Optical Scope: a powerful scope attachment for rifles. Scopes provide a +2 bonus on Shooting rolls at Medium range or longer.

Parabolic Microphone: a long-ranged omni-directional microphone that can pick-up noises up to 500 yards away. These do require a headphone attachment to hear what noises are being picked up.

Personal Watercraft: a small, motorized vehicle for use on the water. These are fast but can only hold up to two riders.

Phone Taps: a tap for listening to telephone lines.

Portable Shelter: a small, easy-to-build shelter for harsh environments. These can house up to three people or two people with full gear. These take about 10 minutes to assemble and are good down to -50°F.

Portable Welder: a portable machine for creating large enough electrical charges to perform spot welding. These are heavy and require a power source.

Protective Helmets: a helmet for use while climbing. These offer protection against falling rocks and short-fall injuries. They can also be used as armor similar to the tactical helmet but with only +2 armor protection.

Repair Tools: a standard set of tools for making repairs. These are either hand tools or ones that run off an air compressor, depending on the task needed.

Rock Climbing Bolting Gear: a standard set of gear for ascending a 1,000-foot wall. These are bolted to the surface for rope attachment.

Rock Climbing Shoes: a specialized pair of hiking boots specifically made for climbing rocks. These have extra grip on the bottom to avoid slipping on rocky surfaces.

Rope: a standard rope that can be used for climbing open areas. These are not ideal for rocky surfaces as they are not reinforced. However, their surface allows for climbing without additional footholds.

Satellite Communication: a backpack radio for communicating extreme distances. These use satellites or capital ships to relay messages across the planet.

Security Bypass Tools: a handheld device for hacking electronic security systems.

Security Camera: a motion-activated camera for monitoring small areas.

Shovel: a standard folding shovel for digging in snow, sand, or dirt.

Ski Boots: an attachment to hiking boots that allow use with cross-country and downhill skis.

Ski Poles: a standard set of folding poles for cross-country and downhill skis.

Sleeping Bag: a standard sack for environmental protection down to -10°F without a shelter and -50°F with a shelter.

Snow Shoes: an attachment to hiking boots that allow for faster, more efficient walking across the snow.

Snowmobile: a small, motorized vehicle for use in the snow. These are fast but can only hold two riders.

Surveillance Camera: a small, concealable camera for performing various types of surveillance. These can be hidden in numerous objects including statues, lamps, pens, and just about anything imaginable.

Video Jammer: a video signal jammer that prevents video communication in all directions within a 1-mile radius.

Watch Radios: a small 2-way radio stored within a watch. These have a range of up to 200 yards.

Water Purifier: a handheld device for purifying water. These are even usable in swamps and wetlands.

Waterproof Clothing: a special set of clothing to keep the wearer dry. These are not used for underwater diving, but are used when traveling across the water and swimming for brief periods.

Winter Gear: a special set of clothing and gear to keep the wearer warm. These are designed to allow easy movement while hiking and climbing and offer protection down to -20°F without a shelter and -60°F with a shelter.

Wireless Interceptor: a tap for listening to communication across wireless devices.

TECH BACKGROUNDS

Mercenary Breed is a sci-fi setting; arcane simply doesn't exist (unless the GM says so). Instead of Arcane Backgrounds, there are Tech Backgrounds. Much like their Arcane counterparts, Tech is the creation of devices, implants, genetics, or whatever to create extraordinary effects. However, to make them stand out from their Arcane counterparts, Tech starts with the Weird Science template and builds from there to create those technological gadgets with varying effects. To keep things simple, these effects are the same as the Powers found in Savage Worlds.

The Tech Backgrounds presented below are designed to emulate some of the themes presented in **Setting Themes**. Tech can thus be part of character creation or used to build NPCs for various mission, campaign, and setting themes. However, each one is different and notes such as trappings are provided for completeness. It's not enough to provide a Tech Background, it is imperative to understand it and how it can be implemented quickly into your games.

MAKING TECH CHARACTERS

Creating a Tech character is done by choosing the Tech Background Edge. From there, choose the desired background and then choose what type of technology applies to that background. Six different backgrounds are provided: Biotechnology, Cybernetics, Nanotechnology, Psionics, Science, and Sorcery. All backgrounds use the same base list of powers, but some powers only apply to certain backgrounds (feasibly at least).

TECH SKILL

Each Tech Background has an associated tech skill used for either creating or utilizing the technology: Genomics for biotechnology, Neuroscience for cybernetics, Programming for nanotechnology, Parapsychology for psionics, Engineering for science, and Manipulation for sorcery.

As with any skill, the character needs to take the tech skill listed on the Arcane Background entry and put points into it as normal. The attribute for that skill is listed in parentheses beside the skill itself.

POWER POINTS

Power points do not work the same across all Tech Backgrounds. Due to the method of creating and using the technology, power points vary not only their use, but also their recovery. As such, each Tech Background discusses how power points are used for that background.

POWERS

Each Tech Background allows for a number of powers as listed in their entry. Additionally, each one discusses how new powers are acquired.

EDGES

Because each Tech Background is unique, Edges related to them are listed herein instead of in **Character Creation**. This allows the GM to tailor which Edges apply

to her setting or campaign. Power Edges are listed here as they vary from background to background. When taking a Power Edge, refer to each Tech Background entry to better understand its application. The Rapid Recharge Edge has a standard Spirit requirement; replace this requirement with Smarts if the Tech Skill is based on Smarts.

TECH BACKGROUND (BIOTECHNOLOGY)

Tech Skill: Genomics (Spirit)

Starting Powers Points: 10

Starting Powers: 1

Allowed Powers: *armor, barrier, beast friend, blast, blind, bolt, boost/lower trait, burrow, burst, confusion, damage field, deflection, disguise, elemental manipulation, entangle, environmental protection, farsight, fear, fly, greater healing, growth/shrink, havoc, healing, invisibility, light/obscure, mind reading, pummel, puppet, quickness, shape change, slow, slumber, smite, speak language, speed, stun, succor, summon ally, wall walker, warrior's gift, zombie*

Biotechnology comes in two different forms: manipulation and acquisition. Manipulation means the character has the ability to manipulate their biological makeup to alter a particular part of their body, thus creating the desired extraordinary effect. Acquisition means the character has a receptacle of some type that allows for the acquiring (inserting, installing, connecting, etc) of a biological device that can be mentally controlled by the receiver, thus creating the desired extraordinary effect. The resulting effect (the Power) is the same, but how that effect is created is considerably different.

Each Tech Background presented herein can easily be greatly expanded so that an entire setting or campaign is built around it. Instead of creating a mini-supplement for each background or technology, they are presented here from a mechanical aspect. Instead of overwhelming you with how to construct an entire setting using the technology, they are explained for quick incorporation during character creation or NPC construction. The GM has the final say on how much that technology influences the setting, campaign, or mission.

For GMs looking to use one of the backgrounds or technology bases to construct their own setting and campaign, these Tech Backgrounds can be used as a platform for launching development, using them as a simple template or guide. Trappings are provided to better explain how the Tech Backgrounds manifest, providing additional guidelines for how much that technology affects the overall setting.

Manipulation biotechnology allows the character to change something about their body when creating a power. If this manipulation is done on a single body part, then only one power may be utilized at a time. If this manipulation is done across multiple body parts, then multiple powers are available. However, this type of use is extremely exhausting as it requires the alteration of one's DNA or genetics.

Acquisition biotechnology allows the character to have some type of receptacle for receiving grown weapons that connect to the character as if they were an extension of him. While a single receptacle could be easy to manipulate, multiple receptacles can cause fatigue as the mind has to work hard to control these foreign objects.

Genomics is the character's ability to exert their will (or dominance) over their own genetics that is attempting to reject the foreign body (whatever is manifesting the power). If a weapon is created instead of a power, use an appropriate skill, such as Fighting or Shooting. Powers that require an opposed roll still use Genomics.

Because each power is manifested as an alteration to the character's body, Power Points are a representation of Fatigue due to the aforementioned exertion of will. When a character drops to 0 Power Points, he gains 1 level of Fatigue until he recovers at least 1 Power Point, at which time the Fatigue gained from their Tech Background (Biotechnology) is removed.

REJECTION

Sometimes a character's genetics cannot be overcome to create the power, represented by rolling a 1 on the Genomics or applicable skill die (Fighting, Shooting, etc) regardless of the Wild Die. This results in the body rejecting the alteration, causing the character to become Shaken, this can cause a Wound. On a critical failure, the character becomes Shaken and gains 1 level of Fatigue.

NEW POWERS

New powers (or weapons) are acquired by altering the body to accept another power. In the case of weapons, only one can be utilized at a time with subsequent weapons being swapped out using an arm receptacle. (If the character has the Two-Fisted Edge, they may accept two weapons. However, they no longer have a hand to use otherwise.) A character can only have a number of powers equal to their Spirit die. However, old powers can be replaced by new ones, but the old ones are then no longer usable.

MAINTAINING POWERS

Maintaining powers work in the same fashion as Arcane Backgrounds. They are a continued dominance over one's genetics to avoid rejecting the foreign body.

REGAINING POWER POINTS

Regaining Power Points also works the same as Arcane Backgrounds. It is a representation of the character's energy, allowing them to once again dominate their genetics. Increasing Power Points and the rate of recharge, with the appropriate Edge, also works the same.

WEAPONS

Instead of choosing a power when taking the New Power Edge, the character may instead create a new weapon from the equipment list. Instead of being treated as a regular weapon with ammunition, it is biological manifestation such as psychic or fear powers. However, the character must have enough Reputation points equal

to the weapon they are recreating in biological form. The player is then allowed to define how the power from the weapon manifests. The Power Points required to use this weapon are equal to the weapon's Rate of Fire. For close combat weapons, the Power Points required are equal to 1 per round.

EDGES

The following Power Edges are usable with Tech Background (Biotechnology):

New Power, Power Points, Rapid Recharge, and Improved Rapid Recharge

BIOHACKER

Type: Professional

Requirements: Novice, Tech Background (Biotechnology), Smarts d8+, Genomics d6+, Knowledge (Genetics) d8+

Biohackers are scholars in genetics and fully understand what it takes to alter one's biology. Each raise a Biohacker gets on his Genomics roll reduces the cost to exert their will by 1 Power Point, to a minimum of 1. The Biohacker must have the Power Points to dominate his genes in the first place before rolling.

BIOMANCER

Type: Professional

Requirements: Novice, Tech Background (Biotechnology), Spirit d8+, Genomics d6+, Knowledge (Biology) d8+

Biomancers are masters of biology, able to dominate their genetics for the acceptance of different modules that produce various results (powers or weapons). When experiencing Rejection, the Biomancer is allowed a single Spirit roll to exert that dominance over their genetics. If they succeed on the Spirit roll, they do not experience the effects of Rejection, although their Genomics roll still fails.

TRAPPINGS

Biotechnology powers are a biological manifestation or alteration of the character. Each one would carry some type of biological trapping, and the aforementioned power list is what is feasible using this technology in a sci-fi atmosphere. Additional powers may be added at the GM's discretion.

While players are encouraged to describe how these powers manifest, here is a list of powers with example trappings. This is only a sample list and ultimately not the only possibilities.

Armor: A chitinous shell encompasses the body.

Barrier: The body projects a field that repulses oncomers.

Beast Friend: Animal sounds begin to project from the throat.

Blast: A ball of toxic gasses expels from the hand and explodes on impact.

Burrow: The legs become worm-like, digging into the ground.

Damage Field: Spikes grow all around the body.

Elemental Manipulation: Tendrils extend into the ground.

Entangle: Vines project from the stomach, entangling the target.

Environmental Protection: Gills form across the throat.

Fear: The face contorts into a monstrous, demonic form.

Havoc: Wind suddenly erupts from the stomach.

Healing: Upon touching, healing blood flows from the hands.

Invisibility: The body becomes camouflaged, creating a cloaking effect.

Puppet: The eyes begin to rotate, causing the target to fall into a trance.

Smite: Spikes begin to grow on the affected weapon.

Summon Ally: Antennae forms, allowing distant communication.

Zombie: A small creature flies out and attaches itself to a dead being.

AVAILABILITY

The cybernetics portrayed in *Mercenary Breed* is not that of a typical cyberpunk setting. It is only available to elite warriors (i.e. mercenaries) and comes at a very high price. In fact, most cybernetic enhancements are the work of a corporation internally and are not available for sale. Thus, they do not carry a cost and are instead treated as powers.

TECH BACKGROUND (CYBERNETICS)

Tech Skill: Neuroscience (Spirit)

Starting Powers Points: 10

Starting Powers: 1

Allowed Powers: *armor, banish, blast, blind, bolt, boost/lower trait, burrow, burst, confusion, damage field, darksight, disguise, divination, entangle, environmental protection, farsight, fear, fly, greater healing, growth/shrink, havoc, healing, invisibility, light/obscure, pummel, puppet, quickness, shape change, slow, slumber, smite, speak language, speed, stun, succor, summon ally, wall walker, warrior's gift*

Cybernetics are high technology enhancements physically installed into the body to provide supernatural-like abilities. They are installed by corporate scientists or a third party that designs the cybernetics and cannot be simply purchased on the street. They are not readily available and their rarity is a sign of true significance within the mercenary society. For only the greatest warriors are granted cybernetic enhancements.

Cybernetic enhancements are attached directly to the character's nervous system and are controlled using the mind. Using them requires more than scholarly knowledge, it requires complete control over one's body to "connect" to the enhancement and activate it. However, with each enhancement comes a certain level of drain on the body, and characters can only acquire so many cybernetic enhancements.



Cybernetics enhances or adds to a character's inherent abilities by allowing them to overcome natural limitations and flaws or simply by providing something they could never gain naturally.

Neuroscience is a character's ability to tap into their nervous system and send the right mental commands to activate the cybernetic enhancement. In mechanical terms, each enhancement is considered a power, and thus always uses the Neuroscience skill. Weapons cannot be created as cybernetics (in Mercenary Breed at least).

Because each power requires the proper use of one's nervous system, Power Points are a measurement of a character's mental fatigue while attempting to press the mind into performing a function it doesn't do naturally. When a character drops to 0 Power Points, the mental fatigue has become too much and he gains 1 level of Fatigue. Regaining Power Points is a form of mental rest, and upon reaching 1 Power Point, the character removes that level of Fatigue gained from his Tech Background (Cybernetics) Edge.

NEGATIVE FEEDBACK

When a character is unable to send the proper commands to the cybernetic enhancement through the use of his nervous system, negative feedback occurs, causing a glitch between the nervous system and cybernetic interface. This is represented by rolling a 1 on the Neuroscience die, regardless of the Wild Die, at which time the character becomes Shaken, this can cause a Wound. On a critical failure, the character becomes Shaken and the cybernetic enhancement goes into shutdown. A subsequent Neuroscience roll is required on a following round to restart that cybernetic enhancement (only the one that shutdown). This requires a full round action and the character may not perform any other action during that round (not even moving).

NEW POWERS

New powers (enhancements) have to be installed into the body for them to work. They are attached to the nervous system and essentially become a part of the character. A character can only have a number of enhancements equal to their Vigor die. However, old enhancements can be replaced by new ones, at which time they can no longer be used and are actually removed.

MAINTAINING POWERS

Maintaining powers does not require subsequent Neuroscience rolls as once an enhancement is activated, it doesn't deactivate until told to do so or if the power is expended (those that cannot be maintained). However, for each power being maintained, the character suffers a cumulative (-1) penalty on all skill rolls (not just tech skill rolls) due to the amount of strain required to operate the enhancement.

REGAINING POWER POINTS

Regaining Power Points works the same as it does for Arcane Backgrounds. It is a representation of mental rest, allowing the character to once again tap into their nervous system through the power of their mind. Increasing Power Points and the rate of recharge, with the appropriate Edge, also works the same. Gaining Power Points is similar to training the mind to handle the use of cybernetic enhancements.

EDGES

The following Power Edges are usable with Tech Background (Cybernetics):

New Power, Power Points, Rapid Recharge, and Improved Rapid Recharge

CYBERHACKER

Type: Professional

Requirements: Novice, Tech Background (Cybernetics), Smarts d8+, Knowledge (Computers) d8+, Neuroscience d6+

Cyberhackers treat cybernetics like a computer program. Not only are they able to accept these enhancements, but they add a layer of software that allows for easier access and control. This additional layer of software allows for additional enhancements to be installed. Cyberhackers may have a number of cybernetic enhancements equal to their Smarts die instead of their Vigor die.

NEUROMANCER

Type: Professional

Requirements: Novice, Tech Background (Cybernetics), Spirit d8+, Knowledge (Neurology) d8+, Neuroscience d6+

Neuromancers display incredible control over their nervous system. Their knowledge is equivalent to a doctor's, but only in-tune with their body. This allows them to overcome feedback with ease. When rolling a critical failure, the neuromancer may make an immediate Neuroscience roll to restart that cybernetic enhancement. If successful, it can be used again on the following round.

TRAPPINGS

Cybernetic powers are grafted onto or into the body. They can be internal or external and are made of a material that doesn't react negatively to the body. The aforementioned power list is what is feasible using this technology in a sci-fi atmosphere. Additional powers may be added at the GM's discretion.

While players are encouraged to describe how these powers manifest, here is a list of powers with example trappings. This is only a sample list and ultimately not the only possibilities.

Armor: Metal or ceramic plates or a ballistic mesh encompass the body.

Banish: A runic glow appears from the hand, sending spiritual beings back to where they came.

Blind: Bright lights emanate from the chest.

Boost/Lower Trait: A needle pumps an elixir into the bloodstream, enhancing the body.

Burst: Screaming feedback emanates from the hand, assaulting the ears.

Confusion: Screaming feedback projects from the mouth.

Darksight: Retinal implants enhance the vision.

Environmental Protection: A helmet forms around the head.

Fear: Ethereal demonic entities shroud the body.

Healing: Medicine flows from a needle into the veins.

Invisibility: Camouflage forms, disguising the body.

Puppet: Tendrils come from the chest, entering the targets head.

Smite: The weapon glows with a cybernetic power source.

Wall Walker: Dozens of suction cups appear on the arms and legs.

TECH BACKGROUND (NANOTECHNOLOGY)

Tech Skill: Programming (Smarts)

Starting Powers Points: 10

Starting Powers: 2

Allowed Powers: *armor, beast friend, blast, blind, bolt, boost/lower trait, burrow, burst, confusion, damage field, darksight, deflection, disguise, divination, entangle, environmental protection, farsight, fear, greater healing, havoc, healing, light/obscure, mind reading, pummel, puppet, quickness, slow, slumber, smite, speak language, speed, stun, succor, summon ally, wall walker, warrior's gift, zombie*

Nanotechnology is the use of nanobots, or nanites, to alter the body for the production of extraordinary abilities. Nanites are tiny, self-replicating, silicon based robots measured in nanometers, programmed to perform a specific function. They live within the blood stream and are commanded by a wireless interface controlled by their host.

Nanites do not carry any intelligence and only perform the task they've been programmed to do. This could include altering the host's body or being expelled from the body as a weapon or for medicinal purposes. Many of the abilities they provide are temporary as these alterations could cause wear on the body and mind, possibly killing the host.

Although nanites are capable of creating, repairing, or enhancing almost anything within the body, they are still bound to the limitations of that body. To overcome limitations would require a large amount of time that cannot be done within the span less than a day. Thus, they have limitations on what powers are possible.

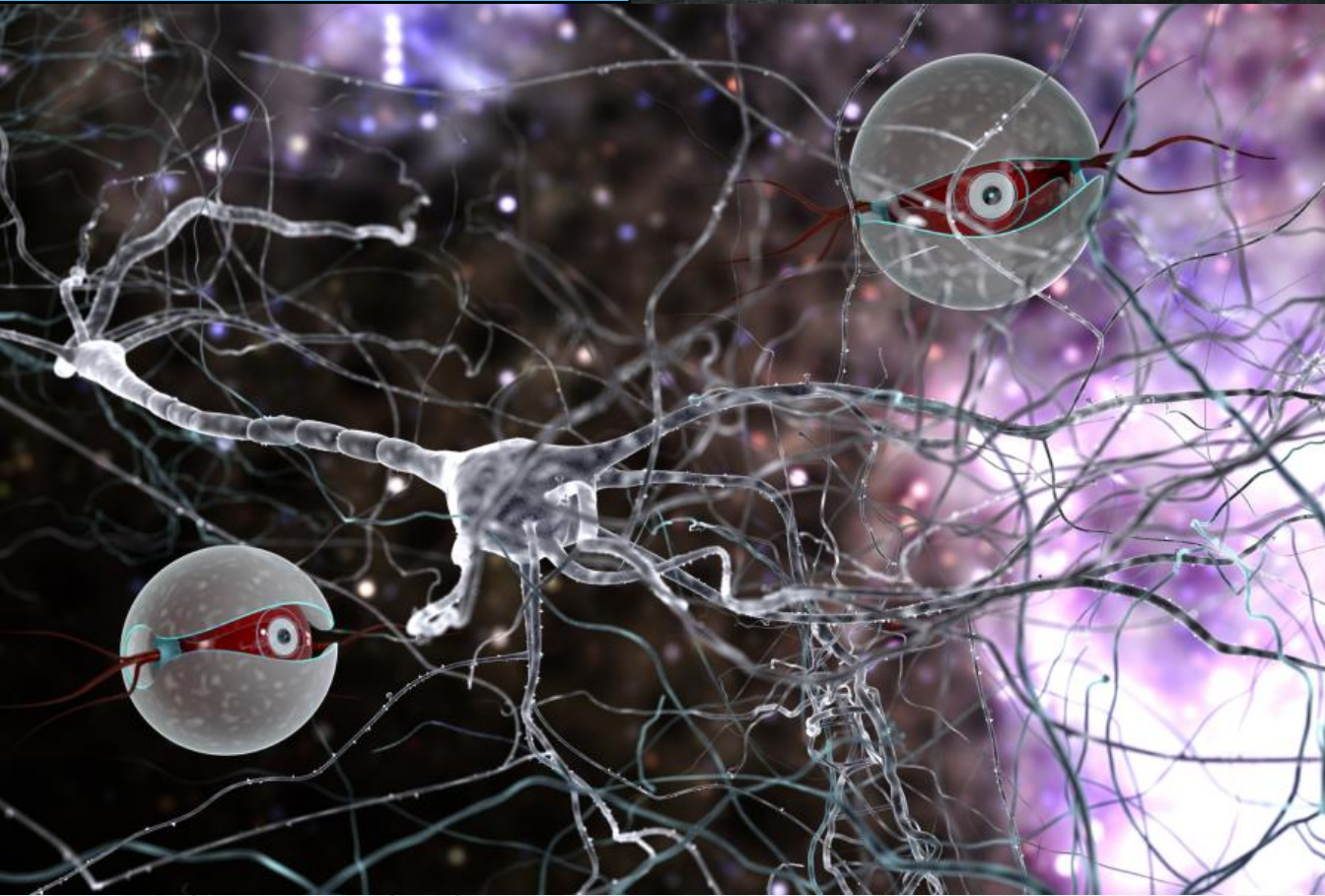
Programming is the character's (the host's) ability to execute a command the nanites have already been programmed to do. Each command results in the replication of a power, but the character must have that advanced knowledge of how to execute the command, represented by having the Programming skill. This prevents others from being able to manipulate the character's nanites without proper training.

Power Points are a measurement of the quantity of nanites within the body. Each one may represent a dozen or even a hundred. The actual quantity is unimportant. When expending Power Points, the nanites are performing the executed command with a number of them, equal to the Power Points of the power, lost due to damage, maintenance, destruction, expenditure, or malfunction. Nanites are self-replicating, but if the character's Power Points ever drop to 0, there are no nanites left to self-replicate. Instead, an injection of nanites is required to regain Power Points. Injections take 10 minutes for the nanites to travel throughout the body, but after that time, the Power Points are fully replenished. If the character has at least 1 Power Point, there are enough nanites to self-replicate.

GLITCH

When a command execution fails, the nanites experience a glitch that causes them to react negatively or perform a function detrimental to the character. This is represented by rolling a 1 on the Programming die, regardless of the Wild Die. When this happens, the character takes 2d6 damage and expends 1 Power Point. On the case of a critical failure, nanites are actually expelled from the body. Everyone within a medium-burst template, centered on the character, takes 2d6 damage; the character also expends 2 Power points.

The use of nanites is unique in that these microscopic, silicon-based robots attempt to overcome the natural limitations of the body. This, of course, could change significantly from one xeno to another. When choosing what Powers to use with nanotechnology, think about the limitations of the character's xeno species and how to overcome them. If the character is semiaquatic, maybe the limitation is that it requires moisture to survive. If the character comes from an exotic atmosphere, maybe the limitation is that it struggles to breathe oxygen.



NEW POWERS

New powers are the creation of new commands to be executed at a later time. All commands are entered into a wireless interface controlled by the character. This interface can be a wrist watch, handheld controller, or a device that plugs into their armor. Acquiring the New Power Edge is the same as using that controller to write the software code necessary to produce the power after executing the right commands.

MAINTAINING POWERS

Maintaining powers works the same as it does for Arcane Backgrounds. The nanites are simply being told to continue their operation without interruption.

REGAINING POWER POINTS

As long as the character has 1 Power Point, the nanites self-replicate at the regular rate of 1 Power Point per hour. However, if the character has 0 Power Points, there are no nanites available to self-replicate and thus an injection of new nanites is required. When receiving an injection, Power Points are fully replenished after 10 minutes (regardless of what they were upon receiving the injection). Because of this, Rapid Recharge is unnecessary.

Nanites are programmed to self-replicate up to a certain quantity. This is represented by the character's maximum Power Points. When taking the Power Points Edge, the character is actually reprogramming the nanites to increase this quantity.

EDGES

The following Power Edges are usable with Tech Background (Nanotechnology):

New Power and Power Points

AQUATIC

Type: Weird

Requirements: Novice, Tech Background (Nanotechnology), Programming d8+, Swimming d6+

Nanites can be programmed to make permanent alterations to the body, although the process takes much longer. Upon taking this Edge, the character programs the nanites to create gills and webbing around the hands. After two days, the gills are created and webbing is stitched between the fingers. He no longer drowns in the water (being able to breathe above and below the water), moves underwater at his full Swimming skill, and increases his Swimming skill by 1 die type. However, due to these abnormal modifications, his Charisma is reduced by 2 and he gains the All Thumbs Hindrance. At the GM's discretion, this change may be reversible, requiring two days to remove.

FLIGHT

Type: Weird

Requirements: Novice, Tech Background (Nanotechnology), Programming d8+

Nanites can be programmed to make permanent alterations to the body, although the process takes much longer. Upon taking this Edge, the character programs the nanites to create wings and give him the ability to fly. After one week, the wings are finished and the character's bones are hollowed. He gains the ability to fly, but his Toughness is reduced by 1. Additionally, due to the unnatural wings on his back, his Charisma is reduced by 2. At the GM's discretion, this change may be reversible, requiring one week to remove.

MASTER PROGRAMMER

Type: Professional

Requirements: Novice, Tech Background (Nanotechnology), Smarts d8+, Knowledge (Computers) d8+, Programming d6+

Master Programmers are able to manipulate their nanites with precision and ease. Their software is much more efficient and with the right commands, the nanites become more effective. Each raise the master programmer receives on their Programming roll reduces the Power Points cost by 1, to a minimum of 1. They must have the Power Points available first before the roll.

TRAPPINGS

Nanotechnology powers are grafted onto or into the body. They can be internal or external, but can only be made of whatever the body is made of. The aforementioned power list is what is feasible using this technology in a sci-fi atmosphere. Additional powers may be added at the GM's discretion.

While players are encouraged to describe how these powers manifest, here is a list of powers with example trappings. This is only a sample list and ultimately not the only possibilities.

Armor: The skin begins to harden.

Beast Friend: The character is able to recreate animal sounds.

Boost/Lower Trait: The nanites work to overcome the limitations of the body.

Burst: The mouth opens and unseen nanites explode out, their tendrils forming razor sharp edges.

Confusion: Nanites reach the surface of the skin and glow brightly.

Psionics are presented herein as an implant to stick with the scientific theme. Players can choose to remove that implant and state the character's psionics are a due to an incredibly powerful mind that can manipulate the surrounding environment. Maybe your psionics are simpler in that the character is a psychic medium, capable of clairvoyance. Another option could be the psychic connection between the character and a psychically-powered suit or vehicle.

Damage Field: Nanite tendrils grow and protrude from the skin, forming sharp points.

Disguise: The face becomes temporarily altered.

Divination: The nanites spark clairvoyance within the mind.

Environmental Protection: The skin begins to cool, allowing for travel through extremely hot conditions.

Farsight: The eyes gain extremely enhanced vision.

Havoc: Extreme wind pressure is expelled from the body.

Healing: The nanites repair a wound.

Mind Reading: A cloud of nanites enters the target and attaches to his brain, allowing the character to read the target's thoughts through the controller.

Smite: Nanites become grafted to the weapon, turning their tendrils into small blades.

Succor: The nanites cure and completely remove an ailment.

Zombie: Nanites enter the ground and attach to a dead body, allowing it to be commanded from the character's controller.

TECH BACKGROUND (PSIONICS)

Tech Skill: Parapsychology (Spirit)

Starting Powers Points: 10

Starting Powers: 1

Allowed Powers: *armor, banish, barrier, beast friend, blast, blind, bolt, boost/lower trait, burst, confusion, damage field, darksight, deflection, disguise, dispel, divination, entangle, farsight, fear, greater healing, havoc, healing, light/obscure, mind reading, pummel, puppet, quickness, slow, slumber, smite, speak language, speed, stun, succor, summon ally, telekinesis, warrior's gift, zombie*

Psionics in Mercenary Breed is much different than in a fantasy influenced setting. It is not the power of the mind; it is an implant in the brain that allows the mind to create extraordinary feats. This implant stimulates parts of the brain that aren't regularly used, allowing the wielder to create powers. However, use of the implant is not inherent to the user; it requires an extensive understanding of connecting the mind to the implant to stimulate the brain.

The character must undergo an invasive procedure of the brain to receive the psionic implant. Once they do, utilizing that implant is simply a matter of connecting to it through control of the mind. When this happens, the brain is able to overcome its natural limitations along with allowing greater control of the body and its organs. While seemingly simple in nature, it is an extremely expensive procedure and typically only afforded by corporations and very wealthy individuals. Even the government rarely has the funds for the procedure. As such, it is reserved only for those who deserve it.

Parapsychology is the character's ability to understand how the brain functions for the purpose of connecting it to the implant. Mastering its use is not as simple as reading a manual and learning it through other scholarly means; it requires mastery of one's brain and an inner wisdom about how to connect the brain with the implant. It is a daunting task, and should not be approached lightly.

Power Points are a measurement of mental fatigue. As Power Points are drained, the brain becomes fatigued as it is required to perform functions it normally cannot perform. When utilizing Power Points, the brain is essentially being pushed past its normal limits. While the character rests, the brain rests, or at the very least is only required for regular thought processes. However, once the brain has been pushed past its limits, represented by Power Points dropping to 0, it has a detri-



mental effect on the rest of the body. When a character drops to 0 Power Points, he gains 1 level of Fatigue until he regains at least 1 Power Point, at which time the Fatigue gained from their Tech Background (Psionics) is removed.

OVERSTIMULATION

When character is unable to properly channel the psionic implant, the brain becomes overstimulated and causes the rest of the body to respond negatively. This is represented by rolling a 1 on the Parapsychology die, regardless of the Wild Die, at which time the character becomes Shaken, this can cause a Wound. On a critical failure, the brain becomes so overstimulated that it has difficulty controlling the body, the character becomes Shaken and attacks himself due to an improper reflex. If the character is wielding a melee weapon, he takes damage equal to the weapon's normal damage. If he is wielding a ranged weapon, he takes damage equal to Str+d4 as if being hit by a club.

NEW POWERS

New powers come when the character learns how to stimulate a different part of the brain to produce a different effect. This requires extensive training as a combination of book-learning and lots of practice. Taking the New Power Edge is the same as performing this training to prepare the brain for actual use of the new power.

MAINTAINING POWERS

Maintaining psionic powers is very similar to that of Arcane Backgrounds, except that the user suffers a cumulative (-2) penalty for each power being maintained. This is because the brain is already being pushed to create the power, and pushing it further causes a lot of excess strain and mental fatigue.

REGAINING POWER POINTS

Regaining Power Points is a result of resting the brain and reducing mental fatigue. However, there is a caveat: characters recover 1 Power Point per hour, but only if they are not using their psionic powers. When using psionic powers, the brain is not resting and thus does not recover from that fatigue. Increasing Power Points and the rate of Recharge is a form of exercising the mind for improved performance.

EDGES

The following Power Edges are usable with Tech Background (Psionics):

New Power, Power Points, Rapid Recharge, and Improved Rapid Recharge

ENLIGHTENED

Type: Weird

Requirements: Seasoned, Tech Background (Psionics), Spirit d8+, Knowledge (Choose an Esoteric Subject) d8+, Parapsychology d8+

The character has received extensive schooling in esoteric subjects, turning them into what many refer to as enlightened: he is able to understand things others do not. Once per week, the enlightened character may use the *divination* power. This does not require Power Points, but the character gains 1 level of Fatigue that goes away after 6 hours.

ORACLE

Type: Professional

Requirements: Novice, Tech Background (Psionics), Spirit d8+, Knowledge (Psychokinesis) d8+, Parapsychology d6+

Oracles are masters in premonitions; it is as if they know what their opponent is going to do before he does it. Because of this, they are able to ease their mind into performing extraordinary feats instead of quickly pushing as a reaction to their targets. By 'knowing' what their opponent is going to do, they can 'prep' their mind in preparation for creating a power. Every raise he gets on his Parapsychology roll reduces the Powers Points cost by 1, to a minimum of 1. The oracle must first have the Power Points to spend on the power before rolling.

PSYCHIC

Type: Background

Requirements: Novice, Spirit d8+, Parapsychology d6+

Naturally, the brain only uses a small portion of its capabilities. Psychics are born with an area of the brain that is more active than what is natural. They are considered to be gifted and often make the best psions. A psychic's brain is much more attuned to its surroundings, granting them a +2 bonus to all Parapsychology rolls.

TRAPPINGS

Psionic powers are created by pushing the mind to perform extraordinary feats. They may manifest visibly, but most of them are completely unseen. The aforementioned power list is what is feasible using this technology in a sci-fi atmosphere. Additional powers may be added at the GM's discretion.

While players are encouraged to describe how these powers manifest, here is a list of powers with example trappings. This is only a sample list and ultimately not the only possibilities.

Armor: The muscles swell incredibly, drawing the skin tight and making it more difficult to puncture.

Barrier: The brain creates a powerful force that is all but impossible to break through.

Blind: The mind reaches out and forces the target's brain to ignore the eyes.

Bolt: The mind reaches out and assaults the mind of the target.

Confusion: The brain is able to create illusions in the target's field of vision.

Damage Field: Spikes grow from the bones, protruding from the skin.

Deflection: A spirit is summoned, deflecting an incoming attack.

Disguise: An illusion forms on the face of the psion.

Entangle: The mind is able to coax the underbrush into growing wildly.

Fear: Psychic screams assault the target's mind.

Havoc: Malevolent spirits form, terrorizing the battlefield.

Healing: The mind is soothed and the body begins clotting blood quickly.

Puppet: The mind reaches out and controls the mind of another.

Smite: A spirit wraps itself around the blade.

Speed: The character is able to sprint without any physical fatigue.

Zombie: A spirit is called forth to animate a lifeless body.

TECH BACKGROUND (SCIENCE)

Tech Skill: Engineering (Smarts)

Starting Powers Points: 12 (but see below)

Starting Powers: 1

Allowed Powers: *armor, barrier, beast friend, blast, blind, bolt, burrow, burst, confusion, damage field, darksight, deflection, disguise, elemental manipulation, entangle, environmental protection, farsight, fear, fly, greater healing, growth, havoc, healing, light/obscure, mind reading, pummel, puppet, quickness, slow, slumber, speak language, speed, stun, succor, summon ally, telekinesis, teleport, wall walker, warrior's gift, zombie*

Science is simply the design and application of a widely known technology by a given society, species, ethnicity, or whatever. As presented herein, it is the generic Tech Background for the aforementioned technology bases: clockwork, dieselpunk, electronics (modern computers, CPUs, etc), steampunk, and teslapunk. Whichever technology is chosen should be in direct relation to the character's technical knowledge, but it's feasible for them to combine any of those technology bases and learn new ones.

Science is the creation of gadgets the character can use to create powers, albeit with a scientific explanation. They can be physically held and require some type of power source. The power source could be another technology base, producing a combination device. For example, it could be a clockwork robot powered by electricity (teslapunk).

Creating devices using the science Tech Background is a matter of designing it, finding the supplies necessary, building it, and testing it out. Depending on complexity, this could take weeks or years. The cost of building these devices is entirely in the hands of the character to pay for outright, find an investor, or convince the corporation to pay for it.

Engineering is the character's ability to understand their design and manipulate it correctly to achieve the desired effect. This can range from knowing which switch turns on the power supply to entering a series of commands to bypass security protocols. For devices that resemble handheld weapons, like one producing the *burst* power, use an appropriate combat skill (Fighting, Shooting, or Throwing). Opposed powers still use Engineering.

SCIENCE VS. WEIRD SCIENCE

Weird science could be considered as abnormal technology with some type of supernatural element. Science is the complete opposite, being the standard technology base of the setting, planet, or xeno species. Instead of experimenting with volatile designs, science is the reimplementation, alteration, or new design of nonvolatile technology that has been proven time and time again.

The engineer does not have Power Points; the device they create does. Each device he creates has 12 Power Points, representing the capacity of its power source. When the device drops to 0 Power Points, it no longer works until being recharged.

MALFUNCTION

Scientific devices are not completely perfect and sometimes the user fails to use it properly. When a character rolls a 1 on his Engineering die, regardless of his Wild Die, the device fails and requires repair. If he wishes to use the device again, he must spend a full-round action making a Repair roll. Success means the device can be used again the next round. Failure means the device still doesn't work.

Because the technology is nonvolatile, in opposition to weird science, malfunctioning can typically be overcome. However, if rolling a critical failure on the Engineering roll, the device becomes completely locked up and requires a Dramatic Task, using the Repair skill, allowing five actions and requiring as many successes. If this is being done during combat, each roll incurs a (-2) penalty. If this Dramatic Task fails, the device is irrevocably damaged.

NEW DEVICES

Although the scientific devices are tied to the available powers, building new ones does not require taking the New Power Edge. Instead, it requires time, money, and a fulfillment of the power's requirements.

Each new device has 12 Power Points when built. Using that device is the same as expending Power Points according to each power's entry. Building a new device is much like designing a new piece of technology and cannot simply be done by acquiring an Edge. Instead, the time, cost, and reputation requirements are based on the rank of the power.

Time: Each new device requires time to research, design, build, test, debug, and create the finished product. The rank of the power being incorporated into the device defines how much time is required for the finished product to be completed. This can be done by the character or a third party. Novice powers require 3 weeks to build. Each subsequent power rank cumulatively triples the time. Thus a Seasoned power requires 9 weeks while a Veteran power requires 27.

Cost: Devices can be very expensive to create. There is cost in research, parts, prototypes, and testing. The rank of the power also defines the cost of the device that power is being incorporated into. Novice devices cost 10,000c to build. Each subsequent power rank cumulatively triples the cost. Thus a Seasoned power costs 30,000c while a Veteran power costs 90,000c. Most likely, the character will never be able to pay for this. Instead, they'll either have to salvage parts, find investors, or find a way for the corporation to cover at least part of the cost.

A character may salvage 90% of the cost for each device. However, they can only salvage 25% of that with each attempt and these attempts should be part of the missions they perform. Thus, they can salvage the full 90% after four missions and only pay the remaining 1,000c for a Novice power device.

Investors and corporate backing should follow a similar formula, although instead requiring many Dramatic Tasks using Persuasion or something other relevant skill.

Reputation: Characters must achieve a certain reputation level to acquire the knowledge or parts necessary to create their device. The rank of the power also defines the minimum RP required before beginning to engineer the device the power is being incorporated into. Each rank of the power cumulatively increases

the RP requirement by 5, starting at 0. Thus a Novice power requires 0 RP while a Veteran power requires 10.

Replication: Once a device has been created, replicating it is much easier than starting from scratch. The time and cost requirements listed above are reduced by 75% to create additional devices. Thus the cost of a Novice replicated device only costs 2,500c and requires less than 1 week.

Replacement: If the character loses one of their devices, they can replace it using one of the original prototypes. This requires updating the prototype for only 10% of the original cost and time. Thus replacing a Novice power costs 1,000c and only takes a couple days. If he recovers the lost device, it is damaged beyond repair and no longer functions.

Sharing: New devices may be shared with other characters. If the device is a handheld weapon, it can be properly operated with a combat skill. If the device requires the Engineering skill to perform, the character cannot operate that device without also having the Engineering skill. Engineering cannot be performed without proper training.

MAINTAINING POWERS

The beauty of engineered devices is that once they're running, they don't require additional intervention to continue running; and turning them off can be as simple as flipping the power switch. However, those that must be manipulated to work, such as firing a weapon, still fall under the normal multi-action penalty. This is at the GM's discretion and should match the design of the device. Maintained opposed powers still require the regular Engineering roll.



REGAINING POWER POINTS

Engineered devices do not simply recover Power Points. For this to happen, they must be connected to a power source or have their internal power source replenished. This is done at a rate of 1 Power Point per 10 minutes. When recharging multiple devices, multiple power sources or replenishments must be utilized to maintain this rate. For each additional device connected to a single power source or replenishment, the time cumulatively doubles to replenish 1 Power Point, although each device replenishes at the same time. Thus if two devices are plugged into a single power source, each one regains Power Points at the rate of 1 per 20 minutes. If three devices are plugged in, each one regains Power Points at the rate of 1 per 40 minutes.

Power sources and means of replenishment should be defined during the design process. At the GM's discretion, these could be universal or very specific to the technology base the Tech Background refers to. Each character is given a single power source or means of replenishing a device simply by taking the Tech Background (Science) Edge. Additional power sources and replenishment means can be acquired by taking the Rapid Recharge and Improved Rapid Recharge Edges. Each Edge provides 1 additional power source or replenishment means.

INCREASING POWER POINTS

Much like designing new devices, each one can be built with a larger power source. However, this costs more money and increases the time required. (This is done on a device by device basis, not across all devices). To increase a device's Power Points by 4 cumulatively doubles the cost and time. A Novice power device with 16 Power Points costs 20,000c and takes 6 weeks while one with 20 Power Points costs 40,000c and takes 12 weeks.

EDGES

None of the Power Edges are used as-written for Tech Background (Science). See the above entries for additional details.

MASTER ENGINEER

Type: Professional

Requirements: Novice, Tech Background (Science), Smarts d8+, Engineering d6+, Knowledge (Choose the technology base of the devices being designed) d8+

Master engineers are very skilled in design and create fail safes in the case of malfunctioning equipment. This could be a simple quick restart to a full mirrored-image of the internal workings of the device. Upon rolling a 1 on the Engineering die and experiencing a malfunction, the master engineer may make a second Engineering roll with a (-2) penalty to activate the failsafe mechanism within the device. If that second roll is successful, the device instead operates as normal.

MECHANICAL ENGINEER

Type: Professional

Requirements: Novice, Tech Background (Science), Smarts d8+, Engineering d6+, Knowledge (Mechanics) d8+

Mechanical engineers are masters of mechanisms and moving parts. They often create intricate designs within their devices to increase efficiency and confuse anyone that would attempt to steal the device. Mechanical engineers gain a +1 bonus to all Engineering rolls due to their efficient designs. Additionally, if one of their devices is ever stolen, it can never be used by someone that isn't trained on how to use it.

TRAPPINGS

Science devices are physical with moving parts, power sources, and anything that transfers power throughout. They can be small or big, fit on the head or the foot, thrown or controlled by a remote. The aforementioned power list is what is feasible using this technology in a sci-fi atmosphere. Additional powers may be added at the GM's discretion.

While players are encouraged to describe how these powers manifest, here is a list of powers with example trappings. This is only a sample list and ultimately not the only possibilities.

Armor: Metal plates engulf the body.

Barrier: A wall of energy entraps the target.

Beast Friend: A robotic animal transforms from a metallic ball.

Blast: A metal object flies through the air, drops acid upon an area, and flies back to the engineer.

Burrow: The bottom of the engineer's boots cause the ground to disintegrate and float the engineer down.

Damage Field: The engineer's armor grows metallic spikes.

Darksight: Special goggles provide dark vision.

Deflection: A shield projects from the engineer's sleeve.

Elemental Manipulation: The engineer holds a box that fans the flames.

Fly: The engineer wears a jetpack.

Healing: A small robot administers quick medical aid.

Mind Reading: The engineer's headdress allows him to connect to the target's mind.

Puppet: A special helmet allows for invasion of a target's mind for hypnotic suggestions.

Speak Language: The engineer has a translator wristwatch.

Summon Ally: A humanoid robot transforms from a metallic ball.

Telekinesis: A flying robot able to lift 500 times its weight.

Zombie: Small robots attach themselves to the dead, animating and controlling them.

TECH BACKGROUND (SORCERY)

Tech Skill: Manipulation (Smarts)

Starting Powers Points: 10

Starting Powers: 2

Allowed Powers: *armor, barrier, blast, blind, bolt, boost/lower trait, burrow, burst, confusion, damage field, deflection, elemental manipulation, entangle, fear, fly, greater healing, havoc, healing, light/obscure, pummel, puppet, quickness, slow, slumber, smite, speed, stun, succor, telekinesis, teleport, wall walker, warrior's gift*

In Mercenary Breed, sorcery is not the harnessing of arcane signatures weaved throughout the planet; that would be too fantasy. Instead, it is the manipulation of a device that stores elements of volatile or damaging substances. The device is designed to hold these substances until the sorcerer enters a command, presses a button, or alters the device to expend that substance, creating the equivalent of a power. Because the resulting effect is a use of these elements and substances for extraordinary purposes, it is deemed as sorcery.

Devices used in sorcery are called control boxes. These control boxes are readily available to corporate mercenaries and government agencies. They are not sold to the general public for fear of their use against government officials. However, each

Sorcery as presented for player characters doesn't have to match sorcery for NPCs. For PCs, it's another implementation of science. For NPCs, it can be sourced from the arcane. If so, this type of manipulation of invisible energy should strike the characters as quite odd, maybe frightening as they simply don't understand how it's possible!

control box is serialized and tracked just in case a mercenary or agent decides to use it inappropriately. Corporations that sell control boxes also sell remote readers that can read the serial number of the box up to 100 yards away. This can then be tracked to the corporation and recipient of the control box should the local authorities need to get involved. These remote readers are sold to governing offices (city and state), local authorities, and the Allied Navy. They are never available to corporations or government agents.

As long as a sorcerer avoids using their control box against government officials, they can use the box in any manner possible and fill it with any substance desired. Each control box has four chambers, allowing it to be filled with up to four different elements or substances. Filling those chambers is as simple as pressing a key to activate a chamber and then immersing the control box in the desired substance. The design of the metal used for the box resists corrosion and all substances flow harmlessly off, with no remaining residue. Removal of the control box may require the sorcerer to use an object that prevents their hands from coming into contact with the element or substance (such as tongues), but otherwise they can handle it afterward. Even fire does not cause the metal to heat and is safe to touch after removal.

Manipulation is the character's ability to enter the right command to get the control box to perform whatever function they desire. This could be done on a keypad, through a wireless remote, or even using mechanical switches built into the control box. Of course, before this can be done, the control box must first be programmed with the new function. This is done through a programming module that is removed once the control box is ready to be used.



Sorcerers are only allowed to keep a single control box, although it can be upgraded. This is tracked by a central system available to all corporations that sell the control boxes. Power Points are a representation of how full the control box is. As Power Points are utilized, the control box is drained of the elements or substances stored within. These do not replenish on their own and once a control box reaches 0 Power Points, it is completely empty.

BACKFIRE

If the sorcerer enters the wrong command, the control box doesn't perform as intended, represented by rolling a 1 on the Manipulation die, regardless of the Wild Die. When this occurs, the sorcerer is assaulted by a backfire of the elements of substances, causing 2d6 damage. When rolling a critical failure, the command is completely wrong, and the control box goes out of control. Everyone within a medium-blast template, centered on the sorcerer, receives 2d6 damage. However, when this occurs, the control box is not damaged, it simply backfired.

NEW POWERS

Taking the New Power Edge is a representation of using the programming box to establish a new set of commands for the control box to perform a new function. This process rarely takes very long, and can probably be done in 4 – 12 hours, depending on how complex the command is (represented by the rank of the power). Once the command is programmed, it is immediately usable.

MAINTAINING POWERS

Maintaining powers with Tech Background (Sorcery) works the same as Arcane Background. It is a result of not entering a command that stops the power from working.

REGAINING POWER POINTS

Control boxes cannot replenish the elements and substances inside them. They must be immersed within that element or substance for replenishment to occur. When this source is available, the control box regains Power Points at a rate of 5 per hour. If the control box cannot be fully immersed in the element or substance, it only regains Power Points at a rate of 2 per hour.

INCREASING POWER POINTS

Increasing Power Points means the sorcerer has turned in their control box to receive an upgrade. Besides the Power Points Edge only being allowed once per rank, the sorcerer must also have increased their Reputation by 5 RP since the acquisition of their last control box.

EDGES

The following Power Edges are usable with Tech Background (Sorcery):

New Power and Power Points

OVERCHARGE

Type: Weird

Requirements: Novice, Tech Background (Sorcery), Smarts d8+

Some sorcerers tinker with their control boxes, or seek out the black market, to create an overcharge mechanism. This overcharge increases the amount of time the elements or substances within the control box are utilized, but in a more

efficient manner. By spending 1 extra Power Point, the overcharge mechanism is engaged and the duration of the power is doubled. This does not affect powers with a duration of 'Instant'.

SAGE

Type: Professional

Requirements: Seasoned, Tech Background (Sorcery), Smarts d8+, Knowledge (Elements) d8+, Manipulation d8+

Sorcerers who are master manipulators of their control boxes in terms of programming and use are referred to as sages. Besides their knowledge of the control boxes, these sages also have a scholarly knowledge of the elements or substances inside the control boxes. Their control boxes are said to be modified for extreme efficiency and effectiveness.

A sage's control box has modifications to improve the expenditure of the elements and substances inside. Whenever a distance is provided in a power's range, that distance is increased by half. Thus, a range of 12/24/48 is increased to 18/36/72. For powers that have a range of 'Touch', their new range becomes Reach 1.

TRAPPINGS

Control boxes can be filled with any element or substance to create the powers it's capable of producing. Of course, these should match the power, but creativity is always at the whims of the player. Each control box can hold up to four different elements or substances, and the type of trapping each power uses would be associated with one of those four elements, or a combination of. Possible elements and substances can include: fire, water, medicine, acid, electricity, poison, ice, sound, and intense heat. The aforementioned power list is what is feasible using this technology in a sci-fi atmosphere. Additional powers may be added at the GM's discretion.

While players are encouraged to describe how these powers manifest, here is a list of powers with example trappings. This is only a sample list and ultimately not the only possibilities.

Armor: Ice forms on the surface of the sorcerer's battle suit.

Barrier: A wall of fire forms.

Blast: A ball of acid splashes onto the ground.

Blind: Small explosions of fire appear before the target.

Boost/Lower Trait: An elixir pumps through the bloodstream.

Burrow: Sound waves pummel the earth.

Damage Field: Electricity arcs across the body.

Deflection: A bullet crashes into a shield of ice.

Entangle: Ice forms around the target.

Fear: A deafening scream rings out.

Fly: Fire and sound propel the sorcerer into the air.

Havoc: Intense heat assaults the battlefield

Healing: Medicine is injected into the body.

Puppet: Hypnotic sounds whisper commands into the target's ear.

Smite: Poison lines the weapon.

Stun: Sonic screams fly through the air.

Telekinesis: Powerful waves appear, carrying an object along.

Teleport: Electricity and sound waves create a wormhole connecting two points.

SETTING THEMES

From its beginnings, *Mercenary Breed* was designed to create sci-fi action and adventure with a mix of the dramatic, also known as space opera. After developing the *Hastilion Expanse* campaign, it became obvious that the toolkits and sandbox setting could actually be used to develop all types of science fiction settings and campaigns. It is thus that *Mercenary Breed* is growing out of its space opera roots to encompass a wide array of themes and flavoring for settings, missions, and campaigns.

CAMPAIGN THEMES

To begin, it is imperative to understand what type of campaign (or overall setting) the GM is attempting to recreate. Does the action focus on a single planet where war is eminent? Or do the mercenaries travel across a galactic sector to perform missions that ultimately benefit the corporation?

Choosing a campaign theme is a good place to start as it establishes the framework that drives the overall story arc. This framework could be recreated as a background storyline always moving as the mercenaries perform various missions. Or it could be recreated as the underlying purpose of each mission, moving the corporation closer to the end of the campaign and the finale of their motivations. What these motivations are can alter the campaign theme, such as settlement of a new sector, expansion of the corporation across recently settled planets, or the complete domination of whatever planet they are headquartered on.

However, one thing to keep in mind is that choosing a campaign theme does not mean every single mission follows that theme. It could simply mean the campaign theme drives the back story while the mercenaries perform missions that may or may not serve to further that back story. The final design is ultimately up to the GM, but it should provide the mercenaries with a reason as to why they've been hired into the mercenary force.

SPACE TRAVEL

STYLE

Exploring a galaxy, or a region within a galaxy, starts with space travel. Space travel campaigns consist of exploration across unknown, uncharted, recently discovered, or even hostile environments. The purpose could range widely from searching for planets to settle to clearing the region of all hostile threats. However, at the core of every space travel campaign is a spacecraft, or fleet, designed for long trips across space without resupplying. The spacecraft must be self-sufficient and would probably contain a large number of personnel to perform all the daily mundane tasks. The term capital ship has been used previously to describe a space faring headquarters for a corporation, which would be a craft designed for housing executives and possibly deploying exploration fleets. Thus, a space travel campaign would be centered on this spacecraft or fleet.

Life aboard a spacecraft would be considerably different than life planet-side. Everyone aboard would have a purpose from simple maintenance workers and child care providers to the navigator and captain of the ship. Each mercenary would thus need a purpose that correlates to life aboard a spacecraft. This could



include leaders of exploration teams, navigators, engineers, and general soldiers, but each one should provide value to the spacecraft personnel. Otherwise, why would they be hired in the first place?

Corporations exist for one reason: to make money. Once a corporation's revenue begins to flatten or dip down, they're bound to seek other means of increasing their revenue. For that, they need to build new facilities to mine, produce, or sell their products. Space travel allows them to find new planets to do this. What planets they choose will be completely dependent on how the corporation makes money, but there is no shortage of new possibilities out there.

EXPLORATION

New planets are opportunities for mining new resources. Newly settled planets may contain new outlets to produce products at a low price if labor is cheap. Well-populated planets may be favorable locations to sell all those products. Either way, the driving force is to find a way to increase revenue.

Corporations who spend their time traveling across space may be looking for resources to sell to other corporations. They could come upon the moon of a recently settled planet with valuable resources locked deep within. Establishing a new mine takes only months and the corporation is able to increase their credit flow by selling these new resources to their existing customers or find new ones. Maybe the resources are extremely rare. Maybe the resources are new and can be made into better technology.

Another possibility is that the corporation is looking to sell resource mining opportunities to other corporations. These corporations are in charge of seeking planets with resources and ensuring a peaceful meeting with the indigenous people.

THREAT ELIMINATION

There are a countless number of solar systems within the Argo Galaxy. Many of them may harbor hostile xeno species. Although the Allied Navy is a force to be reckoned with, their job is to secure the regions of space under the control of the House of the Alliance. Exploration of new regions is at the behest of the corporations. Someone needs to clear hostile areas of all threats.

These corporations explore space looking to clear new regions of hostile xeno species, secure planets for settling, offer diplomatic solutions to unknown species, and document friendly species with the possibility of getting them to join the House of the Alliance. However, entering uncharted space can be extremely dangerous and while exploration fleets specialize in keeping their landing parties safe planet-side, these ones would need to keep their spacecraft safe while in space. Combat is inevitable and many are likely to have large fleets of fighters.

These ships may be significantly larger than exploration vessels with holding areas for additional spacecraft. They should have firepower to match their size, although speed may not be on their side. Slower than exploration fleets, these large ships rely on firepower as they lumber across the unknown.

DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS

On the complete opposite side from threat elimination are the fleets that serve as diplomats for their particular species and, more importantly, the House of the Alliance. These fleets enter new or known sectors to provide aid for those in need or simply convince new species to join the Alliance. They may end up performing missions to help their new xeno allies, land on planets under the rule of a dictator, or be forced to use their skills to avoid being blown out of space.

Diplomatic relations can often be as dangerous as eliminating threats. However, the purpose is for protection and not elimination. Defending the fleet is imperative. You may even end up defending someone else's fleet; a new species that would like to join the House of the Alliance. Negotiations may be necessary, and in the end, you're hoping to increase the power of the Alliance and make new allies. If diplomacy doesn't sound action packed enough, throw in a hostile threat that seeks to destroy your new ally and the mercenaries are forced to offer protection.

MERCENARY THEME

While the space travel description makes it somewhat obvious how to incorporate the mercenary theme into corporations who focus on space exploration, there are other options to consider. You can layer a campaign based on a spacecraft quite simply as the PCs are still mercenaries working for a corporation performing all manner of missions to further the corporation's desires. Life is simply moved from planet-side to space, housing is strictly on the ship, and the mercenaries may need to pull double duties besides mercenary missions.

However, this is not the only option as corporations are not the only ones patrolling the galaxy. Here are a few more options and how to apply them to the mercenary theme.

ACADEMY OF INTERSTELLAR STUDIES AND ECOLOGIES

The Academy of Interstellar Studies and Ecologies is tasked with investigating and documenting all xeno species encountered within the Argo Galaxy. This information is then placed within a galactic repository for all mercenaries and marines to access should they encounter a hostile species or need to know more about an allied species. Their duties include following-up with mercenary encounters, investigating uncharted space, interrogating captured warriors, and following some of the most violent and dangerous beings out there.

The Academy cannot perform their duties alone and most of them are scholars and administrators. For protection, they hire mercenaries and warriors when investigations need to be performed within the heart of hostile environments. They rely heavily on these mercenaries to capture unknown xeno warriors, follow those who require additional studies, and offer protection to other mercenary forces who enter new sectors for threat elimination.

The Academy of Interstellar Studies and Ecologies is featured in the *Xenopedia*. This Alliance body is responsible for documenting all known xenos throughout the galaxy. The information they gather is regularly available to those with proper access, which the PCs always have. This information is relayed across the void through the communication relay satellites along the space lanes. The characters' handheld devices download that information to keep up-to-date and ensure it's readily available when the satellites are not accessible.

All of their work centers on researching all species throughout the Argo Galaxy and transmitting that information through satellite relays back to planet-side network systems. The Academy owns large, slow moving space stations for mission deployment. These space stations can travel between solar systems using an FTL drive, but once there, they float slowly throughout the area. All mercenary forces are given a large landing craft stocked with equipment for performing missions planet-side. These craft are also equipped with defensive weapons should the need arise.

ALLIED NAVY

The Allied Navy is the largest fleet of the Alliance and offers protection throughout charted space. Their job is quite simple: protect all members of the Alliance. They do not seek encounters, but they will do everything in their power to stop them. Their fleets are quite formidable and no one has yet overcome them.

Powering this Allied Navy is a large group of marines and hired guards. None of these are mercenaries nor will they ever receive the perks of being a mercenary for a major corporation (such as luxurious housing). However, the Allied Navy has an endless supply of weaponry and their marines and hired guards are said to live dangerous lives.

Protecting the charted regions of the galaxy is not an easy task. As soon as a new sector is opened for settlement, the Allied Navy has to create a force to patrol that new sector. Whenever hostile fleets are encountered, the Allied Navy responds. Please note that these encounters have to be large enough to muster a fleet as large as the Allied Navy. Small encounters must be handled by the corporations as the Allied Navy simply cannot handle that much work. They're focus is on open warfare, not moon raids. But when those encounters occur, they are epic in scale. The Allied Navy has been known to face down dozens of enemy spacecraft in a single battle, only to continue their patrols a month later and face down another dozen.

The PCs would be performing similar duties to corporate mercenaries, but on a much different scale. They would have to suffer in cramped housing and no personal transportation, but their weapons will be incredible and all military grade. Optionally, a campaign such as this may lower Reputation requirements by 10, or possibly start the PCs with a Reputation of 10. After all, marines need heavy weapons because they face down entire armies, not raiding forces.

The Allied Navy also employs a huge fleet of fighters, giving the PCs another specialized duty to perform. Mass combat within an Allied Navy campaign would be quite heavy, and could range from planet-side wars across the tundra to hundreds of fighters filling the void.

HOUSE OF THE ALLIANCE

The House of the Alliance is the ultimate political party in the Argo Galaxy. Their mission is to use diplomatic relations to convince all xeno species to be allies, drop their hostilities, and join the Alliance. At its very basics, the House of the Alliance sends diplomats and administrators to speak with friendly species for incorporation into the Alliance; but that would make for a game lacking in action and adventure. What many may not realize is that the House of the Alliance also employs space marines to offer protection to newly allied species that don't have the backing of major corporations or the Allied Navy.

The House of the Alliance does not have deep pockets like the corporations nor do they have unlimited resources like the Allied Navy. Instead, they must rely on the prowess of their space marines to find and procure the equipment they need. For this, they are paid significantly more than regular mercenaries, but they must also purchase their equipment. For an easy way of representing this, equipment

costs 100xRP. This isn't an exact calculation, but it's close enough. GMs are encouraged to make adjustments as necessary.

In this regard, PCs are space marines performing missions to protect other species for whatever purpose. These are all recently or soon-to-be allied species who are struggling to deal with some type of hostility. The House of the Alliance steps in with a group of space marines that may look a little haphazard compared to their mercenary counterparts. The biggest benefit? These space marines always seem to find the most exotic weapons and armor as they are not limited to what the corporations retain in inventory. Many mercenaries are awestruck by the incredible xeno weapons wielded by the space marines. However, those same space marines are awestruck by the ease at which the mercenaries requisition equipment and are given free housing and vehicles.

Another benefit of being a space marine is that you are not tied to the whims of the corporation. The House of the Alliance eliminates corruption within and its missions are based on the needs of others, not their own needs. Their own needs are dealt with by the Allied Navy and Academy of Interstellar Studies and Ecologies. This could throw the PCs into not only numerous solar systems, but numerous regions within the Argo Galaxy; possibly spending months at a time traveling between missions.

CHARACTER CONCEPTS

Mercenaries can take on the persona of a standard warrior, but life on a spacecraft would require much more than military duties. Here is a collection of character concepts that embrace the space travel theme.

Commanding Officer: Every spacecraft needs a commander, equating to a commanding officer (their actual title may be different). This is the leader of the entire crew who makes the ultimate decisions regarding the ship. For small expeditions, a PC could easily serve as the commanding officer.

Communications: A specialist in charge of ship-to-ship and ship-to-planet communications. Besides knowing the ins and outs of how the technology works on the ship, they may also be good at locating information planet-side.

Diagnostics: When a system fails on the ship due to maintenance issues or attack, diagnostics personnel are the ones to respond. They are not only skilled in repairing the equipment, they understand how it operates should the need arise to transfer power for defensive or offensive purposes.

Engineer: On large ships, engineers are everywhere. They specialize in specific portions of the ship, learning it so thoroughly that they can make an alteration without putting much thought into it. They provide direction to diagnostics personnel and are always in charge of making adjustments and upgrades.

First Officer: The first officer is the second-in-charge, behind the commanding officer. They may have a more personal relationship with the personnel, acting as a voice for them and translating the commanding officers orders into duties needed to be performed.

Helmsman: Helmsmen and women are the ones that actually pilot the ship. They are skilled in space flight and probably have a background in all types of piloting. To them, flying a spaceship is an art form.

Medic: Medics are important in space to deal with injuries and, more importantly, diseases. Although the air is continuously cleaned on a spaceship, the close

quarters can make diseases spread quite quickly. A good medic can keep a ship's personnel living for a very long time.

Navigator: While the helmsman pilots the spacecraft, navigators make sure they're going the right way. These specialists can maneuver through any sector, know how to read astrological charts, and understand how to determine your location within the void.

Operations: Operations specialists, primarily officers, are in charge of the day-to-day duties aboard the ship. They ensure everyone is doing their jobs and that all jobs are being performed per the commanding officer's standards.

Scientist: Scientist is a catch-all term. The actual field of study should be much more focused, such as xenobiologist. They are tasked with understanding a planet's environment and deciphering everything they can about the xeno species encountered.

Security: Security is in charge of defense for the ship. They not only thwart boarding actions on the ship, they also deal with mutiny from the ship's personnel.

Tactician: Tacticians are in charge of the offensive strikes of the ship and the landing party. They must know the best place and method of striking a target to maximize the effectiveness of the attack.

WEAPONS

Personnel aboard a spacecraft not only need to be concerned with the safety of the people, but also the integrity of the ship. Large weapons inside a spacecraft are dangerous and anything capable of damaging the ship may create more catastrophic problems. Automatic and semi-automatic weapons are never used and security would prefer that all personnel stick to use basic technology (such as crossbows, electrosticks, shocksticks, and molecular hand weapons). Plasma weapons, and anything that uses superheated gas, are absolutely not allowed. The favored pistol for most is the needle pistol, as it is unable to penetrate the walls of the ship. If a species boards with destructive firearms, these foes will be the least of your problems once weapons start firing.

Because of the need to protect the ship as well as the personnel, spacecraft rarely carry weapons that cannot be used aboard the ship. Assault and hunting rifles are common weapons planet-side, but if they're in inventory, they'll be secured in the armory. Corporations that focus on exploration would be more concerned with safety than winning a war.

Members of the Allied Navy will see a significantly different weapons inventory. They still avoid plasma and superheated weapons, but large guns are commonplace. Using them aboard an Allied Navy ship is discouraged, but when landing on a hostile species' ship, there is no concern for the safety of the ship. Specialized suits for boarding parties help keep the marine in place when the walls of the ship are ripped open to expose it to the void. Vibro weapons are much more common within the Allied Navy for melee.

ARMOR

Exploration fleets stock specialized suits much more often than non-exploration fleets. They keep an inventory of clean, pressure, and space suits for different types of exploration and favor body gloves for their ability to fit underneath the other suits.

Corporations and marines meant for threat elimination would still utilize battle suits. Warfare on a planet with a hostile environment is much too risky as an entire army would have to be outfitted with specialized suits. Therefore, only small forces are allowed for these types of missions and the correct suit will have to be requisitioned ahead of time. This should be seen as transparent by the PCs, but it does require proper planning before a mission is initiated. An exploration fleet must always be ready for any environment while a threat elimination fleet must always be prepared to protect the Alliance.

VEHICLES

Exploration fleets store many types of land vehicles in inventory. Because you never know what type of environment will be found on a planet, these fleets must be prepared for anything. ATVs, snowmobiles, personal watercraft, ice vehicles, and mountain bikes would be readily available.

Threat elimination fleets have little use for those vehicles and would instead keep a large inventory of fighters, armored personnel carriers, and penetration craft (for raids on hostile ships).

HOUSING

Housing aboard spacecraft is quite basic. Each PC would be given a small room that has a bed, closet, work desk, and maybe small bathroom. Everything else would be communal.

MUNDANE EQUIPMENT

Exploration fleets employ a lot of surveillance, scientific, medical, and environmental equipment (equipment for operating in various environments and across different terrain). They need to be able to safely cross harsh terrains and perform their investigations. Threat elimination fleets rarely require mundane equipment.

SPACE WESTERN

STYLE

After successful space exploration, it's time to settle the new sector of the galaxy. During this time, villages are small, technology is usually limited to what was brought, and resources are limited to what's readily available on the planet. For all intents and purposes, this begins the space western theme of campaigns. While technically space western is western layered on a sci-fi theme, we're using the term to signify the first decades of settling a new planet or sector.

Space western campaigns consist of life with little protection, limited supplies, and the need to rely on the planet's natural resources. PCs would live in villages, towns, or small cities, most likely in optimal places such as near a fresh water lake or river. Although they have the high technology, the settlements are still in their infancy and must rely on natural resources more than that high technology. Before the supply fleets arrive, houses must be made of wood, concrete, or whatever resource can be managed by hand without further processing. Before the major corporations establish markets, factories, and retail shops, everyone may be limited to what they can barter or trade for.

Transportation faces the same problem. PCs may have arrived with ATVs, personal watercraft, and snowmobiles to deal with the environment, but they won't have luxury cars, motorcycles, airplanes, or helicopters to take them from one place to another. They may even be able to domesticate local animals for riding.

Planetary survey is a very common task for megacorporations, government bodies, and investors to request. Before anyone can begin mass settling a planet or tapping into its resources, a full survey must take place to ensure the safety of the environment and the incoming settlers. Of course, these surveys are sometimes incomplete and certain things get overlooked; especially when a planet is rich in resources that someone wants to harvest.

Campaigns in this type of environment are about survival as much as they are about continued exploration. The exploration fleet may have deemed a planet as ready for settlement, either eliminating the major threat or locating an empty continent, but who knows what lies hidden from these fleets. Maybe the indigenous people live in caves that weren't explored. Maybe their houses appear camouflaged when viewed from above. Maybe they live underground or underwater. Whatever the reason for these species for not being originally detected, the question is: are they friendly or hostile?

FRONTIER SURVIVAL

Frontier survival may seem like an obvious style of space western campaign, but there are several things to remember. Before a planet is settled, it would be cleared of known hostiles and investigated for ideal locations. As such, anything that still lives on the planet should either be extremely isolated, completely hidden, or possibly a species also looking to settle the planet.

Games like this pit the PCs against the rest of the world, defending their new settlements. Instead of the PCs going out to investigate the rest of the world, they are hired or assigned to the settlement for defensive purposes. Corporations that settle new planets always need to ensure the security of their settlement is solid so that construction can proceed. With those settlements comes ways of exploiting the natural resources of the planet for the financial gain of the corporation. Remember, corporations don't settle new planets for fun; they do it for profit.

Frontier survival may also involve a lot of native flora and fauna. Maybe the planet is swarming with dinosaur-like creatures that constantly threaten the settlement. Maybe there are horrible beasts that live underground, only surfacing to hunt. There could also be environmental concerns. Maybe the climate changes drastically and the PCs, and the settlers they are defending, constantly struggle to survive.

PLANETARY SURVEY

Planetary survey is similar to frontier survival, except the PCs are mobile instead of defending a settlement. They must travel across the planet eliminating or be-friending anything or anyone they encounter. Planetary surveying is more than just traveling across the land and understanding its geography, it's also about delving into caves to discover what's within, searching the deepest oceans for signs of life, or climbing a volcano to determine whether or not it's active.

Many corporations focus their efforts on mining and manufacturing. When settling a new planet, finding optimal places to mine and constructing factories near those mines is crucial to profit. Before that can be done, mercenaries scour the planet clearing it of indigenous creatures or species that weren't previously detected. This is akin to an epic fantasy campaign where warriors cross the land, seeking some ultimate goal. For the mercenaries, that goal may be finding the right place for a new settlement. When they find this place, it could be filled with all sorts of terrifying creatures they must battle, avoid, domesticate, or whatever. Before the settlement can start building, the mercenaries must first create a safe place to build.

Another possibility of a planetary survey campaign is searching for ancient relics from a long lost species. Maybe the glaciers of the extreme north or the tundra of the south holds secrets millennia old. Maybe those secrets point to new power sources, improved technology, or even something more arcane in nature. Just because a planet has been deemed suitable for settling doesn't mean there aren't hidden purposes behind a corporation's motivations.

Using that same line of thinking, maybe the planet is not being prepared for settlement, but instead it's being prepared for destruction or extreme isolation. A foul species may have kidnapped high-ranking officials, or even an entire civiliza-



tion, and stolen them away onto a distant planet. The mercenaries must scour the planet looking for their people, dealing with everything the planet can throw at them. This could eventually turn into a military campaign once the mercenaries find the captives. In this type of campaign, the mercenaries may be a covert ops team, looking to infiltrate the planet instead of just surveying it.

GOVERNING RIVALRIES

Settling a new planet can take decades if not centuries before it's completely self-sustaining. During the first years of settlement, small corporations that only require a limited amount of supplies arrive first and start building a network of resources to supply to larger corporations. Large fleets of supplies lumber across the void to bring housing material and building supplies, but again each one is limited in how much it can carry. A lot of conveniences need to be established before a planet can function on its own.

During this time of early settlement, many cities may form in parallel, all with their own ideas for how their city and the planet should be governed. Although the planet needs to conform to the House of the Alliance, there is little regulation in the day-to-day activities from the House. Thus, the planets are free to define the majority of their laws and regulations, but obviously agreements must be made. It is only natural for people to disagree; especially when they are not the same species.

Rivalries form between cities and governing bodies, while alliances form between those who are able to agree. If the cities are settled by different xeno species, extreme differences may form in opinions and what laws should be enacted. When these rivalries form, devious acts occur as one attempts to sabotage another, either physically or politically. In extreme cases, one settlement may be ruled by a tyrant who pressures all nearby cities to conform to his standards. This could result in heinous acts of persecution or even an outbreak of military actions, going as far as declaring war on each other. Which side the PCs choose can drastically alter the feel of a campaign. Do they pick the righteous side or one of corruption?

MERCENARY THEME

Many corporations take part in settling new planets, as do other political bodies. Sometimes, however, the corporation is only a small part of the settling and instead a large group of citizens is intent on establishing roots on a new planet as their current one may have gotten too crowded (physically or politically). Transferring the mercenary theme to a space western campaign can be as simple as defining the corporation as one of the settling groups or altering the mercenary concept to apply to different campaign themes. A few options are provided here.

CORPORATE MERCENARY

The standard corporate mercenary lives a much different life on a frontier planet. Instead of traveling from planet to planet, or even sector to sector, they generally stay on a single planet, making do with what they have available. They don't often get supply deliveries and usually turn to more archaic means of survival (such as riding beasts and hunting with a bow).

Thousands of corporations have motivations for establishing themselves on a frontier planet, but finding mercenaries to fulfill duties on those planets may be more difficult. The life is much less rewarding monetarily, but the mercenaries may instead have the opportunity to carve out their own niche within the new planet. They may be granted hundreds of acres of land, their own personal lake, or even bartered labor to build extravagantly large houses. They may also be given the right to run as planetary governor.

But life on a frontier planet is not an easy one as regular luxuries and conveniences are harder to come by. Simple things such as electricity may not be set up yet, or even running water throughout all houses. Creating settlements and setting up city utilities takes time and money. In a new settlement, life is starting at day 1, not the year 6500.

One never knows what surprises a new planet holds.

COVERT OPERATIONS

Covert operatives are utilized by a number of political and military bodies, including the House of the Alliance. When a frontier planet is deemed as dangerous and settlement is held off, a covert operations team may be sent in to investigate. These are similar to their mercenary brethren, but their focus is stealth and infiltration without anyone knowing. Whether it's to rescue a kidnapping victim or assassinate a rival xeno emperor, covert operatives do their job with extreme finesse.

Who the covert operatives work for is mostly irrelevant. In fact, the operatives may not even know. They're getting paid and they have their orders, everything else is irrelevant. Their missions are dangerous, but very much to-the-point: perform this very specific task and make sure it's done with 100% accuracy. The problem with covert operations is that there is no room for error.

Covert operations forces always have just the right equipment to get the job done, and nothing more. They have little need for heavy weapons that cannot be easily carried around. They are not fighting an entire army, but instead are performing precision acts that must go undetected. Getting out quickly and alive is an absolute must. If they perform their mission perfectly, they'll get repeat business. It should also be noted that covert operatives make considerably more money than mercenaries, but must live a life of disguise. In public, they always wear a metaphorical mask.

MARSHALS

Before local governments are established and the major corporations have the backing of mercenary forces, settlements employ or appoint marshals to enforce

the law and keep the inhabitants safe. Hopefully following a path of honor, marshals have a lot of authority over an entire settlement. Yes the laws should be voted on by the majority, but the marshals are the ones enforcing that law, serving as lawyer, judge, and jury. Some species refer to this as frontier justice – a type of authority that blurs the lines between what is right and wrong.

Marshals make very little pay and have very few resources. They must operate with what they have on hand, what they can barter for from the corporations, or what is given to them by those investing in the settlement. Additionally, they are paid by taxes collected from the settlers, providing them with barely enough to survive. So why would one want to become a marshal? Because they are given the opportunity to choose a 100-acre plot of land to do with as they please in exchange for 15 years of service as a marshal. The House of the Alliance is very clear on the requirements for this exchange: it must be 15 years, no less. If the individual goes 25 years, they get 200 acres. After 30 years, they get 300 acres. Any more than 30 years and a marshal is deemed as unfit to serve the settlement, and instead is encouraged to retire or run for planetary governor (if the position is available).

Most settlements have a group of marshals, much like a mercenary force. Each one is treated as an equal authoritative figure, although at least one typically assumes a commanding role. Each marshal is entrusted with the safety of the settlement, serving only in a defensive or investigative role. Marshals are never allowed to declare war, attack anyone without permission from the settlement, make an arrest without properly declaring a crime was committed, or consort with rival settlements. They are allowed to hunt any native fauna that threatens the settlement, deal with any criminals as they see fit, retaliate against those who cause harm to the settlement, and serve as a diplomatic figure to resolve issues between settlements. These, of course, are just some of their duties and the GM is welcome to embellish as she pleases.

CHARACTER CONCEPTS

Mercenaries can take on the persona of a standard warrior, but life on the frontier may require special skills. Here is a collection of character concepts that embrace the space western theme.

Bounty Hunter: Fugitives often travel to frontier planets to escape persecution.

When a fugitive is on the run, someone is bound to have placed a price on their return. When money's involved, a bounty hunter looking for the fugitive is close behind.

Engineer: Unlike engineers on spaceships, those on frontier planets focus on land vehicles like trains, hovercrafts, snowmobiles, personal watercraft, and ATVs. When supplies are available, colonists turn to engineers to devise new means of getting around safely.

Guard: Guards are the simplest form of protection for high-ranking officials. They are especially prevalent when executives from a corporation are present during the first years of settling a new planet.

Gunsmith: Also known as gunslingers, gunsmiths know the ins and outs of ranged weapons. Shooting is an art form for them and no one is as quick on the draw as they are.

Marshal: Marshals are the local authorities in the colonies. They are either hired from mercenary forces or chosen from the settlers.

Mechanic: A jack-of-all-trades, mechanics are able to make repairs on most mundane equipment and vehicles.

Medic: Survival on a frontier planet is often only as capable as the quality of the medics at hand. They even serve as scientists to investigate what herbal remedies are available on the planet.

Scientist: Scientists are extremely important in the colonies to research the environment as well as the local flora and fauna.

Scout: There's always a need for a lookout or someone that can scour the terrain searching for possible signs of trouble. Scouts are important for their ability to understand the terrain and find the best hunting grounds.

Security: Once a corporation has a facility in place, they first hire security before launching a full mercenary force. While a seemingly simple task, they are in charge of the safety of the facility they're assigned to.

Smuggler: It never fails that frontier planets attract smugglers, possibly finding bounty hunters not far behind. New planets are excellent ways to find valuable gems and precious metals that smugglers take off-planet for sale in the black market.

Surveyor: Surveyors are a counterpart to scouts. They map the terrain and find optimal places for new settlements or where to build a corporate facility. They're the ones called upon to find the valuable gems, precious metals, and other resources desired by the corporations.

WEAPONS

If a corporation is going to bring mercenaries to a frontier planet for lengthy stays, they would be sure to keep those mercenaries equipped with as much ammo as would be necessary to last an entire campaign. That is, of course, as long as they don't end up in a war. However, because the mercenaries aren't going into war, their weapons would most likely be limited to the most common (maybe up to a Reputation requirement of 15). If ammunition did run out, getting supplies could prove difficult.

Space western campaigns that don't involve corporate mercenaries would have to resort to much more basic weapons, such as those with a Reputation requirement of 10 or less. The sci-fi theme should still be present throughout and the PCs shouldn't have to resort to archaic weapons, but the vast inventory of the Allied Navy should never be available. Ammunition would prove extremely difficult to come across, unless it can easily be made (such as modern day bullets). To keep settlements safe, at least one colonist would have the technology to create the equivalent of modern day bullets. No one wants to run out of bullets.

Technology for developing melee weapons could be difficult to define. Vibro weapons would eventually run out of power, molecular ones would eventually wear down, but someone should be available to create hand-forged weapons. If the right corporation hasn't established a facility, or supplies are years out, getting new molecular or vibro weapons should be a rarity.

Of course, there are other exotic options. For instance, the PCs could come upon a xeno cache of weapons material that produces exotic weapons equivalent to those they don't readily have access to. This can make for some interesting weapon designs.

ARMOR

Armor is even more difficult to properly define in a space western setting than weapons. While leather should be easy to find, just look for an animal with the right hide, tactical armor would probably be the go-to for most missions. This type of

armor should be much easier to create, maintain, and repair compared to a full battle suit or body glove. The latter two would require high-tech facilities to create, and repairing them is only performed by artificers with access to high-tech tools (such as corporate inventories). The PCs could easily arrive in their battle suits, but making them last is up to the discretion of the GM.

In frontier planets with a lot of difficult environments for the PCs to encounter (such as underwater missions), there should be enough suits to compensate. Pressure suits are very common in exploration fleets and those carrying supplies should always have some on-hand. The same can be said for clean suits.

VEHICLES

Any corporation or settling agency would be wise to ensure their personnel have all the vehicles necessary to survive on the frontier planet. Finding a fuel source could be as simple as finding methane gases or locating a source of oil that can be refined. Additionally, each settlement would have at least one engineer and mechanic to build and maintain these types of land vehicles.

HOUSING

Housing on frontier planets can range from a simple wooden house with four rooms to a high-tech pod that allows complete safety from the surrounding environment. Either one would suffice, as a PC in a space western campaign probably wouldn't be concerned with luxurious housing until the planet becomes more populated. If they are, then maybe they can design a mansion akin to what you would see in modern times and find a way to build it. Manpower is somewhat limited as everyone is busy performing a job that allows the settlement to grow and thrive.

MUNDANE EQUIPMENT

Technology on frontier planets is high enough to feel like a sci-fi environment. However, there is limited building material and equipment to put it together, resulting in a mixture of structural design. Depending on available resources, the town may look like it comes from a western movie. If supplies have been delivered numerous times, there should be a core city that is developing with all the latest technology.

Mundane equipment should follow this same principal. If it requires a power source, you may be out of luck if there is still limited power production. Surveillance equipment would only be available if the team deemed it necessary (such as covert operatives). Instead, there would be a high concentration of equipment that easily can be made by hand or delivered in high quantities. If you can feasibly fit 100 of that piece of equipment in a large crate, it would definitely be available.

SPACE OPERA

STYLE

After many years of populating, planets become large entities within the greater Alliance. They buy and sell to other planets, house thousands of corporations, are called home to billions of citizens, and serve as a perfect launching point for a space opera campaign. At its simplest, space opera is sci-fi action and adventure with a dramatic flair. Without hampering the creativity of campaign design, space opera can encompass anything and everything. In fact, individual missions could carry space travel, space western, urban warfare, or military sci-fi themes while still

sticking true to the overall space opera feel. It's the overall story arc driving the campaign that makes it space opera.

Space opera campaigns are filled with adventures across the galaxy or throughout every inch of a single planet, including missions in outer space. They can range from the mundane activities of politics to the dangerous delves into a remote base now under the control of a hostile species. As long as something connects all these missions, they can vary in style. However, to make it a true space opera, there should be some type of dramatic event going on in the background.

PCs in space opera campaigns enjoy all the luxuries and equipment available in *Mercenary Breed*. If headquarters is planet-side, it's probably located in a large city where the PCs enjoy a nice apartment on their first day and a huge lakefront mansion on retirement. If headquarters is on a capital ship, a state room may be where they begin but a luxurious suite could be where they retire. All equipment is readily available because you never know what type of mission will be thrown at them. The PCs should choose their appropriate weapons after receiving a briefing of the mission, but before being deployed. As long as they meet the Reputation requirements, the sky's the limit!

Campaigns in a space opera don't need to conform to any type of template, nor do they need to feel similar in any regard. Space opera opens up the campaign to all sectors and planets, sending the mercenaries to wherever they're needed. Their efforts are always to further the desires of the corporation, but that could mean anything. There could be a factory that is being sabotaged. Maybe a mine has been reported as haunted. Maybe the mercenaries need to capture a high profile thief. Or maybe they just need to deal with the political ramifications of their corporation. In the end, the campaign can be designed to encompass every aspect of science fiction.



GALAXY SPANNING

Many space opera campaigns stretch far into the reaches of the galaxy. It may be a single sector, a new expanse, a single solar system, or even the whole galaxy (although that would require a lot of traveling). Because a corporation's assets are spread throughout the galaxy, the mercenaries' missions bring them to these new, possibly exotic places.

Space opera campaigns such as this often incorporate multiple themes into their series of missions. No two missions need to have the same thing as long as there is some type of storyline tying them together. Without that storyline, there's not much of a coherent campaign. This allows the GM maximum flexibility by presenting many different types of exciting missions to keep the PCs on their toes. One game session they might be saving a corporate executive from a desert planet, the next session they're on an ice planet searching caves for an ancient species. The common theme for these types of campaigns is that there doesn't have to be a common theme, just a single storyline that ties them all together.

The core of *Mercenary Breed* is designed to embrace this type of campaign. Everything at the mercenaries' disposal is meant to give them the tools necessary to get the job done across the galaxy. To allow for a countless number of planet compositions, the mercenaries should have access to everything in the *Mercenary's Handbook* along with enjoying some type of corporate recognition for their efforts (such as being rewarded a luxury car).

Hastilion Expanse is a galaxy spanning campaign.

HOME WORLD DEFENSE

Home world defense takes the sci-fi action and adventure and centers it on the mercenaries' or corporation's home world. Instead of traveling to a distant planet, the mercenaries must spend their time defending a single planet from hostile threats. This doesn't mean the mercenaries spend the entire time on the planet, it just means the action typically involves that planet at all times, such as moon bases and remote outposts owned by the defending planet.

Home world defense campaigns rarely leave the solar system, but still could span the reaches of the planet and incorporate neighboring planets with varying environments. The mercenaries will need to be ready for anything, but they'll already know the ins and outs of where they're going because it's all fully documented, inhabited, and maybe under the control of the corporation. However, that doesn't mean the action has to stay planet-side.

One theme of home world defense is that the invaders incorporate lots of space fighters, forcing the mercenaries to take up the ranks of fighter pilots and head toward the void, taking the fight into the face of the invaders. Planetary Defense forces may be able to hold off those that enter the atmosphere, but the mercenaries are tasked with eliminating the threat before they pass into the atmosphere.

Another theme of home world defense is the idea of a xeno invasion from within. The hostile species already lives on the planet, somewhere they've never been previously detected, or they're able to land completely undetected. The mercenaries instead have to assemble ground forces to deal with the invaders. Instead of turning it into a series of mass battles, the mercenaries are an elite force infiltrating the xeno invaders' mother ships.

PLANETARY DEALINGS

A third campaign option would be one that never leaves the planet as there are simply too many things to "fix" on that planet. There are no xeno invaders, but maybe a species already living on the planet is revolting. The mercenaries don't travel to ice planets, but maybe they have to visit the arctic areas to explore a series of dangerous caves. Just because the mercenaries don't leave the planet doesn't

mean there's a shortage of action and adventure. A single planet can house billions of people with all types of terrain and environments, and each one may have a unique problem to solve.

These planetary campaigns are extremely similar to epic fantasy campaigns in that the PCs are crossing the globe to deal with a series of encounters to resolve a much larger issue. However, due to the technology in space opera, the PCs can travel much faster, carry much more devastating weapons, and always have a corporate outpost to turn to for supplies. They would rarely run out of supplies or ammo, and with the use of their handheld computer, they can acquire vehicles with only a day's notice.

Planetary campaigns may also be a lot more visible publicly than any other type of campaign. The PCs are mercenary heroes in the eyes of the general populace as their conquests are televised worldwide. Maybe they have a reporter or full camera crew following them around. Maybe their travels are sold to multimedia outlets and turned into movies or a television series. Or maybe the PCs earn their way onto the cover of the 'Mercenary's Quarterly' magazine. Whatever it is, the PCs definitely have the chance to gain public fame when their entire campaign focuses on a single planet.

If fame follows the PCs around through their mercenary missions, so too will more money, endorsements, and many other things that go along with being famous. The PCs will have to deal with the social aspects of the campaign as much as they'll have to deal with the military and political ones.

MERCENARY THEME

Mercenary Breed was designed around the space opera theme. Corporations hiring mercenaries to perform missions outside of the law or beyond the scope of any government agent can produce a wealth of sci-fi action and adventure opportunities. This is the life of a standard corporate mercenary. Of course, this isn't the only possibility and there are other ways to create that space opera experience.

GOVERNMENT AGENT

Many governments have their own agency to deal with specific types of issues. On planets inhabited by a lot of different species, the planetary governor may have formed an agency to police the different species, ensuring that none of them become hostile and try to overthrow the government. Some governors may have their own mercenary force dealing with issues related to government holdings; corporations aren't the only ones with lots of assets. Corrupt governments may have an agency to sabotage the corporations in an attempt to steal their holdings.

Government agents would most likely have access to the same equipment as corporate mercenaries, but their personal lives would probably be much quieter. Often times, government agents have to hide who they truly are from the rest of the world to avoid detection, possibly even assassination. Maybe they have to maintain a cover story, or maybe they live under a false name. Either way, government agents often live a life of extreme secrecy.

Every planet that is part of the Alliance must have some type of governing body. The House of the Alliance encourages a planetary governor, but will not stop a planet from recognizing emperors, kings, or territorial presidents. Each government type can have its own type of government agents ranging from simple guards to covert operatives, creating new missions to perform.

MILITARY SOLDIER

For a planet to survive, they should have some type of organized military. Most planets employ an army, air force (for planet-side and space combat), and a planetary defense. Armies are used in times of military action strictly on-planet; this

includes rebellions. The air force is primarily focused on invasion from outer space, but sometimes they are assembled to eliminate a rebellion attempt. Planetary defense is strictly focused on threats from off-planet.

Soldiers in the army include land and water forces. The army employs a combination of soldiers with handheld weapons, armored personal vehicles, tanks, amphibious vehicles, and long-range missile carriers. The army is also in charge of ocean faring battleships.

Soldiers in the air force are all pilots, being able to fly on-planet and off-planet craft. The air force thus has three types of bases: land, mobile (aircraft carrier), and outer space. Spacecraft carriers resemble large floating space stations, although they are instead equipped with all means of weaponry and not meant for scientific purposes or housing civilians.

Soldiers in the planetary defense operate the heavy weapons designed to shoot down hostile spacecraft from the safety of planet-side. These weapons are too large to fire across the planet, but can fire a blast strong enough to blow a fighter out of the void.

RADICAL MERCENARY

Not all mercenaries are employed by corporations. Some of them have been burned by the corporations and have instead joined the ranks of the radical mercenaries. Radical mercenaries are just like corporate mercenaries except their purpose is to sabotage and expose corrupt corporations (of which there are hundreds). They may be the reason the corporate mercenaries have been dispatched to a particular mission. Or maybe they come in after the corporate mercenaries and undo everything.

Assassination, infiltration, and theft are not below the radical mercenaries. They may attempt to justify their actions, but in the end they're acting as vigilantes working outside the scope of the law. If caught, their punishment would most certainly be death or life imprisonment.

Radical mercenaries are the ultimate in anti-corporate warfare. Most of them were corporate mercenaries and learned that corruption runs deep throughout the corporate atmosphere. They took the money made from being a corporate mercenary and funneled it into the radical group they joined. With this, they're able to purchase the equipment necessary to perform their missions, but always have to be conscious of running out of money. If the radicals were to run out of money, their rebellious mission would come to an abrupt end as they run out of supplies and ammunition. If they're lucky, however, they may find a rival corporation offering some assistance.

Radical mercenaries often operate beneath the radar of the corporate mercenaries. Unless purposefully confronting the corporate mercenaries, the radicals go mostly undetected. The corporations are so involved in their own affairs that they become blind to what's lurking in the shadows. Additionally, corporate mercenaries are so concerned with whatever mission they've been assigned that they have little time to investigate things that just seem out-of-place.

Instead, government agencies often end up investigating radical mercenaries. There may even be special task forces for investigating these types of radicals. Governments are paid by the corporations and many planetary governors rely on these corporations to pay for their election campaigns. As such, the governors protect the corporations, regardless of how much corruption runs throughout.

CHARACTER CONCEPTS

Mercenaries are more than just warriors in a space opera campaign. Each one has a flavor all his own, amounting to some type of specialized training or where

the character's interests lie. While the possibilities are endless, here is a sample of concepts.

Assassin: Assassins are skilled in stealth tactics, moving silently to get close enough to backstab their target or shoot them from the shadows.

Bounty Hunter: Bounty hunters are skilled in tracking their prey across the cosmos, always knowing where to find just the right information.

Engineer: Engineers not only design technology, they know how to fully utilize it, bypass necessary protocols, and probably repair it.

Hacker: Hackers are skilled in rifling through computers, computer systems, and networks to find the information they desire. Much of their work is beyond the regular limits of the law.

Hunter: Hunters are skilled trackers and killers, always being able to see, hear, or smell a target from a safe distance.

Infiltrator: Infiltrators are able to break through security systems, mechanical and electronic, to get inside of the most secure places. They also know how to navigate through a compound to find where the key individuals are located.

Mechanic: Mechanics are important for on-the-spot repairs and the creation of much-needed gadgets to get the job done.

Medic: Combat throughout the galaxy can be quite dangerous and anyone able to offer any type of healing, setting a broken bone, or pinpointing diseases is highly desired.

Navigator: Getting to and getting around new planets can be difficult. Navigators use their knowledge of the stars and terrain to reach their rendezvous.

Pilot: Traveling to distant planets is typically done on a large ship, but once deployed; a pilot needs to land the force safely.

Psion: Psions are masters of psionic abilities, with a mind much more powerful than any others.

Shock Trooper: Shock troopers lead from the front, able to break through enemy ranks, causing them to scatter and become vulnerable.

Sniper: Snipers perch on distant platforms to exploit their long range shooting abilities. They can take out a single target from incredible distances, allowing the hidden team to continue their infiltration efforts.

Specialist: Specialists are those who carry the weapons no one else wants to. They could be demolitions experts, skilled in flamethrowers, or know how to properly throw grenades.

WEAPONS

In short, all weapons are useful in a space opera campaign. However, the long answer is that the weapons chosen should match the requirements of the mission and what is required to be successful. If entering hostile territory, firepower is important. If going on a diplomatic mission, concealed weapons may be required. If the mercenaries don't really know what they're getting into, then an assortment may be necessary.

ARMOR

In short, all armor suits are useful in a space opera campaign. However, once again, the long answer is that the armor chosen should not only match the requirements of the mission and what is required to be successful, it should be extremely mindful of what the mercenaries have quick access to. While a battle suit will probably be the go-to at higher ranks, a tactical suit may be more important as it allows for easy carrying of weapons and equipment; they're also available much earlier in a mercenary's career.

VEHICLES

Corporations always have access to the right vehicles, and the ones chosen are imperative for the terrain where the mission takes place. Vehicles become very important for a mercenary to get around the planet as they either search out their target or are forced to chase one down. If traveling to a snowy planet, make sure they have snowmobiles. If traveling to a water planet, make sure they have personal watercraft. If traveling to a wetland area or swamp planet, make sure they have amphibious ATVs.

HOUSING

The beauty of being in a space opera environment where corporations rule is that housing is virtually endless. Depending on what the corporation is willing to pay for, each mercenary will have their own accommodations in accordance to where they are headquartered.

MUNDANE EQUIPMENT

Again, in short, all mundane equipment is available. And again, the equipment should always match the missions and what is required to be successful. However, equipment has a weight to it and unless the mercenaries are bringing along a van to hold all their equipment, encumbrance rules apply.

URBAN WARFARE

STYLE

Although urban warfare may sound like a very specific campaign model, we're using the term to signify a planet whose population has swelled so much the urban areas dominate the landscape. This could come in the form of a planet that is essentially one massive city, where all urban areas are connected, or urban areas that are so massive they not only build out, they also build up, where levels of the city sit on top of each other. In the case of the former, there are defined neighborhoods where city, state, and even country lines used to be drawn. In the case of the latter, there are differences in the class of living, dividing each "level" of the city whereas the higher you are, the better your lifestyle.

Urban warfare campaigns remain on a single planet. With how large the urban landscape is, however, even the greatest mercenaries could never search every inch of every sector in their career; there are simply too many. With each sector having its own style, architecture, and even species, it doesn't feel the same going from one to another. Traveling across the globe is much like traveling across the galaxy; each sector is unique just like each planet is. The only difference is that you don't have to travel across space to reach this unique destination.

Urban warfare is typically depicted in crowded, probably dirty urban environments where the population swells all the way to the city's limits. What lies past the city's limits can be anyone's guess.

PCs in an urban setting may not enjoy quite the space luxuries they do in a space opera campaign as everywhere they turn is another high-rise building. Instead of luxury homes, they live in luxury condominiums. They may start in the less-than-desirable areas of society and literally work their way up as their careers progress. Equipment may differ little, but transportation is going to change drastically. With crowded metropolitan areas come smaller vehicles or worse – public transportation! On the other side of the coin, crowded areas can be great places to hide in plain sight. It's easy to blend in with the throngs of people moving about compared to attempting to hide in wide open places.

Campaigns in urban settings may involve a lot of infiltration, recovery (or theft), and in-your-face action. If attempting to attack from long distances, there are a lot of things that can get in the way from crowds of citizens to large buildings that block the view. Be prepared to use tactics with proper preparation to overcome adversaries.

CRIMINAL SYNDICATES

In an urban world, criminal syndicates and gangs often thrive. They dwell in the underbellies of societies and sectors, plotting revenge on a rival or attempting to overthrow the local authorities, creating anarchy. If the local authorities are scared of defending these areas, the criminals and gangs may grow to insurmountable proportions. Whereas a democratic society may survive in the upper echelons of the urban areas, chaos is all that is found in the lower ones.

Criminal syndicate campaigns pit the PCs against a massive crime ring, powerful gang, or kingpin utilizing guerilla warfare. Money rules in this underground world and whoever has it can control the people, goods, entertainment, transportation, and anything else imaginable. To defeat them, the PCs must be cautious, alert, and completely prepared. They may be entering a society that hates authority and has embraced the criminals. Or maybe they'll enter a society ruled by fear where everyone that isn't a part of the syndicate wants nothing more than to leave that society. Will they find friends or will everyone turn into a foe?

Criminal syndicates can be extremely dangerous in that their resources are often widespread and their pockets are very deep. They make their money through illegal means with a profit margin that tops almost any corporation. Because of their domination of the underbelly of society, they control so many aspects of that world that the PCs may find it extremely difficult to locate the information they need to track the syndicate down. Everywhere they turn they encounter dead-ends, misleading information, and probably spies. Even with the backing of a corporation or government agency, the PCs are mostly on their own as they delve into the dark areas of the urban landscape.

DYSTOPIAN SOCIETY

Dystopian societies often feature a world run by executives who care little for those who are nothing like them. The differences in societal class are extreme, almost to the point where the middle class no longer exists. Those who are not wealthy are treated like scum and get very little for the work they do. This creates two distinct worlds on the planet where one is almost utopian in nature and the other is filled with desperation and despair. To overcome their shortfalls, the people in these dystopian societies turn to other means for making money.

Those within the dystopian areas of the world see an urban environment more akin to modern warehouse and bar districts. A continuous veil of darkness seems to never lift and most are dressed in some type of punk-like outfit. They care very little for the executives that run the world and usually only conform to the laws of the street. Criminal activity runs rampant and those with money only have it

through illegal or dishonest means. If it wasn't for the illicit activities of the executives and corporations, everyone in this dystopian underworld would be broke.

Cyberpunk campaigns often feature dystopian societies. In this regard, the players and the GM would have a decision to make before launching the campaign. Are the PCs acting as mercenaries for the corporations or government trying to stop the lowlives of society? Or are the PCs the lowlives who use the corporations to fund their underground life?

Dystopian societies may also feature a lot of gangs, or want-to-be gangs. To find protection and shelter to survive in this society, many people clump together. Walking around alone would be dangerous, if not deadly, but walking with a group of thugs, outcasts, and "meat shields" offers survivability. Who cares what the rest of group does as long as they all live? Illegal or not, everyone needs to find a way to make money to feed whatever habits they may have: drugs, alcohol, music, sex, nightlife, or whatever.

REBELLION

Rebellion campaigns feature a large portion of society that is fed-up with those in charge. They band together and fight against tyranny, corruption, or a government that wishes to crush the lower classes of society. When a rebellion begins, warfare takes place within every corner of society. No one is safe, even corporate executives.

When creating a rebellion-styled campaign, a very important question must be answered. What side of the rebellion do the PCs serve? If the PCs maintain their corporate mercenary status, they may be tasked with putting down the rebel leaders. They may even have to kill thousands of innocent civilians who want nothing more than freedom. The PCs take very strict orders and probably have to deal with how they personally feel about the situation.



If the PCs are on the side of the rebellion, they are going to face a countless number of soldiers and mercenaries being sent from the corporations and government to put down the rebellion. Stealth tactics will be necessary to avoid detection and the PCs may have to employ a type of guerilla warfare rather than an outright military confrontation. After all, if the civilians are revolting, they aren't likely to have the weapons and armor of the corporate and government forces.

MERCENARY THEME

Corporations often control more of an urban planet than the government. They not only have power and money, they also employ a lot more people than the government, giving them the ability to provide influence over local politics. Their mercenary forces are some of the strongest in the galaxy, but they're not the only ones fighting these wars. Here are some other ways to apply the mercenary theme to urban warfare.

CRIMINALS

PCs don't have work on the right side of the law, and who's to say which side is right and which is wrong? Criminal organizations often employ hired goons to bolster their ranks, acts as guards, and perform missions their regular goons can't perform. On the other side, the corporations may hire the mercenaries to track down the criminals that are infiltrating their assets or stealing their secrets. But deep in the dystopian societies, the line between right and wrong can be quite thin indeed.

Criminal syndicates may perform lawless activities or be involved in illegal entertainment, but they also may be the protectors of the underground. If local authorities avoid these areas, the only protection people have is from the criminal organizations. They keep the peace in the areas they police, ensure business owners don't succumb to petty theft (for a small fee), and control all types of establishments others take for granted (like bars, night clubs, and the like). In this regard, the PCs serve as protectors of the underground.

For a total criminal experience, the PCs may instead be an integral part of the criminal ring by taking part in illicit activities. They smuggle goods, steal secrets, assassinate rival kingpins, and possibly even control an entire neighborhood. If this is the case, the players will have to deal with taking orders that may go against their morals and their characters must constantly be on the watch for those trying to stop and arrest them.

LOCAL AUTHORITIES

Not all local authorities are afraid to delve into the shadowy places of their urban landscape. Some even form special task forces to combat the criminal syndicates, gangs, and general misbehavior. As long as they're properly equipped, they stand a good chance against the rampant crime.

Much like the criminal theme, local authorities would have to be directly involved in the goings on within the underbelly of society. Unlike the criminal theme, the local authorities are most likely unwanted and will come across continued resistance. Locating contacts within this underground may be impossible, unless you have a mole already in place. Subterfuge could be an extremely important element in succeeding in these dangerous missions as the PCs enter the area mostly blind to what's really going on. They could try intimidating the local ruffians, but that's not likely to produce much information. The trick is to take the fight directly into the face of the criminals.

Local authorities have to use extreme caution when delving into their missions. Standing in the middle of the road to partake in a shoot-out is likely to lead to death. Yes they may kill their target, but in the act of doing so, those living within

the underground decide these authorities are trouble and shoot them on the spot. Tactical missions probably stand a better chance of success and allowing the PCs to survive.

SWAT TEAM

Using the term SWAT team very generically, this team could represent something similar to a SWAT team, riot control, or anyone that relies heavily on their superior equipment to rid groups that have “gotten in the way.” A SWAT team campaign is much like a local authority campaign, except that instead of subterfuge, the PCs employ much more visible tactics. They don’t slink around trying to find their targets; they grab their gear, form a strong team, and bombard the hideout with manpower and weapon power.

These types of control teams are not likely to be deployed into areas where everyone sides with the criminals. Instead, they are sent to quell the rebellions, save the citizens, end the riots, and sever the criminal ring’s ties with the community. By employing extra armor and heavy firepower, they do stand in the middle of the road assaulting their target’s hideout. However, they must only do this in areas either under their control, where the citizens actually want help, or where the rebellion is not fully concentrated. By picking apart smaller areas one by one, the war can be won one battle at a time.

Control teams always have one benefit: they always attempt to employ superior firepower (not necessarily bigger, just better). From a mechanical perspective, this could lower the Reputation requirements for all weapons by 10. From an in-game perspective, it means the PCs will have to stand tall against pocket forces of resistance, using their massive firepower to gun down as many as they can. However, if this is a rebellion and the resistance is led by mostly innocent citizens, there may be some moral ramifications to deal with. Either way, the more that die, the quicker the campaign will succeed!

CHARACTER CONCEPTS

Urban warfare campaigns can contain some interesting character concepts compared to basic space opera. Basic warriors may be employed as normal, but what about all those individuals who are fed up with the way things are and want to make a difference? They may not be combat experts, but their desire for change drives them on.

Bureaucrat: Public servants and administrators heed the call of rebellion when corruption runs deep through the veins of the government. Their skill in dealing with governmental red tape may give them insight into breaking through security protocols.

Dealer: Dealers are criminals who handle the selling of illegal goods. They typically buy at what could be considered a wholesale price and sell for profit.

Demolitions: Demolitions experts are important for breaking into fortified locations. They also have knowledge of structural integrity to avoid having an entire building collapse on the raiding party once inside.

Executive: Sometimes executives become fed-up with their humdrum lifestyle and seek the thrills of the underground. They may maintain their high paying job while moonlighting as a thief in the shadows.

Ganger: Gangers are ruffians that run with gangs. They are more like a jack-of-the-trades, rather than specializing in something.

Hacker: Hackers are those skilled in breaking into computer systems and networks and bypassing electronic security systems.

Handler: Handlers deliver goods safely from one area to another, often between sellers and dealers. They are responsible for avoiding the suspicion of local authorities when moving things around is necessary.

Scavenger: Scavengers dig through the rubble of old, possibly destroyed buildings to find things to sell, salvage, or use as supplies to make something bigger. When weapons are in short supply, scavengers have a way of finding weapons that have been discarded or left behind in a firefight.

Shock Trooper: Shock troopers in urban settings lead the charge into the enemy lines. Using shields as protection, their purpose is to break and scatter those enemy lines.

Smuggler: Smugglers are thieves that bring goods into the underground. They are able to fence those items using a handler who then sells them dealers.

Spy: Spies are those that infiltrate the enemy force by pretending to be an ally. They feed information back to their superiors and are imperative in learning of a target's most important secrets.

Street Samurai: In an urban environment, melee weapons may be more common than ranged ones. Masters of wielding melee weapons are called street samurai. They never have to worry about running out of bullets and use the confined space of the underground to their advantage.

WEAPONS

Urban warfare is all about close quarters combat. Whether it's melee or ranged attacks, one would need to bring weapons appropriate for confined spaces. Large weapons can be very destructive, and if the PCs are trying to protect or reclaim a neighborhood, destruction of the surrounding establishments would be considerably frowned upon. PCs may even find that the tightly packed urban terrain offers more advantages over what type of weapon is being used. The key to surviving is knowing your quarry and what type of weapons they employ.

ARMOR

PCs in an urban environment rarely have to worry about different types of environment and tactical suits that allows them to carry equipment more efficiently. The best armor may simply be the type that allows for maximum survivability and not efficiency. Shields are very common as are Kevlar jackets.

VEHICLES

Vehicles may be necessary to reach the destination of the mission, but once inside the proper urban district, traveling is mostly by foot or vehicles that can get around easily and quickly (like hoverbikes). Mobility is important in an urban environment, but you won't find wide-open spaces for large vehicles or equipment vans.

HOUSING

Housing is quite simple on urban planets. Rarely do you find houses outside of townhouses and most people live in apartments and condominiums ranging from tenement buildings to luxurious high rises.

MUNDANE EQUIPMENT

Technology in urban environments can be a mishmash of low and high. In areas of wealth, everyone would obviously have access to all the latest gadgets and luxuries. In areas where the lower classes dwell, they may have to make do with secondhand equipment and whatever they can scavenge from dumpsters. Without money, finding the right equipment is difficult.

Of course, the lower class areas have no shortage of people with money. It's just that these people typically make that money through illegal means and use it to control everyone in the neighborhood. They enjoy all the luxuries their neighbors can't, own the establishments where everyone spends what little money they have, and typically don't funnel much of that money back into the neighborhood. While it doesn't seem fair, these are also the people protecting the neighborhood from rival criminals, gangs, and local authorities looking for fugitives.

MILITARY SCI-FI

STYLE

At some point in time, every planet or species must deal with war; it's inevitable. War comes in many varieties including personal, social, political, and military. These could be a war against an organization, ethnicity, species, or an entire planet. What drives these wars could also range from domination to elimination or rebellion. When the backdrop of the campaign is war, this typically falls under military sci-fi.

In the lifecycle of science fiction, military sci-fi comes after a species has become powerful enough to declare war against something that continually threatens them, in an effort to assimilate a neighbor, or has attracted the attention of someone who wants that power. Military sci-fi is not much different than space opera, except the dramatic backdrop is replaced by one of war. Combat probably consumes 95% of the encounters, and the war doesn't end until one side succeeds or the other concedes.

Military sci-fi is also similar to urban warfare. Instead of strictly being internal on a very urbanized planet, it can span the galaxy or take place in any planetary environment, not just the urban jungle.

The common factor of a military sci-fi campaign is war, and the PCs are involved. Maybe they've done so willingly; maybe they thought their career would head down a much different path; maybe the war has grown so large that all able bodies are being turned into soldiers. Whatever the purpose, it would be best to take hold of heavy firepower.

CIVIL WAR

Civil war can be quite devastating as it's a single group who's split and is now fighting each other. This could be a nation, continent, ethnicity, or the entire planet. This war could have started from a simple disagreement of views to an outright disliking of each other. If one side yearns for change while the other doesn't, and the dispute cannot be resolved politically or socially, then civil war may be the next step to protect one side's beliefs.

Which side is right and which is wrong is often a blurred line. Often the difference between right and wrong is a moot point and the conflict arises from one side attempting to force their beliefs upon the other. If this is preceded by oppression, an outright rebellion against tyranny can quickly explode into a full civil war. Both

sides are probably outfitted in similar ways and winning the war may boil down to tactics, patience, or even attrition.

It should be noted that when a planet becomes a uniform species, where the lines of ethnicity mean very little, any war that occurs between residents of that planet fall under civil war. In the Argo Galaxy, many species have erased those ethnic lines and consider themselves one versus a galaxy filled with other species. If a war were to break out between the Northern and Southern Hemispheres, it would be a civil war, not matter how large it is and no matter who's fighting. The gemini have become a single species, not one divided by backgrounds. This concept continues even when a species occupies multiple planets. It becomes an internal conflict within that species and does not include non-allied external parties attacking that species.

Constructing this type of campaign may require a small amount of preparation before launching into the campaign. The players should be informed about what each side represents and why they are involved in this war. After knowing that information, they could then choose a side and ultimately determine the outcome of the civil war. Involving different PC species in the conflict is as simple as defining those PCs as allies of whatever side is chosen. However, the core conflict remains within a single species; each side simply has their own allies to call upon.

INVASION

Invasion comes when the conflict involves a non-allied external party. The only caveat is that this external party must be of a different species; otherwise it falls under civil war. That species doesn't have to be completely foreign to the PCs though; they could be well-known, distant "cousins" (a species that was originally part of the PC's species, but interbreeding now sets them apart), or part of a much



larger conspiracy. If the external party was a former ally but has now launched an invasion, they are no longer considered allies or are instead part of that aforementioned larger conspiracy.

Invasion doesn't have to always be planet-wide. It could be the invasion of a continent, solar system, or sector. The invasion could even come from within as a species that inhabits someone else's planet may have been conspiring to dominate or annihilate that species, simply biding their time until the "mother ship" comes along. It could also be a political invasion whereas a certain species is attempting to overthrow another's government or way of life by infiltrating their ranks and taking over. This could result in enslavement.

Much like civil war, the PCs don't have to be on any particular side. If the invasion involves a hostile species attempting to destroy everyone living on a particular planet, the PCs may be part of the planetary defense against the hostilities. However, if the invasion involves rescuing an enslaved species, the PCs may be part of the invasion in the hopes of freeing everyone under the control of the slavers. Another option would be to go the radical route and have the PCs be part of a hostile species that is attempting to demonstrate their galactic power by expanding their control of a sector, taking over new planets that were already inhabited by friendly species. This last type of campaign could also force some moral decisions to be made.

WAR AGAINST X

War against *x* means the PCs are part of a group that has declared "war" against something or someone. This could be a particular criminal organization, a single hostile species, a generalization (like "war on drugs"), or a very particular purpose (like War of Relic Reclamation). A campaign such as this could be the result of continued threats from the target of the war or the PC's employers now becoming powerful enough to fight back.

This type of war doesn't have a specific size or focus. It could be a full military campaign or a group of mercenary forces targeting a specific species that continually threatens the sector. It could be socially or politically motivated whereas the PCs are part of a larger plan to regain something that was taken away or restore someplace that fell under the control of someone else.

Wars such as this would receive a fair amount of backing from the corporations; possibly even more than one. If not a corporation, then they could be publically funded through government taxes, tithes, or whatever. These wars could also be very public or extremely secretive. If there is a public outcry for help, the more visible the war is the more trust the backing party earns from the general public. If the public is meant to be shrouded from this threat then the entire war is done with the utmost secrecy. Maybe it's for the safety of the general public or maybe it's because someone doesn't want them to know the truth.

It should be noted that a war against *x* campaign doesn't have to be formally declared as a war. It's just that the storyline is war-like and the ultimate goal is to eliminate the threat permanently. Of course, elimination doesn't have to mean death; it could also mean surrender, restoration of a previous party, retreat, or even an alliance that ends all hostilities.

MERCENARY THEME

Corporate mercenaries could easily be part of a larger force of either additional mercenaries or elite soldiers within an entire army. Another application would be the mercenaries are but one force allied together against a much greater threat. In cases of war against *x*, the mercenaries would instead be acting on their own, but should have access to allies in the same or similar position. Other options exist and we present three of them here.

ESOTERIC ORGANIZATION

Throughout history, secret organizations could form to keep the general populace safe from a particular threat. These organizations could be government backed, supported by someone with personal interests, or have their own source of funding. Regardless, these organizations have existed for centuries and wage a secret war without the general public knowing. Maybe their existence is spoken of in rumors, folktales, or the ramblings of drunken informants. Above all, secrecy is imperative and should everyone learn of this war being waged, it may cause an upheaval in the daily goings on of an entire planet.

Esoteric organizations typically exist for a very specific purpose. They are not simply formed “just because” or to squander someone’s money. They form with some type of charter and declare their purpose as working for against something or someone. In a military sci-fi campaign, this could be a specific species that causes havoc throughout the planet, a grouping of cosmic creatures that somehow manage to span the galaxy, ancient beings that haunt the cosmos, or even the safe dispersion of secret information across the galaxy.

What makes these organizations so esoteric is that they must perform their duties without the knowledge of the general populace. Why this is so can vary as much as the organizations purpose. This could include safety, survival, naivety, or even the proliferation of specific beliefs (such as religion). To know the truth would be detrimental, or even deadly, to society or the leaders of that society; either for selfless or selfish reasons.

SOLDIERS

Soldiers are the life force of planetary armies. While the marines of the Allied Navy patrol the void, the soldiers on the ground are in charge of keeping the people of the planet safe once the threat has entered the atmosphere. In times of war where the planet and the space around it are threatened, both the planetary army and the Allied Navy work to eliminate the threat. For those on the ground, they rely on the soldiers to take action.

PCs could become a part of that soldier force, either working as common soldiers within a larger battalion, or serving as elite soldiers tasked with striking at the heart of the threat. In cases of the former, the PCs may even be squad leaders or specialists working with the regular soldiers. In cases of the latter, the PCs could be working alone, as a single team, taking orders and fulfilling those duties without the assistance of anyone else.

Soldiers are an extremely important part of winning a large-scale war. Whether they serve in an army, planetary defense force, continental guard, or military outpost, the war cannot be won without them. One thing to consider in a soldier campaign, however, is that rank has meaning and the PCs will have to take continuous orders from their superiors. This may mean changing the course of their actions or turning their attention elsewhere. If the PCs retain their mercenary credentials, they have been conscripted into the ranks of the soldiers to serve their planet.

SPECIAL TASK FORCE

Special task forces are formed by local authorities and government agencies to deal with a growing threat to the local citizens. This isn’t a threat so large that it requires an army to be assembled, nor does it fall under the secrecy of an esoteric organization. Instead, these task forces are in response to the public outcry for help, often serving as a means of demonstrating a political or social understanding of the public’s concerns. In other words, a special task force is as much for show as it is for purpose.

PCs within a special task force are typically given a basic set of orders defining the force's purpose. From there, they are usually given the freedom to go about as they please to achieve the end goal. This freedom may be due to the sponsoring body not actually knowing how to resolve the issue, or they simply don't care (because the task force is more for show). Sponsors who are more aware of the issue may actually provide more direction for each mission, asking for a regular status report, but continue to allow a good amount of freedom for completing each mission.

Special task forces are often formed by hiring outside "experts" to get the job done or promoting those already within the organization because of seniority or skill. Rarely do they look for volunteers as the matter at hand is much too public. Additionally, if a particular corporation is being affected by the matter, or is the one crying for help, they may appoint some of their mercenaries to join the task force and work for the sponsoring agency. In this regard, the corporation will probably provide additional funding to get the job done.

CHARACTER CONCEPTS

A typical soldier or warrior is easy enough to create, but when the threat requires tactics, skill will be as necessary as firepower. Here is a selection of character concepts for following a path of expertise.

Assassin: Removing a leader from the enemy's ranks can be imperative in turning the tide of a battle. Without the proper leadership, the enemy's rank and file may fall apart due to lack of proper command and control. It is the job of the assassin to kill those leaders.

Commanding Officer: Each military force has some type of ranking system that includes commanding officers. Without specifying actual rank or how much they command, these officers provide the orders to everyone within that force, relaying them from their commanders.

Communications: Communications across the battlefield is important for moving forces to the right positions or making your allies aware of an incoming attack. These specialists know how to relay those communications, often times using encoded messaging.

Demolitions: In times of raiding, getting through a barrier falls on the shoulders of the demolitions experts. They may have to fall back when guns start blazing, only to run to the front of the line when another barrier is encountered.

Elite: Elite soldiers, guards, and the like are the ones granted special duties on important missions. They are akin to covert operatives and are highly skilled in the art of killing.

Heavy Weapons: Heavy weapons specialists are those that man or carry the really big guns for mowing down entire units of infantry or shooting an aircraft out of the sky.

Infiltrator: Infiltrators specialize in getting behind enemy lines, spying on the enemy, or even shadowing the enemy. They can be used to gather information about the enemy's headquarters or find a way for a small team to get inside.

Mechanic: During war, using vehicles is inevitable. When this is the case, those squads will need mechanics to keep those vehicles running or repair any damage that occurs. They can also be used to sabotage enemy vehicles, knowing where to strike to disable those vehicles.

Although the focus of the action is on the characters, military sci-fi also focuses on the war going on around the characters. (This could even be a war that spans an entire galaxy.) The efforts of the characters are important, but reinforcements are probably nearby should something become too much of an obstacle to overcome.

Medic: Field medics can either offer quick bandaging of injuries or offer medicines in hostile environments. Although it may be unwise to attempt a full healing while under fire, the medic can quickly ease the pain.

Priest: Wars often have a religious purpose or they can potentially damage a person's religious beliefs (such as staring down a demon that is purported to be mythological). When this is the case, forces employ priests, typically priests who can also hold their own in battle, to mentally and emotionally cure those who succumb to fear or heresy.

Psion: Advanced xeno species may have already discovered psionic abilities and employ powerful psions within their forces. The power of the mind can be just as explosive as the power of a gun.

Scout: Scouts are the lookouts who dare to travel ahead of the main force and watch for dangerous terrain or enemy forces. They are also trained in tracking enemy forces that break away or retreat.

WEAPONS

The bigger, the better! Within military sci-fi campaigns, destructive firepower is often more important than tactical firepower. Melee weapons are carried, but typically only for the rare occasion when the enemy charges or needs to be dispatched quietly. Otherwise, everyone carries large weapons with plenty of ammunition to annihilate as many enemy targets as possible. If this is the ultimate desire of the party, the GM should consider lowering the Reputation requirements of ranged weapons by 15 or 20. The PCs will be encountering large forces often and need the right firepower to back them up. Besides, war would seem odd if everyone was carrying pistols and knives.

In addition to large weapons, heavy weapons for attacking vehicles may be necessary. There is an excellent selection of military grade heavy weapons on the *Savage Worlds Deluxe* core rulebook to choose from, probably eliminating Reputation requirements. This is not because it would be cool to wield these weapons, it's simply because they are necessary to knock out the enemy's advancing force.

If the military sci-fi campaign is a full-scale mass battle instead of a series of smaller encounters, incorporating the mass battle options in the *Ultimate Game Mechanics Guide: Ground Warfare* could be an excellent way of differentiating between the different forces and weaponry each side employs. If this is the case, remember to pay attention to the range capabilities of the weapons the PCs choose and if they're leading a group of soldiers or acting on their own as an elite force.

ARMOR

With so much firepower being employed by each side, wearing weak armor isn't an option. In fact, there's no way the enemy or the planetary armies would consider outfitting their soldiers in armor that doesn't hopefully protect them. Possibly throwing out all types of specialized armor, anything less than tactical armor would be pointless. Consider eliminating the Reputation requirements completely for armor and instead only consider encumbrance rules.

VEHICLES

The location where the action is taking place will determine what types of vehicles are necessary to support the PCs' efforts. Only choose the vehicles that match the terrain and if a change is necessary, it may take weeks to support the war effort with a large enough supply. Either the PCs need to find the depot, or they

need to make do with what they have. Other than that, unnecessary vehicles would never be readily available.

HOUSING

Housing probably isn't a concern in a military sci-fi campaign. If the PCs get a chance to rest, it may instead be within a barracks, makeshift housing, or even a cave that offers some type of protection. Don't get hung up on housing because the PCs will probably never use it.

However, if the military sci-fi campaign is more episodic (a series of mini-campaigns), the PCs should be rewarded well for surviving such war-like conditions.

MUNDANE EQUIPMENT

Mundane equipment is much like vehicles in that it should specifically only match whatever is necessary at that time. Communications, jamming equipment, and maybe even surveillance equipment could be necessary, but much of the regular mundane equipment barely finds a use. However, it should not succumb to the limitations of larger items, such as vehicles, in their availability. Every force should have a supply truck or equipment shelter nearby to support the war effort. If the action takes place in outer space, this may come in the form of a moon base converted to support the troops.

TECHNOLOGY THEMES

It's perfectly acceptable to assume that everyone in the galaxy has progressed at generally the same rate and utilizes very similar technology design. In this case, there's no reason to adjust each mission's theme outside of the above setting themes and below flavor types. However, a more realistic approach would be to define that each planet or species has developed in a slightly different manner, creating technology that ultimately serves the same purpose, but looks considerably different.

This can be simply done by defining different levels of technology that reside between low and high. For example, vibro weapons and railguns are high technology. A planet that hasn't reached that level yet simply does not have those weapons available. This type of method allows the GM to gauge what the mercenaries will encounter, but it doesn't define how that technology level looks when applied to the mission.

To further enhance these technology levels or to add a level of interest to the adversaries being created, the GM can apply different technology themes to better describe how that planet or species has developed and what their level of technology looks like.

Whatever technology is chosen can be applied to a single mission, a larger adventure, the full campaign, or even the entire setting. By applying it to the setting and combining it with the above themes and below flavor, the number of combinations becomes quite substantial.

BIOPUNK

One form of biopunk is technology incorporated at the biological level, being an integral part of the species. Not only does this species incorporate biological equipment, their weapons and armor are actually grown – externally or as a part of each individual. If the weapons are grown by the individual, they take the place of a normal body part that now becomes enhanced by that change. For example, bio-

Technology doesn't have to be homogenous across a single setting. Galaxies that incorporate numerous xeno species would conceivably include many different types of technology bases as no two species are completely alike.

punk species may have an arm shaped and used like a sword with the other arm in the shape of an assault rifle. Not only do they use these weapons in battle, they control them with their minds, muscles, or whatever. Changing out that weapon would require the individual to take the time to re-grow a limb.

In the case that the equipment is grown externally, each individual has some type of receptor to allow that piece of equipment to be attached. Once attached, that equipment is controlled, once again, by the user's mind, muscle, or whatever. Although acting as an attachment to the body, it looks like it is an actual part of their body.

Biopunk can also come in the form of species capable of interacting with their surroundings in unique ways. Although their spacecraft look similar to everyone else's, they are grown from the native vegetation instead of built in a factory. If that species possesses the right capabilities, they may be able to control that spacecraft by attaching themselves to it. Furthermore, if the walls are also part of that biological make-up, the species may be able to meld into the wall only to appear on the other side. The use of doors would become obsolete. Controlling their weapons could be a matter of detaching one's arms and connecting the resulting stub to the weapon control. With the right capabilities, the controller of that weapon may even be able to extend its vision to that of the weapon, using it like a scope.

On the other side of biopunk is the use of biotechnology. Instead of the species being a part of their technology, they manipulate their own biology for the purpose of enhancement. While other technologies graft their components to the user or are operated externally, the manipulation of one's biology and genetics can create incredible abilities that are simply inherent to the user. For example, someone receives a genetic modification that makes them incredibly strong or agile; they can then use this advantage to overcome their foes. In this type of biopunk environment, characters are treated like computer programs, capable of being reprogrammed or modified by making changes to their DNA or genetics.

In the former use of biopunk, this type of technology would be inherent to the species from the very beginning. It doesn't have to define their technology base, but it definitely defines what it looks like. In the latter use of biopunk, this would be achieved in high technology societies, capable of manipulating one's biological make-up. It doesn't have to be the highest technology base, but it would be higher than where we are in modern day for it to be readily available. However, this doesn't necessarily define what the technology looks like.

CLOCKWORK

Clockwork is the use of gears and springs to create some type of automaton device. Clockwork devices are very mechanical and often contain dozens if not hundreds of sets of gears for longevity. These devices require external winding to create tension that ultimately moves the gears through friction or the use of teeth. If the movement within the device is slow, it could last days or weeks before needing to be rewound. If the movement is quick for a more deadly output, the device may only last minutes or hours before needing to be rewound.

When looking at the clockwork technology base from a historical aspect, automata have been around since ancient times with a growing use in medieval and early modern times. However, for finely crafted time pieces, clockwork technology may still be used. From a sci-fi aspect, clockwork may be the first signs of technology advancement for any developing society. It's not likely that this technology could take the species into space, but you never know what the GM creates.

Automata are not the only devices possible with clockwork technology. Weapons can easily be created using gears instead of other projectile means. When wound up, the bullet is driven out with a force similar to that of a gun. The distance may

not be quite as far and weapons larger than a single-firing rifle probably aren't possible, but there's no reason why one couldn't invent a weapon capable of firing three, six, or even twelve projectiles at a single time (think ballistae of old). The weight would probably be significant with the more projectiles possible, and reloading times should be 2 or 3 rounds, but in the end it's possible.

Clockwork armor suits could also be possible, except that instead of offering a lot of protection (probably only 1 or 2 armor), it could enhance one's capabilities by providing enhanced speed, strength, or agility. These suits would be akin to wearing an exoskeleton, but their internal gear mechanisms means the user only needs to wind up and go! The suit is driven by the clockwork design and thus has what boils down to being an internal power supply. Of course, once those gears stop, the user is simply standing inside a giant collection of metal, gears, and springs.

Clockwork technology is capable of creating some amazing things, but it ultimately is on the lower side of the technology level due to its inherent drawbacks. Although it can strike with the force of a bullet, it carries long reloading times in addition to winding times. Also, it could be considerably heavier than its counterparts.

CYBERPUNK

The cyberpunk technology base incorporates the use of cybernetics. Cybernetics uses technology to enhance one's ability by either replacing or grafting that technology with a specific body part. This technology is a combination of biology, electronics engineering, and computer science. If these enhancements are placed where one can see them, the effect is almost robotic in nature. If they are internal and cannot be seen, no one may ever know.

Whereas biotechnology is the altering of one's DNA and genetics, cybernetics is the alteration of one's body that doesn't affect them genetically. A common purpose of cybernetics is to make "things" more efficient and effective. When this is achieved, one can fully utilize whatever body part has been enhanced, rather than dealing with any inherent limitations. This includes the mind. Another common purpose of cybernetics is to enhance one's current capabilities to produce something extraordinary. This includes superhuman strength.

The most prominent feature in cybernetics is that there doesn't have to be a prominent feature. Each cybernetic implant can be considerably different than a comparable one, achieving the same output with a completely different input. Cybernetics doesn't have to look or feel the same from one person to another. Instead, it should be tailored to fit the specific needs of the user by considering their limitations and desires. If an individual has a broken leg and wants to walk, their cybernetic implant allows them to move again. If they instead want to run at incredible speeds, their cybernetic implant not only overcomes their limitations, it maximizes their capabilities.

Cybernetics is typical of higher technology environments. The higher that technology, the easier the enhancements are to acquire. Within the highest technology levels, cybernetics may simply be a way of life and almost everyone has them. In a technology base such as modern day, cybernetics may be extremely expensive and only available to those that absolutely need them (such as a quadriplegic).

DIESELPUNK

Dieselpunk is not so much a technology base as it is a style. The aesthetics of dieselpunk is akin to what would be found during the early 20th century from World War I through World War II. For a sense of design, think of the design of cars



and trains during the 1930s that had bodies with a combination of boxy and rounded styles.

Dieselpunk technology doesn't have to be powered by diesel, but it would be fitting given the title; it could instead be powered by gasoline. However, to have a proper dieselpunk design, the technology should somehow be powered by a petroleum-based fuel and is probably very dirty – producing fumes, pollution, and plenty of black smoke. It could exhibit equipment and vehicles the same as we enjoy in modern day, but the design is still very retro-future and is instead a progression of the aforementioned time period. Pulp and pulp sci-fi often feature dieselpunk styling.

Dieselpunk has no bearing on what type of technology is available; it only defines what it looks like. If a planet is oozing with petroleum, so much so that they can survive on its use for many millennia, they may decide it's simply the easiest way of powering everything they make. They could still advance to the point of building robots, flying ships, space craft, and high tech weapons, but it all has that 1910-1950s look and either operates on diesel (or some other petroleum byproduct) or is built by machines that are. If this causes the air to be choked out by pollution, simply build apartments amongst the clouds where the air is cleaner!

It should be noted that portable weapons are probably not diesel powered, but the larger, more destructive ones may be. Dieselpunk is less about the diesel and more about the look and feel.

NANOPUNK

Nanopunk is the use of nanotechnology where nanites are used in a similar fashion as biotechnology. Sometimes nanites are used in biopunk, but within nanopunk, only nanotechnology exists. Nanotechnology is the manipulation of matter on the atomic and molecular scale. Nanites are tiny robots, measured in nanometers, which can perform

whatever function they've been programmed to do. While biotechnology manipulates the DNA and genetics of an individual, nanites are used to repair, enhance, or reprogram the individual.

The biggest difference in nanopunk is that the nanites must remain in the body for their function to work. If that function is to make a one-time repair, the nanites would then have to be flushed from the body. If they are instead meant to continuously alter ones' capabilities, the nanites would remain, only requiring reprogramming to perform a different function.

The most common use of nanites is for medical purposes, but those looking for an extra boost to their abilities would use the nanites to overcome their genetic limitations. For example, if one can only hold their breath underwater for so long, the nanites can be programmed to create gills. Another example would be to create fingernails long and hard enough to be considered as natural weapons. The application can vary quite a lot, but the source of those extraordinary capabilities always comes from the work done by the nanites.

A major limitation to nanotechnology, just like biotechnology, is that reprogramming and altering the body is taxing work and may even require many hours or days in solitude while the change is occurring. Most commonly, from an in-game perspective, would be to have the alterations occur overnight while the individual is sleeping.

As a technology level, nanopunk doesn't need to be as high as biopunk, but it should be at a very high level. Although this may be experimented within in modern times, for it to be efficient and effective, the technology would have to be much higher.

PARANORMAL

The term paranormal is being used to signify modern day technology levels. It is also noted as being the lack of space travel. Although the species may have the ability to travel to their moon, launch satellites, or send probes to neighboring planets, they have not achieved space travel and thus the galaxy is a very foreign place to them. They haven't encountered other species and know very little about the greater cosmos.

Missions would never be launched from a paranormal setting; it would be the destination. For some reason, the PCs must travel to an unknown, undocumented planet that no one in the galaxy has interacted with (at least not publicly). Whether it's chasing a fugitive or searching for a rare xeno species, the location of these missions puts the PCs in grave danger. Discovery could be considered a military threat or be welcomed with open arms. However, those watching these types of landings, such as special agencies, either attempt to quickly cover-up the meeting (the PCs would be the target of that cover-up) or kidnap those who have arrived (possibly never wanting to let them go).

Other options do exist, however. The planet could be even further back in time compared to modern day and see the PCs instead as gods being sent from the heavens. Their weapons are archaic, but they stand in awe of the sight of the PCs' landing. Great stories will be written of this meeting (possibly to become mythology in the upcoming centuries) and the PCs are free to do as they please with their new followers.

Of course, not all planets living in a paranormal situation are unknown to the House of the Alliance. There are potentially dozens if not hundreds of planets in the Argo Galaxy that haven't achieved space travel technology, but are under the watchful eye of the House. They are then protected by the Alliance and all species are told to stay away from this planet until a proper meeting can be arranged. The



House is extremely cautious of who they approach and are wary of forcing their high technology onto a species that isn't ready to embrace it yet.

STEAMPUNK

Steampunk is the heavy reliance on steam-powered technology, much like the diesel of dieselpunk. It's also an aesthetic that resembles an enhancing of technology from the 19th century, taking most of its influence from the Victorian Era and the American Wild West. This doesn't have to define what types of technologies are available, but with steam power, the larger the power source, the heavier it should become; theoretically.

Electricity doesn't necessarily exist in a steampunk world, or at least it hasn't caught on like it did on Earth. Computers and robots can be steam-powered as are ships that now grace the skies or travel through the cosmos. Because steam is easy enough to create continuously, unlike clockwork winding, one could easily reach outer space. However, they probably wouldn't be able to travel very far or very long.

Another option of steampunk is the blending of steam-power and other power sources to produce a space faring species. Maybe their spaceships are atomically powered while their robotic soldiers are still steam-powered, thinking it more efficient or cost effective.

Steam power could easily be combined with clockwork technology to create amazing creations. As long as one carries a backpack for creating the steam, they can utilize clockwork devices that never need winding as they are instead powered by a steam-powered device that continuously runs until the backpack runs dry. No need to wind as the gears are run by a single steam-powered interface.

There is also a definite look associated with steampunk. Besides the technology itself, the clothes of those in this environment often have a very Victorian style to them. Their more mundane equipment, vehicles, and even houses would follow this same pattern, as if the entire world is stuck in Earth's 19th century with only a desire to proliferate its steam-powered technology.

Steampunk can be available at a fairly low technology level. Probably residing just higher than clockwork, the ability to harness steam is much different than creating electricity or refining petroleum. Even though the technology may be low, steampunk is still characterized by mechanical devices, probably made from metal. This offers a fair amount of armor protection and can be used to fire projectiles at a rapid speed, delivering the same amount of force as a gun.

TESLAPUNK

Teslapunk is much like dieselpunk as it is an aesthetic along with being a power source. While our houses are powered by electricity, anything that is handheld or able to be transported is not; that's where teslapunk comes in.

Teslapunk takes the use of electricity to the next degree by incorporating electrical power sources for things like weapons or armored suits. Teslapunk's aesthetics appear to be most influenced by the turn of the 20th century, slightly later than steampunk, but before dieselpunk. It is based on the concepts of Nikola Tesla, taken to the nth degree. Common visuals include electricity crackling all around the electrically-powered device. Electricity has thus replaced all other sources of power and has not been replaced by anything newer.

Electricity can easily power lots of things, but to be teslapunk it should look a little more over the top than basic electronics. Additionally, when powering portable equipment using electricity, wall outlets simply aren't feasible; portable power supplies are a necessity! Much like the steam-producing backpack, one would have to carry around an electricity-producing backpack.

Teslapunk requires the knowledge of electricity, but that's really the only requirement. From there, any type of technological device could be created. From a technology level standpoint, it sits on the same timeline as dieselpunk and even steampunk; it's just a different power source. As long as you can properly harness the true power of electricity, anything is possible. But like these other technologies, the larger the power source required, the heavier it's going to be.

WHY THEMES?

Technology themes and campaign flavors are presented for one simple reason: character concepts. One of the underlying themes of Mercenary Breed is the ability to create a character of any xeno species, from any background possible, and from any planet that embraces any technology. To achieve this level of flexibility, combined with the Savage Worlds ability to create any character possible, technology themes and campaign flavors allow players to create an interesting background (including home world) for their character along with defining the type of technology utilized by their species.

When creating your own xeno template, this information can further be designed into the character and how their tech background or basic capabilities manifest. Someone from a world that embraces dieselpunk can take the Tech Background (Science) Edge and define that their engineering abilities stem from diesel-powered technology. Or maybe a character taking the Tech Background (Biotechnology) Edge has defined that their right arm is actually a receptor for attaching different types of organically grown weapons.

Technology themes are intertwined with Tech Backgrounds, just like campaign flavors can be incorporated into a character's background and home world. Although none of this is a requirement, it does present even more options for creating extraordinary characters with very colorful backgrounds.

CAMPAIGN FLAVOR

Campaign flavor offers yet another way to mash other influences into a mission, setting, or campaign. When considering the whole of sci-fi themes, there are an amazing number of combinations between overall theme, technology base, and campaign flavor. Mix them up and mash them together to create a truly unique experience the players will always remember.

The basic elements of a setting don't have to define what a campaign will look like or even what the overall setting feels like. The aforementioned setting themes are a starting point to get the GM and players on the track of what type of characters they're going to create and what the underlying theme of the setting is. From here, you can add different flavor to that setting or campaign to make it even more unique. It's simple enough to create a basic space opera setting and campaign, but what about one set in a dystopian environment or combined with elements of horror?

In addition to the setting or campaign, individual missions can be flavored to depict a much different world than the last mission or upcoming ones. While planets and xeno species can be depicted with varying degrees of technology levels, so too can their overall atmosphere be adjusted to depict worlds where no two are alike. This can also be done by adding a flavor to that mission or planet, creating an even more exciting adventure or campaign.

While there are many possibilities for flavoring settings, campaigns, missions, and planets, here are some of the more common ones.

DYSTOPIAN

Dystopian societies are those that feature a downward spiral due to poverty, oppression, societal collapse, or governments that hold way too much power and control. This can be driven by politics, environments (natural disasters), spirituality, or even religion. Within these environments is a constant fear of consequence and a pressure to conform. This may lead to rebellion, conformity, or somewhere in between.

When creating a dystopian environment, there should be some type of controlling body or person that has ultimate control over virtually everything. This control doesn't have to extend to every person in that environment, but it should require that everyone is meant to conform to a particular standard or face the wrath of some enforcement body. The saying "big brother is watching" comes to mind in this situation where everyone's moves and actions are somehow being monitored.

To make this dystopian environment believable, there should be at least one event that caused the setting to move in this direction. Maybe it was war or a revolution; maybe it was overpopulation or a societal breakdown; or maybe it was the breaking of everyone's sanity where a religious body came in to "put the pieces back together."

If creating a dystopian version of the Argo Galaxy, the House of the Alliance could become a totalitarian body that demands the conformity of their rules and regulations. Instead of allying with new species and bringing them into a galaxy of free trade and capital gain, they all but enslave that new species and demand that they conform to this standard, or face certain death. The House would then be aiming to control the entire galaxy, not just creating a friendly environment for all to share. In this situation, the mercenaries could be part of those enforcement efforts or part of a rebellion to overthrow the House of the Alliance.

FANTASY

Just because it's sci-fi doesn't mean it can't contain elements of fantasy. This could come in the form of fantasy races with space travel capabilities, the incorporation of fantasy magic, or a combination of both. This could manifest as a collection of planets, each with a unique fantasy race that embraces their own type of

magic, or a central location (such as the void) where extraordinary power lays waiting to be harnessed as magic.

Fantasy settings and planets don't have to be friendly. While the concept of xeno species appearing in many different forms is sci-fi, fantasy races could be replaced and turned into malevolent species attempting to thwart the efforts of the House of the Alliance. They could utilize the same technology as the Gemini or their allies, or embrace a completely alien ability equivalent to fantasy magic. Just because these xeno species harness magic doesn't mean that same ability needs to be available to the PCs.

Another possibility for incorporating fantasy is to plug your favorite fantasy settings into the Argo Galaxy as an unknown and undocumented planet. When the PCs are sent there for a mission or happen upon it for whatever reason, they find a planet filled with races from fantasy fiction utilizing technology on the lower side of the spectrum. This could include clockwork and steampunk, but it could also be magically powered devices. In this regard, the PCs would be completely foreign to who these indigenous people are and how they manifest their amazing powers. However, just because the PCs brandish superior technology doesn't mean they automatically prevail. Magic can be extremely powerful and strength in numbers may overwhelm the PCs quite quickly.

GOLDEN AGE

Golden Age is a colloquial term for sci-fi fiction that followed the pulp era, typically the 1940s and 50s. It can be considered as an era of enlightenment combined with more realistic sci-fi tropes compared to its pulp predecessor. Hard science fiction (which utilizes a more natural and realistic progression of technology than space opera) held much more influence over the Golden Age, compared to the fantasy-like elements of pulp sci-fi, along with the heavier incorporation of space opera. It is essentially a much more linear progression of events where the protagonists (the PCs) work together to overcome problems and xeno threats.

Golden Age sci-fi still contains the heroics of the PCs, but with a more reasonable twist than simply adding fantasy elements or disregarding the laws of physics. Space travel is thus a very common theme within Golden Age sci-fi whereas the heroes are traveling across the galaxy, exploring and learning about what else is out there. Without the assistance of high technology, most of these encounters can seem quite simple: the xeno species utilize lower technology as do the PCs, creating a fairly balanced encounter. If necessary, maybe social skills are used instead of military ones. The imbalance of the overall mission comes from the PCs being few in number meeting an entire xeno population. Although tactics may be necessary, few PCs would win this war of attrition as they are excessively outnumbered.

Golden Age sci-fi embraces a number of common tropes including the use of astronaut-like equipment to species that are fairly anthropomorphic. This could be considered as a part of the paranormal atmosphere where space travel is limited to a single solar system. However, the big change is that the PCs are the ones travelling abroad and not dealing with the landing of a species they immediately view as hostile. It's the PCs landing on the planet and possibly being viewed as hostile.

If turning the Argo Galaxy into a Golden Age sci-fi setting, the timeline would shift back probably hundreds of years to where the Gemini were first exploring the solar system and eventually the galaxy. Space travel had recently become possible and their first meeting with the Festoon had ensured the Gemini were able to travel great distances. This could be the first years of the forming of the House of the Alliance and the incorporation of the first allied species.

If this layer of flavoring is added to a single mission, the PCs could instead come upon a rather advanced society, attempting to reach out in a diplomatic fashion. After landing, they are met with a mixture of resistance and cooperation. In the end, they may have to overcome a number of rebellious organizations in the hopes of bringing this new species into the embrace of the House of the Alliance.

GOthic

Gothic sci-fi is an amalgamation of aesthetic and environment. The aesthetic aspects come from the influence of gothic architecture. Gothic architecture can be characterized with high towers, large windows, pointed arches, elegant designs, and typically the use of a lot of stonework. The environment aspects come from the influence of gothic horror (usually without the romance). This includes the inclusion of demons, vampires, lycanthropes, undead, and angels. These are not the only inclusions, but they are common ones (or at least something equivalent to them).

Gothic sci-fi is a form of horror with a slightly different look and feel. There are often elements of corruption and insanity, but possibly not as prevalent as sci-fi horror where sanity is a large part of the setting. There also may be considerably more hope in a Gothic sci-fi environment than a pure horror one. This could come in the form of the PCs simply having access to weapons and equipment that allows them to take down their horrific adversaries or that the adversaries are slightly hampered in their capabilities. Another option is to give the PCs a secret “weapon” that exploits some weakness inherent to every horrific adversary (cosmic magic, banishment, archaic weapons, etc).

From the standpoint of the Argo Galaxy, adding a Gothic sci-fi layer to the entire setting would possibly alter the overall sci-fi xeno theme presented in the *Xenopedia*. This could create a complex or even awkward setting that doesn’t feel cohesive. What would make more sense would be to create a planet or sector using the Gothic sci-fi flavor. The GM could even create a new galaxy using the Gothic sci-fi flavoring.

If this flavor is added to a single mission, the PCs would find themselves coming upon a planet with incredible architecture, threatened by horrific beings. If they’re lucky, their high technology weapons are capable of destroying these threats with little to no bearing on their sanity or purity. Or, if they’re not so lucky, they may end up fleeing in sheer terror with little more than their wits holding them together. Either one could make for an interesting mission.

When creating a new setting (such as a new sector or full galaxy) or campaign using Gothic sci-fi, it may be necessary to add the Guts skill to demonstrate how capable each individual character is in rationalizing the horror they face. When creating this new setting or campaign, take care to note the incredible architecture and build a bestiary that matches the theme. This can be done by creating new adversaries or altering those provided in the *Xenopedia* by giving them a more Gothic horror-like appeal. Xenos can turn into demons or angels, gemini can become undead, and animal-like species can become lycanthropes. Fear will have to be added to many of the adversaries to keep with the horror side of the setting, shapeshifting and flight may be necessary, but in the end, the base stat blocks shouldn’t need too much modification.

HORROR

Sci-fi horror is the infusion of prominent horror themes into the environment, and possibly aesthetic, to create a game that focuses on the horrific plot as much as it does the characters. Commonly in sci-fi horror settings and campaigns (not missions), there are additional mechanics for Guts, Fear, insanity, corruption, and

any number of horror elements that mechanically represent a character's ability, or inability, to cope with what they experience. If creating a sci-fi horror mission, the PCs are bound to experience something incredibly mind numbing as they see sights they were never meant to see or encounter beasts few could walk away from alive.

Sci-fi horror isn't just the species encountered during the course of a campaign or mission, it should be something represented by the entire atmosphere. Whether it's investigative or survival horror, there should be a lot of dark elements and the possibility of something "hiding in the shadows" waiting to strike. There should be this sense of extreme caution and possibly paranoia where if the PCs make a wrong turn, death could be imminent.

The beauty of throwing horror into a sci-fi setting is that regular species could be made to look a lot more terrifying with only a few alterations. There doesn't need to be any standard sci-fi or horror tropes as the GM is free to explore the entire galaxy looking for a way to throw the PCs into a virtual Hell. Even if the PCs have the firepower to overcome these beings, there should be an inherent PC disadvantage that the creatures can exploit. This could be winning a battle of attrition, exploiting the weak minds of the PCs, disrupting one's religious beliefs, or performing fiendish acts that drive the PCs insane.

Creating sci-fi horror missions can be achieved by creating an extremely violent and perverse species, possibly driven by the desire to enslave the entire galaxy or just destroy everything in their path. Besides looking like something straight out of the PC's nightmares, the very demeanor of this species is terrifying. When they land (or penetrate a spacecraft) they immediately begin killing everyone in sight and don't stop until they're dead, the indigenous people are dead, or they have become slave masters to the survivors. This can be the back story of an entire campaign too.

Another method of creating sci-fi horror missions is to place the PCs on a planet with a secret past. Maybe horrific beings actually control the planet, serving as puppet masters to politicians and executives. Maybe these beings come out at night and slaughter anyone foolish enough to brave the darkness. Or maybe each city is surrounded by a great wall, protecting them from the horrors beyond that wall. It could then be the PC's mission to keep that or a new city safe while a wall is built, repaired, or expanded.

If creating a horror version of the Argo Galaxy, much of what is presented can simply be altered to conform to that new version. Even the adversaries in the *Xenopedia* can be retained with slight alterations to make them terrifying.

POST-APOCALYPTIC

Post-apocalyptic sci-fi is life after an apocalyptic event, but the furthering of technology wasn't really altered or simply took on a different form. Thus, the technology of the age is still a continuation of what was available before the event occurred. This is in opposition to typical post-apocalyptic settings where everything seems to stop while those who remain continuously fight for survival.

Apocalyptic events can be internal or external and have a variety of effects on the population. Internal events include plague, geological disasters, environmental catastrophes, world wars, or drastic climate changes. This can lead to the decimation of certain populations, death of an entire ethnicity, destruction of a large region, or the loss of a power source. External events include meteor strikes, asteroid strikes, xeno invasions, or a supernova. This can lead to enslavement, worldwide decimation, or immediate evacuation.



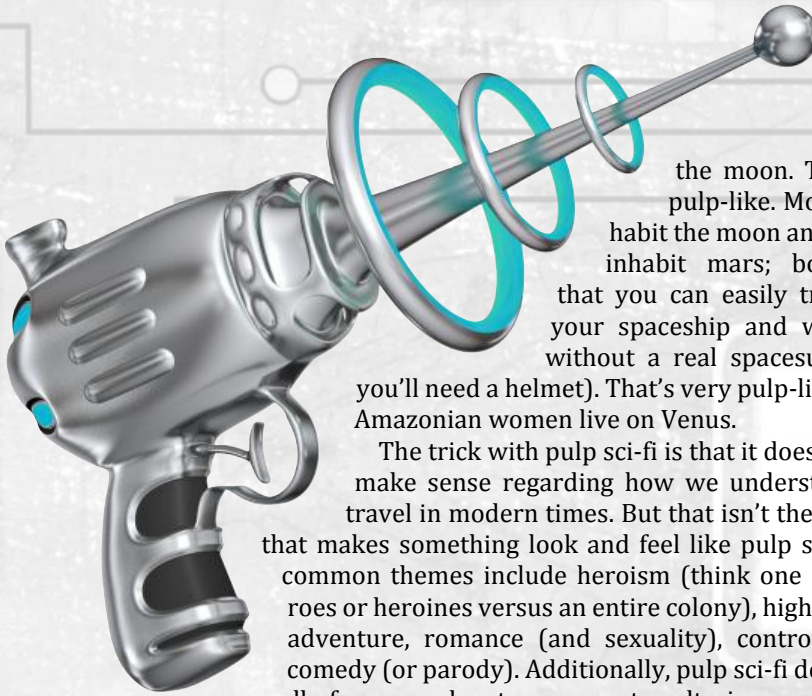
Creating post-apocalyptic missions, campaigns, or settings may place the PCs in the shadow of the apocalyptic event before the population has fully recovered. This could be a grand rescue mission or one aimed at helping the planet rebuild. If the setting is created much later than the apocalyptic event, the PCs could instead be part of a society that has changed significantly. Possibly in an effort to avoid another occurrence, the people have scattered across the stars instead of only living on a single planet; or maybe they have chosen to live only within space ships. In either type of game, the apocalyptic event should have some type of major influence over what drives the plot and the setting's theme.

Given the size of the Argo Galaxy, apocalyptic events could be regular occurrences that force the indigenous people to reorganize, rethink, or recover. This could produce a much improved lifestyle or one that turns into a dystopian society. However, to keep with the sci-fi theme, technology still advances. Any number of the species presented in *Mercenary Breed* or *Xenopedia* could have experienced a life-changing apocalyptic event.

Adding a post-apocalyptic theme can be done at the planetary, solar system, or sector level. Involving the PCs means the event has some type of bearing on their ultimate goal, but it doesn't have to define their employer or lifestyle. If they are outsiders traveling to this location at the behest of their corporate employers, the PCs still enjoy all the luxuries available in the rest of the Argo Galaxy.

PULP

Pulp sci-fi attempts to mimic the look and feel of sci-fi fiction from the pulp era, typically the 1900s through 1930s. However, what sets it apart from many other sci-fi themes is the lack of necessary realism. Things don't always have to make sense in pulp sci-fi. For example, you can strap on a jetpack and helmet and fly to



the moon. That's very pulp-like. Moonmen inhabit the moon and Martians inhabit mars; both places that you can easily travel to in your spaceship and walk about without a real spacesuit (maybe you'll need a helmet). That's very pulp-like. Oh, and Amazonian women live on Venus.

The trick with pulp sci-fi is that it doesn't have to make sense regarding how we understand space travel in modern times. But that isn't the only thing that makes something look and feel like pulp sci-fi. Other common themes include heroism (think one or two heroes or heroines versus an entire colony), high action and adventure, romance (and sexuality), controversy, and comedy (or parody). Additionally, pulp sci-fi doesn't typically focus on planetary- or sector-altering events, but in-

stead focuses on each mission and how each character is an integral part of that mission.

The entire Argo Galaxy can easily be turned into a pulp sci-fi experience simply by softening the rough edges (literally and figuratively). For one, pulp sci-fi probably doesn't span an entire galaxy, so narrow the focus onto a sector or quadrant. Also, tear down the walls of scientific realism and physics by allow easy space travel across a solar system where every planet and moon houses someone and the climate is always optimal. Then soften the edges of technology by making them a bit more rounded like a car from the 1930s. Finally, remove the big weapons as no one from pulp sci-fi seems to wield anything larger than a one- or two-handed laser weapon. These are just suggestions, of course.

When it comes to adversaries, everything can exist in pulp sci-fi, but without the horror or overwhelming nature that comes with it. It would seem as though every xeno species in the galaxy has developed in a similar manner, brandishing the same technology levels and attempting to live a very similar life. They may look considerably different, but their society is the same or similar to the PC's. This may be an oversimplification, but pulp sci-fi has a certain visual appeal as much as it does an atmospheric appeal.

EXAMPLES

RETURN OF THE UNDEAD

MILITARY SCI-FI HORROR

The planet of Mesuna has been hit with yet another deadly plague. Last time, 10% of the population was killed, resting silently in their graves. This time, although 25% of the population has been killed, they are not resting silently. Cosmic energies are certainly at work here as the bodies of the dead mutate and rise up to form a horrible, misshapen army of undead.

Stories have been told about the cosmic energies that lay within the void, the black space between cosmic bodies. The stories continue that when the stars and planets align just perfectly, these energies are transmitted throughout the solar system, causing all types of catastrophe. Unfortunately for Mesuna, the spread of these energies coincided with the second outbreak of the deadly White Eyed Plague – named as such because the eyes turn completely white when afflicted with the disease, with death following only days later. No one knows where this plague originated from, but many speculate it came from one of the species now living on Mesuna. Civil riots have broken out amongst a war.

The army of undead has formed into a massive force destroying everything and killing everyone that gets in their way. Their destination? No one knows, but they seem to concentrate their efforts on urban areas. The House of the Alliance has dispatched a small army to support our war efforts, but our military forces will have to hold out until that time. To bolster the army, the corporations have offered the support of their mercenary forces. While our soldiers hold back the onslaught against our cities, the mercenaries attempt to infiltrate the rear of the undead army, hoping to stop whoever is leading them. So far, they have found nothing.

The cosmic alignment (it's not a perfect alignment, just a relative alignment) will remain as such for another three months. With every death we experience, another undead creature arises and mutates. Stories about zombie-like beings were found in ancient scrolls, but these are not shambling corpses, they are fast beings with hellacious features. Just the sight of them is enough to test one's sanity. This will continue for three more months until all of them can be killed or someone finally uncovers who or what is driving this army of undead. Thank goodness the creatures finally lay peacefully once being killed the second time.

THE RED PLANET

PULP SCI-FI FANTASY (SPACE OPERA)

Welcome everyone as we prepare our exploration force for their first trip to Gulnor, the red planet! With our recent technological advances, we've been able to build this beautiful space faring craft, allowing these brave heroes to leave the confines of Hune and travel throughout our solar system. Equipped with only their space suits and laser guns, they will seek out diplomatic relations with every species on every planet they visit. With their stop being Gulnor, about two days away, they should be done with their full exploration by the end of the month.

Our satellites have taken pictures of every planet and found life on each one. The pointed-ear inhabitants of Gulnor should be more than willing to make friends with their green planet neighbor. The squat inhabitants of Fumier on the gray planet, just past Gulnor, have probably already befriended their pointed-ear neighbors and will welcome our exploration force with open arms.

However, be cautious of the lizard- and bear-like inhabitants we've seen on the outer planets as they seem to carry dangerous weapons and wield incredible powers of the mind. But when those of Gulnor demonstrate their control of the elements, embrace their teachings and bring back their knowledge.

Prepare to launch my heroes, for your quest can greatly improve our way of life by learning how our cosmic neighbors live theirs. Should you receive resistance, don't be afraid to use your laser guns after attempting diplomatic relations.

Ready the countdown!

ANARCHY

POST-APOCALYPTIC SCI-FI FANTASY HORROR (URBAN WARFARE)

Life on Tunis was prosperous. The population was thriving and cities of insurmountable sizes grew from the ancient villages and towns. The year was 3056 of the new era and no one thought twice about the planet of which they lived.

Tunis was growing old and the continuously moving land was causing a deadly strain on the inner planetary core. With little warning, massive volcanoes rose up from the sea and spewed thousands of miles of ash into the air. The cities were ill-prepared, but defenses were quickly established to fight against the thick air. But when the volcanoes erupted, something ancient awoke from within Tunis.

After four days of eruptions, new explosions were heard from the tops of the volcanoes. These explosions did not create new ash for they were followed by horrific screams of terror. The magma turned to obsidian and the volcanoes became engulfed with Hell. Disgusting, nightmarish creatures of all shapes and sizes came pouring from the mouths of the volcanoes, finding their way to shoreline. Seeing massive cities in the background, they made their advance.

The ends of the city were quickly penetrated, and the citizens were nothing compared to the might of these invaders. Inches before these creatures reached the densest urban areas, they froze in their tracks. The sounds of thunder could be heard in the distance, and the beasts set their sights on the disturbance, possibly sensing a new threat.

Bursting forth from mountains and caves poured the beings of folklore. Stories and legends told of these mythical beings and the magic they harnessed, but no one believed them. Now that the apocalypse had rang out and the people were being hunted down by the horrors of ancient times, these mythical beings answered by rising from their eternal slumber.

The year is now 3059 and the war continues. The Horrors, as they are called, continue to stalk the urban centers in force, looking for survivors to kill, eat, or enslave. Even with the aid of the mythical beings and their magic, the Horrors may prevail, but the mercenary forces are determined to stop them.



THE GRAND UNIVERSE

Let's face it; the size of the universe is unfathomable. No one knows how big it is, if it actually ends, nor how many galaxies it houses. This boils down to one sci-fi conclusion: there are an infinite number of possibilities. While this is true, there are some limitations that should be put in place. First, galaxies are tens of thousands of light years in diameter. Filling this amount of space can take a lot of time, but you'll have no shortage of adventuring opportunities. Second, galaxies are millions of light years away from each other. Most likely, you'll never travel to another galaxy. Given the size of most solar systems and the possible number of planets they hold, your games may only consume 10 – 25% of a given galaxy. And with the laws of physics in place, regarding space travel, this is probably more than enough as your mercenaries may never be able to feasibly travel any farther than that in their lifetime.

Or you could just break the laws of physics.

Mercenary Breed is not hard sci-fi; a version of science fiction heavily based on realism. It is designed for action and adventure without worrying too much about things that simply aren't possible (like faster-than-light travel). However, it does make the assumption that mercenaries are operating within the confines of a single galaxy with thousands if not millions of planets capable of supporting life in some type of sentient form. Most of the galaxy is unexplored, but the House of the Alliance intends to document every inch possible and create a cohesive alliance throughout. A bit utopian in design, but ultimately such true cohesion just isn't possible.

There will always be differences in opinions and there will always be someone looking to dominate another species, planet, ethnicity, or whatever. In other words, galactic peace could never really happen. Besides, if there wasn't some type of conflict, your missions would lack action and adventure. Instead, they'd be nothing more than political games where you try to diplomatically outmaneuver your opponent. You can create that type of game, but Mercenary Breed is meant to be exciting!

This is the basic design of the Argo Galaxy. It is a large galaxy, 55,000 light years in diameter, located millions of light years away from its neighboring galaxy. The House of the Alliance attempts to maintain peace throughout the galaxy and create alliances between the different xeno species to allow for free trade, but that's just how things look on paper. In reality, there are still thieves, pirates, armies, slavers, tyrants, and any number of malevolent beings that wish to conquer, steal, or kill. New species are encountered frequently and with each new expansion, the Alliance grows with new allies, documented enemies, and rumored chance encounters.

This is the sandbox setting provided to you. It is waiting to be filled with planets, species, and maybe another violation of the laws of physics to allow for faster travel across the galaxy or even a portal leading to another galaxy (or dimension). At the same time, Mercenary Breed is presented as a tool-kit, allowing for the GM and the players to assemble their own galaxy or fill the Argo Galaxy (or even the Milky Way) with whatever bits and pieces they desire. What follows is a discussion of how the players can work with the GM to further flesh out their setting or campaign.

ARGO GALAXY

The Argo Galaxy is the default setting for Mercenary Breed. It is a spiral galaxy and very little of it is fully defined within this book. This is intentional as it's designed to be a sandbox with enough to get you started and tools to fill in the gaps. It is based on a real galaxy, NGC 4414, and follows the same laws of physics that Earth does, except for the ability to travel at faster-than-light speeds.

There's nothing unique about this galaxy in real life, it's simply one that has been documented enough to be given an understandable structure. Because we are so locked into our own Solar System, it does mean that the Argo Galaxy can now become whatever you want it to in terms of stars, planets, and other cosmic objects. Then again, you can apply that same logic to any galaxy.

One of the original designs of Mercenary Breed, and one that still rings true in this new edition, is for players to design their own home world related to their character's background. This allows them to be part of the process of populating the Argo Galaxy with additional planets, lending credence to the existence of their character (in terms of species, technology, and abilities). By not worrying about the real design of the NGC 4414 galaxy and not confining you to a specific Argo Galaxy setting, you can thus populate it as you please.

Players are allowed to create their characters' home world using whatever tool they desire. In fact, they can simply do it by providing a written, or spoken, overview of the planet and allowing the GM to place that planet wherever plausible within their Mercenary Breed setting, or even constructing it for a later mission.

There are several things to consider when creating your own home world to add to the Argo Galaxy:

- **Placement:** How far away is it from the setting or campaign's headquarters?
- **Purpose:** What purpose does the planet serve besides housing a population? What do they supply to other allied planets?
- **Government:** What type of government, or ruler, runs the planet?
- **Alliances:** Does the planet or xeno species have special alliances that help them survive or can be called upon by the character at a later time?
- **Enemies:** Does the planet or xeno species have any particular enemies, internal or external, that aim to destroy them politically or through military means?
- **Motivation:** What motivation does the planet or xeno species have for sending its warriors to work for a corporate mercenary force?
- **Corporations:** Does the planet have any major corporations that have their own mercenary forces?
- **Escape:** Was the character allowed to leave the planet or did he have to escape?

These questions are quite simple and don't need to be answered in great detail. However, they help to flesh out the home world and how it can be incorporated into the setting or campaign. For example, if the planet is near the core headquarters of the campaign, the GM can incorporate it into a mission. If the character was forced to escape, a galaxy-wide manhunt can become the backdrop of the campaign. Without answering these questions, the planet is just another ball of rock floating in space.

MILKY WAY

Your Mercenary Breed missions and campaigns don't have to be within the Argo Galaxy. They could easily move to a more well-known galaxy, such as the Milky Way. This leads to questions about Gemini vs. human, but we'll address that later. Besides our solar system, little is fully defined and detailed about the Milky Way. We may understand its relative size, number of stars, and what other cosmic bodies are there, but we have no idea how many planets are out there, what they look like, and what intelligent life they house. However, the Milky Way is twice the size as the Argo Galaxy, and thus could house twice, if not more, as many secrets (inhabitable planets, hostile species, unknown technology, etc).

The size of the Milky Way could present a problem, or a simple solution. Either a setting could spread out greatly across a large expanse of the galaxy, or it's so isolated (or far away from) that humans aren't even a part of the setting. This could help answer some of the questions below, but ultimately it depends on how much the GM wants Earth to be involved in the setting or campaign.

One benefit of using the Milky Way is that you can use the research already done on the Milky Way to better define what home worlds the characters come from. You could even use names already established for various stars and their solar systems. However, using the Milky Way is really a matter of how the following questions are answered. This can guide the players and GM into creating a setting they love, set in a galaxy they are somewhat familiar with.

- **Humans:** Are humans, and Earth, a part of the setting? Are they a member of the House of the Alliance or a currently undocumented species? Have they been contacted by another species? Were they friendly?
- **Gemini:** Are Gemini still the center of the galaxy's politics? Did they spearhead the House of the Alliance? Are they distant cousins of humans? Or do you simply remove them and replace their history with humans?
- **House of the Alliance:** Does the House of the Alliance exist? Is it centered on Coursian or do you move it to Earth?
- **Alliance:** How much political power does the Alliance have? Who's a member of the Alliance? How do they view xeno species?
- **Allied Navy:** Does it exist? Does it patrol our Solar System?
- **Timeline:** If humans are a part of the setting, what year is it? What era is it? What type of technology do they utilize? Do they follow the standard historical timeline or does it deviate somewhere, creating an alternate history?
- **Earth-like:** Does every inhabitable planet appear Earth-like? Can xeno species exist on planets like Mars or Venus?
- **Space Travel:** Because the Milky Way is so big, how much of has been explored? How does one travel throughout the galaxy? Are there wormholes or warpgates to allow for travel from one side to another?

These questions are samples of ones to answer on how to utilize the Milky Way as a base setting. It doesn't answer the question about characters; use the questions in **Argo Galaxy** above for guidance.

YOUR GALAXY

TOOLKITS

Mercenary Breed has two toolkits for building galaxies and planets. Each of these is card-based and meant to create random locations. The galaxy building toolkit is meant to create the galaxy for the setting or for another galaxy the characters are sent to due to some type of technological device (like a warp gate). The planet building toolkit can be used to build home worlds, although it's primarily meant for creating random planets to fill the setting's sandbox and then used for missions.

SCI FI COMPANION

The *Sci-Fi Companion*, from Pinnacle Entertainment Group, also has a planet building toolkit. This one is dice-based, instead of card-based, and can also be used for building home worlds and filling out the setting's sandbox. Some of the content provides details about the planet beyond what the *Galaxy Guide* provides. These two can be combined to truly create a fully fleshed-out planet, or even a collection of planets to create an entire solar system, quadrant, or sector.

MAKE IT YOUR GALAXY

There's no reason why either the Argo Galaxy or the Milky Way needs to be used. A third option exists in that the players and the GM work together to create their own galaxy. This can then be filled-in as needed, either by placing the background of the Argo Galaxy, including its xeno species, into this new galaxy or creating a new one. What's the benefit?

1. The galaxy can be made smaller. By shrinking the size of the galaxy, one can easily travel from one side to the other.
2. The galaxy can be moved closer to another galaxy, including the Milky Way. This allows for a greater expansion of your setting or the possible outcome of two galaxies crashing into each other.
3. Recreate an existing fictional galaxy. Turn your favorite book or video game setting into a playable setting with *Mercenary Breed*.
4. Write your own physics. If you don't like the current laws of physics, write your own that match the design of the new galaxy.
5. Change the fundamental construction of the galaxy. It doesn't have to be a spiral and it doesn't have to be a tight cluster of solar systems. You could also add cosmic conflicts like multiple black holes or attacks from massive asteroids.
6. Add a greater influence of fantasy. Instead of everything being technology-based, science could be much more fantasy-based with ships powered by some arcane power, demons existing in the void, dragons traveling between planets, or whatever. This could also create a series of linked fantasy planets that continuously break the laws of physics.
7. The galaxy is torn by war. Military sci-fi doesn't have to be relegated to planet-side battles. Send combat into the stars and let the action center on a series of military campaigns where characters take control of their fighters and bring down massive capital ships.

MULTIVERSE

Multiverse isn't so much a new galaxy concept as it is a fantasy-like theory that there are multiple universes sitting parallel to each other without ever touching. These could be replicas of a base universe with slight historical changes, or a copy and paste of planets with completely different inhabitants. If incorporating a multiverse theme, however, there needs to be some method of traveling between those universes.

Multiverse concepts are diverse in how these other universes are approached. Traveling between them thus becomes a constant mental challenge to understand what becomes right and what becomes wrong. The laws of physics probably wouldn't change, but the technology base could. Here are some concepts of creating parallel universes:

- **Mirror Image:** Compared to the base universe, mirror images are created as a change in people's personalities. Those who were evil are now good, and those who were good are now evil. This doesn't have to be the case with every person of the population, but should be represented by the major NPCs.
- **Alternate History:** Change one fairly significant piece of history and the outcome of that universe changes drastically. For example, what would life be like on Earth had the Roman Empire never collapsed?
- **Technological Research:** Not every universe needs to regard technology in the same way. Maybe the parallel universes move along a scale of technology from clockwork and steampunk to teslapunk and dieselpunk.
- **Fantasy Tropes:** Maybe as you move along from universe to universe, the amount of fantasy tropes increases until you have one end with pure sci-fi and the other with pure fantasy.
- **Super Powered Tropes:** Much like the above, maybe as you move further away from the base universe, people's abilities become even more extraordinary, eventually creating a universe where super powers are the norm.
- **Clone:** A possible concept is that each universe is a clone of the other, functioning only days or weeks behind the other. Thus, if someone really important dies, maybe you'll have enough time to travel to the clone universe, save the person, and bring them back to your universe.

All the concepts presented in **The Grand Universe** are meant to provide players with ideas on how they would like the GM to construct the setting or campaign they are going to play in. This isn't necessarily giving all the power to the players, but it does allow them to drive the concepts ultimately created by the GM. It can also help to determine what subgenre and theme the setting or campaign takes given the galaxy desires of the players.

For example, if the players decide they want to create a multiverse where technology changes from universe to universe, maybe the bulk of their campaign is to recover some rare technology in another universe. This technology can be brought back to their own universe to save an entire planet if not the entire galaxy. Maybe this piece of technology is a great weapon or can unlock a great secret.

Whatever the case is, the setting and campaign should be one that all are excited to play in to fulfill those character concepts!

BUILDING YOUR GALAXY

Originally, Mercenary Breed was presented as a toolkit with a sandbox galaxy to play in. Mercenary Breed 2.0 flips that and presents the Argo Galaxy as the basis for Mercenary Breed, but also presents tools to fill the galaxy as you please or even create your own.

By making this change, Mercenary Breed is now presented with a more complete setting, although it's still a sandbox setting. The planets provided herein are meant for quick use and as a guideline for the GM to build her own planets and fill the Argo Galaxy to meet the needs of her missions and campaigns.

ARGO GALAXY SETTING

The Argo Galaxy is the base sandbox setting for Mercenary Breed. It is a spiral galaxy, roughly 55,000 light-years in diameter, and located around 60 million light-years from Earth. It is an unbarred (without a central bar), flocculent (discontinuous) spiral galaxy with eight short spiral segments. It is based on the NGC 4414 galaxy, in the constellation Coma Berenices, with a slight modification to the spiral segments.

The House of the Alliance estimates the galaxy as containing around ten billion stars. Current estimates place Alliance exploration and documentation around 40% of the galaxy, although some within the Alliance estimate that number to actually be closer to 30%. The truth is, no one truly knows, but new sectors are continually being discovered.

The bulk of the inhabitable planets lie in one of the galaxy's eight spiral segments. Coreward (toward the core of the galaxy) presents difficulty traveling due to cosmic dust, debris, asteroids, and other bodies that make travel dangerous. It is thus the assumption of the Alliance that few xeno species populate that section of the galaxy, although the GM may declare otherwise.

If the galaxy were marked as north, east, south, and west, the Alliance has traveled primarily in the northwest, west, and southwest sections of the galaxy. Coursian, the political center of the House of the Alliance, sits on the Penta arm in the west. When asked why Coursian wasn't marked as the first arm (Primera), the Alliance declared that it made more sense to start counting from the arm that appeared to be closest to the core (the inner-segment of the Primera arm). The Primera arm is in the east and the Alliance counts the arms counterclockwise: Primera, Secundo, Treca, Cuarto, Penta, Hexa, Hepta, and Octa.

ARGO GALAXY DESIGN

Coursian sits slightly rimward (toward the outside of the galaxy) of the center of the Penta arm in relation to coreward and rimward. Its planetary system is called the Joplin System and houses the festoon's current home planet of Lak'husa. Coursian is the fourth planet with Lak'husa being the fifth planet. The first planet, Metalla, is a heap of molten rock, just barely large enough to be considered a planet. The second planet, Aphela, is a small terrestrial planet with no atmosphere. The third planet, Satella, is a medium terrestrial planet, smaller than Coursian, with an extremely dense atmosphere.

The Argo Galaxy is a large sci-fi sandbox for GMs to play in. The shell of that sandbox is defined and there are many toolkits contained throughout this book that aid in filling that sandbox. GMs are encouraged to work with players to add home planets corresponding to unique player character races, adding adventure hooks to weave that planet into the storyline.

Coursian is an optimal planet, much like Earth, for embracing life. Lak'husa is close to optimal, although the festoons, and everyone else, are forced to live within bio-domes that provide constant temperatures and ample oxygen. The sixth and seventh planets in the Joplin System are both very large gas giants with violent atmospheres and strong gravitational pulls. This strong gravitational pull on both planets helps to attract asteroids and meteors that may threaten Coursian and Lak'husa.

The Joplin System is part of the Gemini Sector, which spans across the center of the Penta arm. The Penta arm inhabits both the Northwest and Southwest Quadrants (quadrants divide the galaxy across each 90° axis with direction being a "galactic direction"), but the Gemini Sector lies on the trailing (away from the direction the spiral arms are "moving") side of the Southwest Quadrant. Within the Gemini Sector is a collection of ten expanses (counterclockwise starting at the trailing side): Core (which includes the Joplin System), Juno, Minerva, Venus, Apollo, Vesta, Ceres, Liber, Vulcan, and Pales. Each expanse contains a collection of planetary systems arranged closest to each other with large space lanes in-between the expanses. Thus an expanse could include one to thirty (if not more) planetary systems. The Core Expanse has five planetary systems: Joplin, Rhodo, Cyan, Hetero, and Hapto. Directly south of the Gemini Sector, spinward, (following the direction the spiral arms are "moving") is the Lunar Sector on the Hexa arm (home of the Hastilion Expanse). Directly north of the Gemini Sector, trailing and in the first quadrant, is the Solar Sector.

The Core Expanse is home to the core species of Mercenary Breed (although the l'nels travel across the entire expanse in their spaceships). The hhlilachi's home world of Travall is located in the Rhodo System, rimward of the Joplin System. The primas' home world of Theta is located at the far rimward end of the Core Expanse in the Cyan System. The shrilang's home world of Skrague is located in the Hapto System at the far coreward end of the Core Expanse. The Hetero System did not contain any beings of high intelligence and has instead been colonized by the gemini.

COURSIAN

Coursian is the home world and birthplace of the gemini. It is here that the political power of the House of the Alliance is seated along with many of the inter-planetary corporations. Coursian is the fourth planet from the sun within the Joplin System.

Its entire timeline dates back millions of years. Coursian's civilized timeline is only about 7,500 years old. While it is believed the gemini evolved from primates common to Coursian, there are signs of species "seeding" by an advanced civilization scientifically dated back 8,000 years. This has led to the belief that the gemini actually landed here 8,000 years ago but failed to establish a thriving civilization. This would have resulted in a regression toward a barbaric or feudal society and a loss of technology and history. Ancient ruins have also been located to back this theory.

Environment: Coursian is a very fertile planet filled with resources and productive soil. Resources range from agriculture and herbs to precious gems and ore. While this has allowed the planet to be completely self-sufficient, it is unable to supply resources to anyone else. The resources are spread too thin to accommodate off-planet export. Coursian's main export is politics and money.



70% of the planet is covered by water with 85% of the western hemisphere covered in water. It is dominated by the Gafry Ocean in the west, Zodiac Ocean in the north, and the Falta Ocean in the south. Its five major landmasses are covered by terrain which varies depending upon distance from the equator. Lands in the south are mostly tropical and sub-tropical while the north is primarily temperate. A large body of water, the Temperate Sea, resides in the center of the five landmasses. Hundreds of mostly volcanic islands make up the remaining areas of the planet.

Population: Coursian had previously been a single-intelligent-species planet. Over the decades, more and more xeno species have been moving there to become a part of the political scene, mainly the House of the Alliance, and come under the employ of one of the many inter-planetary corporations. While gemini are the primary and dominate intelligent species, they have opened their arms to all allied species.

This blending of species has created a population of roughly 45 billion, which is significant considering the scarcity of inhabitable land. This population enjoys all manner of advanced technology along with a plethora of starports to reach destinations beyond the imagination.

Planetary Science: Coursian is considered a medium-sized planet with a full rotation every 26 hours and full revolution every 385 days. It rotates about its axis at a 35-degree angle. It has two moons, Thirgate and Seirgate, relatively close to each other. Both moons can be seen in the sky at the same time with Seirgate rising while Thirgate is at the meridian mark.

Atmosphere: Coursian has a very favorable atmosphere. In regards to the majority of alien planets, it is very standard including its gravity. Technology has grown at a relatively steady rate keeping this atmosphere mostly intact and the climate properly regulated. The gemini were using a lot of polluting technology when they met the festoons. These pollution-causing industries were quickly replaced by organic and renewable energy sources that drastically reduced the pollution. While some damage was already done to the atmosphere, it has not altered the planet in any significant way.

Culture: The gemini have a relatively conservative culture with a very well-developed law enforcement system. Major crimes are severely punished and criminals rarely get away. An extensive law and investigation network ensures the public's safety and captures 95% of all criminals. However, the gemini people are generally not violent and are mostly peaceful with all species of the Alliance.

The gemini keep their peace dealings enforced with an extensive navy that prevents hostiles from reaching any allied planet. While this may seem very aggressive, their motive is diplomacy and their maneuvers are primarily defensive. The gemini do not initiate wars, but they will definitely do everything they can to stop them.

LAK'HUSA

Lak'husa is the current home world of the festoons. Due to their long lives and peaceful society, festoons choose to control their population and only control a single home world. While many travel to allied worlds and live amongst their people, only one world will ever be called a festoon home world. Lak'husa is the fifth planet from the sun within the Joplin System.

While the festoon's history dates back at least 100 millenia, their life on Lak'husa started 4,000 years ago. After fleeing hostile threats, they followed the words of their eldest oracles and landed on Lak'husa in hopes to ally with the neighboring gemini. While the planet was not favorable, standard bio-technology allowed the festoons to survive. They watched the gemini and learned their culture by tapping



into satellite communications. Patiently, they waited until the gemini reached outer space and landed upon Lak'husa ground. Diplomatic relations were initiated immediately with much enthusiasm.

Environment: Lak'husa is a living world, but lacks the soil for agriculture. Biotech centers for farming and raising animals were created to support the population. While the festoons were able to sustain themselves for many centuries, their population growth was limited by food resources. However, the planet is rich in ore and metals which the festoons were able to use for their multitude of technology, mechanical and electronic. This excess of ore and metal allows Lak'husa to thrive and trade for other resources.

Due to its location, much of Lak'husa is frozen and lacks vegetation. Half the planet is land, primarily frozen or ash, while the remainder consists of a combination of water and phosphates, giving it a green hue. The festoons remove the phosphates from the water to sustain life.

The planet is dominated by ten land masses all connected together with sporadic seas sprinkled throughout. The Festoons rarely venture outside of their bio-domes and thus only two of the ten continents are populated. The largest is Thak'tula with a population located on Lint'lu. Thak'tula is located around the equator in the eastern hemisphere with Lint'lu located around the equator in the western hemisphere. Remaining continents are generally too cold to sustain life.

Population: Lak'husa is predominantly a single-intelligent-species planet with a few gemini living throughout (albeit on a temporary basis). The festoons prefer to interface with other xeno species aboard space stations or within small groupings on that species' home world. This is due to their fear of being vulnerable to hostilities.

Festoons enjoy a long life and thus do not feel the need to create a large population. This is partially due to the lack of available resources and inhabitable lands, but mostly it is tradition. The population of Lak'husa is roughly 5 million. The elders encourage traditional views on a smaller population in order to avoid needing additional resources.

Planetary Science: Lak'husa is considered a medium-sized planet with a full rotation every 32 hours and a full revolution every 465 days. It rotates about its axis at a 40-degree angle. It has one moon, Stot'pha, which was converted into the festoon's main space station.

Atmosphere: Lak'husa has a fairly thin atmosphere outside of the bio-domes, breathing apparatuses are required, and a standard atmosphere inside the bio-domes. The festoons have always used non-polluting industry so as not to further thin the atmosphere. Oxygen exists but most species find it difficult to breath outside of the bio-domes. Unprotected travel outside of the population centers is discouraged.

Culture: Contrary to their population growth, the festoons of Lak'husa are very liberal. The elders believe in freedom of virtually everything outside of criminal behavior and feel the administrative personnel of the "government" should be pencil pushers and "middle management" rather than true governing bodies. This has resulted in a very convoluted administrative body, a lot of scientific research and a taste of pleasures that many would consider taboo. The elders only participate in governing decisions related to the species and their culture as a whole.

While this could lead to anarchy, the festoons have learned that violence and crime is rarely a necessity. Rather, they spend their time on technology and personal happiness. This is the reason they lack a militant arm and rely upon the gemini for protection.

SKRAGUE

Skrague is the home world and birthplace of the schrilang. It is a planet filled with dangerous, violent environments ranging from the hot desert to the bare tundra. It's the second planet from the sun in the Hapto System, although far enough away to allow life. Due to its proximity to its sun, the planet is hot and dry with little snow outside of the far reaches of the poles.

Survival on Skrague, outside of arachnid and insectoid creatures, is only possible below its surface. Here, large aquifers exist, stretching for thousands of miles across the planet. Most of them are connected in some form, and thus only three aquifers are technically in existence (although the schrilang have politically broken them into twenty sections). It is here that the schrilang first made their way from the tumultuous surface into the underground to begin evolving into an intelligent species some 100,000 years ago (of course, they only started recording their history 2,000 years ago).

Environment: Skrague is a barren world, on the surface. Below its surface it is teeming with fresh water, phosphorescent plants, hardy fish, and many different cave-dwelling animals. This underground 'paradise' has allowed the schrilang to sustain life, although overpopulation is a continuous threat as the amount of water and food available is ultimately limited.

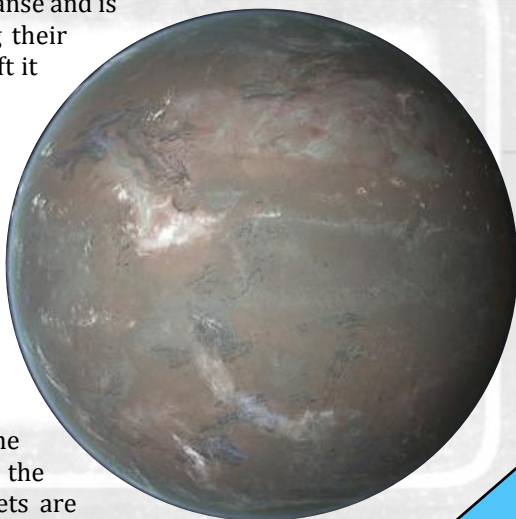
The water comes from the melting snow throughout the tundra and poles on the surface. Each hemisphere experiences a summer that allows enough snowfall from the winter to keep the aquifers filled. However, if the planet held a population as large as Coursian, the aquifers would run dry before the next melting season.

On the surface, 65% of the planet is covered by desert with the remaining 35% being a mixture of tundra and arctic. There is no water on the surface due to the porous nature of the ground, filling the aquifers below. The deserts are rich in iron, giving them and the tundra a reddish hue. However, the iron is mostly filtered by the ground, keeping the aquifers fresh enough for the schrilang to drink. The standard gemini would likely not live as prolonged exposure to the iron would damage their body.

The vast deposits of iron on Skrague have allowed the schrilang a part in the Alliance's ultimate affairs. It is used across the Core Expanse and is the only thing keeping the schrilang from abandoning their home world. Without it, they would have completely left it behind once they became part of the Alliance.

Population: Without being adapted to the iron richness of Skrague or continuously carrying your own water supply, few outside of the schrilang can live on Skrague. Diplomats have been known to visit for a few weeks, but once their fresh water is gone, they must find another means of surviving (unless their bodies can handle the iron). As such, the only intelligent species 'living' on Skrague are the schrilang.

The schrilang tightly regulate their population. Due to the holding capabilities of the aquifer, it can only support the current population of 100 million. Once the population increases to 101 million (or thereabouts), the schrilang pull together a large fleet (their civilian fleets are



larger than their military ones) and scatter 5% of their population amongst the known galaxy. Some say this isn't possible, although the schrilang state it is. Rumors abound that the schrilang instead first poison their oldest people before sending anyone off-planet.

Planetary Science: Skrague is a medium-sized planet with a full rotation every 28 hours and a full revolution every 315 days. It rotates about its axis at a 40-degree angle. It has one moon, Shesht, which is large enough to support a thin atmosphere. Shesht is used as a shipping outpost for the iron from planet-side.

Atmosphere: Surprisingly, Skrague has a favorable atmosphere. If one can handle the intense heat and dangerous wind that throws many rocks throughout the air, they'll find oxygen-rich air. The reason it's a barren planet is due to its proximity to its sun. The gemini have proposed a special dome structure that would filter the dust and debris in the air and shield part of the sun, allowing others to live on the surface. So far, this has been met with nothing but resistance.

Culture: The schrilang were raised on the environmentally violent Skrague, breeding ferocity into their people for the purpose of survival. One must be brave, quick, and dangerous to hunt above and underground to provide food for the masses. There is no time to stalk one's prey nor is there time to waste fighting with it. Kills must be quick so that the hunter can get back to the safety of the caverns before they're ripped apart by the debris in the air.

The schrilang have thus created a militaristic government, as much as one could call it, where everyone has a 'job' to perform that supports the elders, warriors (those who hunt and fish), engineers (those who manage the aquifers), and scientists (those who create new spacecraft and military technology). They appreciate everything that promotes their militaristic nature and scholarly deeds are strictly those that promote this ideal. If they spent more time researching their own survival, they could probably find a way to live on the surface within bio-domes. However, this is not their nature as they have known little outside of violence and survival since their first days.

This violence often results in squabbling between schrilang factions, similar to gang warfare, but the elders do nothing to stop it. To them, it is simply another means of population control, allowing the masses to continue surviving on the water available within the aquifers.

THETA

Theta is the home world and birthplace of the primas. It is a lush planet filled with forests that stretch from one end to the other. While some primas have found homes outside of Theta, 80% of the primas galactic population is born here. Theta is the third planet from its sun within the Cyan System.

Very little is known about Theta outside of the primas' history and the geminis' documented research. In fact, outside of understanding that Theta is filled with luscious forests, providing wood for the Core Expanse, and other forest-born flora and fauna, research has yet to discover most of what's there. The gemini theorize this may include species deep within the polar tundra that have yet to be properly explored, scouring the forests to discover all creatures, testing the water for possible diseases, and diving into the depths of its many seas to discover what lies beneath their surface.

Environment: Theta is an extremely fertile planet when it comes to forest-born agriculture; fruit grows in abundance and is an essential export for the primas' culture. However, anything that doesn't normally thrive in a forest will die quite quickly as the ground soil can't support other types of farming.

Theta's other main export is its exotic wood. The trees that populate its vast forests grow thick and strong and are a valuable resource for building houses

across the Core Expanse. However, exporting these trees is heavily regulated by the gemini to avoid the desecration of the forests. Sections of the forest are identified for logging, all inhabitants are transported elsewhere, the area is stripped of its trees, new trees are planted once the soil is churned, the local inhabitants are allowed back into the area, and the process is repeated once per year. Each time a new area of forest is located, it must be at least 1,000 miles away from the prior two locations. This method of regulation allows Theta to reap the riches of selling the wood, but keeps the forest from being depleted.

Only 25% of Theta is water, in the form of large fresh water seas. However, many of its forests are actually rain forests and subjected to seasonal flooding. This flooding moves between regions throughout the year and covers an additional 5% of the landscape. Additionally, many of the trees on Theta are known to 'store' water inside them, providing nourishment to many of the creatures that inhabit them.

The various seas across Theta are extremely deep and continually refilled from the many rainfalls in the nearby forests. Closer to the poles, however, the land becomes barren and a vast tundra forms. It is believed that vast seas lie underneath the tundra, but expeditions have not been initiated to find out. There is simply too much that still needs to be researched on Theta and the tundra is not an immediate consideration.

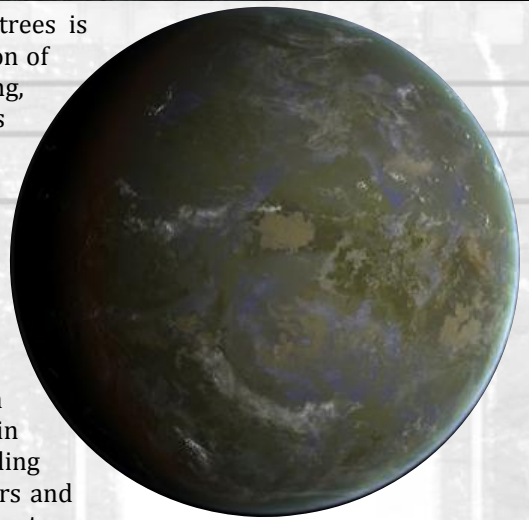
Population: The primas don't allow anyone outside of the gemini and those accompanying the research teams to live on Theta. After a cruel corporation snuck onto the planet and clear cut a huge swath of forest, the primas don't trust anyone they haven't already formed relations with. As such, space stations have been established on Theta's two moons to monitor all traffic on and off the planet.

The gemini have befriended the primas from their first encounter, and are an important part of researching the primas and Theta's history, geology, and biology. Because the primas ultimately have little care in these things, they rely on the gemini to do so. Additionally, the primas have allowed the gemini to 'modernize' their villages with rudimentary technology, things the primas can easily understand, and conveniences. Instead of living in simple huts on the ground, vast fortresses have been built within the trees, allowing the primas to remain safe from any predators that stalk the ground; although there are extremely few.

Currently, there are approximately 50 million primas and 100,000 gemini living on Theta, plus a small number of other xeno races working with the gemini. At one point, there were almost twice as many, but the primas' villages were becoming crowded and opted to send their population across the known galaxy to find new home worlds and join the Allied Navy. However, few primas have been able to live as long as they did on Theta. Thus, most of the race is still born on Theta and leaves once the villages become too crowded.

Planetary Science: Theta is a medium-sized planet with a full rotation every 25 hours and a full revolution every 328 days. It rotates about its axis at a 15-degree angle. It has two moons, Yhesh and Fosch, which sit on opposite sides of the planet. Entrance to Theta can only be done after first checking in at one of the space stations on Yhesh or Fosch and gaining clearance.

Atmosphere: According to the gemini, Theta has one of the best, if not the best, life-sustaining atmospheres in the known galaxy (unless one is not an oxygen breathing species). It is rich in oxygen and its air is free of all pollutants. No



industries are allowed on the planet if they create any type of pollution or byproducts. Nothing, not even food, is imported at the risk of exposing the environment to a foreign substance. This is what drives the gemini to fully study the planet. Once they fully understand Theta and everything in it, the primas may allow the gemini to build larger structures and begin importing. Until then, however, the primas allow nothing to be brought to their planet.

Culture: Originally, the primas never needed a reason to leave Theta. It is a lush planet that allowed their population to thrive. Due to the tightness of the forest, villages with chiefs were the only viable means of government, creating rivalries, and sometimes hatred, between different villages. As one would grow, another village would grow jealous of their prosperity and possibly declare some form of war. This caused rage to breed through the primas population from an early age.

The continuous back-and-forth between the different villages never really allowed the primas to develop technology, although they never really needed it. To this day, they still live under the premise that technology is not necessary, and they don't need anything that Theta doesn't provide. However, their rage still boils up from within and their new outlet for that rage has become joining the Allied Navy. Nowadays, there is relative peace between the various villages, although centuries of hatred still come to the surface periodically. Wars between the villages are not unheard of, although they are much less frequent than before the gemini arrived.

The primas still live their tribal life and still answer only to their tribal chieftains. The only difference now is that the tribal chieftains have gemini advisors and ambassadors to handle relations with the gemini and anyone else that is given clearance on the planet. However, inter-tribal discussions are only allowed between primas' chieftains and thus their somewhat simplistic life continues on; which seems to please the primas just fine. They are much better at receiving orders than thinking for themselves.

TRAVALL

Travall is the home world and birthplace of the hhilachi. It is a wet planet covered in swamps, bogs, and wetlands with a rainy season that lasts about 75% of the year. The deepest water is only 50' and the plant-life grows extremely thick. It's the second planet from its sun within the Rhodo system.

The hhilachi pride themselves on their ability to survive in this wet, humid environment. Where the trees grow thick and tall, the hhilachi have made villages amongst the branches that stretch up to a mile in each direction. At the basin of these trees are the same wetlands that cover the entire planet. The hhilachi species relied heavily on the fish and other wildlife that called the waters their home, leading to their ability to hold their breath underwater for an extremely long time. The evolution of their species has allowed them to thrive in this environment; this includes the small amount of webbing they have on their hands and feet.

Environment: Travall has no soil available for farming, ranching, or tree groves. 75% of the planet is covered in water for at least part of the year. This means that the only plant-life that can grow is that which can survive the soaking wet ground and won't die from after being partially submerged in water. However, this also means the plants that do grow have no shortage of water and grow at an alarming rate. These trees are so thick and tall that all manner of civilization can be built amongst their branches.

This also means Travall has an abundance of strong, thick wood that grows quickly. The hhilachi have taken to 'farming' these trees by cutting a single tree down every week. The roots of the trees grow so deep that it takes days to remove them at the roots, which in turn allows for a new tree to grow in its place. Because

the trees are so large, however, an entire house can be built from just a single tree. This has turned lumber into Travall's main export.

Technically, only 35% of Travall is covered in water such as rivers, streams, lakes, and seas. However, due to the long rainy seasons and continuous flooding, 75% of the Travall becomes covered in water at some point every year. The only lands that are never covered in water are those that sit higher than the flood level and areas along the poles where it rains less.

Gemini corporations have taken to looking for fossil fuels underneath the muck that lies at the bottom of many of the wetlands, finding an interesting mixture of oil-like substances. These somewhat recent discoveries are leading to a new, possibly more lucrative export for Travall. However, no one knows how much is there and when it would run out.

Population: The hhlilachi have welcomed everyone to Travall that wishes to live there. The water throughout the planet is fresh, and some of the wetlands surround large lakes that can easily sustain a population. The hhlilachi build their villages fairly close to each other and have encouraged all others to do the same. They stand by their ideas that proximity to allies will save all should an invasion occur. With the access to fresh water and the hhlilachis friendly environment, many different races have set-up small corporations, luxury getaways, entertainment clubs, and various other small businesses within the treetop villages. They have also built large treetop walkways to connect the various villages to avoid having to travel through the water.

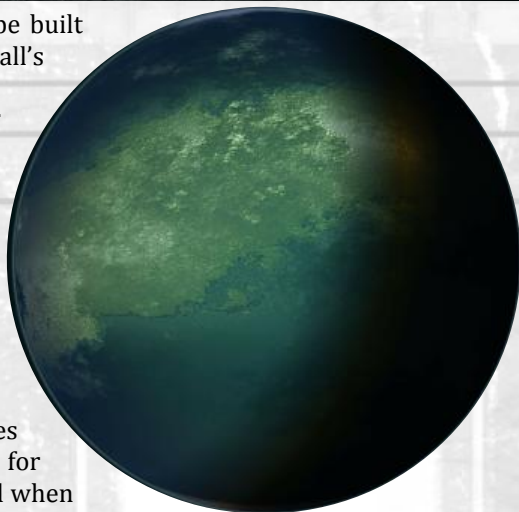
Although the hhlilachi dominate Travall's population, it is believed that many gemini, festoon, and primas now call it home. The primas find the environment extremely enticing as they can live a life amongst the trees and play in the water below when desired. As long as there is room in the villages, trees for cutting, and the environment doesn't become affected, the hhlilachi continue to allow their planet to be populated by other xenos.

Currently there are 240 million hhlilachi on Travall with around 1 million gemini, about that many primas, and probably less than half that many festoon. No one really tracks that number, although the geminis are establishing the means to do so.

Planetary Science: Travall is a medium-sized planet, although one that is slightly larger than most medium-sized planet. It has a full rotation every 36 hours and a full revolution every 336 days. It has one moon, which the hhlilachi simply call Silver as it doesn't have a formal name, and rotates about its axis at a 45-degree angle. The gemini are in discussions to establish a space station on Travall's moon and intend on giving it a name.

Atmosphere: Travall has an ideal atmosphere, albeit one that is very humid. It is rich with oxygen although its air can sometimes be difficult to breath due to the continuous presence of fog and the thick humid air. Due to the thickness of the humidity and the continuous fog, no pollution-generating facilities are allowed on Travall. Pollution would have a difficult time dissipating into the air, thus causing a lot of respiratory problems for those living there.

Culture: The hhlilachi love their wet planet, but are also very curious. They do not invest much time or resources into technology, choosing instead to focus on survival and the luxuries of living, and often become fascinated by the technology brought to Travall from other xenos. They are also extremely trusting and loyal,



possibly leading to easy means of smuggling as the hhlachi find those regulations to be unnecessary. The geminis have stepped in to help with securing Travall, keeping out smugglers and driving pirates away from the planet.

The hhlachi stick to a fairly strict code that everyone within a village has a purpose and should perform their job for the survival of their village. By allying with other villages, they ensure that in the case of war, they can call upon other villages for aid. While it may seem that war would never break out, a new tyrannical hhlachi is born periodically, being able to persuade his followers to seek out some type of revenge on their brethren.

One of the most important roles on Travall is that of the warrior. They serve to hunt for food and keep a continuous eye on the landscape to watch for possible threats. These threats could be from the followers of a tyrant or one of the rare dangerous creatures that also calls Travall home. However, these warriors sometimes have a difficult time seeing other xenos as dangerous or understanding their possible motivations. They are strong and brave, but at the same time they are still friendly, loyal, and trusting.

The hhlachi are thus a culture of mixed ideals. They yearn to trust, but try to be cautious of tyranny. They live a relaxed life, but at the same time keep a vigilant watch for invaders. Only the hhlachi seem to understand these opposing emotions, although the geminis continue to study the hhlachi psychology to find out why.

MILKY WAY SETTING

There's no reason why Mercenary Breed has to sit within the Argo Galaxy; it could very easily be moved to the Milky Way. While the planets may need to be adjusted to fit the actual design of the Milky Way and gemini could become humans, everything else is universal in its design. If this is desired, here are some things to consider.

GALACTIC DESIGN

To properly present the Milky Way within your setting, or at least a plausible means of presenting it, it is imperative to first understand how the galaxy is designed. For starters, it is a barred spiral galaxy. A barred galaxy is one that has a large band of stars that form a bar-like structure that crosses the center of the galaxy. A spiral galaxy is one with "arms" that extend from the center of the galaxy, most likely from the bar, and reach out to the farthest extents of the galaxy. These arms are curved in the direction the galaxy rotates whereas their tip faces away from that rotating direction.

It is estimated that the Milky Way is 100,000 – 120,000 light-years in diameter. This makes it twice the size of the Argo Galaxy, providing much more space for interesting species to be encountered. It has an estimated 100 – 400 billion stars; let's use the simple average of 250. Using the "Law of 1s" (as I like to call it), for simplicity sake, there are 2.5 billion stars with planets orbiting around them (planetary system). 25 million of those planetary systems contain inhabitable planets. 250,000 of those planets contain intelligent species. (1% of 1% of 1% - the "Law of 1s".) This means the GM really has a lot of opportunities to create a vast galaxy filled with all sorts of xenos. This could include those within the *Mercenary Breed*, the *Xenopedia*, and the *Hastilion Expanse* campaign. (These numbers are purely for in-game purposes and have no scientific merit.)

There are four main spiral arms and two spiral spurs. The Perseus Arm and Scutum-Centaurus Arm seem to connect to the galactic bar in the center. Moving outward from those are the Norma Arm and Carina-Sagittarius Arm. The spur

closest to the galactic center is the Orion-Cygnus Arm and the Norma Arm appears to have a spur that continues after a break called the Outer Arm. The Orion-Cygnus Arm contains the Solar System (our system), about 27,000 light-years away from the galactic center. The galactic center lies in the direction of the constellation Sagittarius.

The Solar System lies in an area known as the Galactic habitable zone. This means life can definitely survive on any inhabitable planets, away from the dangers nearer the galactic center. The closest spiral arm is the Perseus Arm, approximately 6,500 light-years away. However, there are 64 known stars within 16 light-years of our sun.

SOLAR SYSTEM

It should be noted that the term Solar System and solar systems are not the same. Solar System, with capitals as a proper name, is the actual name of the planetary system Earth resides in, orbiting around our Sun, also called Sol. However, the term solar systems, without capitals and plural, is often used generically to refer to any system that contains a star with planets orbiting around it. The correct term is planetary system, defining a group of planets, or other objects, that orbit around a star or star system (multiple stars that orbit around each other). This is in reference to the Solar System where we live.

The Sun has a collection of neighboring bright stars which, in the world of Mercenary Breed, would be very easy for the characters to travel to and house intelligent species. The closest, to list a few, are (in order of distance, starting with the nearest): Alpha Centauri, Sirius, Epsilon Eridani, 61 Cygni, Procyon, Epsilon Indi, Tau Ceti, Groombridge 1618, and 40 Eridani. These ten stars, including the Sun, can be used to set the first stages of the House of the Alliance (or whatever the humans call it) to establish a political power within the Milky Way. In relation to the Argo Galaxy, these ten stars would make-up part of the Gemini Sector, incorporating the Core Expanse and at least one other expanse. The next sets of closest stars would fill the rest of the Gemini Sector. Of course, this doesn't fall within the same quadrant designations of the Argo Galaxy, but then that can be easily modified.

Our Solar System comprises eight planets: four terrestrial planets and four gas giants. In terms of the **Planet Building Kit**, "large" is a terrestrial planet and not a gas giant. It seems easier to build planets where species can live rather than places where it doesn't seem logical. However, these gas giants could have moons that are the size of planets and allow for intelligent species to survive.

Earth is the largest of the terrestrial planets; it and Venus are considered medium-sized planets. Mars and Mercury are the smallest of the terrestrial planets and considered small-sized planets. Earth is the equivalent of Coursian and Mars is the equivalent of Lak'husa if moving the Argo Galaxy to the Milky Way. This presents a reference point when creating new planets using the **Planet Building Kit**.

Terrestrial planets typically have no to very few satellites (moons). Those they do have are probably most related to our moon or only slightly larger. Gas giants, however, can have dozens of moons, some of which are the size of a terrestrial planet. For example, Jupiter's Ganymede and Saturn's Titan could be optimal locations for corporations to establish environmentally controlled mining facilities.

TOOLKITS

Of course, you don't have to layer the Argo Galaxy atop the Milky Way to connect the Gemini and the Alliance with the Solar System. It's just as easy to take the Solar System and gradually move out, filling in the details where desired. Using the **Planet Building Kit**, the bright stars (as they are probably the most likely to have

If creating a retro sci-fi atmosphere, the Milky Way is a good place to host adventures and campaigns. Take the basics about what humans no of the Milky Way and fill in the gaps by embellishing the truth and sprinkling in various aspects of pure fiction based on the toolkits presented throughout.

If neither the Argo Galaxy nor the Milky Way suits your needs, create something completely new. Build your own sandbox or create a defined setting for the characters to explore. You can even create multiple galaxies and link them using jumpgates or some other type of intergalactic travel method.

inhabitable planets around them) become your planetary systems, ready to be populated by randomly chosen planetary features.

From there, you can move to the **Random Xeno Generator** to determine what xenos call that planet home. For creating a mercenary campaign where the characters work for a corporation, use the **Corporation Building Kit** to determine their employer, rivals, and allies. For creating a campaign where the characters work for someone other than a corporation, use the **Setting Themes** chapter as a guide to determine which pieces suit the needs of the campaign. You can then let the characters peruse the **Equipment** chapter and find the gear they need to be successful.

This open-ended, sandbox design, supplemented by the various toolkits, is one of the core designs of *Mercenary Breed*. The setting can just as easily reside in the Milky Way as it does in the Argo Galaxy.

GALAXY BUILDING KIT

A third option exists: build your own galaxy (or adapt one that exists but is not detailed in this book). Building your own galaxy doesn't really require that many steps. Populating that galaxy with planets is probably a much more daunting task, especially if you spend time defining how far apart the different planetary systems are and where they're located in the galaxy.

There are a few aspects to take into consideration when creating your own or adapting an existing one. Keep in mind, however, that scientifically defining galaxies is still in a relative infancy and much of their information is theoretical, assumed, or generalized (such as a galaxy containing 50 million – 70 million stars). The accuracy of this information isn't that necessary as the focus of your setting or campaign will probably be a fairly small portion of the galaxy. Thus, don't get caught up with accuracy and feel free to generalize some of the details. After all, is anyone ever going to know exactly how many stars are in a given galaxy?

SHAPE

There aren't that many common shapes to a galaxy. Scientifically they are categorized by type: elliptical, spiral, and irregular. Unfortunately, the term irregular doesn't really lend itself to understanding the shape. Instead, we'll list the shapes as elliptical, spiral, ring, starburst, spheroidal, lenticular, and irregular.

Elliptical galaxies have an ellipsoidal shape that ranges from nearly spherical to very flat. Spiral galaxies have a center with arms that spiral away from it. The center can be round or flat and elongated (called unbarred or barred, respectively). They kind of look like a pinwheel. Spiral galaxies generally come in two forms: flocculent and grand design. Flocculent spiral galaxies are those with patchy, discontinuous spiral arms while grand design galaxies are those with prominent, well-defined spiral arms. Ring galaxies are ones with a circle-like appearance that go around a central region. The ring and the center may not appear to be connected, but they are in fact part of the same galaxy.

Starburst galaxies exhibit a high amount of star formation compared to most galaxies. They almost look as though they are continuously exploding. Spheroidal galaxies are round; similar in shape to elliptical except that they are completely round. Lenticular galaxies are similar in shape to an elliptical galaxy but with ill-defined spiral arms. They sit somewhere between elliptical and spiral in their morphological definition. Irregular galaxies are simply those that don't fall into one of the other shapes; they often have a chaotic appearance.



SIZE

Galaxies can vary quite drastically in size. The smallest ones are referred to as dwarf galaxies, regardless of their shape. The largest ones don't have a second designator. In fact, some of the dwarf galaxies are small enough that they orbit around larger galaxies like a moon does a planet. In this case, they are referred to as satellites of the larger galaxy. It should be noted, however, that the size of a galaxy has little to do with its shape; dwarf galaxies come in many different shapes.

Most galaxies fall within the range of 3,000 light-years in diameter to 300,000 light-years in diameter. Defining a galaxy's size is going to drastically affect how many stars it has and possibly its distance from other galaxies. If the galaxy is small enough, it may orbit around a larger galaxy. However, a larger galaxy probably isn't very close to another larger galaxy, unless they are nearing a collision. Of course, most galaxies aren't really close enough to travel between them without some type of advanced technology.

STARS

Deciding how many stars are in your galaxy should take both shape and size into consideration. For instance, a large ring galaxy may have fewer stars than a large elliptical galaxy simply due to its shape. The number of stars can range quite drastically from 10 million to 100 trillion. The exact number is not important, but if applying the "Law of 1s", then the number of stars will affect the number of inhabitable planets with species living on them.

There is no science to apply to how many stars are in your custom galaxy; just use something reasonable given the shape and size of the galaxy. Think about the shape and how many stars would fit within that shape. Then consider the diameter in relation to the shape and how many stars could feasibly present within the constraints of that diameter.

GALACTIC CENTER

The galactic center is the center of a galaxy where everything orbits around, expands from, or seems to grow out of. For irregular galaxies, this may not be the actual center, but is the point where the galaxies “life” is building from.

It is believed that the galactic center of most galaxies consists of a supermassive black hole. However, besides a black hole, another consideration is the design of the star formations around that black hole (such as the barred or unbarred spiral galaxies). If this galactic center is not navigable, defining its shape and size forces the characters to find a way around it.

DISTANCE

Once your galaxy is created, it's time to define the distance your planets, planetary systems, and any other important body is from the galactic center and from each other. This may include the distance from your galaxy to another. Although there doesn't need to be a scientific reason for this distance, it helps to define the galactic direction the characters will be able to travel to find life.

For example, if the main sector of your setting sits along the rim of the galaxy, the characters know that to find life they need to travel toward the galactic center. Additionally, if using spiral arms, it may be pertinent to know the distance from one arm to another as in-between those arms could be dangerous gas and dust that could destroy a spaceship.

Distance is a feature of your galaxy that is probably only important during in-game play. However, if you are constructing a setting with numerous planetary systems, expanses, and sectors, the characters may need to know the distance between their missions as this could create opportunities for random encounters, training, pirate encounters, or even getting lost.

PLANET BUILDING KIT

The Argo Galaxy is an open sandbox. Only a handful of planets are defined so that the remaining possibilities match that which the GM wants to utilize for missions and campaigns. The same can be said about the Milky Way outside of the Sol System and if the GM creates a custom galaxy. As such, here is a simple toolkit for creating new planets when necessary.

When creating a new planet, a number of factors should be considered to flesh out the details of the planet's composition and characteristics. This allows the mercenaries to better understand what the planet is like and provides direction for what type of creatures and settlements could be found. If creating a home world for a xeno template, make sure it matches the description of the species. You wouldn't want an aquatic species coming from a desert planet.

SIZE

Defining the size of a planet is possibly one of its most important features. The size will subsequently define the number of possible satellites and landmasses, which can drastically alter how high the population is. For mission purposes, size can also define how many possible locations for encounters there are, how many indigenous species can thrive on the planet, and how far important locations are from each other.

SATELLITES

Satellites are objects within space that orbit around the planet. This may include a moon or asteroid that became trapped within the planet's gravitational pull. The number of moons possible should be relative to the planet's size. Smaller planets will have fewer satellites, if any at all.

ATMOSPHERE

Atmosphere is another very important feature as it defines what equipment the characters will need, or not need, to perform their mission on that planet. Planets with a thin atmosphere rarely hold enough oxygen, or any other gas for that matter, for the characters to breath. Additionally, it's very likely the rays of the local star heat the planet to extreme temperatures during the day and may end up frightfully cold during the night. A planet with an exotic atmosphere, such as something toxic, will force additional preparations to be made.

CLIMATE

Climate isn't so much an all-encompassing, worldwide climate. Instead, it's the climate the characters will either come into contact with the most often or is the one most prevalent on the planet. There are occasions where a planet may only have a single climate, but that's not very reasonable. Terrestrial planets will probably always have at least two, if not dozens, of different climate types. Thus, when building a planet, defining a single climate is more of a generalization for the planet and what's pertinent for the characters' mission. In the Random Planet Generator that follows, climate is extremely generalized.

GRAVITY

Gravity is one of those funny things that are a bit fantasy in nature. We know that planets with a lower gravity than Earth make walking difficult as one tends to bounce off the ground (think walking on the moon). However, how high or low the gravity is compared to that of Earth is ultimately up to the GM, along with its corresponding side effects.

GEOLOGY

Geology is the process of defining the solid surfaces of a planet. How many landmasses does it have? Are they rocky or flat surfaces? Are they large, connected continents or non-contiguous islands scattered about? Geology can go hand-in-hand with climate to better define what the planet looks like. For instance, if the planet is cold, there will likely be a lot of large, tundra areas bordering glacial masses. These tundra areas would probably be quite rocky in nature and contain little to no soil for growing anything, even trees.

RESOURCES

Defining a planet's resources is a way of defining the corporations' motivations for building a facility, particularly a mining facility, on that planet. For instance, if a planet has no valuable resources, few corporations would pay it any attention. If the planet is covered with trees and this serves as its main natural resource, then corporations dealing with lumbering activities would be anxious to open a new facility. Additionally, planets rich in natural resources would have lots of corporations looking to expand there.

When creating a random planet, make sure it properly ties into the mission that will also be created. If the two don't match, new planets can be created randomly or some of the aspects of that planet can be defined without using the cards. If anything, just use the Random Planet Generator as guidance for creating the new planet where the mission occurs. This is the same for when players create home worlds for their new xeno species.

AGRICULTURE

Agriculture is an important way of defining how the planet's inhabitants survive. If agriculture simply isn't possible, then maybe fish are the only food available. Another possibility is that the indigenous population survives on moss and algae that grows on the trees. Farming in this environment wouldn't be necessary.

TECHNOLOGY

The Alliance, and the entire Argo galaxy, is filled with species that utilize all different types of technology levels. When dealing with a species diplomatically, one should be cautious to not frighten their hosts with technology that overwhelms the senses. On the other hand, you don't want to bring a club to a plasma fight.

POPULATION

Defining a planet's population is more than just giving it a number. It may be very important to know how many species live on a planet and how those species interact with each other. Additionally, if a planet only has a single species, why aren't other species living there? Do the inhabitants prohibit other species? Maybe they discriminate against anyone that doesn't look like them? Of course, it could be that the environment is poisonous to anyone other than the indigenous species. Before landing, the characters should be aware of whom they will be dealing with.

GOVERNMENT

There are many different types of governments; too many to properly list here. As with a planet's population, their government is another important thing for the characters to know. When the occasion calls for it, the characters may need to know how to 'properly' address the ruler of a government to avoid further ramifications (especially if they need that ruler to help them out). Some of the more common ones are: democracy, hegemony, monarchy, socialism, theocracy, oligarchy, and autocracy.



RANDOM PLANET GENERATOR

To randomly create a new planet, use the standard deck of playing cards and deal out a total of three cards. Each card's suit and value defines the different planetary characteristics. If a Joker is dealt, place it back into the deck and deal a new card.

READING THE CARDS

Card number one's suit defines the basic category of the planet. Card number one's value then defines the characteristic of that planet considering its categorization. Other than a moon or moon-like planet, all planets are terrestrial, thus being suitable for sustaining life.

Card number two's suit defines the overall composition of the planet. Card number two's value then defines a prominent characteristic associated with that type of composition.

Card number three's suit defines the overall society of the planet. Card number three's value further defines the society including its general attitude towards its own people and outsiders.

CARD NUMBER ONE

Club	Moon: The planet is actually a moon or the size of a moon (dwarf planet). One day lasts 12-16 hours and one year lasts 250-300 days.
Diamond	Small: The planet is smaller than Earth. One day lasts 16-20 hours and one year lasts 300-350 days.
Heart	Medium: The planet is approximately the size of Earth. One day lasts 20-36 hours and one year lasts 350-425 days.
Spade	Large: The planet is much larger than Earth. One day lasts 32-56 hours and one year lasts 400-825 days.

***Note:** If creating a moon or dwarf planet, the second card may not apply and some of the third card options may not apply.*

CARD VALUE (CLUBS)

2-3	Barren moon with deposits of minerals.
4-5	Barren moon with deposits of precious gems.
6-7	Barren moon with deposits of ore.
8-9	Barren planet with deposits of minerals.
10-J	Mostly barren planet with deposits of precious gems.
Q-K	Ice-capped planet with deposits of ore.
A	Fertile planet with exotic animals.

CARD VALUE (DIAMONDS)

2-3	Fertile with agriculture and no satellites.
4-5	Oceanic with deposits of ore and 1 satellite.
6-7	Volcanic with deposits of precious gems and no satellites.
8-9	Swamp with exotic animals and 1 satellite.
10-J	Fertile with deposits of minerals and no satellites.
Q-K	Ice-Capped with deposits of ore and no satellites.
A	Tropical with exotic animals and 1 satellite.

CARD VALUE (HEARTS)

- 2-3 Fertile with agriculture, minerals, and 1-2 satellites.
- 4-5 Fertile with precious gems, ore, and 1 satellite.
- 6-7 Oceanic with exotic animals and 2 satellites.
- 8-9 Barren with minerals, ore, and 1-2 satellites.
- 10-J Ice-Capped with minerals, precious gems and 1 satellite.
- Q-K Volcanic with precious gems and 2 satellites.
- A Fertile with asteroid ring, exotic fibers, and 1 satellite.

CARD VALUE (SPADES)

- 2-3 Barren with minerals and 3-5 satellites.
- 4-5 Fertile with agriculture, minerals, ore, and 3 satellites.
- 6-7 Barren with nothing and 5 satellites.
- 8-9 Tropical with exotic animals, ore, and 3-5 satellites.
- 10-J Ice-Capped with exotic animals and 4 satellites.
- Q-K Fertile with ore, exotic fibers, and 3-5 satellites.
- A Swamp with exotic animals and 3 satellites.

CARD NUMBER TWO

- | | |
|---------|--|
| Club | Thin: The planet's composition is altered by a thinner atmosphere. |
| Diamond | Standard: The planet's composition thrives within a fairly standard atmosphere. |
| Heart | Dense: The planet's composition is altered by a denser atmosphere. |
| Spade | Exotic: The planet's composition is shaped due to an exotic atmosphere. |

CARD VALUE (CLUBS)

- 2-3 Cold climate, normal gravity, 1-2 major landmasses.
- 4-5 Hot climate, normal gravity, 1-2 major landmasses.
- 6-7 Hot climate, normal gravity, 3-5 major landmasses.
- 8-9 Hot climate, normal gravity, no major landmasses, small islands only.
- 10-J Temperate climate, low gravity, 1-2 major landmasses.
- Q-K Hot climate, low gravity, 3-5 major landmasses.
- A Cold climate, low gravity, 1-2 major landmasses.

CARD VALUE (DIAMONDS)

- 2-3 Temperate climate, normal gravity, 1-2 landmasses.
- 4-5 Temperate climate, normal gravity, 3-5 landmasses.
- 6-7 Temperate climate, normal gravity, 6-8 landmasses.
- 8-9 Temperate climate, normal gravity, fractured islands.
- 10-J Hot climate, normal gravity, 1-2 landmasses.
- Q-K Cold climate, normal gravity, 1-2 landmasses.
- A Hot climate, normal gravity, 3-5 landmasses.

CARD VALUE (HEARTS)

- 2-3 Cold climate, normal gravity, 1-2 major landmasses.
- 4-5 Hot climate, normal gravity, 1-2 major landmasses.
- 6-7 Hot climate, normal gravity, 3-5 major landmasses.
- 8-9 Hot climate, normal gravity, no major landmasses, small islands only.
- 10-J Temperate climate, high gravity, 1-2 major landmasses.
- Q-K Hot climate, high gravity, 3-5 major landmasses.
- A Cold climate, high gravity, 1-2 major landmasses.

CARD VALUE (SPADES)

2-3	Acidic atmosphere, temperate climate, normal gravity, 3-5 major landmasses.
4-5	Sulfuric atmosphere, temperate climate, normal gravity, 3-5 major landmasses.
6-7	Toxic atmosphere, temperate climate, normal gravity, 3-5 major landmasses.
8-9	Helium atmosphere, cold climate, low gravity, 6-8 major landmasses.
10-J	Tephra (volcanic ash) atmosphere, hot climate, normal gravity, fractured islands.
Q-K	Explosive gas-filled atmosphere, cold climate, high gravity, 3-5 major landmasses
A	Carbon dioxide atmosphere, low gravity, cold climate, 3-5 major landmasses.

CARD NUMBER THREE

Club	Low-tech: The population primarily utilizes low technology devices.
Diamond	Mid-tech: The population primarily utilizes basic technology devices common most everywhere.
Heart	High-tech: The population utilizes a lot of uncommon, high technology devices.
Spade	Advanced-tech: The population makes use of the most advanced technology.

***Note:** Culture could signify species, cultures, races, or sub-races.*

CARD VALUE (CLUBS)

2-3	Population less than 10,000, a single primary culture, and tribal society.
4-5	Population less than 10,000, a single primary culture, and an autocracy.
6-7	Population less than 100,000, a single primary culture, and theocracy.
8-9	Population less than 100,000, two primary cultures, and tribal societies.
10-J	Population less than 1 million, two primary cultures, and oligarchy.
Q-K	Population less than 1 million, four primary cultures, and tribal societies.
A	Population less than 10 million, five primary cultures, and theocracy.

CARD VALUE (DIAMONDS)

2-3	Population less than 10 million, four primary cultures, and democracy.
4-5	Population less than 10 million, six primary cultures, and capitalism.
6-7	Population less than 100 million, two primary cultures, and fascism.
8-9	Population less than 100 million, six primary cultures, and democracy.
10-J	Population less than 100 million, six primary cultures, and monarchy.
Q-K	Population less than 1 billion, eight primary cultures, and theocracy.
A	Population less than 1 billion, ten primary cultures, and libertarianism.

CARD VALUE (HEARTS)

2-3	Population less than 100 million, four primary cultures, and democracy.
4-5	Population less than 500 million, six primary cultures, and capitalism.
6-7	Population less than 500 million, six primary cultures, and monarchy.
8-9	Population less than 1 billion, eight primary cultures, and democracy.
10-J	Population less than 1 billion, eight primary cultures, and capitalism.
Q-K	Population less than 5 billion, ten primary cultures, and capitalism.
A	Population less than 5 billion, twelve primary cultures, and capitalism.

CARD VALUE (SUADES)

2-3	Population less than 1 billion, four primary cultures and theocracy.
4-5	Population less than 5 billion, six primary cultures and democracy.
6-7	Population less than 5 billion, eight primary cultures, and monarchy.
8-9	Population less than 10 billion, fourteen primary cultures, and capitalism.
10-J	Population less than 10 billion, fifteen primary cultures, and democracy.
Q-K	Population greater than 10 billion, twenty primary cultures, and capitalism.
A	Population greater than 10 billion, twenty primary cultures, and democracy.

PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

Once the basic characteristics for the new planet have been defined, it is time together as a cohesive collection that properly defines enough aspects of the planet to send a landing party and know what to expect.

Once the planet has come together, there may be conflicting characteristics. One choice is to explain it away with terraforming, bio-engineering, or native evolution. Another choice is to redraw one of the cards and reconfigure the planet.

Some combinations may seem odd, but are quite plausible. Planets with an acidic atmosphere could still contain populations in the billions as they have either adapted or evolved, live in protected cities, live underground away from the acidic air, or are simply immune to its effects.

When considering atmosphere, and possibly other characteristics, it is pertinent to note that the description is in the eyes of the mercenaries and not the native species that live there. A toxic environment to the mercenaries may be non-toxic to native species. Maybe the native species breathe methane or sulfuric gasses, maybe the poisons in the air do not affect them, or maybe they live in areas where the toxic gasses do not reach (such as under the water or under the ground).

The random planet building toolkit can assist in creating a plausible planet, but it is still up to the Game Master and maybe the players to populate that planet with species that can tolerate and thrive within its environment.

EXAMPLE

Let's create a random planet. The GM begins by drawing three cards randomly: seven of spades, four of hearts, and the king of diamonds (in that order). Card number one is spades, meaning the planet is a large one; the seven means it is a large, barren planet with no resources and five moons. Card number two is hearts, meaning the planet has an atmosphere that is denser than Earth's; the four means it has a hot climate with normal gravity and one or two major landmasses. Card

number three is diamonds, meaning the planet utilizes basic, common technology; the king means it has a population of less than one billion with eight primary cultures ruled by a theocracy (essentially a religious group). With the basic structure of the planet, the GM creates the PCs next mission.

"You have come across a large planet called Tenobi. From the Alliance's archives, you discover that Tenobi is a shrine planet, ruled by the leaders of the Shinuba religion, a vast religion within the gemini species. This shrine planet is a highly sought-after destination for pilgrims, religious leaders, and those seeking the solitude of meditation for extended periods of time.

"Arranged around Tenobi are five moons referred to locally as "The Five Relics." These five moons represent the points of the star used as the symbol of the Shinuba religion. Those who travel to Tenobi from the far reaches of the sector must spend their first year on one of The Five Relics. At any time, ten million of the 750 million inhabitants actually live in ziggurats, bases, and temples on the moons of Tenobi. Being that the Shinuba religion is only practiced by gemini, they are the only inhabitants. However, gemini from many different planets practice the religion and come to the shrine planet.

"Once planet-side, the followers of the religion find a large planet, devoid of resources of value to the corporations. There are two major landmasses, centered on the poles and divided by a series of seas that travel around the equator. Although the atmosphere is dense and a bit "heavy," the gravity is normal. All living facilities on The Five Relics have rooms that allow the visitors to become acclimated to the change in atmosphere once the visitor reaches planet-side. Upon moving to Tenobi, all visitors are required to eschew high and advanced technology, forcing them to live a mostly simple life, albeit one with technology used for easier survival.

"The seas on Tenobi are all fresh water that feed the plains that run from the seas to the deserts heading toward the poles. The deserts then turn into a frozen wasteland where no one dares travel. 90% of the population lives on the plains with the remaining 10% living on the fringes of the desert. The deserts and location of the plains (being near the equator) creates a consistently hot temperature for the residents, but one that is still livable. However, the rains only fall along the seas and in the plains, meaning past that point, the climate would be quite oppressive.

"The gemini originally came to this planet seeking solitude to establish the Shinuba religion. It sits very near many planets that practice the religion and thus serves as the religion's headquarters. Thousands of shrines have been erected to symbolize their deities and heroes, giving the planet a greater purpose for those wishing to travel there. It is believed that the closer one is to the shrines, the greater their connection is to those deities and heroes. However, the planet holds a very mysterious past.

"When the gemini reached Tenobi, they found it empty outside of the natural flora and fauna. However, excavations along the fringes of the desert unearthed vast ruins from an ancient past. Some say that below the buildings that exist in the desert today may be secret passageways to vast labyrinths with hidden relics and treasures of the planet's former inhabitants. The religious leaders of Shinuba have very little interest in the planet's ancient past and have instead sold the rights to search for some of these relics to whatever corporation is willing to pay the most. The religious leaders have no military experience, nor do they own any weapons. Thus, delving into these relics may be extremely dangerous, although no one truly knows. The lure of discovering ancient technology has brought many to the planet. The hope is that whatever lies within these ruins may bring great wealth. This is what you have been sent to investigate."

TECHNOLOGY LEVEL

Once a new planet has been created, it's time to populate it (assuming the planet is being used for a mission or home world; 'filler' planets don't have to be populated, especially if they're empty). The planet could be populated by species already available in the setting, this book, or another *Mercenary Breed* supplement, or a new one could be created using the **Random Xeno Generator**.

While populating that planet, the question of technology level will inevitably come into play. This is most likely because each species (or ethnicity) is tied to a technology level or the characters will need to know what they need to prepare for. In *Mercenary Breed*, these technology levels help define many aspects of the planet's population. This is not limited to what weapons and tools they utilize; it also can define their knowledge and understanding, how they view space, the size of their population, the types of government they would follow, and how influential they could be in the galaxy.

Most mercenaries operate within the high technology category. Encountering a low or mid technology planet could seem as though the characters would immediately overwhelm the population and conquer without thought. While this could be true, the following provides the GM with options on how to incorporate these different technology levels into their settings, adventures, and campaigns to create interesting encounters, enemies, or allies.

LOW TECHNOLOGY

Low technology is essentially the equivalent of Earth's Bronze, Iron, and Middle Ages. Weapons are simple; hand-to-hand and close-range combat are the norm. A low technology species may be inquisitive about space, but they know very little facts about what's out there. They may have astronomers gazing up at the stars every night, forming theories that could be true, or they may have entire tribes formed around the worship of those stars. These same species would be very unlikely to follow any type of democracy. If they've moved away from tribal life, they likely follow a single leader (King, Emperor, Lord, etc.), religious group, or deal with things on a communal level. Life is relatively simple and wars are typically motivated by land possession, dominance, resources, or wealth.

When encountering a low technology species, it would seem the characters are no match. Instead of pinning the characters in a firefight against these species, creativity needs to be employed to 'level the playing field'. First, low technology species often have many warriors used for defense or massive offensive strikes. They may even employ armies that number well over 10,000. When staring down odds like this, the characters will run out of ammo well before the army has run out of soldiers.

Second, low technology species don't travel through space to find their quarry. They march across hundreds of miles in the name of war or properly fortify their towns to mount a defense. They use the environment to the best of their abilities and they have all evolved to function in peak condition within that environment. Thus if this species thrives in caves, they likely have Low Light Vision. If the species lives in the trees, they climb and swing through the woods faster than the characters can imagine. If the characters aren't wary, they'll quickly become surrounded with all escape routes cut-off.

Third, low technology species employ siege weapons. If the characters decide to attack a fortress well outside the range of arrows, they better watch for the giant boulder, launched from a trebuchet, coming down on their position. These species have equipment to protect their homeland or devastate their neighbor's.

Fourth, from a fantastical point of view, low technology species may not have high-tech weapons, but they could have supernatural powers. This could be simple, inherent to their species, or something more amazing like psionic powers. There can always be a fallback plan.

If diplomacy is desired, don't discredit the value of a low technology species. The primas are a low technology species and the Alliance relies on their great strength throughout the Allied Navy. They make disciplined soldiers and their rage allows them to unleash incredible attacks on their foes. They just need to be properly trained in the use of high technology weapons. These species may also have large populations of workers that can tend to the land, mine resources, or function as servants to great nations. Even armies need to be supported by those who don't carry weapons.

MID TECHNOLOGY

Mid technology is equivalent to Earth's Early Modern and Modern Ages. Projectile weapons are common, hand-to-hand weapons are high quality, and longer-range combat is the norm. These species study space in a scholarly manner and may have already reached nearby space (although they probably haven't left their planetary system). Democracy, socialism, and dictatorships are common while tribal life is a thing of the past. The populations across the planet are fully aware of each other and global trade is extremely common.

When encountering a mid technology species, the characters employ much more destructive weapons and protective gear than the species, but that doesn't mean they have an indefinite advantage. These species are used to firefights and war is conducted on grand scales. However, when coming to a species' home, they have one huge advantage: supply. The characters have a limited amount of ammo and equipment, but the species can keep refilling. Plus, there may be a sniper placed hundreds of yards away waiting to shoot through the characters' helmets. Caution is a must!

Mid technology species should never be taken lightly. They violently fight for their beliefs and have no problem employing guerilla tactics. They may choose stealth over frontal assaults, long-range missiles to mine fields, or maybe they'll simply bombard their opponent with weapons of mass destruction. Whatever their solution is, they will always have the supply chain to outlast the characters and the drive to keep hammering until the characters finally give up.

An important factor to remember about mid technology species is that they often don't have the proper knowledge to understand how their destructive weapons ruin the planet they live on. Or maybe they're just so overzealous that they don't care. Regardless of why, they fight to the death and will rarely be found surrendering to someone looking to enslave them or force them into believing something new. They are simply unwilling and stubborn!

However, a mid technology species also presents the Alliance with huge potential. Their technology is high enough that it rarely needs to be drastically modified to acquire intragalactic space travel. They understand the resources on their planet, how to acquire them, and how to turn them into by-products that can be traded with other planets. They also have a deep understanding of wealth and often yearn for what the Alliance can offer them (monetarily, scientifically, politically, and even socially).

HIGH TECHNOLOGY

High technology is what is presented in the **Equipment** chapter and what's implied by being able to traverse the depths of the Argo Galaxy. Most mercenaries

Technology levels in *Mercenary Breed* are presented quite generally. Everything is grouped into buckets being low, mid, or high. If GMs wish for additional granularity, use a system that breaks technology into eleven levels, from TL0 through TL10. The lower the number, the simpler the weapons. The higher the number, the more the setting encompasses the options, and possibly exceeds them, available in this book. TL0 would be prehistoric and TL10 would incorporate the most cutting edge technology possible.

carry high technology weapons, armor, and equipment and interface with other high technology devices. However, to keep things interesting, weapons and gear aren't the only thing available to high technology species, so are resources.

Species that fall into this category typically span entire planetary systems, expanses, sectors, or even galaxies. As such, they should have an endless amount of resources at their disposal. These aren't planetary resources; these are social, political, military, scientific, government, and corporate resources. These species would have their own megacorporations, navies, planetary defense systems, spies, and really anything you can imagine. Instead of confronting the characters outright, they'll use subterfuge to undermine the characters' activities, political power to quash their employer, or influence the general populace to strike against their employer or interfere with their activities.

High technology is often much more than open warfare; it's intelligence, espionage, back-stabbing, corruption, sabotage, and many other activities that are all but invisible. Think of high technology as Lex Luther and the mercenaries as Superman. Lex Luther cannot confront Superman as he's simply too powerful. So instead, he uses his abilities to weaken and imprison Superman. That's what high technology species would do; weaken their opponent, especially those who are much strong militarily, before making their move. As the mercenaries have access to devastating weapons, possibly the same ones the high technology species does, the end result may be nothing more than a stalemate. The victor will then be decided by whoever can think quicker and employ better tactics.

High technology species are a boon and a bane to the House of the Alliance. In terms of their ability to offer wealth and potential to the Argo Galaxy, they are an extreme boon to the galactic economy. However, with this much ability, they most likely have a large amount of influence and may oppose some of the Alliance's beliefs or wish to undermine some of the laws established by the House.

From the GM's perspective, high technology species may make the perfect backdrop for a campaign. The characters would rarely be able to overcome such a species in a single confrontation, and time is definitely not of the essence. There are numerous machinations going on throughout that campaign that affects that species in small ways. Thus, the characters need to succeed on thwarting numerous plots, schemes, espionage activities, and whatever else is going on. On the other hand, it could be a long-term military campaign where the species is attempting to overthrow an entire planet by striking their most important locations.

During these campaigns, the ultimate antagonist may employ species of other technology levels to undermine or slow down the characters. These could be simple roadblocks or all-out attempts to kill the characters.

MISSION THEMES

When creating a setting, campaign, or mission, it's imperative to properly match each mission's theme with an appropriate technology level. For instance, if you were creating a military sci-fi campaign, the opponent wouldn't last long if they were a low technology species attempting to overthrow, or defend against, a high technology species. It would also be difficult to justify a species that employs dieselpunk but cannot create a weapon more powerful than a sword and bow. On the other hand, a space exploration mission could easily come across many low and mid technology species as part of their journey through the galaxy.

There are no static rules when matching a theme to a technology level, outside of it needing to be plausible. However, it should be critical that the characters are given a task they need work on to overcome; the solution shouldn't be so simple that the players get bored.

THE SPACE BETWEEN

It's easy to focus on the action going on planet-side or within near-space. What about the space between planetary systems? How about the space between planets? There's so much out there that it could seem unfathomable to consider all at once. However, *Mercenary Breed* doesn't confine the GM to a single planet and its satellites; there's an entire galaxy to explore!

Besides the scientific studies about space debris and astrological bodies, what's out there for the characters to explore or encounter? How does the GM make the time traveling from planet to planet interesting? In settings and campaigns, such as the *Hastilion Expanse* campaign, the characters hop from planet to planet to perform their missions. Time spent traveling could be simply waved as "You arrive three weeks later" or role-played in terms of what the characters experience. This chapter addresses that time spent traveling between planets.

TRAVEL

Mercenary Breed makes one simple assumption: traveling between planets is a matter of traveling through space. There are no mechanics for wormholes, jump-gates, warp drives, or anything that avoids simply traveling across the galaxy. For settings and campaigns that span great galactic distances, GMs are encouraged to add one of these mechanics for faster travel. Otherwise, the characters will have to ride the slow boat or the not-nearly-as-slow boat.

PLANETARY SYSTEM TRAVEL

Some settings and campaigns never need a reason to travel outside of a planetary system. If the focus of the game is extremely centralized or the hostiles are traveling to the characters' home world, there may be no need to develop a means of traveling any farther. This type of travel could quickly travel between planets within the same planetary system in a matter of weeks or days if not hours (depending on the GM's desired technology level).

As a reference point, Earth's current technology allows travel from here to Mars in six to eight months (depending on where each planet is in their orbit). If running a pulp sci-fi campaign where Mars is inhabited by humanoids on an oxygen-rich planet, this may be completely sufficient as there isn't a lot of back and forth between planets. The GM could also move the technology level up a bit and reduce that from months to weeks. The characters thus arrive on Mars in an average of seven weeks. Bump it up higher and they arrive in days or maybe even hours.

Regardless of the time required to travel, the technology to power that trip doesn't have to stray very far from modern-day abilities; if at all. There's also a possibility that traveling to Mars is a yearly affair and technology is instead focused on developing fighters that can travel around Earth and to the moon should hostilities within space arrive (if they haven't already). The key is to match the supposed technology with the requirements of the setting and the desires of the campaign. If the characters need to travel to and from Mars on a regular basis, that time should be reduced significantly. If they only do it once, then does that time really matter?

If intra-planetary system travel is the only desired distance, take a look at technology theories on how to better Earth's space exploration capabilities. Currently

we use rockets to blast into space and guide us along. Satellites can be used to relay information back and forth and we have the capability of communicating with robots on the surface of Mars.

If there's a concern over fuel, use fission rockets or change those rockets to solar sails powered by the sun. Maybe the distance for communication is an issue; change satellite relays to laser communication across the cosmos. What about dangerous exploration? Increase the capabilities of the robots exploring the alien planets. What about traveling closer to the sun? Add radiation-blocking force fields to the spacecraft to protect those within. What about food? Make the spacecraft large enough to house a greenhouse.

The key is to make just the right adjustments to make the setting plausible. If you're interested in hard science fiction (sci-fi based on a progression of factual knowledge and theory rather than fantastical ideas), then there's plenty of websites to research on what technology could be possible. Otherwise, just modify what we have to fit the needs of the campaign. Once the time required to travel between planets is established, the GM knows how many random encounters (or even plot points) can be inserted during these travels to make that time more interesting.

FTL DRIVES

Mercenary Breed uses the sci-fi concept of faster-than-light (FTL) drives to power spacecrafts when traveling through space. There is no science to why this is possible, just that it's the standard method of powering spacecrafts. It's not the fastest method, nor is it the slowest. Each FTL rank is equivalent to one parsec, or 3.26 light-years, of travel per year. Most FTL drives carry a rank between six and twelve.

Additional assumptions regarding distance are made for the sake of simplicity. Each planetary system is assumed to be one-half to two parsecs apart with one parsec being the norm. Using a typical speed of FTL8 (eight parsecs per year), the characters can thus travel between planetary systems in six weeks (using Earth weeks for simplicity).

If creating a setting or campaign map denoting each planetary system, hex maps are recommended. Each hex represents one planetary system's worth of space (whether there is a planetary system there or not). Each planetary system is then placed within a single hex and could be charted or uncharted. If using the typical speed of FTL8, traveling two hexes would take twelve weeks. This leaves plenty of time for random encounters!

This may seem like an extraordinary amount of time in the eyes of the players. Possibly because it is, but then most of that time will probably be waved away and not role-played or shoe-horned into an encounter. In fact, if running a random encounter while traveling, it's recommended that only one encounter be utilized. Otherwise the players may feel as though their characters are never going to reach their destination. If the players don't want to see their characters spending so much time on a spacecraft while traveling between planetary systems, kick the FTL drive up a few notches, all the way to FTL50 (which the GM could call a warp drive). FTL50 means the characters can travel between planetary systems in only one week. Anything less than one week should probably be handed over to jumpgates or science fiction sorcery. But in the end, travel technology should be decided by the desires of the GM and the players.

Defining how the FTL drives work can be virtually anything. GMs are encouraged to create their own means of producing this type of travel such as 'nuclear fission hyper drives', 'ion fusion rockets', or 'anti-matter harnessing drives'. It doesn't even need to make sense, but it could be cool to come up with something truly technologically amazing!

It's also plausible that the characters' spacecraft is equipped with intra-planetary system travel and inter-planetary system travel. The spacecraft's main rockets are used when traveling throughout a planetary system and the FTL drive is only fired-up when traveling to a different planetary system. This could be a good way of defining how the spacecraft manages their fuel consumption and how the FTL drive is incapable of traveling at such slow speeds.

LANDING PARTIES

Two of the common ways for the characters to travel across large distances of space is within their employer's capital ship or within public transportation craft already traveling in the necessary direction. Often times, when using these methods, the characters' final destination is different from their transportation. In the case of a corporate capital ship, their mission is to guard near-space while the characters explore planet-side. If a public transportation is being used, the characters' waystop is simply along the way as the craft lumbers toward its final destination.

In these situations, the characters will need a smaller spacecraft, which fits inside the larger craft, for traveling planet-side. In cases where there are no spaceports, these smaller spacecrafts are an absolute must have. These are the spacecrafts used for landing parties that can land on any flat surface large enough to hold the craft and take off again with no need for extra space. Traveling from the large craft to planet-side should only take minutes, but these smaller crafts can also be used for traveling throughout the planet. They are fully equipped for all types of exploration and accommodate the characters' weapons and armor needs. This includes special armor for exploring toxic and underwater environments and

space for land vehicles (such as ATVs). The characters should equip this spacecraft before departing, but there should always be ample space for their gear.

SPACE LANES

Traveling through space can be quite dangerous. The space between planetary systems can be filled asteroid fields, cosmic rays, cosmic debris, meteors, comets, and plasma. Any of these items can prove to be a deadly obstacle to those traveling through or near them and should be avoided at all costs. As the Allied Navy travels throughout newly explored areas of space, they create a galactic mapping system to mark the safest routes through outer space. These routes are known as space lanes.

Galactic cartographers, aboard the Allied Navy fleets, work with navigators to chart the Argo Galaxy and denote where the space lanes are. These lanes are the safest, or sometimes least dangerous, paths through outer space for traveling from one planetary system to another. They are often not the shortest routes between points, but they're use is also not required. When time is of the essence, and a craft has a highly skilled navigator, shortcuts are regularly taken through areas that hopefully aren't filled with treacherous obstacles. (The obstacles may not always be permanent, sometimes they move throughout outer space.)

For spacecraft that are more concerned for their safety, or maybe they just don't have a highly skilled navigator, the space lanes are the most ideal path to take. They allow one to pass between planetary systems without coming into contact with them unnecessarily along with avoiding as much cosmic interferences as possible. These space lanes are akin to a freeway that cut around the planetary systems with optimal 'exits' for traveling directly to a desired planetary system.

BEACONS

Space lanes are marked using beacons. The location of these beacons is set according to the position of the five nearest stars. They have onboard thrusters to compensate for any drifting and alert signals if they become damaged. The signal



they transmit stretches far enough to reach the center of the applicable space lane and denote the farthest edge of the space lane. Traveling past the beacons is at the risk of the spacecraft.

Beacons look much like a satellite. They have large wing-like protrusions with highly-sensitive solar panels supplying them with what little power they need to operate. The cylindrical center is as large as a room and antennae are mounted on both ends. Each one is placed and maintained by the Allied Navy and internally include four separate fail-over systems to allow the beacon to operate until the Allied Navy can arrive to repair or replace it.

COMMUNICATION RELAYS

Space lanes are supported by a lengthy series of communication relays that span the known galaxy. These relays take the form of satellites orbiting the planet farthest from a local star. Each relay node has four satellites orbiting a single planet to ensure maximum communication. Each satellite broadcasts an x-ray toward other nodes to ensure maximum transmission (broadcasts always occur twice to ensure accurate receipt). The signals thus bounce around throughout the galaxy until reaching their applicable destination.

When considering the size of a galaxy, this communication method is slow, but considerably reliable. Messages could take days or weeks to reach their destination, but they always seem to make it. At least enough of the communication reaches its destination to get the point across. Those using the communication relay system, called Space Lane Communications or SLC, are encouraged to make their message short and search for the nearest location to relay the message to a farther destination if necessary. (Corporations prefer this latter method and add datacenters to receive and relay messages in all their corporate-owned facilities.) Once the message reaches its destination planetary system (or spacecraft within outer space), it's sent to a communication satellite orbiting the destination planet and then to a message receipt center.

SPACE STATIONS

Much like service centers are built at optimal locations along freeways, space stations are installed at optimal locations along the space lanes. Although unlike a service center, they offer more than just fuel and food; these are miniature cities with a resident population around 25,000 (twice that if you count visitors). They offer fueling stations, restaurants, hotels, nightlife, entertainment, gambling, resorts, repair and maintenance facilities, retail outlets, and a lot more. In fact, some corporations have even established small corporate facilities on these space stations to manage their subsidiaries on the space stations. Although there aren't that many space stations out there for this purpose, the ones that do exist are quite the site to behold.

SPACE PIRATES

Space lanes may be the safest routes through outer space to avoid cosmic obstacles, but they're not without hazards; space pirates frequently prowl them. Space pirates is the colloquial term for anyone that stalks outer space in very small bands looking to initiate hostilities with anyone that comes near; even other space pirates. These hostilities are prompted by the need for wealth, gear, weapons, armor, food, gems, metals, and even more capable spacecrafts. They are callous, dangerous, and extremely hostile beings that never conform to a particular standard. (Space pirates comprise many different species.)

Space lanes can be very dangerous places to be. Higher levels of traffic allow pirates to hide within and lower levels of traffic allow hostile xenos to hide within. While traveling through the void, no one is truly safe.

The Allied Navy is dedicated to stopping space pirates, but their ships are often too slow for the speed of the pirates. Corporate mercenaries, government agents, and other elite warrior groups typically have more capable ships for chasing space pirates, but they better be properly equipped to fight them too. Space pirates always choose ships with devastating weapons that are highly maneuverable to utilize their hit, plunder, and run tactics. They are similar in form to Earth's Vikings and pirates of old, just operating amongst the stars.

It's imperative to understand that space pirates are actually self-reliant. It may sound as though they need to plunder other vessels to survive, but instead they do so for items to sell or use for bartering. There is apparently an entire network of facilities located across the galaxy that serve as part of the space pirate ring. These facilities offer a place for pirates to hide if needed, sell or trade their loot, call upon favors, find employment, find new recruits, refuel, and basically anything else associated with what it takes to be a space pirate. Unfortunately for all, neither the House nor the Allied Navy knows where any of these facilities are. Once anyone gathers enough intelligence to take a facility out, the Allied Navy finds it abandoned and empty.

PIRATE NETWORK

Space pirates are supported by a fairly vast network of resources, much like their 'legal' counterparts. This network consists of those who provide places to stay, eat, and entertain, outlets for replenishing resources, fueling locations, and basically everything the pirates need to survive. In fact, sometimes these network locations get so big that they become entire cities built around the support of space pirates. Ones of this size are typically built on moons to avoid as much attention as possible from those exploring planet-side.

There is an unwritten rule in the pirate network: everyone is an ally while in port. This means that whenever space pirates arrive at a pirate network spaceport,



they are not allowed to perform any actions against other space pirates. Outside of these spaceports, all bets are off. Enemies and allies abound within the world of pirates, and those with friends can make a lot of trouble for those without. But no matter how many of those friends are together at a spaceport, and how many enemies they face, no hostilities are allowed. Those that break this rule are shunned from the pirate network for life and their whereabouts are tipped off to the Allied Navy when possible.

GAMBLING DENS

Outside of pirate network spaceports are gambling dens that support all types of pirates. Although gambling is a staple of these dens, they are in fact all-encompassing entertainment centers that cater to space pirates. On the surface they seem like simple taverns, inns, and entertainment clubs, the right credentials or password allows access to the rear or basement where the true entertainment is.

Gambling dens also serve as safe havens for space pirates while outside the pirate network. However, the rules of the network extend to the gambling dens, and while inside, everyone is an ally. These gambling dens are thus found on many Alliance planets, including those with the highest population densities. In fact, often times a couple dozen can be found on the most populace planets.

When space pirates are looking to dock at an Alliance planet with a gambling den, they'll need to find a way around standard Alliance protocols. This can be done by docking in transports that are secretly part of the pirate network, dock at a nearby moon and get picked up by a craft conforming to Alliance protocols, also part of the pirate network, or use some type of device that fakes the protocols and allows safe passage.

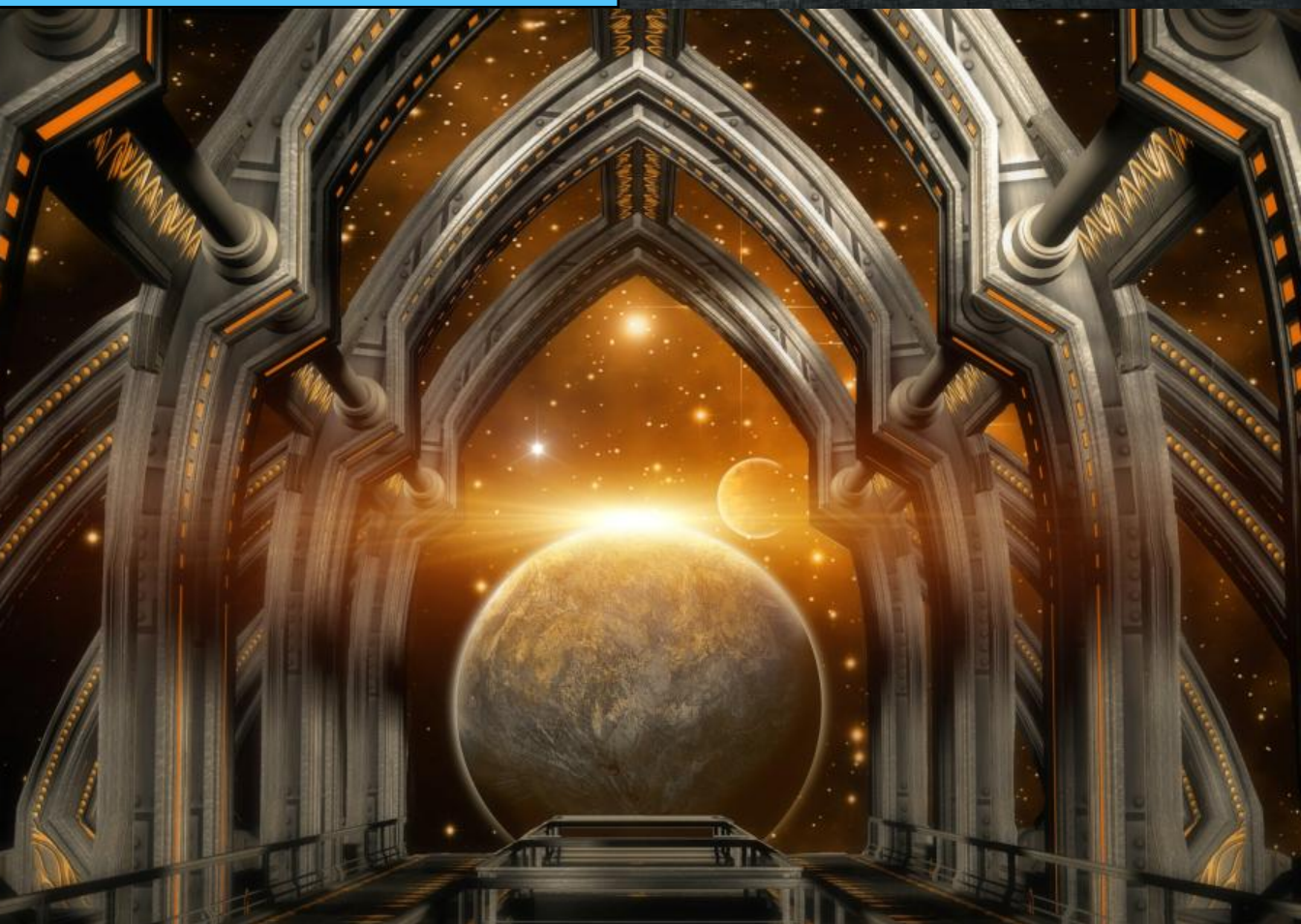
FENCING LOOT

The pirate network has very extensive resources to call upon for fencing loot. Always done through a middle-man, the pirates sell their loot to a fence who then turns around and sells it to non-Alliance xenos or corporations who like to work outside of Alliance space and rules. (Selling to corporations is actually easier than one may think as manifests are often fudged regarding import and export.) Corporations that transport their own equipment across the cosmos can move stolen merchandise around pretty quickly.

Prices in the fencing market allow everyone to save or make money. Corporations are typically buying the equipment for 75% of retail while the fence is buying it for 40 – 50%. Non-Alliance xenos cannot purchase this equipment anywhere else and thus pay around 125% of retail.

PIRATE CAMPAIGNS

The **Setting Themes** and **Employment** chapters discuss different ways of utilizing the basic themes presented in *Mercenary Breed*. For those who'd like a more rogue-like setting or campaign, playing the role of space pirates is an excellent alternative. In addition to everything presented in these two books, space pirates have the benefit of being able to travel outside of Alliance space, encountering non-Alliance species without hostilities, participate in a career of looting, be extremely wealthy, and utilize underground facilities, like those of the pirate network, to make their campaign more exciting. These characters can be rogues, scoundrels, pirate captains, fences, weapons experts, and any number of roles that would serve a space pirate craft (or the pirate network). They could even spark a revolution and turn the Alliance against itself!



COSMIC BEINGS

There are many out there that look toward the heavens for answers, and who's to say that outer space doesn't contain some type of cosmic or divine beings? In the world of *Mercenary Breed*, it's entirely plausible that something is out there that even the Academy cannot explain. It's a huge universe with endless possibilities, and the GM is encouraged to make their setting and campaign as unique as desired. Maybe the GM's setting has some type of cosmic entity that exists everywhere and lords over the laws of physics. If choosing to use cosmic beings, the question is "What are they and why do they exist?"

MONSTERS

The *Xenopedia* presents a number of species scattered across the known galaxy for GMs to use throughout their settings and campaigns as NPCs, allies, connections, character templates, encounters, political rivals, or whatever. The one thing it doesn't offer is the concept of monsters that live in outer space. After all, who's to say that every xenos has to live planet-side?

Maybe there are enormous creatures that 'swim' through space, feeding off the energy it produces. Think of whales swimming through the ocean; these are cosmic whales traveling through space where time ticks by in a manner that holds no meaning. They could be millions of years old and have traveled across multiple galaxies. They could feed on asteroids or cosmic plasma, satiating an incredible appetite that sees an Allied Navy fleet as lunch. How could a beast such as this be killed? What happens when it dies? And how many are out there?

DIVINITY

The concept of gods dates back thousands of years on Earth. With the multitude of planets throughout the universe, the concept could date back millions of years. But what do they mean? In the eyes of most, divine beings are simply everywhere. They can see everything without having to be anywhere. They have their hands in all manner of occasions while ignoring everything around them.

If incorporating divine beings in a sci-fi campaign, are they cosmic beings with the ability to travel vast distances in the blink of an eye? Maybe they're not a physical manifestation and are instead a giant source of intelligent energy that comprises the entire galaxy. If they're physically real, are they so enormous that their ships can travel from one end of a planetary system to the other in seconds? And what about the idea that planets were made and not formed through millions of years of cosmic creation? Once again, the GM is encouraged to incorporate these ideas as they desire.

If choosing divine beings, the GM can then create a religion around the worship of these beings, including the creation of a pantheon. This opens up another possible employment outlet as the characters could be warriors of a religious military order like spacefaring knights templars.

ANCIENT RACES

Rumors have run throughout fiction that the lost city of Atlantis was populated by an ancient race that used to populate all ends of the galaxy, if not the universe, and one day decided to leave. If this is true, is there an ancient race that has been watching everyone for millennia and ultimately knows everything there is to know about the galaxy? Maybe they've mastered immortality and see the day-to-day machinations of humanoids so trivial that they're meaningless. To them, war is a waste of time and the pursuit of knowledge is all that matters.

Ancient races are a way to tie together loose ends within certain settings and campaigns. If the GM has designed a campaign revolving around the search of ancient relics found throughout the galaxy, these relics had to come from someone with an ancient purpose. Add in an ancient, immortal race and this galactic treasure hunt really comes to life.

Chasing relics from an ancient race could open up to an exciting pulp sci-fi campaign as the characters travel across a galaxy they really don't understand in search of these powerful relics. On the other hand, this could also open up another employment possibility as the characters assume the role of guardians of the ancient race, or part of the race itself, recovering relics that were lost thousands of years ago.

EMPLOYMENT

At its core, *Mercenary Breed* is about assuming the role of a hired warrior for one of the megacorporations within the Argo Galaxy. The term mercenary is used to describe a character becoming involved in someone else's efforts to further themselves with the hopes of gaining wealth, power, fame, or whatever during their time of employment. However, this is only one way for a character to play in a sci-fi action and adventure game. The characters don't have to work for a megacorporation; they don't even have to be involved for personal gain. **Employment** explores some of the different concepts relating to who the characters within a sci-fi action and adventure setting could work for and why. Although megacorporations are the most prevalent, they're not the only option.

WHAT MAKES A MERCENARY

Being a mercenary is a career decision. One is not conscripted into a mercenary force, serving simply because their name was drawn. One also cannot volunteer to join a mercenary force; you have to be accepted into a program, much like a job interview. Mercenaries are elite warriors who have proven themselves to be skilled with what their employer needs to protect their assets. Military skill is not the only basis for these decisions; the ability to command and think under pressure are important as are their abilities to solve problems quickly, fully utilize whatever resources are available to them, and exploit every opening to gain the advantage. Mercenaries must be cunning, intelligent, and brave.

Being a mercenary is a lifelong decision. One doesn't simply join a mercenary force for a few years and look for advancement opportunities elsewhere, noting their mercenary experience on an application. Once someone chooses to become a mercenary, they are dedicating themselves to a life of protecting their employer until the opportunity to retire or being removed from the mercenary program. The former can lead the mercenary to great wealth. The latter could find them hidden away from the general populace for life as they simply know too much. Mercenary work is like insider trading; they know all the corporations' dirty secrets, and are typically the ones burying them, and simply cannot be allowed to act on those secrets.

Being a mercenary means leaving a former life behind. Those who are married and have children are never admitted into a mercenary force. They are simply too much of a liability should the opposition decide to use the mercenary's family as leverage against them. Parents, siblings, and extended family may be in communication with the mercenary, but typically kept at quite a distance. However, once the mercenary becomes imbedded in the corporate culture and gains an excellent reputation, they are finally allowed to have families as their housing situations will accommodate a spouse and children. The only drawback for the family is that they are living in a secured house, but that's the price a mercenary pays to have a family.

Being a mercenary means employer dedication. Mercenaries don't hop around between corporations or government agencies; once they gain their first opportunity, that is who they will stay with until they are no longer a mercenary. Again, they simply know too much about the corporation to be allowed the opportunity to work for a possible rival. There have been cases of corporations being exposed for fraud and the mercenary force being disbanded, but future employers ignore

the previous employer as they are no longer a threat to their industry (this is the price a corporation pays for breaking Alliance laws). If a mercenary is ever found supporting the operations of a rival corporation, the punishment is prison or banishment.

Being a mercenary means having an employer with deep pockets. Only the largest corporations and government agencies can afford mercenaries. For corporations, these are companies with no chance of succumbing to a hostile takeover (unless they're disbanded for some reason) nor do they ever have to worry about regular financial ups and downs. They have weathered many storms and have a portfolio large enough to support them indefinitely. Corporate mergers are not uncommon, nor are they particularly common, and in these cases, one of the corporations becomes a subsidiary of the other. The mercenary forces remain and the corporations use each other to increase their overall wealth. Smaller corporations, however, are often bullied into selling out to the megacorporations and have no mercenaries to help them out. If one of their operations is sabotaged, there's a good chance they can't recover. Of course, there are laws attempting to prevent this. For government agencies, only the most powerful nations can afford mercenaries and even war can't thwart their power; usually.

Being a mercenary doesn't have to mean all of the above. There are occasions where mercenaries, or something equivalent, have been employed as private military task forces for entire planets, species, and planetary systems. Where this is the case, the mercenaries are their own employer. They sell their skills, as a team, to whoever needs it at the time. These types of mercenary groups are prevalent in newly settled planets, species that haven't fully established themselves or simply need assistance, remote locations, planetary systems with large collections of satellite operations, and regions of new exploration. These mercenaries must provide for themselves, although their fees are quite steep. This allows them a standard of living mostly comparable to corporate mercenaries, albeit without the endless supply of equipment.

For GMs looking to run a Mercenary Breed campaign in this last style, extra bookkeeping may be necessary. It will become imperative that the characters know who they can rely on for missions and pay, where they can go to get the equipment they need, understand who their true allies are, and always have contacts that can provide the resources they need. Corporate and government employers make it easy as they provide all the information to the characters as a single point of contact (the Master of the Mercenary Force). When the characters are going lone wolf, it's up to them to do the leg work.

Regardless of whom the characters work for, they should always have that mercenary mentality. This isn't the same as entering the military, serving for four years, and returning home. This is a full-time, lifelong dedication that could provide amazing adventures, or death.

MEGACORPORATIONS

Corporate mercenaries are the original design of Mercenary Breed. The characters work for multi-million, billion, or even trillion credit megacorporations with a vast number of resources that need protecting. Megacorporations are typically driven by wealth although political or social power are common motivations. A company wishing to rule a nation will have to flex a lot of political power. A company wishing to enlist vast populations to their cause will have to appeal to the social networks. Regardless, these megacorporations are the characters' employer and their ability to call upon the necessary resources and find the necessary equipment is astounding.

GENESIS HOLDINGS

Genesis Holdings is the parent company of Gleaming Jewels, Precious Stones, and Delphi Mining. Gleaming Jewels is an exotic jewelry retailer and Precious Stones is a commercial jewelry retailer. Both are located throughout the galaxy. Delphi Mining is the gem mining company that supplies them.

With Galactic Headquarters located on Coursian, Genesis Holdings is the galaxy's most popular jewelry corporation. Their retail locations are well-known and cater to all levels of wealth. Gleaming Jewels focuses on the more exotic gems and lavish jewelry enjoyed by the wealthy while Precious Stones sells lower priced jewelry with the same level of quality. Both retail chains acquire their gems directly from Delphi Mining, keeping the corporation's profits very high by removing the 'middleman'.

Genesis Holdings uses these high profits to build eccentric corporate facilities – such as their grand Galactic Headquarters, within the heart of gemini society, on Coursian. These profits are also used to fund new mining activities that keep the jewelry market mostly under their own control. Direct mining and shipping has allowed Genesis Holdings to become one of the most profitable corporations in the Argo Galaxy with executive paychecks that show it.

Statistics: Genesis Holdings has yearly revenue around 5 trillion credits. While this is low compared to many corporations, their profit margin is one of the highest around. They achieved success due to their ability to control costs and cut-out any distributors or third parties.

In addition to retail and mining facilities, Genesis Holdings maintains its own logistics and shipping. This results in Genesis Holdings mining, shipping, designing, crafting, and selling their jewelry. They have retail facilities located on ten planets with managing corporate facilities on each planet. The close distance of executive management to retail outlets allows Genesis Holdings to react quicker to changes



in the market and problems that arise. They have mining facilities on fifteen planets that not only supply their own retail outlets, but also sell lower quality gems to other retail companies.

Each division utilizes four levels of management: general manager, district manager, regional director, and worldwide vice president. The corporate structure is very common and attempts to remain simple to avoid excessive overhead costs.

Relations: Genesis Holdings employees enjoy a healthy, yearly profit sharing bonus. This keeps employee satisfaction very high and creates a certain corporate façade in the eyes of the public. This results in very high customer satisfaction and good public relations.

Mercenary Forces: Due to their healthy profits, Genesis Holdings employs multiple mercenary forces. Those who serve through retirement enjoy salaries that rival executives and bonuses in the six-digit range. There are four cells of mercenary forces with a fifth one in development, due to continuing expansion. Each force is assigned specific planets and shipping lanes and expected to keep them safe.

Mercenary forces are expected to focus on the three different areas of the corporation: mining, shipping, and retail. This produces a number of possible adventure seeds.

Mining: Mercenary forces are used during exploration of new planets to establish new mining facilities. Forces may encounter hostile creatures or unknown xenos. On colonized planets, rebels or general antagonists may appear. Sabotage could occur within new or existing mining facilities along with attacks from rival corporations.

Shipping: Shipping lanes are often under attack from pirates or hostile xenos. Spaceships with valuable cargo are a target for anyone looking to plunder the contents. Sometimes these ships are found floating, intact, outside of the normal space lanes with no crew aboard.

Retail: Mercenary forces are also employed to investigate theft or stand against any rioting or looting caused by external confrontations. However, dealing with retail problems is less common as the local law enforcement typically get involved.

MILITANT MARINES

Militant Marines is the foremost producer of military weapons and armor throughout the Alliance. Militant Marines custom designs their weapons and armor to each species' physique and preferred technology. They don't sell directly, but supply to a very large number of military equipment distributors. This allows the corporation to maintain steady production lines feeding every participating xenos without being bogged down by the more tedious sales management.

Militant Marines is strictly held by geminis and resides primarily within Coursian. The House finds discretion extremely important and disallows Militant Marines to share their designs with potentially hostile xenos. This also gives the Allied Navy an insight into all species' equipment should conflicts arise.

Supply lines for material are numerous, but manufacturing facilities are few in number, primarily consuming a large state-sized facility in a remote area on Coursian. Manufacturing is extremely secretive and facilities are built mostly underground, protected from bombing. These safety measures have made Militant Marines the favored military weapons and armor developer for most Alliance species. This has led to large levels of revenue even though profit margins are not high.

Statistics: Militant Marines holds a single corporate facility outside the densely populated areas of Coursian. This highly secured facility contains all ten of their executive members along with the majority of their design group. The incorpora-

tion of the design group into the facility requires maximum security with strong defensive batteries.

While profit margins are low, yearly revenue tops 60 trillion. Most of this is funneled into security and safety including a large mercenary force, ready to deploy at any sign of danger. Militant Marines is not allowed to carry their own military division, so they use their mercenary forces as their security outlet. Additionally, high-reputation mercenaries become part of the weapons and armor development group, testing prototypes in real-world situations. This goes as far as using them in combat to validate the integrity and abilities of the new equipment.

Militant Marines has one extremely large manufacturing facility kept from the eyes of the general public along with several smaller ones whose locations are widely known. Smaller facilities can be used as diversions for hostile forces or actual production facilities for older technology (those that no longer require confidentiality).

Outside of the corporate facility, which employs roughly 10,000, actual employment figures are unknown. The Alliance requires a non-disclosure agreement from all employees and prohibits published statistics.

Relations: Militant Marines' employees are paid well for their work, but only slightly higher than industry standards. Satisfaction is average and public interactions are not very common. Customer satisfaction is extremely high, bringing new customers looking for better weapons and armor.

Mercenary Forces: Militant Marines maintains a very strong mercenary force for their own safety. At least 100 mercenaries are employed at a single time to ensure any hostilities are thwarted immediately. Given the nature of their products and the sensitivity of their designs, hostilities are quite common.

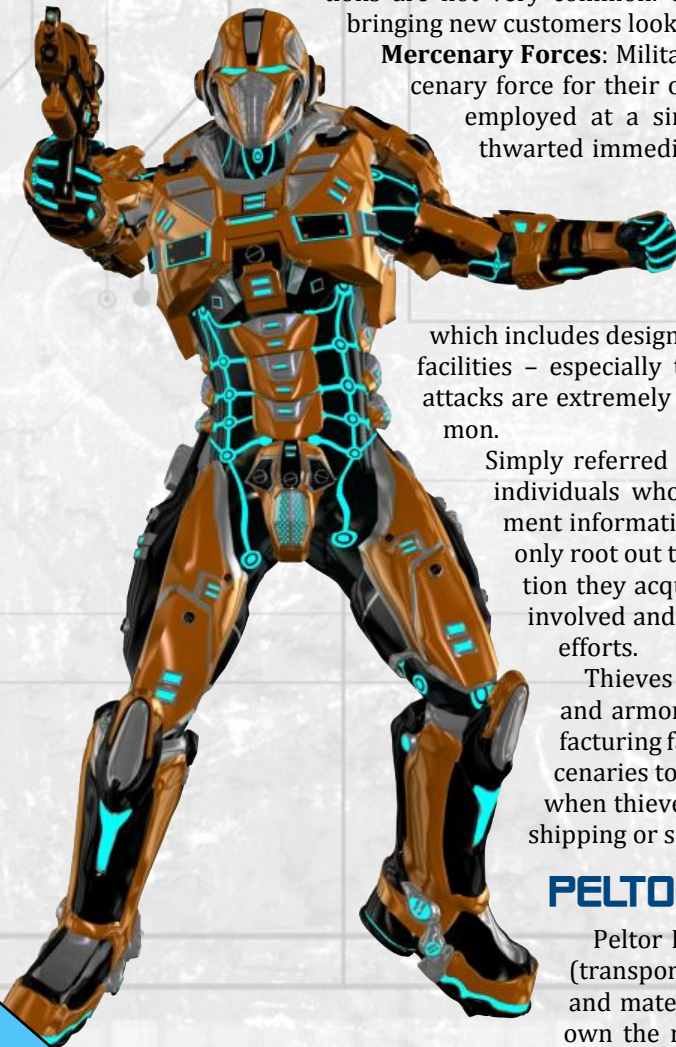
Adventure Seeds: Militant Marines requires their mercenaries to ensure the safety of their corporate facility, which includes design and development, and all manufacturing facilities – especially their largest complex. While large-scale attacks are extremely rare, hackers and thieves are quite common.

Simply referred to as hackers, these are the groups and individuals who attempt to steal designs and development information. Mercenary forces are required to not only root out the hackers, but also destroy any information they acquired, quietly disposing of all individuals involved and breaking apart any groups leading these efforts.

Thieves are those who attempt to steal weapons and armor from any location, including the manufacturing facilities. Militant Marines dispatches mercenaries to these break-ins and aids their customers when thieves (or pirates) attack their vessels during shipping or simple transit.

PELTOR LOGISTICS

Peltor Logistics is the largest logistics company (transportation, tracking, packaging, warehousing, and material handling) in the Core Expanse. They own the most commonly found spacecraft within



the space lanes and are a preferred option for interplanetary shipping. They'll do business with everyone and have many allies amongst the megacorporations. They are also a preferred option for government agencies and thus have a lot of influence over many politicians.

Peltor Logistics is a festoon-owned company supported by geminis and l'nels. Their goal is to 'rule the space lanes' through commercial, industrial, retail, and consumer shipping across the Gemini Sector. So far they've met this goal within the Core Expanse and are looking to gain a foothold in other expanses.

Peltor Logistics has the largest space fleet within the Core Expanse, even larger in number to the Allied Navy. Anyone traveling the space lanes could rarely travel a single day without seeing at least one Peltor Logistics spacecraft.

Statistics: Peltor Logistics' business is amongst the stars. As such, their corporate headquarters is a massive space station within the Joplin System, equidistant from Coursian and Lak'husa. This facility is possibly one of the most well armed space stations in the Core Expanse, housing all executives, vice presidents, and directors. The festoons feel these security measures are necessary as life amongst the stars can be dangerous. Additionally, the space station has several docking bays dedicated to deploying new spacecraft and maintaining current ones.

Logistics is a very busy industry and Peltor Logistics covers all aspects of it. Their yearly revenue tops 600 billion credits, although their overhead costs are quite high. The festoons don't mind this as they're not nearly as greedy as gemini-held corporations. They would much rather provide a desired service to all those who need it and keep their employees happy.

Besides their space station headquarters, Peltor Logistics operates many spaceports across the Core Expanse. Each spaceport is situated within ten miles of major city centers and supported by a large network of smaller ware-



houses and distribution centers to feed the spaceports. Every planet they support has this same set-up, meaning one never has to travel far to drop off their packages when shipping between planets.

Peltor Logistics only handles inter-planetary shipments and leaves shipments between city centers to other shipping companies. However, they have essentially cornered the market on interplanetary logistics as they only have one competitor who has yet to threaten Peltor's revenue.

Relations: External and internal relations are extremely important to the festoon and Peltor Logistics. In fact, the company regularly uses these to measure their performance. If anyone is unhappy, changes are made. It's been said that Peltor Logistics has the expanse's highest customer and employee satisfaction. This is not uncommon for a festoon-owned corporation, but Peltor Logistics promotes this satisfaction as much as they possibly can.

Mercenary Forces: Peltor Logistics maintains a fleet of highly mobile mercenary forces. Each one is assigned an interplanetary spaceship whose sole purpose is to serve the needs of the mercenaries. Everyone aboard these spaceships perform duties necessary for that support (armory, cafeteria, maintenance, library, etc.). Although their mercenaries don't live a very lavish life while actively serving (due to living on a spaceship), they are all given grand estates as retirement gifts in one of Coursian's wealthy neighborhoods.

Space Pirates: Space pirates are one of the largest threats faced by Peltor Logistics. These pirates used highly-customized spacecraft to monitor the space lanes for cargo-carrying craft (such as Peltor's). Mercenaries are expected to troll the space lanes, looking for pirates to purge. They are given blanket permission by Peltor (and the House) to fully eliminate any pirates they encounter. The Alliance frowns upon space pirates and wants them completely removed from the galaxy, but they're much too quick for the Allied Navy. They're ships are fast and maneuverable and can outrun any Allied Navy craft equipped with the firepower to deal with the pirates. The smaller fighters employed by the Allied Navy simply cannot face the firepower brought to bear by the pirates. Because of this, the House relies on Peltor's mercenary forces to keep the space lanes safe.

Rival Corporations: Although Peltor doesn't have a rival corporation, their customers often do. Corporations looking to sabotage their rival's shipments are the second largest threat faced by Peltor Logistics. Unlike space pirates, however, the mercenaries are not allowed to purge the space lanes of corporations that usually follow the Alliance's laws. Instead, the mercenaries must proceed with extreme caution and use defensive measures to keep Peltor's spacecrafts safe.

YEN SAFETY INC

Yen Safety is a hhlachi and schrilang owned company and a former subsidiary of Militant Marines. It is the largest equipment safety testing and regulatory corporation in the Gemini Sector. They set the standards that all equipment companies must abide by if they want to sell their equipment within the Alliance. Additionally, they perform all means of testing necessary, for a fairly high price, required to ensure that standard is being met.

Yen Safety used to be the testing and regulations division of Militant Marines. However, it was poorly managed and frequently neglected to properly regulate equipment designed for species with special needs (such as the hhlachi and schrilang). The House was not happy with Yen Safety's performance and regularly denied them the ability to regulate everyone's equipment. This cost the company a lot of money as enforcing and ensuring these regulations was where they made their money.

Seeing as how the company was a 'waste of time', according to Militant Marines executives, they sold the entire company to a large group comprised of retired mercenaries. The group, known as Mercenary Veterans, consisted of multiple species including those with special equipment needs. Yen Safety became Mercenary Veterans main focus, although the retiree group still exists, as they formed a proper corporation and set-out to establish standards for all equipment corporations to abide by. Seeing as how the special needs were the most important, majority stake in the company was purchased by hhlachi and schriling retired mercenaries. The minority stake is primarily owned by geminis and festoons, but many species have a small foothold in Yen Safety.

Statistics: Yen Safety has multiple corporate facilities, although its galactic headquarters is given as Coursian, the same facility originally owned by Militant Marines. However, each corporate facility has its own vice presidents to oversee operations within its applicable region or planetary system. The location of these facilities is dependent on the proximity of equipment manufacturers that need Yen's services.

The House takes equipment safety very seriously and has essentially handed a monopoly of writing and enforcing equipment safety standards to Yen Safety within the Gemini Sector. Coupling this with Yen's extremely low overhead has made them one of the most profitable corporations in the sector. Their annual revenue is only around five billion credits, but they have so few employees and facility square footage to maintain that profits are much higher, percentage wise, than other, much larger corporations.

One of the reasons Yen manages to stay so profitable is that it requires the corporations who need the testing to pay all extra costs incurred and supply the equipment. However, Yen does spend most of its revenue each year on maintaining its test facilities (which includes large spaceships) so that all testing is compliant.



Relations: From the public eye, Yen Safety is a rarely known corporation. Outside of their safety mark required on all equipment that has passed their testing, few would even know they exist. Corporations wishing to sell equipment within the Alliance, however, need to fully understand who Yen Safety is and what they do. Although many loathe doing business with Yen Safety, they are required by the House to do so and thus cannot get away from it.

As such, Yen's public relations are almost nil outside of the private sector. Their public rating is acceptable, but that's only because it's a rating from the corporations they do business with. Their internal rating is extremely high as employees of Yen seem to love working for the company and enjoy their yearly profit sharing bonuses.

Mercenary Forces: Outside of executives and regional VPs, Yen Safety only has two types of main employees: engineers and mercenaries. Although there are a handful of support positions, their job is to support the engineers and mercenaries. The engineers are the ones creating the implementing the safety codes while the mercenaries are the ones doing the testing. While this may seem like an extremely low-risk mercenary job, it's quite the opposite as all testing is done live, in the field. This ensures the customer's and Yen's interests are extremely secure.

Before the mercenaries are allowed to take the new equipment into the field, it must first pass a series of tests within secure facilities. These tests ensure the equipment doesn't leak or break and will definitely do what it's supposed to do. Ensuring it performs within the required limits, however, requires field trials. During these field trials, Yen's mercenary forces often come into contact with their customer's rivals looking to steal the equipment or somehow gather intelligence regarding the equipment.

During field trials within outer space, it's fairly common for Yen's mercenaries to encounter space pirates. While this may seem a regular, random occurrence, Yen's VPs know where the space pirates regularly troll and purposely send their mercenaries to test the equipment within those areas. Live fire is a much better test than simulated fire.

Another common field trial is within dangerous underground caverns. There are many places throughout the galaxy reported as having hostile inhabitants beneath the ground. When Yen catches wind of this, they mark it as another location for field trials to occur. In essence, Yen is actually placing its mercenaries into hostile environments to perform field trials. However, they make this very clear to the mercenaries upfront and they're given all intelligence necessary to remain as safe as possible. This is one reason why Yen charges so much for its services.

GM's Note: Using Yen Safety as a megacorporation employer to the characters opens up a new opportunity. Because they are field testing new or experimental equipment, they could easily have at least one item of gear with a Reputation requirement that exceeds the characters' current RP. This is acceptable and GMs are free to add an element of 'failure' as if the equipment failed during the field trial or some type of accident occurred. This shouldn't kill the characters, but it may make their missions quite interesting as they're using a brand new piece of equipment and they're the test dummies.

CORPORATION BUILDING KIT

When creating a new corporation, a number of factors should be considered to flesh out the inner-workings and structure of the corporation. This allows the players to better understand how their mercenaries fit within the corporation and

allows the GM to drive the storyline so that it fits within the scope of the corporation. If it's a rival corporation, these details allow the GM to create missions relating to the newly created corporation.

INDUSTRY

Before delving too far into creating a new corporation, it's imperative to understand what industry (or industries) that corporation is involved in. Choosing the industry allows you to decipher what types of products or services it offers, who its rivals would be, what sectors of the galaxy it would most likely be involved in, how it would most likely be encountered, and how everything else will be 'flavored' when fleshing out the details.

For example, if the corporation is tied only to the medical industry, the missions could often involve secret drugs, pharmaceutical experimentations, maybe black market organ purchasing, odd cadaver experiments, or any slew of ideas relating to the medical industry. You wouldn't, however, search them out for a new piece of high-powered armor. Additionally, if the company is involved in the medical industry, it may be a partner of another corporation for the development of biological weapons.

PURPOSE

After deciding the industry the corporation is involved in, it's time to choose what purpose they serve within that industry. Do they mine resources? Do they serve as a distributor? Do they create end-use items? Or do they get involved in sales? Maybe they do a combination of those purposes. Whatever it is, the corporation will have some purpose as to why it's involved in that industry as there are always inputs and outputs to every industry.

Purpose is another big driving factor of deciding missions involving corporations. For example, if a corporation is involved in mining resources, the characters may be sent into a mine believed to be haunted or under attack from a rival corporation. If they're involved in distribution and sales, the characters may have to infiltrate a large ring of thefts spanning an entire expanse.

STRUCTURE

Creating a corporation's structure may or may not have an effect on a missions theme. However, it may be important to the GM as they have to decipher who orders are coming from within an executive structure, if there are resources available within a subsidiary or parent company, and how deep its pockets may be. While the characters probably don't care about this, the GM can use it to leverage certain features of their missions. This could include off-planet housing, access to gear, alliances with other corporations, and affiliations with government agencies.

PRESENCE

A corporation's presence within the galaxy helps in defining the scope of a setting or campaign. This presence could be given as the current planetary systems, expanses, or sectors served by the corporation or a look at where they're expanding. Either way, this defines what planetary systems the characters will spend missions in and where they'll be traveling to and from. Presence should also be tied to the industry and purpose by defining what planets they would feasibly have a presence in.

RELATIONS

Defining a corporation’s relations can provide a new adventure hook tool for the GM. If a corporation has poor relations and corruptions, the public may serve as an obstacle to the characters. If a corporation has good relations, there may be hidden agendas that haven’t surfaced yet. It’s possible the characters will never need to understand a corporation’s relations; unless they get in the way, of course.

RANDOM CORPORATION GENERATION

To create a new corporation randomly, use a standard deck of playing cards and deal out three cards. Each card’s suit and value defines the corporation’s various characteristics. If a Joker is dealt, place it back into the deck and deal a new card.

READING THE CARDS

The first card’s suit defines the basic industry supported by the corporation. Its value further defines that industry.

The second card’ suit defines the overall structure of the corporation. Its value further details that structure.

The third card’s suit defines the social and political aspects of the corporation. Its value further details those aspects.

CARD NUMBER ONE

Club	Consumer: The corporation primarily deals with the consumer market.
Diamond	Commercial: The corporation primarily deals with the commercial market.
Heart	Industrial: The corporation primarily deals with the industrial market.
Spade	Military: The corporation primarily deals with the military market.

CARD VALUE

2	Spacecraft
3	Land Vehicles
4	Air Vehicles
5	Entertainment
6	Communications
7	Consumables
8	Accessories

9	Construction
10	Medical
J	Technology
Q	Mining/Agriculture/Natural Resources
K	Weapons
A	Gear/Equipment/Luxury Items

CARD NUMBER TWO

Club	Tens: The corporation has corporate facilities numbering in the teens.
Diamond	Hundreds: The corporation has corporate facilities numbering in the hundreds.
Heart	Thousands: The corporation has corporate facilities numbering in the thousands.
Spade	Ten Thousands: The corporation has corporate facilities numbering in the tens of thousands.

CARD VALUE (CLUBS)

- 2-3** No subsidiary companies, 5 executive officers, 1 planetary presence, dozens of product lines, less than 1,000 employees, and over 250 million credits in revenue.
- 4-5** No subsidiary companies, 5 executive officers, 2 planetary presences, less than 2,000 employees, and over 500 million credits in revenue.
- 6-7** 1 subsidiary company, 10 executive officers, 1 planetary presence, less than 3,000 employees and over 750 million credits in revenue.
- 8-9** 1 subsidiary company, 10 executive officers, 2 planetary presences, less than 4,000 employees, and over 900 million credits in revenue.
- 10-J** 1 subsidiary company, 10 executive officers, 3 planetary presences, less than 4,000 employees, and over one billion credits in revenue.
- Q-K** 1 subsidiary company, 10 executive officers, 3 planetary presences, less than 5,000 employees, and over one billion credits in revenue.
- A** 1 subsidiary company, 10 executive officers, 4 planetary presences, less than 5,000 employees, and over five billion credits in revenue.

CARD VALUE (DIAMONDS)

- 2-3** 1 subsidiary company, 10 executive officers, 2 planetary presences, less than 25,000 employees, and over 100 billion credits in revenue.
- 4-5** 1 subsidiary company, 10 executive officers, 4 planetary presences, less than 50,000 employees, and over 150 billion credits in revenue.

6-7 2 subsidiary companies, 15 executive officers, 5 planetary presences, less than 75,000 employees, and over 200 billion credits in revenue.

8-9 2 subsidiary companies, 15 executive officers, 8 planetary presences, less than 100,000 employees, and over 250 billion credits in revenue.

10-J 2 subsidiary companies, 15 executive officers, 10 planetary presences, less than 100,000 employees, and over 500 billion credits in revenue.

Q-K 3 subsidiary companies, 20 executive officers, 10 planetary presences, less than 100,000 employees, and over 1 trillion credits in revenue.

A 3 subsidiary companies, 20 executive officers, 15 planetary presences, less than 250,000 employees, and over 6 trillion credits in revenue.

CARD VALUE (HEARTS)

2-3 2 subsidiary companies, 15 executive officers, 10 planetary presences, less than 20 million employees, and over 2 trillion credits in revenue.

4-5 2 subsidiary companies, 15 executive officers, 15 planetary presences, less than 25 million employees, and over 5 trillion credits in revenue.

6-7 3 subsidiary companies, 20 executive officers, 16 planetary presences, less than 25 million employees, and over 25 trillion credits in revenue.

8-9 3 subsidiary companies, 20 executive officers, 18 planetary presences, less than 50 million employees, and over 10 trillion credits in revenue.

- 10-J 3 subsidiary companies, 20 executive officers, 20 planetary presences, less than 50 million employees, and over 15 trillion credits in revenue.
- Q-K 4 subsidiary companies, 25 executive officers, 15 planetary presences, less than 50 million employees, and over 25 trillion credits in revenue.
- A 4 subsidiary companies, 25 executive officers, 20 planetary presences, less than 100 million employees, and over 30 trillion credits in revenue.

CARD VALUE (SPADES)

- 2-3 3 subsidiary companies, 20 executive officers, 15 planetary presences, less than 10 million employees, and over 20 trillion credits in revenue.
- 4-5 3 subsidiary companies, 25 executive officers, 15 planetary presences, less than 50 million employees, and over 25 trillion credits in revenue.
- 6-7 4 subsidiary companies, 25 executive officers, 20 planetary presences, less than 50 million employees, and over 50 trillion credits in revenue.
- 8-9 4 subsidiary companies, 30 executive officers, 20 planetary presences, less than 100 million employees, and over 25 trillion credits in revenue.
- 10-J 5 subsidiary companies, 30 executive officers, 20 planetary presences, less than 100 million employees, and over 50 trillion credits in revenue.

- Q-K 5 subsidiary companies, 35 executive officers, 25 planetary presences, less than 100 million employees, and over 100 trillion credits in revenue.
- A 6 subsidiary companies, 40 executive officers, 25 planetary presences, millions of product lines, less than one billion employees, and over 100 trillion credits in revenue.

CARD NUMBER THREE

- Club **Good Relations:** The corporation is seen as good through the eyes of society.
- Diamond **Average Relations:** The corporation is seen as average through the eyes of society.
- Heart **Poor Relations:** The corporation is seen as poor through the eyes of society.
- Spade **Corruption:** The corporation has known corruption running through its offices.

CARD VALUE (CLUBS)

- 2-3 No conspiracies, employee and customer satisfaction is very high
- 4-5 No conspiracies, employee satisfaction is high, and customer satisfaction is very high.
- 6-7 No conspiracies, employee and customer satisfaction is high.
- 8-9 One conspiracy, employee and customer satisfaction is very high.
- 10-J One conspiracy, employee satisfaction is high, and customer satisfaction is very high.
- Q-K One conspiracy, employee and customer satisfaction is high.
- A No conspiracies, employee satisfaction is average, and customer satisfaction is high.

CARD VALUE (DIAMONDS)

- 2-3** One conspiracy, employee satisfaction is average, and customer satisfaction is high.
- 4-5** One conspiracy, employee and customer satisfaction is average.
- 6-7** One conspiracy, employee satisfaction is average and customer satisfaction is low.
- 8-9** Two conspiracies, employee and customer satisfaction is average.
- 10-J** Two conspiracies, employee satisfaction is low, and customer satisfaction is average.
- Q-K** Two conspiracies, employee and customer satisfaction is low.
- A** Three conspiracies, employee and customer satisfaction is average.

CARD VALUE (HEARTS)

- 2-3** Two conspiracies, employee and customer satisfaction is low.
- 4-5** Two conspiracies, employee satisfaction is very low, and customer satisfaction is low.
- 6-7** Three conspiracies, employee and customer satisfaction is low.
- 8-9** Three conspiracies, employee and customer satisfaction is very low.

- 10-J** Three conspiracies, employee satisfaction is very low, and customer satisfaction is low.

- Q-K** Four conspiracies, employee and customer satisfaction is low.

- A** Four conspiracies, employee and customer satisfaction is very low.

CARD VALUE (SPADES)

- 2-3** Four conspiracies, employees feel like they are working for a dictator and customers have been bribed.

- 4-5** Four conspiracies, employee and customer satisfaction is very low.

- 6-7** Corporation is actually a front for illegal activities, employee and customer satisfaction is high.

- 8-9** Corporation is involved in political scandals, employee satisfaction is average, and customer satisfaction is high due to bribes.

- 10-J** Five conspiracies, employee and customer satisfaction is low.

- Q-K** Six conspiracies, employee and customer satisfaction is very low.

- A** Employees are given frequent bonuses with no explanation, employee and customer satisfaction is very high.

PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

Now that you have the basic elements and details of the corporation, a number of things need to be further fleshed out. These items are best chosen according to the mission or campaign being run rather than through random generation:

1. What xeno race is running or owns the corporation?
2. Where is their galactic headquarters located?
3. What aspect of the industry do they support (manufacturing, distribution, sales, shipping, etc)?
4. Where applicable, who is the Master of the Mercenary Force?
5. What additional benefits do they offer their mercenaries?

EXAMPLE

Let's create a random corporation. The GM begins by drawing three cards randomly: three of hearts, two of clubs, and the ace of spades (in that order). Card number one is hearts, meaning the corporation primarily operates in the industrial market; the three means land vehicles. Card number two is clubs, meaning the corporation has facilities number in the teens; the two means there are no subsidiary companies, five executives, one planetary presence, dozens of product lines, less than 1,000 employees, and over 250 million credits in revenue. Card number three is spades, meaning there is corruption within the corporation; the ace states that employees are given frequent bonuses with no explanation and employee and customer satisfaction is very high. With the basic structure of the corporation, the GM creates the company the characters work for.

"Welcome to Metro & Urban, your new employer. Before beginning your career as a mercenary in one of M&U's new mercenary forces, you do some research about the company within the Alliance's archives. There isn't much information about M&U, but what is there seems to glow with excellence.

"M&U operates ten massive facilities throughout Coursian, building the planet's highest quality construction equipment. Their designs have been reported as second to none and many, much larger competitors frequently make attempts to reverse engineer M&U's designs. Their ten facilities cover nine manufacturing facilities and one corporate facility with each one attempting to be more lavish than the next. This is quite surprising as the company's annual revenue only tops 400 million credits and employees often gleam about their yearly bonuses.

"The nine manufacturing facilities support a total of thirty product lines, creating huge vehicles designed for urban and suburban construction (both medium- and large-scale). The reason for the low number of employees is that the manufacturing facilities are 90% automated with only around 50 employees needed to run the facility. Another 400 employees work at the corporate facility, comprising engineering, administration, sales, management, and executives (of which there are only five).

"M&U is new to the mercenary scene, just now creating its first mercenary force. The reason for this is the danger involved in the areas their construction vehicles are being utilized. Construction companies rarely have the funds to hire mercenaries and they have instead leaned heavily on the corporation that supplies the bulk of their construction equipment. The biggest concern is sabotage, but often times these construction zones end up within dangerous areas due to urban combat (gangs, mafias, and even hostile corporations) or unexplored territory where hostile species are encountered."

[Behind the GM Screen]: Metro & Urban has a secret that it's managed to keep from the eyes of the House. They have a secret, eleventh facility that designs and builds large, custom vehicles for warfare (open and urban). Those who purchase these military vehicles pay exorbitant prices which the corporation funnels into the company's construction vehicle divisions through employee bonuses (including very large ones for the executives). By 'cooking their books', M&U is able to show, on paper, that their revenue is high enough to justify this level of profit sharing.

The problem, and one reason for the mercenary force, is that some of the vehicles have landed in the hands of the wrong individuals after being stolen, abandoned, or immobilized during combat and never recovered. This and the aforementioned reason for the new mercenary force is why the characters now find themselves in the employment of M&U. Part of the campaign involves the recovery of these war vehicles.

SPECIAL OPERATIONS

Megacorporations aren't the only ones in need of mercenaries. There are many local, regional, federal, and global services that carry special operations forces to deal with various military and enforcement activities.

GOVERNMENT

In the Mercenary Breed universe, the House cannot be bothered with Special Forces on a mass scale as they're too involved with fending off galactic wars and keeping their people safe. Instead, they require individual governments to institute small-scale Special Forces groups to address any issues that specifically involve those governments. Depending on the size of a population, this is done on a city, state, planetary, or planetary system level.

These Special Forces are akin to a mercenary force, although they don't get the same type of benefits and are treated like a government employee. They receive their orders from the governor of that governing body (planetary governors are the most common) and allowed to utilize the resources of the governing body. The most common names for these forces are: Special Forces, Task Force, Governmental Elites, Elite Guards, and Guardian Warriors.

Governments aren't much different than corporations. They have assets and employees that need to be kept safe, they provide a vast amount of resources to their mercenaries, they often get involved in conspiracies, and they have vast amounts of revenue. They differ in their motivations, desires, portfolio diversity, requisition process, and benefits. Instead of worrying about how they're similar to corporations, here's a look at how they differ.

Motivations: While corporations are motivated by the revenue they receive from the customers they provide products and services to, governments are motivated by the social and political ramifications of failing to serve the people within their jurisdiction. The backlash of failing their people could result in protests, riots, rebellion, crime, gangs, war, or worse, not getting reelected.

When governments have better public relations, they tend to entice more people to move into their jurisdiction which increases their tax revenue. With higher tax revenues, the government has more money to spend on public and private projects including top secret research. When problematic people, groups, or gangs form within that jurisdiction, public relations begin to sour and people start moving out. When this happens, property values drop and tax revenue decreases. This means less money for all those projects.

Stopping these problems from arising on a large scale falls on the shoulders of the government's Special Forces. Smaller scale versions of these issues would be dealt with by local law enforcement; when things get out of hand, the Special Forces are necessary. An example of this is a small gang of thugs versus a large mafia. The small gang would be addressed by law enforcement while Special Forces would deal with the large mafia.

Desires: In the interests of the general populace, governments put public health and safety before anything else. The governor and other politicians may have secret, personal desires, but the government as a whole is usually focused on those two things. Although local law enforcement agencies claim to protect the citizens, when either public health or safety is threatened, the Special Forces are sent in to investigate and eradicate the threat. This is partially to show the strength of the government in the eyes of the public, and partially due to the local law enforcement's inability to get the job done quickly and thoroughly.

Portfolio: Corporations typically produce a collection of related, or somewhat related, products or offer similar services. Governments do whatever is necessary in the eyes of the public and according to the desires of their politicians. If they want to research new pharmaceuticals, they create a project and fund it. If they want to open a large spacecraft repair shop to service the number of ships entering their jurisdiction, they find the most optimal candidate to build it and then the government manages it. If buildings are abandoned within their jurisdiction, they may buy them and rent them out.

Regardless of what the projects are, governments typically have a considerably more diverse portfolio of products and services than corporations. Although the majority of these projects are meant to serve the government in some way, as opposed to serving the customer like corporations do, they can vary quite significantly. As with their motivations, Special Forces deal with large-scale threats to these products and services.

Requesting Equipment: The problem with being a government agent is that everything involves much more red tape than it does with corporations. Unless a piece of equipment has been previously requisitioned and is now sitting in inventory, the characters must follow the standard process of requesting new capital. This typically involves filling out forms, getting multiple quotes, qualifying vendors, acquiring signatures, submitting a purchase order, receiving the equipment through standard channels, and finally deployment.

While this would create horrendously boring role-playing, it's defined as this: when requesting new equipment, not in inventory, it takes extra time; maybe a week, month, or several months. However long it takes, the characters must plan accordingly.

Benefits: Government agents don't have access to the same benefits as corporate mercenaries. They'd be lucky to get government housing, although this is extremely rare, they probably don't get government vehicles, but they do enjoy a much higher salary. Due to not being compensated for living expenses, instead of the low wages of a corporate mercenary, government agents receive salaries comparable to their coworker engineers. The higher their reputation, the higher their salary, but this means they have to pay for their house, cars, and food. They don't have to pay for their weapons, but they still have to provide themselves with a means of living and getting around. Upon retirement, they get a good pension and are essentially taken care of for the rest of their lives equivalent to how well their retired governors are taken care of.

But, much like a corporate mercenary, government agents need to live to see retirement. Hopefully the government doesn't plot against retired agents and have them permanently removed so that they no longer draw a pension. This could lead to more, interesting missions!

ALLIED NAVY

Although the Allied Navy is the military powerhouse throughout the known galaxy, its core focus is warfare throughout the stars. When they require small strike forces to infiltrate planet-side, get behind enemy lines to sabotage their operations, assassinate a leader to impede the army, or rescue a prisoner of war, they call upon their Elite Task Force.

These Elite Task Forces (ETF) are akin to a mercenary force in that they comprise highly skilled and specially trained warriors equipped for close encounters. Most marines can handle large spacecraft with massive weapons, but only an elite few are gifted with the ability to strike into the heart of the enemy. Because their jobs are so important, and dangerous, those within the ETF are treated much better than the standard marine.



The Allied Navy is similar to corporations with headquarters located on spacecraft and stations, in turn providing those places as the mercenaries' homes. Although they don't have assets, they have an entire Alliance to keep safe which means everyone's assets are to be protected by the Allied Navy, on a very large scale. Although they don't generate any type of revenue, they are paid for by the Alliance from a percentage of each planet's monthly tax revenue. They have a vast supply of resources, although the majority of them have a military purpose. They differ in their motivations, desires, accommodations, equipment procurement, and benefits. Here's a look at those differences.

Motivations: The Allied Navy is not motivated by public happiness generating tax revenue; that's the responsibility of each government. Instead, they are motivated by public safety on a grand scale. Their job is to protect Alliance Space (a term they use to define the known galaxy) from all hostilities; again only on a grand scale. If a planet is being threatened by a small group of hostiles, mercenaries and Special Forces are expected to intercede. If a planet is being threatened by a hostile species' space fleet, the Allied Navy is expected to intercede. It should be noted that the Allied Navy places planets without a Planetary Defense Force as highest priority as they have no means of protecting their citizens.

Although the geminis work very hard to prevent war amongst Alliance species, the occasion does arise and the Allied Navy is expected to react accordingly. In these occurrences, they are told to use the least amount of force necessary to neutralize the threat as their targets are part of the Alliance. When war occurs with a non-Alliance species, they are given the right to use as much force as necessary to protect all within the Alliance.

The ETF is extremely important in military campaigns for precision strikes in the hopes of debilitating the enemy. These are typically very dangerous missions but ultimately very necessary to win the war.

Desires: Above all other things, the Allied Navy strives for balance within Alliance Space. This doesn't mean that every scuffle needs to be addressed and no hostilities could ever exist; it means the Allied Navy does everything within its power to keep Alliance Space free of major threats. The Allied Navy thus becomes very important in new expansion areas where settlements are still building and planetary defenses have yet to be installed. However, the goal to achieving balance, according to the Allied Navy, is to eradicate all threats before they make it planet-side.

Accommodations: ETF warriors are quite lucky compared to their marine counterparts. Instead of living in shared rooms with dozens of bunks, they get private rooms aboard the Navy's largest ships with a comfort level between community rooms and an officer's quarters. Although these accommodations may seem cramped and boring, they are a treat compared to living in a community room while serving the Navy.

Procurement: The Allied Navy has virtually endless pockets. Its budget is enormous and it manages to stay underneath that consistently year to year. This excess budget allows them to procure whatever equipment is necessary to support the ETF. The only problem is that they are a continuously mobile fleet amongst the stars. Procuring new equipment is not a matter of going down to the nearby vendor and putting it on a corporate credit account. Instead, although procurement avoids the unnecessary red tape, it must travel from the closest planet with inventory through standard or naval shipping channels. This could take days, weeks, or even months. If the item is hard to get within the Navy's current location, it could even take a year. Sometimes the ETF has to make do with what they have on-hand.

Benefits: ETF warriors really get no benefits. They're monthly pay is small, only enough to cover entertainment while at port, although they do get free meals and a private room. Other than that, they don't get anything until retirement from the ETF.

Retirement from the ETF can mean one of two things: leaving the Allied Navy with a healthy pension (commensurate to their Reputation) or transferring to an officer position within the Navy. Those who transfer to an officer position acquire a rank equivalent to their importance within the ETF and given a plush, private room aboard the Navy fleet. From here they can continue what is probably a safer career and eventually retire from the Navy or move on to the House of the Alliance. Some even retire from the Allied Navy's ETF and join a mercenary force, keeping their pension and getting corporate mercenary pay at the same time. In addition to their pension, they get a house assigned by the Allied Navy (also commensurate to their Reputation).

PLANETARY DEFENSE

When a unified planet reaches a certain population threshold (unified meaning the entire planet is led by a single planetary government), typically around one billion, a Planetary Defense Force (PDF) is formed. Prior to this there will be regional armies and militias, but nothing the Alliance considers global. The PDF is the planet-side and near-space military force that protects the planet. Although the Allied Navy will step in when the PDF gets overwhelmed, they are expected to provide their own defensive measures to keep their citizens safe. This includes major rebellions amongst the population and invasion forces from hostile xenos.

The PDF comprises three standard military divisions: army, navy, and air force. The army consists of millions of guard units ready to protect their planet from

threats internal and external. They are also mustered during times of natural disaster. The navy consists of seamen and battleships to address internal and external threats that travel the seas. If a planet doesn't have any water, they won't have a navy. They are also mustered during times of water-born natural disasters and internal pirate threats. The air force has a double duty: combat internal threats throughout the air and combat external threats throughout near-space. Each air force thus has jet planes for air combat and fighters for space combat. They also are typically equipped with at least one space or moon station for training pilots and refueling fighters during combat.

Supporting all three of these divisions is a central group of weaponry, typically manned by the army. These massive weapons are capable of firing accurately into space to destroy enemy fighters. Individually, each weapon can take down a single fighter; collectively they could probably destroy the smallest capital ships. However, they are typically used as support for the air force fighter squads.

The PDF army and navy may employ small bands of elite warriors, but the true excitement lies in the air force Strike Teams. These Strike Teams are small bands of pilots specially trained for the most dangerous combat situations when staring down a hostile invading xenos. In other words, the air force is the first line of defense when a hostile species enters the planetary system, seeking to invade the planet.



The PDF is similar to corporations in that it provides housing for its soldiers, albeit on-base military housing. They don't have assets but are dedicated to protecting the citizens of their planet. In some circumstances, the army's engineers are called upon for major (very large-scale) projects, providing them with revenue. However, the bulk of their money comes from yearly tax revenues from the citizens. They have a vast supply of resources, and unlike the Allied Navy, their vendors are nearby. They differ in their motivations, desires, accommodations, equipment procurement, and benefits. Here's a look at those differences.

Motivations: While the Allied Navy is motivated by public safety on a grand scale, the PDF is motivated by public safety on a planet and planetary system scale. Their reach rarely extends past the habitable planets within their planetary system and never past the ends of their planetary system. Outside of this area is the responsibility of the Allied Navy or a neighboring planetary system if they're nearby.

Their job is to protect their section of space from all threats internal and external. This includes hostile xenos invasions and uprisings amongst the population. All internal threats must be larger than the mercenary forces can handle and external ones must be within the PDF's capabilities. If the PDF cannot handle the external threat, the Allied Navy responds as quickly as possible.

The air force contains the bulk of the PDF's Strike Teams, although the army has been known to assemble them during dire times (such as all-out urban warfare). However, only the air force's Strike Teams are regular pillars of the PDF and always in existence. With larger populations, the PDF trains and maintains additional Strike Teams providing more opportunities for elite warriors. During times of peace, Strike Teams can be found assisting corporate mercenaries, army engineers, and those providing aid for natural disasters.

Desires: The PDF places planetary safety above all other things. Balance isn't always necessary, but when regional or planetary hostilities threaten the general populace, the PDF steps in. If the public is safe from all harm, the PDF allows the hostilities to work themselves out. Some think the PDF allows hostilities to grow out of proportion as it gives them a reason to assemble their army, navy, or air force.

Accommodations: PDF accommodations for Strike Team pilots (or soldiers in the army) are simple, but comfortable. Each one is presented with a simple house upon appointment to a Strike Team (prior to that, they'll have to live in community housing) and can requisition something larger should they marry and have children. Otherwise, they're stuck with their simple house until retirement. They do have the option of transferring from one housing region to another, possibly moving from a colder to a warmer climate or even going from a land-locked state to one near the sea. This would only be available once the pilot has earned their right to move, but it at least gives them something to look forward to before retirement.

Procurement: If the PDF doesn't have something they need, procuring it is similar to the red tape process required by the government. This is due to tighter budgets and ease of acquiring alternate equipment. The PDF doesn't have the luxury of 'we need it now, no questions asked' processes like the Allied Navy and they typically only purchase what they need to outfit their soldiers and pilots.

Benefits: Free housing with the PDF is located on a military base. This offers a home and free meals within the community cafeteria, but that's about it. Sometimes it's possible to requisition a vehicle for the night or while on vacation, but nothing permanent. All those who make it to retirement, especially Strike Team pilots, are given ample pensions (commensurate to their Reputation) and can even find political work within the global government.

MISSION POSSIBLE

You have your galaxy, planets, corporations, characters, and ideas of where those characters are going to travel. Now it's time to pull all that together in a series of missions to either complete a short adventure, extended adventure, mini-campaign, or a full campaign. If you already have a series of missions laid-out, then go ahead and let the players jump right in and play! If you're stuck on where to go, **Mission Possible** contains the GM advice you can use to construct those missions.

MISSION STYLE

Mercenary Breed presents a number of setting themes that can be mixed and matched to create a complete setting and campaign. Those same themes can be used when creating missions. Choose one or more of those themes that directly or indirectly relate to the setting and campaign theme as your starting point. Remember, missions don't always have to match the setting or campaign theme at 100%, particularly in space opera campaigns. For example, your campaign involves political and social maneuvering for a corporation to rise to the top. During that maneuvering, however, the characters must perform a highly military-focused mission akin to a military sci-fi campaign. The purpose of the mission is related to the larger campaign, but is different than the basic space opera theme.

Besides the basic theme of a mission, there are different methods of resolution that can be applied. Keep in mind the players may have different ideas about how to resolve the mission, but the basic design is essentially preserved. Here are a handful of mission styles that can be mixed and matched to create a complete mission. One or more styles can be chosen as each mission probably has a number of encounters that need to be resolved and each one can carry a different style.

APPREHENSION

Apprehension missions are those involving chasing, catching, and interrogating a target. This may include a typical *Savage Worlds* chase in hovercars, motorcycles, ATVs, helicopters, space fighters, or whatever. The chase itself could utilize Boating, Driving, or Piloting skills followed with Intimidation after the suspect has been caught. The thrill of the mission is tracking down the suspect, locating their whereabouts, setting a trap, chasing them as they attempt to get away before finally catching them and then forcing some answers out or throwing them in jail (such as if they had a bounty on their head).

COMBAT

Combat missions are just that: using military force to resolve a conflict. They can be offensive if the characters are tracking down their targets or defensive if the characters are securing a facility under attack. Combat can be long range, close range, melee, in vehicles, and other massive affairs. The last two are discussed more under Large-scale Combat. The location of the combat may be a large open field, tightly packed in a spaceship, or across a deep ravine. Regardless of where, weapons are necessary.

When it finally comes time to build a sci-fi adventure, remember to correlate it with all other aspects of the setting and planet where that adventure resides. Pay attention to technology levels and bases, external influences, the characters' employer, hostile xenos, indigenous creatures, and allied xenos. By aligning the mission to those aspects, the gaps begin to narrow and the adventure becomes a more fluid piece of the setting instead of sticking out like a sore thumb.

DIPLOMACY

Diplomacy missions are those that combine persuasion, lying, knowledge, empathy, and a basic understanding of your compatriots to succeed in your discussions. The purpose of those discussions can vary, but they are always resolved with everything except combat. This could be diplomatic relations with a new species, trying to acquire the rights to land, negotiating between nations to establish peace, or quelling a rebellion with only your words. Although Persuasion appears to be the best skill for diplomatic relations, these types of missions often benefit from different Knowledge skills to either understand and relate to the compatriot, or strike up a conversation to earn this trust. These Knowledge bases could include military tactics, religion, science, or even an understanding of different species and cultures.

DRAMATIC TASK

Although a dramatic task is a single act performed to achieve whatever final outcome is desired, a dramatic task mission is one that uses multiple dramatic tasks across multiple characters to be considered a success. These types of missions are great when time is of the essence and all the actions being performed require either a significant chunk of that time or multiple steps, using the same skill, to be performed. An example of this is flying through an asteroid belt and crashing onto a moon. The characters must work in tandem to repair the ship before their oxygen runs out, their quarry gets away, or their pursuers find them. The number of successes on each dramatic task may determine how well the characters ship is able to fly afterward or if they're able to flee at all. Dramatic task missions can make interesting random encounters or be used in conjunction with extended skill tests.

EXPLORATION

Exploration and investigation missions are those where the characters use their senses alongside skills used for searching: Tracking, Survival, Streetwise, and Investigation. While this could be a matter of discovering clues and piecing them together, it could also be a matter of deciphering a new planet's environment, exploring a nearby jungle, or spelunking into the depths of a dark chasm. The end result could be the recovery of an artifact or lost asset, the rescue of a kidnapped victim, or the discovery of a new species.

EXTENDED SKILL TEST

Extended skill tests are similar to dramatic tasks, except the action being performed is being directly or indirectly opposed. Additionally, each character may offer their own skill test to achieve success as long as those skills complement each other. Success on an extended skill test requires the character to achieve a certain number of successful rolls before experiencing a certain number of failure rolls. The limit of rolls is a sum of the two, although each Raise usually counts as an additional success. Gambling for a large prize that takes 24 rounds to achieve would be an example of an extended skill test. Maybe the character needs four successes before experiencing two failures across four rounds of gambling. Infiltrating a villain's base is another example wherein the characters must roll Lockpicking, Stealth, Notice, and Climbing several times to break in, steal an artifact, and get out without getting caught. The extended skill test may be cumulative whereas across all four skills there must be no more than five failures before achieving fifteen successes.

ROLE PLAYING

Role-playing missions are those that don't use, or rarely use, any skills and instead shines the spotlight on the players to see what they can discover with those around them (people, place, or objects). This could be in the form of vignettes with important NPCs, the calm before a massive battle where tactics are discussed, or even an investigation where the players simply need to steer their characters in the right direction. These types of missions could also be used to track down informants and gather necessary information.

SOCIAL

Social missions sit between role-playing and diplomacy. They are often guided by the words of the character, but a skill roll, such as Persuasion, is called for because their words are being opposed or are meant to change or cloud the minds of those they're directed toward. This may include attempting to convince a rival to join their employer's cause, persuading a politician to pass a certain bill, or wearing disguises during an intimate event. While Persuasion is probably used most often, Stealth and Knowledge may be useful as well.

STEALTH

Stealth missions are those that focus on avoiding direct contact at all costs. Theft, recovery, espionage, and surveillance are common purposes, utilizing Stealth to move about and Notice to ensure you don't get caught. Skills designed for specific uses, like Hacking, Knowledge (Engineering), Lockpicking, and Repair, may become very important as well. The key is to avoid engaging the enemy and get in and out without getting caught.

SURVIVAL

Survival is the polar opposite of exploration. Whereas exploration and investigation find the characters traveling into and through areas to find something, survival finds the characters traveling out of areas without someone (or something) finding them. If the characters crash land on an uncharted planet, they find themselves fighting for their survival against some horrific indigenous creatures. Another type of survival mission is when the characters encounter extreme environments and must finish their mission without succumbing to the hazardous conditions. This could include the intense heat from a volcano or the intense cold from a frozen planet.

ENCOUNTER TIPS

Now that you have a setting, campaign, and mission planned, it's time to create some encounters by choosing the opposition or creating an obstacle that requires skills to overcome. Keep in mind that sci-fi combat and fantasy combat are significantly different affairs that could make the characters' jobs seem too easy. In an open, ranged combat, the characters would spend their time aiming and firing with little to no need for tactics. Whereas fantasy brings characters closer to their opposition or forces them to balance magic and physical attacks, sci-fi has such amazing weapons that the characters may never have to fully encounter their opposition, just be able to see them.

Sci-fi weapons can throw combat balance out the window. Weapons and armor far exceed a modern or fantasy campaign and thus become a factor when attempting to scale the encounters appropriately. However, even if weapons are not equivalent, there are other stats that can be used to even the odds. Fast moving xenos can quickly eliminate the advantage of ranged weapons. Harsh environments can cause Fatigue that slows the party down. Just remember that the characters may have the advantage considering weapons and armor, but they may suffer from being a short humanoid that easily breaks.

Instead of open warfare, it may be more exciting for the players to get involved in tactical combat whereas they have to use skills, movement, cover, and wits to overcome the opposition, not just pointing their weapon and shooting until their target is dead. Unless open warfare is what the players want, tactical combat can be much more memorable and gives purpose to the skills they've chosen for their characters.

SCALING

The Savage Worlds core rulebook discusses scaling encounters across Novice through Legendary Ranks using the Combat Rating method. This is a great method if the opposition is comparable to the characters comprising a group of equivalent Wild Card NPCs, a Wild Card leader and his minions, or a horde of lesser beings. However, when creating and scaling a sci-fi encounter, there is one factor that needs special attention: distance. If the opposition's weapons cannot reach across the distance between them and the characters, but the characters' weapons do, scaling is completely irrelevant. Every time the targets step out of cover, the characters dispose of them easily and the combat becomes boring.

This problem can be overcome by either giving the adversaries better weapons or forcing the characters to close ranks with their targets. Another method is to build a large horde of fast beings that can cross the distance between them and the characters without losing the battle of attrition. Once they arrive, they have enough of their force left to engage in hand-to-hand combat, giving the characters a true run for their money.

ENVIRONMENT

Open warfare can be exciting in military sci-fi campaigns where turned-over vehicles and the continue onslaught of artillery support is the only cover provided to the characters. But when quarters are tight, adjusting the environment so that the characters are at the disadvantage is a great way to make combat more tactical. It's also a great way to scale encounters so that you're not stuck simply creating creatures with a higher Toughness that may be all-but impossible to defeat at higher ranks.

For example, the characters are led into a cave with dark lighting, narrow walkways, and rough terrain. They can only walk two wide, need night vision goggles to see, cannot run, and explosive weapons will backfire and damage them as well. Their target, on the other hand, has low light vision, can climb and walk across the walls, has a skin tone that blends in with the surroundings providing a bonus to stealth, and excels at close combat with razor sharp appendages. The creature doesn't need to have a high Toughness because hitting its Parry becomes that much more difficult and the creature utilizes hit and run tactics. The characters can instead use their skills, such as Notice, Tracking, Knowledge, and Climbing, to gain some type of advantage over the creature. Hopefully they brought quality melee weapons and the fight goes down as a memorable one!

This is an example where the environment is adjusted, instead of the creature's Toughness, to adjust the difficulty of the encounter and make it more tactical.

ARCANE

Just because the characters don't have access to Arcane Backgrounds, per the standard Mercenary Breed mechanics, doesn't mean their adversaries can't. In fact, throwing in an arcane-wielding sorcerer could really throw off the expectations of the characters as they simply cannot fathom how the creature is able to reproduce such abilities. Where this magic source comes from is almost irrelevant, but it

should be presented as something truly extraordinary to the characters. They simply don't understand it! Of course the players do, but that's metagame knowledge. This could force Fear rolls or some type of morale check as the characters are in awe of the display of supernatural ability.

FEAR

Horror is inevitable in any campaign; deciding whether it's enough of a shock to force a Fear test is up to the GM, but this is another tool they can use to make an encounter more difficult. While adding the Fear special ability to the adversary is easy enough, there are other situations when Fear can apply.

For example, a disgusting species may ooze an aura of horrific stench that repulses the senses of the characters. Anyone entering a room where that creature has recently entered must make a Fear test or start retching uncontrollably. Another example is the first sight of a horrendous massacre; so much blood and internal organs spilling out causes a Fear test to avoid running away in terror or going into shock. The latter is especially true if the adversary is a creature that eats humanoids for breakfast. Starting combat Shaken and with a level of Fatigue can be considerably detrimental. Rolling on the Fright Table only makes that worse.

PUZZLES

Another tactical encounter option is to remove combat all together. Allow characters to get involved in incredible puzzles, forcing them to use their skills to figure it out. This can include Climbing, Hacking, Healing, Investigation, Knowledge, Lock-picking, Notice, Repair, and Tracking. This is another way of giving purpose to the skills the players chose, especially when choosing a Knowledge specialty that doesn't normally come into use.

An example could be a search and recovery mission of an abandoned spaceship. The characters must find the damage, make the applicable repairs, bring all systems back on line, ensure the spaceship is capable of flight, and then pilot it back to base. However, if these items are not done perfectly and in the correct order, the spaceship goes nowhere!

LARGE-SCALE COMBAT

Mercenary Breed is a character- and story-focused setting that delegates the use of large-scale combat to the GM. It's not that these types of combat situations won't arise; it's just that Mercenary Breed doesn't offer alternate mechanics to those already available. For vehicle combat using the Chase rules, reference the Savage Worlds core rulebook. For ship-to-ship combat using alterations to the Chase rules, reference the Science Fiction Companion from Pinnacle Entertainment Group. For Mass Battle, reference the Savage Worlds core rulebook and optionally integrate the *Ultimate Game Mechanics Guide: Ground Warfare* from Mystical Throne Entertainment.

This section discusses what the characters can do during these situations.

VEHICLE COMBAT

Vehicle combat can occur almost anywhere. It can be within city limits, in rural areas, throughout the desert, on the water, in the air, or through a jungle. Unless the characters have a chauffeur (which wouldn't be too exciting) they'll need the proper vehicles for a chase.

Within the city, cars, hovercars, motorcycles, and hoverbikes are optimal. If using hover vehicles, use the standard mechanics for all other vehicles with the additional mechanic that hover vehicles ignore small obstacles and rough terrain. In rural areas, faster vehicles could be optimal in addition to those used within the city. On the water, personal watercrafts and jet boats work. In the air, it could be helicopters and fighter planes. You could even launch the characters in space fighters using the same rules as a fighter plane.

Through the jungle, ATVs and hovercrafts (if the jungle has a lot of wetland) are ideal; the most important factor is to have the right vehicle.

The chase mechanics work perfectly for vehicle combat, and there are a number of things a character can do to attack (per the chase rules). Making a standard ranged attack with a ranged weapon is easy enough, but what about using the terrain? Projectiles should move much faster than vehicles on the ground, and if there is optimal terrain, a character could try to block their target or pursuer. Trees and rocks are good obstacles as are stoplights and a geyser that shoots from an explosion underwater.

If the vehicles are next to each other, Mercenary Breed offers many melee weapons that can be used to slash tires, slice into vehicles, or smash windows, anything able to get past its armor. If the characters are being pursued, they could climb into the trunk or open the rear doors of a van and take shots or hurl grenades at their pursuer. If the characters are the pursuers, they could lean out the windows to take shots at their target or use their skills to find a shortcut; they could even call in their contacts to create a roadblock.

SHIP TO SHIP COMBAT

Ship-to-ship combat could be quite common in a sci-fi campaign. If the characters are piloting a small craft, the chase rules should cover it. However, if the characters are a part of the crew within a much larger craft, they're likely to not have a direct hand in the combat and instead serve as Wild Cards able to help the ship win the battle.

During that 'Attack' phase of the chase rules, the characters should be given the opportunity to help influence the direction of the battle to give their ship an advantage. This can be done with the use of various skills to perform whatever action the characters are capable of performing.

- **Hacking:** Hacking can be done across the vastness of space with the right connections and protocols. If a character can succeed at a Hacking roll, maybe they can get into the enemy's ship's computer and plant a bug or even shutdown a weapon system. This should have an appropriate penalty though.
- **Knowledge (Xenos):** If the combat is against a xenos ship, the character with this skill has a better understanding of the enemy's weapons, tactics, and available technology. This may help to overcome any inherent penalties they have otherwise.
- **Navigation:** Characters with knowledge of the stars may know how to read their target's maneuvers if they're fleeing. Maybe they're heading to a desolate moon with a giant cavern to hide in. Maybe they're maneuvering to avoid an asteroid belt. This could provide a bonus to the Piloting roll.

- **Notice:** Characters can also man an observation deck to look for vulnerable spots in their enemy's ship. This can be used as a bonus to a Called Shot or something comparable.
- **Repair:** Characters able to repair a ship should be allowed to do so. This can also be achieved with a Knowledge skill, such as Knowledge (Engineering). Although they shouldn't be able to repair massive external damage, they should be able to prevent further damage inside such as a computer that's been damaged and is beginning to affect its peripherals. This could aid in overcoming damage.
- **Shooting:** Characters can grab a defensive mounted weapon to attack incoming fighters, boarding parties, or obstacles (such as asteroids). This can be used to avoid or overcome a roll on the Complication Table.

MASS BATTLES

Mass battles can be pretty exciting affairs in a sci-fi setting. There are so many high-tech weapons to be used and the opposition can vary significantly from the characters' allies, making tactics that much more important. After establishing the battlefield and prepping the Knowledge (Battle) rolls, let the characters have some type of effect using their skills.

- **Climbing:** Gaining an advantage can be difficult to do when an army is so large that you can't see the end of it. Climbing to a higher vantage point where neither army can reach and getting a better overview of the enemy can provide a huge advantage for support weapons. For example, the artillery cannons can be adjusted to fire upon a command tent that can't be seen from the ground. These orders can easily be relayed across the communication channels.
- **Driving:** Vehicles in a mass battle could offer some interesting support if they're properly equipped and protected. Additionally, if the characters have a slight height advantage, leaving a large truck in the firing lane of the enemy can serve as a good obstacle; as long as the character can get away without getting killed. The driving skill would also be used if the character hopped into a tank and decided to add support.
- **Hacking:** If the enemy speaks a language the characters understand or can quickly translate, hacking into their communication network allows the characters to decipher the enemy's movements before their made.
- **Knowledge (Artillery):** Characters knowledgeable in the use of artillery can man or command one of the support batteries to place the attack in just the right spot.
- **Knowledge (Demolitions):** Demolitions can be laid throughout the battlefield before the enemy begins to advance. The use of this skill could be preemptive to strike at the enemy as they cross the battlefield.
- **Knowledge (Xenos):** If the enemy is an unknown xeno, this knowledge skill can be very helpful to overcome any penalties due to the enemy's advantage or even as a bonus to Morale because the characters understand the enemy's tactics. This could also be used in place of Knowledge (Battle Tactics) where applicable.
- **Piloting:** Characters can offer additional air support in a helicopter, bomber, or fighter plane.

MISSION BUILDING KIT

There are so many methods to build a mission with each producing a significantly different result. But for the truly stuck GM, here is a simple toolkit to help you create your next mission or even a series of them to form an entire campaign.

When creating a new mission, a number of parameters help to define the mission's purpose and framework. These parameters can be combined in many unique ways to create thousands of different missions spanning the entire galaxy.

MOTIVATION

Motivation is the high-level reasoning behind the mission at a fairly generic level. Is it a politically motivated mission or is it motivated by military purposes? Establishing a high-level purpose for the mission helps to align the subsequent choices for framing the mission. Of course, there's always that time when events occurring during the mission fall outside of this framework, but overall the motivational framework remains intact.

Once the highest level of the motivational framework is established, additional details can be determined to focus that motivation. For example, if the mission is motivated by military purposes, maybe it's triggered by a recent invasion or incursion by a known or unknown xenos.

LOCATION

Location is essential for determining the environment that will surround the characters during the mission. Sometimes location needs to be closely tied to the motivation, but not always. This means that missions can plausibly be located anywhere and connected back to the original, high-level motivation. This is mainly because Mercenary Breed has such a wide focus. However, if your setting or campaign is more narrowly focused, then the location should tie directly to the motivation such that it fits within the setting and campaign. For example, if your campaign resides solely on Coursian, a xenos invasion on Skrague probably wouldn't apply.

RESOLUTION

Resolution is the mission's structure for how the characters can resolve it. This is not to say that have to resolve it this way; it's just how the mission is structured. This helps guide the GM for what type of encounters to build and what stat blocks they'll need to create. If the mission is purely a series of skill tests and dramatic tasks, obstacles may be necessary but may not involve NPCs with full stat blocks. Avoid attempting to railroad the encounters by creating enough information within the GM's notes to allow for multiple resolutions. For example, if the characters decide to take a diplomatic route instead of military, create dramatic tasks that can be performed or give the main NPC Persuasion and Charisma.

OPPOSITION

The final stage is to choose the opposition for each encounter, remembering to scale them according to the characters' rank. Remember that encounters can be internally opposed involving someone the characters already met or even work for.

RANDOM MISSION GENERATOR

To create a new mission randomly, use a standard deck of playing cards and deal out a total of four cards. Each card's suit and value defines different aspects of the mission. If a Joker is dealt, place it back into the deck and deal a new card.

READING THE CARDS

The first card's suit defines what is motivating the mission. Its value further defines the driving factors for that motivation.

The second card's suit defines the mission's location. Its value provides additional details about that location.

The third card's suit defines the mission's basic style. Its value further defines that style, although it should only provide direction and be the definitive means of resolution.

The fourth card's suit defines the opposition. Its value provides information about that opposition's technology base.

CARD NUMBER ONE

Club	Political: The mission is politically motivated.
Diamond	Military: The mission involves some type of military motivation.
Heart	Social: The mission involves the public in its motivations.
Spade	Private: The mission is strictly a private matter that few know about.

CARD VALUE (CLUBS)

2-3	Ambassador. The mission involves someone serving as an ambassador.
4-6	Corruption. The mission involves political corruption.
7-8	Diplomacy. The mission involves diplomatic relations.
9-10	Election. The mission is prompted by an upcoming or recent election.
J-Q	Expansion. The mission requires political intervention for a recent or upcoming expansion of the employer's assets.
K-A	Law enforcement. The mission involves government-backed law enforcement.

CARD VALUE (DIAMONDS)

2-3	Invasion. A hostile species or nation is invading another, prompting war.
4-6	Pirates. Space pirates are the reason for military action.
7-8	Rebellion. There is a rebellion brewing or occurring, forcing military intervention.
9-10	Rescue. An important figure has been kidnapped and needs to be rescued through military force.
J-Q	Retaliation. Someone is retaliating in a very hostile manner, possibly building up to a war.
K-A	Takeover. Someone has forcibly taken over one or more of the employer's assets and the characters must take it back through the use of force.

CARD VALUE (HEARTS)

2-3	Environmental. The mission involves some type of public environmental issue that needs to be addressed.
4-6	Expansion. The employer's expansion of their assets is being opposed by the public or a public organization.
7-8	Occult. The mission has an esoteric religious element.
9-10	Religion. The mission has a prominent religious element.

- J-Q** Riots. There is a massive public outcry that needs to be handled delicately.
- K-A** Underground. The mission involves the unruly places of an urban center.

CARD VALUE (SPADES)

- 2** Exploration. The mission requires the characters to explore a new territory before their employer can expand into the area.
- 3** Defensive. One or more of the employer's assets is under attack and must be defended.
- 4** Theft. The characters are asked to steal something from a rival.
- 5** Espionage. The main aspects of the mission are to gather intelligence and spy on a rival or political figure that is opposing the employer.
- 6** Security. A very important function is coming and the characters must provide security for it, including scrubbing the area to ensure everyone's safety.
- 7** Recovery. Something has been stolen from the employer and the characters must get it back.
- 8** Search & Rescue. Someone, or something, important has gone missing and the characters must find him or her.
- 9** Salvage. One or more of the employer's assets has been destroyed or abandoned and the characters must salvage everything inside, including clearing out the reason for the destruction or abandonment.
- 10** Kidnapping. Someone important to the employer has been kidnapped.
- J** Termination. Someone previously important to the employer has been terminated and is causing problems.

- Q** Expansion. An upcoming or recent expansion of the employer's assets is encountering issues that must be resolved.
- K** Military. The employer is involved in a small military skirmish.
- A** Infiltration. The characters must infiltrate a rival force or hostile being covertly, assassinate a leader, perform surveillance, retrieve documents, or whatever is most important to the employer.

CARD NUMBER TWO

- Club** **Planet:** The mission takes place on a terrestrial planet.
- Diamond** **Satellite:** The mission takes place on a planet's satellite.
- Heart** **Spaceship:** The mission primarily takes place aboard a spaceship.
- Spade** **Space Station:** The mission takes place aboard a space station.

CARD VALUE (CLUBS)

- 2** Mountains. The mission takes place in the mountains or foothills.
- 3** Underwater. The mission takes place under the water.
- 4** Island. The mission takes place on an island or archipelago.
- 5** Urban. The mission takes place inside an urban or suburban center.
- 6** Rural. The mission takes place in a very rural area.
- 7** Desert. The mission takes place in a desert or very dry area.
- 8** Forest. The mission takes place in a forest or jungle.
- 9** Swamp. The mission takes place in a swamp or wetland.
- 10** Plains. The mission takes place in the rolling plains.

- J** Headquarters. The mission takes place within or near the employer's headquarters.
- Q** Tundra. The mission takes place in the tundra or near the poles.
- K** Underground. The mission takes place in an underground or cavernous location.
- A** Coastline. The mission takes place on or near a coastline.

CARD VALUE (DIAMONDS)

- 2-10** Moon. The mission takes place on or inside a moon.
- J-Q** Asteroid. The mission takes place on an asteroid orbiting a planet.
- K-A** Planet. The satellite is actually a dwarf terrestrial planet orbiting a gas giant.

CARD VALUE (HEARTS)

- 2-3** Small. The mission incorporates small spacecraft such as fighters or those used for landing activities.
- 4-6** Medium. The mission incorporates medium-sized spacecraft such as those used for exploration and mining.
- 7-9** Large. The mission incorporates large spacecraft such as transport ships.
- 10-J** Capital. The mission incorporates giant capital spaceships.
- Q-A** Navy. The mission involves the Allied Navy fleet.

CARD VALUE (SPADES)

- 2-5** Corporate. The space station is a corporate asset or headquarters.
- 6-10** Pirate. The space station is part of the pirate network.
- J-A** Space lane. The space station is one built to support the space lanes.

CARD NUMBER THREE

- Club** **Investigation:** The mission is primarily and investigative one.
- Diamond** **Skill:** The mission utilizes many types of non-combat skills and skill tests.
- Heart** **Combat:** The mission involves a heavy amount of combat.
- Spade** **Infiltration:** The mission is primarily covert and requires stealth.

CARD VALUE (CLUBS)

- 2-6** Investigation. The mission primarily deals with investigating civilized areas.
- 7-A** Exploration. The mission primarily focuses on exploring unsettled areas.

CARD VALUE (DIAMONDS)

- 2-4** Dramatic task. A lengthy dramatic task is a key factor for the mission.
- 5-7** Gaming. The mission includes some type of gaming or gambling for the characters to move forward.
- 8-Q** Skill test. The mission focuses heavily on non-combat skills whereas the characters must achieve a certain number of successes before acquiring a certain number of failures.
- K-A** Social conflict. A social conflict is a key factor for the mission.

CARD VALUE (HEARTS)

- 2-5** Defensive. The combat is primarily defensive.
- 6-8** Mass battle. The combat includes large-scale attacks.
- 9-A** Offensive. The combat is primarily offensive.

CARD VALUE (SPADES)

- 2-8** Stealth. The characters must make every attempt to remain out of site.
- 9-A** Top secret. Only the characters and their immediate commander know of the mission.

CARD NUMBER FOUR

- Club** **Rival:** The opposition is a rival of the employer.
- Diamond** **Alliance:** The opposition is an Alliance species.
- Heart** **Non-Alliance:** The opposition is a non-Alliance species.
- Spade** **Internal:** The mission is strictly an internal affair.

CARD VALUE (CLUBS)

- 2-4** Lower technology. The rival primarily deals in a slightly lower technology base than the employer.
- 5-J** Same technology. The rival primarily deals in the same technology base as the employer.
- Q-A** Higher technology. The rival primarily deals in a slightly higher technology base than the employer.

CARD VALUE (DIAMONDS)

- 2-4** None. Technology level is not a factor for the mission.
- 5-7** Low technology. The allied species is considered low tech.

- 8-10** Medium technology. The allied species is considered mid tech.
- J-A** High technology. The allied species is considered high tech.

CARD VALUE (HEARTS)

- 2-4** None. Technology level is not a factor for the mission.
- 5-7** Low technology. The non-allied species is considered low tech.
- 8-10** Medium technology. The non-allied species is considered mid tech.
- J-K** High technology. The non-allied species is considered high tech.
- A** Ancient race. The non-allied species is an ancient race with an unknown technology level.

CARD VALUE (SPADES)

- 2-8** Sabotage. The mission deals with the sabotage of the employer's most common technology base.
- 9-A** Legacy. The mission deals with the unearthing of the employer's legacy products that are no longer supported, or possibly under stood.

PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

Once you have the basic elements of the mission, it's time to put them together and add applicable flavor detail; remember to address the following items:

- Theme – Make sure the mission follows the theme, or a compatible theme, of the setting or campaign.
- Travel – If travel is required, how far do the characters have to go and will any random encounters be involved?
- Assets – The employer needs to have a vested interest in the mission. What asset that they own or wish to own is involved?
- Clean-up – What do the characters do with the asset after the mission has been resolved? Does life continue as normal or does the asset need to be brought back to headquarters?

By piecing together all the elements of the mission, making them conform to the setting or campaign, and flavoring it as necessary, the mission is laid-out and ready for applicable encounters. If the card combinations don't make sense, redraw all four, replace a single card, or just choose a different option. If creating new creatures to throw at the characters, consider the **Random Xeno Generator** and the **Random Creature Generator** from the *Xenopedia*. Otherwise choose a selection from the *Xenopedia* and let the game begin!

SAMPLE MISSIONS

It's time to put the toolkits from *Mercenary Breed* and *Xenopedia* to use. The following three missions all have a framework constructed using the **Random Mission Generator** and where applicable, other random generators are used.

SHAKETH BETA

To begin, the Random Mission Generator is used with the following cards being drawn:

1. 2♦ - Military, Invasion
2. K♦ - Satellite, Planet
3. Q♣ - Investigation, Exploration
4. 3♣ - Rival, Lower Technology

After pulling together the basic structure of the mission, here's a summary:

The characters have been assigned, by their employer Peltor Logistics, to investigate the dwarf planet Shaketh Beta, a satellite of the much larger terrestrial planet, Shaketh Alpha. The planet is a gemini home world for the Shaketh Nation, with Shaketh Beta containing a Peltor outpost serving as a maintenance and refueling station along with shipping what few goods are imported and exported by the Shaketh people.

One of Peltor's regional rivals, Space Lanes, Inc., has decided to launch a small military invasion of Peltor's assets within the unsettled areas of Shaketh Beta. They are claiming that Peltor is repressing their employees and many inhabitants on Shaketh Beta, which affects shipping between Shaketh Alpha and Shaketh Beta, where Space Lanes earns one-fourth of their annual revenue. The military invasion is small compared to what the Allied Navy would worry about, comprising around 1,000 soldiers and support personnel. The act is considered hostile, but the Allied Navy refuses to get involved. It's up to Peltor's mercenary force to handle the issue.

Peltor can pull together a military force, but it will take weeks to do so as they need to pull more mercenary forces to the area. Instead, they have tasked the closest mercenary force with investigating Space Lane's force to determine its strengths and if it's even a true threat to the corporation.

After putting together the framework of the mission, the **Random Planet Generator** is used to further create Shaketh Beta. Because the size of the planet has already been chosen, along with the knowledge that it supports life, the first card is not drawn and the second card is drawn until a ♦ appears.

1. Not drawn.
2. 8♦ - Standard; Temperate climate, normal gravity, fractured islands
3. J♦ - Mid-tech; Population less than 100 million, six primary cultures, and monarchy

Shaketh Beta is a water-dominated planet. Its few landmasses consist of a dozen islands scattered about the planet with six of these islands being inhabited. Due to the distance between the islands, each one has a slightly different culture, although each one is led by an elected monarch.

Each inhabited island is home to a Peltor spaceport, allowing shipping of goods to and from the planet off each island. Inter-island shipping is handled by a local

company and shipping to Shaketh Alpha and nearby planetary systems is serviced by Peltor and Space Lanes Inc. Each spaceport employs a number of island residents and Space Lanes Inc. is looking to steal business from Peltor by placing an invasion force on an uninhabited island, claiming they are going to attack each Peltor spaceport and free the employees claimed to be repressed. Space Lanes has also claimed that mutiny is brewing amongst the Peltor employees and their attacks will only bring about mass hysteria. It is as if they're claiming a peace-keeping mission as a means to justify the military action.

BRIEFING

The characters are called into their MMF's office with discerning news about their facilities on Shaketh Beta. It appears that one of their competitors, Space Lanes, Inc., has sent a stern warning to Peltor Logistics that they are on the verge of being invaded by this rival corporation. This military action is supposedly in response to Peltor employees' outcries of repression, claiming that hundreds of employees are citing the need for immediate action against Peltor and are seeking the aid of their closest competitor on Shaketh Beta, Space Lanes.

Peltor has performed an initial investigation of Space Lanes' allegations and found them to be false. The MMF instead views this as a bullying tactic by Space Lanes to gain market share within the shipping of goods to and from Shaketh Alpha and Beta. The scattered islands across Shaketh Beta make it an ideal place to perch an invasion without having to stand in the face of those you're targeting (the threatening force is hundreds of miles from Peltor's facilities).

Peltor doesn't wish to pursue military action against Space Lanes as it could damage their reputation and possibly injure their employees. The MMF is quite certain that Space Lanes intends on damaging Peltor's facilities, causing downtime that can be exploited by their rival. This could significantly grow Space Lanes' shipping revenue, but Peltor ultimately doesn't believe the threat is real.

The MMF has been informed that a team of mercenaries must be assembled to investigate the matter and do everything they can to avoid combat. No one should need to get hurt or killed, although the mercenaries are asked to return to Peltor at all costs necessary. The executives want the matter disposed of as quickly and quietly as possible.

The MMF encourages the characters to use stealth and espionage tactics for this mission. They need to gather enough information about Space Lanes' true intentions and the capabilities of their supposed invasion force.

QUIET APPROACH

As the characters fly planet-side on Shaketh Beta, they need to avoid detection by Space Lanes' invasion force. To do this requires a successful Piloting or Navigation roll, representing superb flying or finding the most optimal route to take. On a failure, the characters' craft is shot at with artillery, requiring a successful Piloting roll to avoid. If that fails, the characters' craft is shot down and they must swim to the island without getting caught.

As the characters approach the island, known locally as Delta Nine, they find a large, uninhabited island now mostly consumed by Space Lanes' invasion fleet. Artillery can be spotted with a successful Notice roll (if they were shot down, no roll is needed), alongside larger aircraft meant to transport soldiers across vast distances. There are no discernible weapons on the aircraft, but they are large enough to haul a formidable force to another island. There are a total of six of these aircraft (one for each attack Space Lanes is threatening to launch).

The large flat part of the island has been turned into a runway for the aircraft (they have vertical thrusters which require very little runway) and a series of three large, temporary buildings. Space Lanes' construction is meant to be put up and taken down quickly (this can be discerned with a successful Notice roll) and probably wouldn't last through a hurricane.

The rest of the island is empty, except for indigenous flora and fauna, due to its rocky terrain and thick jungles. Sentries are not posted throughout and Space Lanes seems content to only guard the flat areas of the island. This allows the characters to approach from the rear of the three buildings. (No Stealth roll is needed if approaching from the rear.)

SURVEYING

GM's Note: *Everything within this section can be seen on a successful Notice roll or through role-playing.*

Each of the three buildings is large enough to house barracks for the troops, offices for the generals, a mess hall, and a large shop for storing munitions. Fortunately for Peltor, the munitions storage is currently empty. Although the guards have guns, the remaining soldiers throughout the area don't. (Only 5% of the soldiers currently have weapons and they're all on guard duty.) Scattered throughout the area are also support personnel tending to the needs of the soldiers.

Flanking the large aircraft are six helicopters (one for each aircraft). Although the aircraft do not have weapons, the helicopters do. All of them are currently sitting quietly with only maintenance being performed. However, the helicopters look fairly old and it's possible the maintenance is to get them working (GM's discretion).



The remaining outdoor areas around the base have been given over to troop entertainment. When not on guard duty, the soldiers are playing games and enjoying their down time. Upon closer examination, most of the soldiers look as though they could be properly trained, but are definitely much too young to be elite or veterans. (In fact, they are all new recruits.)

GATHERING INTELLIGENCE

After the initial surveys outside, the characters need to continue their investigation inside the buildings. Allow the players to find constructive means of gaining access to the building, or require a successful Stealth roll from each character. If anyone fails, the guards become more alert, providing them a +1 to Notice rolls when opposing the characters' Stealth rolls.

From here, the characters need to navigate through the building to continue their investigation. If they're able to find and don guard outfits, they can roll Persuasion with a +2 bonus instead of Stealth for much of the mission. Otherwise they need to sneak around and periodic Stealth rolls should be required.

The barracks provide little information to the characters. They find hundreds of rows of cheap bunk beds suitable for a force of this size. Packs can be found with clothing inside, but again there are no weapons to be found.

The mess hall always has someone inside either preparing or serving food. The support personnel don't regard the characters as anything more than workers in the buildings (or soldiers) and tend to ignore their presence. They have no information to provide other than they were called here to work the mess hall and arrived a few days ago.

The only intelligence of value to the characters is what they can find within the offices. However, gaining access could prove difficult as each one is locked when no one is inside or they are occupied by an officer. (The officers aren't actual military officers and are instead more like politicians.)

OFFICER ROOMS

Which room the characters find the following information in is at the GM's discretion. There are a total of three officer rooms in each of the buildings for a total of nine. If the mission needs to be longer, have the information scattered throughout all three buildings, forcing the characters to maneuver their way into and through each without getting caught.

The following pieces of information can be found in the officer rooms either with a successful Notice, Investigation, or Hacking roll or through role-playing:

- The munitions storage shops are all for show. Not only are they now empty, but records indicate there are no shipments of weapons scheduled to the island. The guards are equipped with weapons and fully-loaded clips, but those are the only weapons and clips that are going to be delivered. Space Lanes Inc. did not follow standard protocol to procure the weapons, nor do they really have the funds to do so. The hope is that as long as they appear to have a capable army, Peltor will give in to their demands and relinquish control of some of their shipping business. The cost of outfitting the soldiers could outweigh additional revenue from gaining the additional shipping business.

- Personnel records show that all of the soldiers on base are new recruits hired by Space Lanes, pulled from Shaketh Alpha's Planetary Defense Force. None of them have seen action in the field and most have just recently finished their first year of training. The PDF appeared willing to allow the soldiers the opportunity to assist Space Lanes, although their purpose was undefined.
- Electronic communication between the officers shows they have concocted a story for the soldiers that the base was set-up as a military training exercise. The soldiers have been told they are not actively involved in a military conflict, but this live exercise provides exposure to possible real experiences including the set-up and use of temporary facilities during remote operations.
- All of the soldiers conscripted into this army lack specialized training and have only received the basic training required by the PDF. None of them can fly the helicopters or aircraft, but are optimal for guard or battlefield duty. Most of them have performed active guard duty before, but none have seen active battlefield duty.
- The helicopters and aircraft were delivered five days prior, but the pilots for the craft have not shown up. There appears to be confusion between the officers on whether or not any pilots have been contacted for the job. One of the officers speculates the helicopters and aircraft are also part of the show Space Lanes Inc. is putting on and none are going to be hired.
- Each soldier is responsible for one shift of guard duty per week. There are enough weapons and armor to outfit 50 guards and each guard serves one shift in a three-shift rotation. The guards then rotate shifts for the following week – if they worked the first shift one week, they'd work second the next and the third the week after that. This provides enough coverage for the base according to Space Lanes Inc. The officers prefer to double the number of guards per shift, but their employer refuses to purchase the equipment for it.
- During their downtime, soldiers are required to perform some type of physical activity at least four hours a day. This keeps them from getting sluggish and provides something for the soldiers to do. Most soldiers have turned to playing sports or other games, including hiking across the island. Morale amongst the soldiers is actually quite high and they all seem to be enjoying their assignment.
- None of the soldiers have been made privy to the target of their supposed attacks. They are completely unaware that the targets are civilian targets with many innocent workers inside.
- The soldiers are regularly told that their weapons are being stored on another island for safe keeping. Before launching the attack, the weapons will be delivered by boat. This is meant to keep the overall operation safe from sabotage. Of course, it's a complete lie and there are no weapons other than those assigned to whoever is on guard duty.

SPOTTED

While moving through the buildings, the characters' Stealth rolls are unopposed. Most of the guards are outside and those inside are easily distracted. If moving into a more sensitive area (such as the officer rooms), guards will be paying attention and Stealth rolls are opposed by the guards' Notice. If the characters are spotted, the guards move to apprehend them. They prefer to subdue the characters, but if weapons are drawn, the guards return fire. Should this happen, there are 50 guards and 9 officers with weapons alongside 950 unarmed soldiers.

If the characters get caught, they are bound and thrown into a room for interrogation. The officers have little skill in interrogation and can probably be easily subdued for an escape. Getting caught incurs a +2 bonus to the guards' Notice rolls while the characters are escaping. Escaping can be done as a Stealth Dramatic Task or a chase scene.

- Guard (two per character)

LEAVING

The characters must get off the island alive with the intelligence they've gathered. Depending on what they were successful in finding, it should be obvious that Space Lanes' army is essentially bogus. There are no more weapons or armor; there are no pilots for the helicopters and aircraft; the soldiers think they're on a training exercise and would probably question a real attack.

As suspected, the invasion is a bullying tactic. Space Lanes is just attempting to steal market share from Peltor. After bringing the gathered intelligence to the MMF, Peltor exposes the phony invasion threats and embarrasses Space Lanes publicly. The maneuver will probably cost them market share, lead to an investigation by the Alliance, or the people will just ignore like they do with so many other corporate squabbles.

- Guard (one per character)
- Officer (one per two characters, rounded down)

ADVERSARIES

GUARD

The soldiers are only active while on guard duty. There are only enough weapons to support fifty guards.

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d6, Spirit d4, Strength d6, Vigor d4

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 6 (2)

Skills: Fighting d6, Notice d4, Shooting d6

Armor: Tactical suit light (All +2)

Weapons: Knife (Str+d4), submachine gun (24/48/96, 2d6, RoF 3, Shots 30, AP 1, Auto)

OFFICER



The officers are politicians with a small amount of military training.

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d8, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d6

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 5

Skills: Fighting d8, Knowledge (Politics) d6, Notice d6, Shooting d8

Armor: None

Weapons: Knife (Str+d4), hand pistol (12/24/48, 2d6+1, RoF 1, Shots 17, AP 1, Semi- Auto)

SUPPORT PERSONNEL

Support personnel are the non-soldiers working in the buildings.

Attributes: Agility d4, Smarts d6, Spirit d4, Strength d4, Vigor d4

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 2; **Toughness:** 4

Skills: Notice d6

Armor: None

Weapons: None (Improvised weapons only)

SWARM CONTAINMENT

To begin, the Random Mission Generator is used with the following cards being drawn:

1. Q♠ - Private, Expansion
2. 10♥ - Spaceship, Capital
3. 6♣ - Investigation, Investigation (Civilized)
4. 5♥ - Non-Alliance, Low Technology

After pulling together the basic structure of the mission, here's a summary:

The characters are employed by Genesis Holdings, with a focus on their Delphi Mining activities. On their way to serve as diplomats to the halilupas on the mining-planet Hail (see the *Xenopedia*), their capital ship becomes the victim of a particularly nasty disturbance throughout its public decks.

Delphi's capital ship was transporting a large shipment of gemstones to a Precious Stones facility when the crates began to fall apart. From within the cracks and holes in those crates came hundreds of small bugs. The containment crew aboard the ship thought little of the bug infestation and moved to contain the creatures (this is a somewhat common occurrence when mining on exotic planets), but failed miserably. The bugs apparently grew and multiplied rapidly; the containment crew quickly became overwhelmed. Using the ventilation shafts, all public decks now have some type of bug infestation.

These bugs are about the size of a gemini's fist and the workers are too panicked to do anything about it. Thankfully for the crew, Delphi never leaves without a mercenary crew aboard. They have mustered their mercenaries and assigned them to rid the ship of the infestation without any casualties or damage to the ship.

With the framework of the mission in-place, the bugs need to be created. The xenos from the *Xenopedia* are much too large for this simple infestation so a new one will be created using the **Random Creature Generator**. Most of the bugs' features are defined, so instead of drawing cards, the characteristics will be chosen.

1. The bugs are small insects, equivalent to drawing a 3♣.
2. The bugs have a chitinous shell, but their size means it only provides Armor +1. To keep things simple, the bugs have the ability to bite and sting, but as a swarm (MBT). This is equivalent to drawing an 8♣.
3. Because they are bugs, they should have the ability to walk on walls, equivalent to drawing another 8♣.

Although the cards were not drawn, due to the bugs being partially defined, this is a demonstration of how to apply the **Random Creature Generator** if we were to draw cards or choose the desired characteristics. (If you shuffle between each card pull, drawing two 8♣ is possible.)

No one knows what the bugs are, but the characters are free to give them a name once the mission is over (this is a right provided by the House). For now, they'll simply be called a Bug and a Bug Swarm.

BRIEFING

The characters are on the ship when the infestation breaks out. Their MMF recaps that the ship is being threatened by some type of insect infestation and the workers in the public decks are apparently too afraid to do anything about it. The MMF doesn't really know why, but reports have come in that the infestation is "really bad and out of control." He's not sure why a group of exterminators haven't been sent, but is assigning his mercenaries to address the issue. "Get rid of these bugs, but don't damage the ship," is really all he has to say to the characters.

NAVIGATING THE CRAFT

Delphi's capital ship is very large, as most capital ships are. It has a total of 35 decks with 15 of them considered public. These decks include: living quarters, entertainment, cafeteria, gymnasium, warehouse, outfitters, plus health and wellness. The ship is broken into four quadrants, loosely defining their use. From top to bottom, they are: navigation and engineering, support, military, and public. Navigation and engineering cover 10 decks. This includes the bridge, power facilities, and engineering maintenance. Support covers 5 decks and includes technical workers, mercenaries, internal maintenance, and docking stations. Military covers 5 decks and includes all soldiers, equipment, and vehicles being transported. At this time, the military deck is mostly empty as Delphi is not engaging in any military actions.

The characters are in the support quadrant with the MMF's office located on Deck 23 (their living quarters are located on Deck 22). Computer scans show the infestation has not made it past Deck 18, meaning the characters will have to purge parts of the military quadrant in addition to the public quadrant. Each deck can be reached by the main elevator. A second elevator is used for reaching the navigation and engineering quadrant, but the characters shouldn't need it.

What deck order the characters take during this mission is up to them. To make it easier, each deck is noted below, allowing them to pick and choose what direction they take. Thus, they can start at the bottom (Deck 1) and work to the top (Deck 18), or vice versa.

PURGING THE INFESTATION

Being that the characters are inside a capital ship, they are advised against using destructive force. Besides, swarms are immune to their standard projectile weapons due to their ability to simply avoid bullets. Allow the characters to be creative in their weapons, although hand flamers and flamethrowers should be allowed (regardless of Reputation requirements). Plasma weapons are not allowed but simple fragmentation grenades are. The decks can withstand those types of blasts and the maintenance crews will clean up the shrapnel.

The characters are free to choose which deck they travel to. There's no order needed, although the encounters and environment change slightly. Each deck is noted here from top to bottom for simplicity's sake.

MILITARY DECK 18

Deck 18 is split into two areas. Half of the deck is part of the hangar that stretches from Decks 16 to 18. The other half is living quarters and private rooms for the officers. The officers' hallway ends in a large glass window overlooking the hangar. One cannot enter the hangar from here as the only entrance is on Deck 16; however, they can see everything in the hangar.

The military deck is empty of soldiers and officers, but six helicopters can be seen, in the hangar, from the officers' window. Swarms of bugs are apparent,

although their size is not discernable from this level. Throughout the offices and living quarters, ventilation can be seen with swarms of small bugs coming through.

- Bug Swarm (two)

MILITARY DECK 17

Deck 17 is also split into two areas. Half of the deck is part of the hangar while the other half comprises two very large conference rooms with many screens along the walls and connections for various handheld devices built into the tables. Ventilation can be found in the hallways and the conference rooms. However, the ventilation in the conference rooms doesn't connect to the central ventilation to avoid sound traveling from the conference rooms. Thus, the bug swarms coming through the ventilation only come out of the hall way ventilation. There is no window overlooking the hangar.

- Bug Swarm (two)

MILITARY DECK 16

Deck 16 is actually twice the height of Decks 17 and 18. Half of it is utilized by the hangar and the other half by a series of training and activity rooms. Ventilation is numerous as these rooms tend to smell quite bad during training exercises. Many bug swarms can be found, but they seem to be concentrated in the hangar.

- Bug Swarm (six, two in the rooms, four in the hangar)
- Bug (two in the hangar)



PUBLIC DECK 15

Deck 15 actually serves the public and military decks. It comprises a number of outfitters who supply necessary gear, supplies, clothing, consumables, and pretty much every tangible good needed on the ship outside of food. The bug swarms seem to be drawn to those selling clothing.

- Bug Swarm (two)

PUBLIC DECK 14

Deck 14 is an extension of Deck 15, although it doesn't serve the military decks. It includes many outfitters and has a couple restaurants as well. The bugs seem to be drawn to the restaurants.

- Bug Swarm (two)
- Bug (four)

PUBLIC DECK 13

Deck 13 is a maintenance deck and is only accessible with a maintenance key-card. Ventilation maintenance can be performed here, along with electrical and network maintenance. Thus, all ventilation leads to the maintenance deck somehow, although those requiring privacy have special enclosures to prevent sound from passing through. There seems to be a high concentration of bugs on this deck.

- Bug Swarm (four)
- Bug (two per character)

PUBLIC DECK 12

Deck 12 is an entertainment deck. This deck includes nightclubs, bars, restaurants, and a large lounge. The bugs are particularly drawn to the bars and restaurants.

- Bug Swarm (four)
- Bug (one per character)

PUBLIC DECK 11

Deck 11 is an entertainment deck, mostly consumed by a large movie theater. The rest of the deck is consumed by physical entertainment centers. There are few bugs on this floor.

- Bug Swarm (two)

PUBLIC DECK 10

Deck 10 is a living quarters deck. These quarters are larger than those on lower decks and are owned by wealthier individuals. There are actually no bugs on this deck and all the owners of the facilities on Decks 11 – 15 are huddled here for their safety. They have apparently been fending off the swarms that appear from the ventilation shafts. They do not need any assistance and assure the characters they have everything under control.

PUBLIC DECK 9 – 5

Decks 9 through 5 are the common living areas for the rest of the public personnel. Many of them have locked themselves inside their rooms as the hallways are filled with bugs. Each deck has about the same number of bugs.

- Bug Swarm (one per character)

PUBLIC DECK 4

Deck 4 is the health and wellness deck. It comprises a large clinic with a small area for more serious reasons (akin to a hospital). There are few workers left behind, and those that are still here are spending all their time fending off the bugs to keep their patients safe.

- Bug (two per character)

PUBLIC DECK 3

Deck 3 is the large cafeteria that serves the entire ship. The food here is quite basic and not nearly as nice as the restaurants and has attracted a large number of bugs. To make it easier for the characters, the bugs are separated into four areas throughout the cafeteria. The quantity below denotes the number of bugs in each area.

- Bug Swarm (two)
- Bug (one per character)

PUBLIC DECK 2

Deck 2 is split in two between the shipping/receiving dock and the warehouse. The dock stretches across Decks 1 and 2 with warehousing space on each. The workers here have all fled and only the bugs remain.

- Bug Swarm (four)

PUBLIC DECK 1

Deck 1 is split in two between the shipping/receiving dock and the warehouse. The warehouse on this deck is where the infestation began as the crate housing the bugs is located in the warehouse.

- Bug Swarm (four, in the dock room)
- Bug (three per character, in the warehouse)

ALL CLEAR

Once the characters have purged the infestation, the MMF provides the all-clear notice so that everyone can get back to work or whatever they were doing. It takes at least a day for the personnel to be comfortable enough to go back to their daily routines, but eventually the ship goes on like nothing happened.

ADVERSARIES**BUG**

These bugs grow and reproduce extremely fast. Upon fully maturing, they are the size of a gemini's fist and no longer swarm together.

Attributes: Agility d4, Smarts d4 (A), Spirit d4, Strength d4, Vigor d6

Pace: 2; **Parry:** 4; **Toughness:** 4 (1)

Skills: Fighting d4, Notice d6

Special Abilities

- **Armor +1:** Thin chitinous shell
- **Bite/sting:** Str+d4
- **Flight:** Bugs have a Flying Pace of 12" with a Climb of 12". They cannot run.
- **Insect:** Bugs are capable of walking on walls and ceilings, and move at their full Pace when doing so. No Climbing rolls are necessary.
- **Size -2:** Full-grown bugs are the size of a fist.
- **Small:** Attackers incur a (-2) penalty to hit the full-grown bugs.

BUG SWARM

These bugs grow and reproduce extremely fast. Before they grow, they swarm together in large groups of tiny bugs.

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d4 (A), Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d6

Pace: 2; **Parry:** 4; **Toughness:** 4 (1)

Skills: Notice d4

Special Abilities

- **Armor +1:** Thin chitinous shell
- **Bite/sting:** 2d4, MBT, automatically hit
- **Flight:** The bug swarm has a Flying Pace of 12" with a Climb of 12". They cannot run.
- **Insect:** Bug swarms are capable of walking on walls and ceilings, and move at their full Pace when doing so. No Climbing rolls are necessary.
- **Split:** The bug swarm may split into two smaller swarms (Small Burst Templates). The Toughness of these smaller swarms is reduced to 3.
- **Swarm:** Parry +2; the bug swarm comprises hundreds of the small bugs. Cutting and piercing weapons do not deal damage while area-effect weapons work as normal and a character may stomp (if the swarm isn't flying) and inflict his damage in Strength each round.

PIRATE ESPIONAGE

To begin, the Random Mission Generator is used with the following cards being drawn:

1. 5♠ - Private, Espionage
2. 9♠ - Space Station, Pirate
3. 4♣ - Investigation, Investigation (Civilized)
4. A♠ - Internal, Legacy

After pulling together the basic structure of the mission, here's a summary:

Militant Marines, the characters' employer, has a slight issue; pirates have stolen a cache of legacy armor and weapons from a remote warehouse. The facility was supposed to have been fully secured, but the pirates were able to get past the security measures and steal everything inside the warehouse.

Militant needs to get the gear back, but the now fully-equipped pirates will overwhelm any mercenary force thrown at them. Therefore, Militant needs the characters to infiltrate a pirate space station, find where the armor and weapons are being stored or used, and notify the Allied Navy as to the whereabouts. With any luck, the Allied Navy will destroy the pirates or at least run them off and provide Militant with the opportunity to recover the stolen gear.

The characters must proceed with extreme caution. Militant stresses the use of espionage for the mission to avoid mercenary death. However, the characters may need to rely on their wits and weaponry to avoid sticky situations and get off the space station alive. As long as they obtain information regarding the whereabouts of the gear, the characters are free to do whatever else is necessary to get that information back to Militant (or possibly directly to the Allied Navy).

BRIEFING

The characters' MMF is livid as they walk into this office, beckoned once again for another mission. His ire is quite obvious as he stares at a series of photos projected on the wall depicting the break-in. An old warehouse located on Theta was broken into by pirates. The warehouse was supposed to have been highly secured, but the

pictures depict large holes in the walls where the bulk of Militant's legacy cache is stored.

After intense interrogation, it was found that not only were the guards not properly trained for this type of situation, maintenance on the building had been neglected and the security system was intermittent at best. With all these factors considered, the pirates were easily able to overwhelm the poorly trained guards and break through the no-longer secured wall. There are suspicions that the pirates knew this information and attacked that particular wall for a reason. However, the interrogations have yet to prove this. A force of corporate security officers have been sent to the warehouse. Upon arrival, they fired the entire staff at the warehouse and are working diligently to repair the damage, perform building maintenance, repair the security system, hire new employees, and get the guards properly trained.

The MMF continues to stomp about showing his disgust over the sloppiness of the warehouse and how "it must have been an inside job!" Regardless of the situation, the pirates have a cache of Militant's legacy armor and weapons. All of these items need to be recovered for fear of the pirates using them against Militant and any corporation they run into. If they do, Militant will most likely receive backlash for the breach of the warehouse, damaging their reputation and possibly leading to losses in revenue.

Recovery is of the utmost importance and Militant has assigned four mercenary forces to deal with the issue. Each one is assigned a sector to search where pirates have been regularly encountered. The MMF informs the characters that they must use extreme caution when entering pirate territory and should probably pass themselves off as either merchants or rebels. They have been assigned a temporary spacecraft with no Militant Marines markings and signatures that suggest it's used for mercantile purposes.

The characters are told specifically that engaging the space pirates in combat would result in certain death. Instead, they should find out where the equipment is and report back so that a fleet can be sent to deal with the space pirate ship.

APPROACH

The characters have been assigned to search the galactic region around Theta. The pirate space station is located well off the space lane between Coursian and Theta, thus requiring the characters to search for it. Finding the space station requires a successful Navigation roll to locate it within one day. If none of the characters have Navigation, it takes them three days, which has a slight consequence later on.

Pirate space stations don't really care who lands and who avoids them, as long as they're not from the Allied Navy. However, at this time, they are on the look-out for Militant Marines spacecraft, thus requiring the characters to maintain a façade. Once the pirates think the characters are not from either threat, they're ignored and allowed to go about their business.

The pirate space station has numerous rebels, deserters, rogues, and the like that came from a mercenary force or even the Allied Navy. As long as they dock without ties to their former employer, no one cares. This is just another way the space station stays safe. If a ship were to approach baring the marks of hostility (the Allied Navy, a corporation with particular interests against the space station, etc.), the space station opens fire and blares klaxons internally so that all those present can assemble their fleet and attack. If the characters don't approach under disguise, they will be met with serious firepower and their ship will be destroyed.



DOCKED

Once the characters dock their ship, they are free to move about the entire space station at their leisure. There are no restricted areas, no greeters, and really no one to cares that they've arrived unless they make trouble. There are no maps on the space station showing where anything is. There are no billboards advertising what's available. Most places have a sign over their entrance so that newcomers know what to expect, otherwise navigating the space station is at the whims of those aboard.

The characters can either wander around and search through the locations noted below or they can define what type of place they're looking for and be pointed in the proper direction. Even pirates and rogues are willing to give directions to the best bar in the space station! If the characters are stuck, a Streetwise roll will help.

DEEP SPACE

Deep Space is a restaurant and lounge. Its food is one of the best, and most expensive, on the space station. Local business owners dine here often, but pirates and rogues are less likely to be present. The atmosphere is one of comfort, but the prices are usually too much for an entire pirate crew or the lonely mercenary deserter. The patrons at Deep Space have a lot of knowledge regarding the space station, although they're usually tight lipped. The best way to get them to talk is to buy them drinks while their siting at the bar.

The characters can discern the following from Deep Space's patrons:

- Deep Space is most popular among local business owners.
- The owner, Darex Helio, was a fence for many decades. He built a large savings and opened Deep Space for the purpose of providing good food to the space station's locals.

- Darex Helio is a master chef, in addition to being a fence (although he's no longer working as a fence).
- Some of the patrons willingly provide the names of a good fence for newcomers.
- Deep Space patrons are more open to newcomers that aren't pirates than any other establishment. Part of this is to woo the newcomers into visiting their business.
- Most of the local business owners don't keep tabs on the comings and goings of the space pirates.
- Most of the local business owners loathe the pirates, but put up with them because they bring a lot of money to the space station.
- The space station was originally established for merchants wishing to deal outside of Alliance jurisdiction. As the Alliance has grown, the merchants have moved their dealings farther out into space. The space station then turned to supporting the pirates for regular income.
- The space station is actually more profitable supporting pirates than merchants.
- The warehouse makes a lot of money from pirates who store their loot.

GEMINOT

Geminot is a comedy club and entertainment center. It attracts many pirates as the humor there changes little from day to day (locals find it repetitious). There are many loose lipped patrons enjoying their booze and inexpensive entertainment. There is even a small gambling den in the back.

The characters can discern the following from Geminot's patrons:

- Geminot is reportedly owned by a space pirate.
- It features comedy acts, exotic dancing, card tournaments, live music, and rent able party space. The featured act changes from day to day.
- Most pirates come here at least once on their stay to the space station.
- A large group of pirates docked and came straight to Geminot a few days ago.
- Several of those pirates passed out in the bar area, apparently while celebrating.
- None of those pirates were gambling, nor did they seem to have that much money available (most acts are very inexpensive to watch).
- When those pirates entered, only the captain was armed.
- Most pirates that come to Geminot carry weapons out of habit.

ROCKET'S HOLE

Rocket's Hole is a popular bar. It attracts the rogue crowd more than the pirate crowd and is a good place to gather rumors from those living in the space station. The characters should use extreme caution with what they say or ask. They need

to be friendly as signs of intimidation will be met with physical force. Rocket's Hole's patrons are not about to be bullied around and they're bound to get suspicious if the characters forcefully interrogate them.

The characters can discern the following from Rocket's Hole's patrons:

- Rocket's Hole is a favored spot amongst the locals.
- The owner, Tek Smithe, used to be a mercenary, but retired and opened up Rocket's Hole on the pirate space station.
- Tek welcomes all patrons, but tries to avoid particularly vile pirates.
- Tek has been known to stow the occasional mercenary deserter.
- Tek has helped fake the death of more than one mercenary deserter.
- A pirate ship came in a few days ago with a loot of gear.
- Rumors say that the pirates divided up the loot after stealing it.
- Several pirate ships have come in during the past few days, but none have had any loot besides the one.
- No one knows which ship or pirate crew had the loot.
- Most pirate crews on the space station are really not that dangerous.
- Only a couple dozen pirates actually live in the space station.
- Most pirates come to the space station to regroup, fence and store loot, meet with others, seek entertainment and refreshments, or simply rest.

"WEASEL" FRAN

Fran, nicknamed "Weasel", is a fence. He's currently the most popular choice for fences, but the popularity can change from month to month. Fran is an arrakin (see the Xenopedia) who got his name from his ability to weasel his way in and out of deals. As is typical for his species, Fran is an excellent businessman, and manages to get the best prices for almost everything brought before him.

Like many fences, Fran views anonymity much higher than most on the space station. (His job pretty much requires it.) Gathering information from him is quite difficult, unless the right questions are asked. His will cannot be broken, but his greedy desires often set people down the right path toward getting the information they seek.

Talking to Fran is a bit more difficult than with others. He cannot be persuaded, intimidated, or taunted. He refuses to answer questions of a private manner, and will never divulge any information relating to the pirates he serves. However, he is a businessman and is always looking to buy, sell, or trade.

- If the characters ask about purchasing armor, weapons, or gear: "I have a small amount of gear left, but haven't received any new armor or weapons in weeks."
- If the characters ask about selling armor, weapons, or gear: "You'll have to wait a few days as I'm in the middle of a big shipping deal."
- If the characters ask if Fran has received any new shipments in lately: "My last deal was weeks ago, but I'm in the middle of a big shipping deal now."

- If the characters ask where to bring the goods they wish to broker: “Just leave it on your ship or bring it to one of the storage warehouses. I’ll put together a crew to inspect and retrieve it.”
- If the characters ask which method above is the most popular: “I prefer to broker through the warehouses. It’s safer than boarding someone’s ship.”

Fran is used to newcomers asking him odd questions. Often times, newcomers are looking to undercut competitors, get better deals than rivals, or avoid using the same fence as someone they distrust. He shrugs off any question not related to the above and hurries the characters along if they don’t have something ready to broker. (He’s also used to people contacting him before they’re ready to deal.)

WORD ON THE STREET

The characters are free to wander around the space station, eavesdropping on people’s conversations, stopping random strollers and asking information, striking up conversations with willing parties, or whatever they can think of while outside an actual venue. Either by using Streetwise or simply asking the right questions, they can discern the following:

- The warehouse area has been very busy lately.
- A large pirate ship docked a few days ago.
- There was a ruckus at Rocket’s Hole the other day as a pirate crew was partying after a huge score and got too drunk.
- Crates were seen being brought from the warehouse to the docking bays.
- No crates have been brought from the docking bays to the warehouse.
- A pirate captain that docked days ago has been looking for new recruits.

VITAL INFORMATION

After gathering information, there is a set of vital pieces that should be pieced together in one way or another.

1. The pirates docked at the space station.
2. They did not fence the stolen Militant Marines equipment.
3. They removed items from their loot storage.
4. They’re recruiting new pirates.
5. They have not contacted a fence (because they’re not fencing the gear).
6. The original equipment cache was divided up. (Don’t worry, the characters only need to chase down one while the other mercenary forces will chase down the others. However, GMs could opt to add other searches as new missions, but this isn’t required.)
7. Other than getting too drunk, the pirates haven’t done anything to disturb the daily lives of those on the space station.

PREPARING TO LEAVE

The pirates are at the space station to load up other goods from storage onto their ship. They stayed a few extra days for entertainment, but are slowly preparing the ship to leave. If the original Navigation roll required to find the space station did not succeed, the ship is leaving as the characters walk into the docking bay. If they succeeded on their Navigation roll, the ship is still being loaded with supplies.

The pirate crew is quite large, so that characters are not advised to engage in combat. If they do, use the stats below. However, there are at least ten pirates per character, plus the captain (a Wild Card of the Space Pirate stat block). Instead, as requested by Militant, the characters are to provide their MMF (or the Allied Navy) with the information they need to track down the ship and force it to surrender the equipment.

If the ship is still in the docking bay, the following description can be easily discerned without any rolls necessary. If the ship is preparing to leave, each description note can be discerned on a successful Notice roll. If the characters don't get enough of a description, allow them to chase after the space pirates.

- The space pirates' ship is dark grey.
- The marking "XC1185" is noticeable on both sides, but someone has clearly tried to remove them (a failed attempt).
- It's a fast transport trip and the FTL drives are clearly visible.
- The helm is in the nose of the ship.
- Large plasma cannons are mounted on both sides.
- [Only if still docked] The cargo section clearly cannot hold the entire cache of equipment stolen from Militant Marines.

ADVERSARY

SPACE PIRATE

Space pirates are a dime a dozen. Each one differs little from the other and most are pulled from the belly of society.

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d6

Pace: 6; **Parry:** 5; **Toughness:** 6 (1)

Skills: Climbing d8, Fighting d6, Navigation d4, Notice d6, Repair d6, Shooting d8, Taunt d6, Throwing d6

Armor: Leather (All +1)

Weapons: [2] Knife (3/6/12, Str+d4), hand pistol (12/24/48, 2d6+1, RoF 1, Shots 17, AP 1, Semi-Auto)

Other Weapons on Ship: Hunting rifle (50/100/200, 2d8, RoF 1, Shots 5, AP 2, Snap fire), crossbow (15/30/60, 2d6, RoF 1, AP 2, 1 action to reload)

SAVAGE TALES

Presented here is a collection of savage tales to get your missions and campaigns going. These missions cover Novice through Veteran ranks.

WAR OF THE WORLDS

Titan is a gemini colony and a major interstellar bread basket, providing over a trillion kilos of food every year to the galactic market. Unfortunately, communications with the planet abruptly ceased about six hours ago, eighteen hours after reports of a Cr'judi-infested ship crashing on the planet. Military forces have been put on alert, and the Allied Navy is sending ships with ground troops to ensure the colony is safe.

But the brass at the top wants some insurance.

The characters are contacted via an emergency channel directly from the Master of Mercenary Forces. It would seem their ship is the closest vessel to Titan, so he asks them to take on a special mission: act as point and scout for the Planetary Defense Force.

Their direct orders are to go planet-side and recon Fort Brandt, the only military base on the planet. Allied Navy forces will arrive at Titan roughly one hour behind the characters, and the MMF wants them to make sure the Alliance troops aren't wandering into a trap... after all, those Cr'judis might look like monsters, but they've got a cunning intelligence, and can be dangerous opponents. Once the team has arrived at Fort Brandt, they're to feed information to the incoming fleet and act as eyes on the ground.

ARRIVAL

The trip to Titan isn't long, rough, or unusual, but when the characters arrive at the planet, they find a nasty surprise waiting for them: Titan's auto-defense system has been activated, and apparently isn't recognizing their ship's identification signature! Getting to the surface is going to take some skilled and tricky piloting.

Landing at Fort Brandt (or anywhere on Titan — but it would be a waste of time to land anywhere other than Fort Brandt since they've only got a couple of hours to get the job done) is a Dramatic Task, as explained in the core Savage Worlds rules.

The Dramatic Task is against the Piloting skill, and suffers an additional (-2) penalty (rolls are made at a total of (-4), or (-6) on the draw of a Club). The Piloting check can be cooperative, but the characters need a total of five successes to reach the surface unharmed. For every success by which they fail the Dramatic Task, their craft takes one Wound. Addition ally, if they fail on any given roll, all the characters must succeed at a Vigor roll, with the same penalty as the Piloting roll was for that pass, or take a level of Fatigue from bumps and bruises incurred as the ship is buffeted by cannon and missile fire. If the Failure was on the draw of a Club, every character takes a Wound instead (although it can be Soaked). If they Critically Fail a Piloting roll, the Fatigue (or Wound) is automatic—the characters don't get a Vigor roll to avoid it (although the Wound may still be Soaked).

FORT BRANDT

"LET'S WARN THEM!"

You should tell the players their characters know the planetary Self-Defense Systems will shred the larger Allied Navy ships if they try to approach the planet, which means the characters' top priority should be shutting those systems down. Savvy characters might try to send word back to the Alliance, but they'll find not only is their identification signature being jammed, so is their communications—the characters have an hour to sort things out, or they'll get to watch the fireworks as an attempted landing group gets annihilated in Titan's stratosphere.

Once past the barrage from the Self-Defense System, the characters can land, and the first thing they need to decide is what they want to accomplish first. Fortunately, they can land directly at Fort Brandt, on the fort's landing port. The characters should have a few minutes (no more than ten) to patch up wounds and make plans.

A successful Common Knowledge roll (or Investigation if they use the ship's computer to answer the question) tells them the Self-Defense System for Titan is controlled directly from Fort Brandt. However, the ship's sensors also pick up nearby weapons fire—in fact, if the characters step outside their ship, they can hear it.

It's not hard to spot the source if the characters make any attempt to do so: a group of gemini soldiers is pinned down in a bunker by a group of Cr'judi youth. The soldiers are mostly holding their own for the moment.

Have the characters make a group Notice roll. With a success, they spot a couple Cr'judi (one for every two characters) on the building above the soldiers preparing to leap down to get the drop on them. The characters are still a hundred yards (50') out if they want to try taking some shots, but even if they miss, they'll at least have alerted the soldiers to the danger.

Additionally, one gemini soldier is Incapacitated every round after the first until the swarm is dealt with. Check for survival after the combat. If they all fall, Captain Jackson (see below) takes one Wound every round until the swarm is eliminated or he too becomes Incapacitated. In the fight with the Cr'judi, every two remaining soldiers (Jackson counts as two by himself) who aren't locked in combat cause a Shaken result on one of the Cr'judi (which can result in Wounds); if a Cr'judi focuses solely on the gemini soldiers, it causes one Wound against them (the drop, should they get it, causes an extra Wound).

The characters face one more potential threat: if they don't start moving within two rounds, another group of Cr'judi Youth closes in on their position and attacks. If they move right away, they'll avoid this (unless they have too easy of a time with the original swarm, in which case the second swarm can liven things up a bit).

- Cr'judi Youth [Wild Card] (one or two) – see *Xenopedia*
- Cr'judi [Wild Card] (one per two characters, rounded down)

GEMINI SOLDIERS (UP TO 5)

These men and women form the defenses for this planet. Use the Soldier stat from the core *Savage Worlds* book under the Allies section, and arm them with assault rifles (24/48/96, 2d8, AP 2, Auto, 3RB) and battle suits (Armor +6).

CAPTAIN JACKSON [WILD CARD]

Use the Experienced Soldier stat from the core *Savage Worlds* book under the Allies section, but increase his Spirit and Smarts by one Die Type, and give him Knowledge (Battle) d10, as well as the Command and Inspire Edges. He's also armed with an assault rifle (24/48/96, 2d8, AP 2, Auto, 3RB) and wears a battle suit (Armor +6).

Any of the soldiers who survive this skirmish automatically become allies of the characters and have a Friendly disposition. They can tell the characters they were away from the fort when the Cr'judies hit, and rushed back as quickly as they could when they realized something was wrong. Initially it all seemed quiet — too quiet — until the Cr'judies ambushed them. They originally had a full squad of twelve; the survivors are all that's left.

Any of them can also tell the characters where the control room for the Self-Defense System is located and guide them there. The place is supposed to be secure, so they can't guarantee being able to get the characters inside.

IT'S A TRAP!

Getting to the Self-Defense System's control room is surprisingly easy — even if the characters don't have a guide, a successful group Smarts roll gets them there. The interior of Fort Brandt is eerie, though. The lights are all on since the backup generators have kicked in (so there aren't any lighting penalties), but the hallways are empty except for the occasional blood splatter.

For that matter, getting into the control room itself turns out too easy as well, since the doors have been smashed in. There's blood all over the place in there, but no bodies. Examining the computers and control systems reveal that they've also been smashed — it'll take some repairs to get them up and running again.

However, once at least half of the group has entered the room, Cr'judi Youth (one per character) emerge from the ventilation shafts and several Cr'judi rush up the corridor from behind to attack.

- Cr'judi Youth [Wild Card] (one per character)
- Cr'judi [Wild Card] (one per two characters, rounded down)

There is one Cr'judi for every two characters. For this combat, Captain Jackson (if he's still alive) counts as a character and every two gemini soldier Extras count as a single character. An additional Cr'judi Youth enters the fray each round unless there are no more Cr'judi left standing. Otherwise, all stats and rules from the previous combat apply.

Repairing the computers is a Dramatic Task using the Repair skill. If the characters attempt it while the combat is going on, they suffer an additional (-2) penalty on each pass, with each pass taking two rounds.

However, if they can bring the computers online, it's easy enough to shut down the planetary Self-Defense System and activate the fort's automated defenses (which will eliminate any other Cr'judies inside Fort Brandt).

ERADICATING THE INFESTATION

The fleet arrives only minutes after the characters finish the Dramatic Task (for good or for ill), but how the Allied Navy chooses to deal with the situation depends on whether the characters were successful in shutting down the Self-Defense System.

If the characters were successful, troops can be landed, and a battle fought to destroy the Cr'judies. This can be run as a Mass Battle, if desired. The Cr'judi forces have 10 Tokens and a defensible position, but no place to retreat; the Alliance has 9 Tokens, superior firepower, and air supremacy. If Captain Jackson is still around, his Knowledge (Battle) can be used if the characters desire.

If the characters weren't successful, the Allied Navy loses a fair number of small ships and troop carriers in the attempt to land before they manage to withdraw to a safe distance. At that point, they have no choice but to bombard the planet, which will destroy the Cr'judi Infestation, and the characters if they can't get off the planet quickly enough (remember the Self-Defense Systems will still be blasting at them as they try to leave).



"I'LL GUARD THE SHIP!"

If any of the characters decide to stay and act as guards for their vessel, feel free to throw a scouting party of pi rates at them, too!

RESOLUTION

If the characters win the battle, they receive full honors from their MMF and are paid 500c on top of any other normal rewards for their trouble (or 1,000 credits if one of them personally commanded the battle). If they fail, they'll have to retreat and the fleet is forced to functionally destroy Titan — this won't look good on their record.

ANOTHER MAN'S TREASURE

The characters are contacted for something of an easy job. Chermona Inc. is interested in a fertile moon called Selardi II in one of the more remote arms of the Argo. They wish to hire the team as guards for their research team. The lead researcher is Jessica Childs, a severe woman in her early thirties. The team will do their best to keep on friendly terms with the characters. The problems start when they reach the moon.

Their ship is an Arminius-class ship, which grants +1 to Investigation rolls using the ship's labs.

NOT QUITE A HONEYMOON

The scanners pick up another vessel. The vessel makes no move to hail the characters' ship — it actually belongs to a group of space pirates called the Blackmarks who've abducted a young engenico woman named Lita, in order to force her father into paying a hefty ransom. They told Lita's father to transmit a code when they arrived, so the ship waits long enough for the code to come, and when it doesn't, they open fire.

The enemy ship is actually a heavily modified drone and has +1 in Chases against the character's ship. (If the characters want to try to run away, they find that the FTL Drives can't be reactivated so soon after use, so it's a Chase).

At the end of the combat, either the character's ship is damaged and they have to crash-land on the moon, or they find information from the drone that leads them to believe that there's another ship in the area that this one was sent out from — everyone knows drones can't usually operate on their own for a great deal of time.

An Investigation roll made on the computers of the drone (with penalties based on how many wounds the drone took before it was shut down), reveals some information on an engenico girl named Lita who's being kept under guard by the Blackmarks.

LUNAR LANDING

Once the characters are on the ground, they have to find their way to the main ship that housed the drone. This is a Dramatic Task using Tracking at (-2), although if the characters take Ms. Childs along, she can add +1 to the roll. If the task is failed on a clubs, the characters are ambushed by the pirates, who try to take the characters as prisoners, if they can (-1 to their attack rolls, but they have the drop). If the task is failed, the characters stumble into a scouting party, and a melee breaks out. They have to act fast if they don't want reinforcements showing up. If the task succeeds, they find the base and can attack the guards, who are on duty, with the drop!

- Space Pirates (two per character) — see page [214](#)

FINAL CONFRONTATION

Once the characters get past the guards (or if they're captured), they're confronted by the captain. He has the girl, Lita, with him, and is convinced the characters are trying to rescue her (whether they are or not). If the characters try to negotiate with him (for instance, by trying to convince him that they don't care about the girl), he's Unfriendly, but can be reasoned with (he's just in it for the money, after all). However, it's likely to look bad on their records, since he's a known criminal and would prefer the characters to join his crew. If the characters aren't going to join, they have to die, since this is his planet and he's not going to give it up to the Alliance.

- Space Pirates Captain [Wild Card] (use space pirates stat block, but make him a Wild Card)
- Space Pirates (two per character)

RESOLUTION

If Lita is rescued, her father rewards the characters with a piece of tech of their choice from his home world (although he'll remember if the characters are too greedy). If Ms. Childs and her crew survive and can conduct their research, the Guild considers it a job well done, and rewards them accordingly.

TROGLODYTES

The characters have just returned from a regular patrol when they're summoned by their MMF. When they arrive at his office, a mission folder with an Alpha Priority label is sitting on his desk.

"I just received a report that a group of protected researchers has crash-landed on Halcyon I, a desert planet that orbits two suns. Delphi Mining, the corporation who sponsored the mission, is giving headquarters a lot of grief over the incident, so it needs to be dealt with as quickly as possible. We've chosen your team to initiate a search and rescue mission."

"Given that the emergency beacon was activated, we know the location of the crash, but all attempts to contact the crew have been unsuccessful so far. Additionally, several hours after the beacon was activated, it was deactivated, which means it was either destroyed or disengaged. Either way, it means the situation is likely dangerous. Remember, your job is to find any survivors, secure them, and return them safely to headquarters. Understood?"

He answers any immediate questions, and then uploads the mission file to the characters' ship to get them on their way.

NOTHING TO SEE HERE

When the characters arrive on Halcyon I, their computers can guide them to the last known spot the emergency beacon was at, but when they arrive they find that the wreck age has been looted. Only bits and pieces of the ship are left, and there are neither survivors, nor bodies to be found.

It's easy to spot lots of huge tracks leading away from the wreckage, which they can follow right away, or they can look around the crash site for other clues. Characters can make a group Notice roll to find a small data disc. If the characters can open the disk on a computer system (Hacking roll to determine the password),

it contains scans of the interior of the planet, giving the characters a +2 bonus to navigate the passages in Dark and Dank.

DARK AND DANK

Once the characters follow the tracks, they lead to a huge mine entrance, braced by giant steel beams. Entering, it becomes clear that this planet once had an active mine of some sort here. The place is massive, and trying to find their way through it requires a Dramatic Task using Smarts.

If the characters succeed, they find themselves dumped down a chute into some sort of plexiglass holding facility, where they see that they're in an arena. If they failed, they need to make a Vigor roll or take a level of Fatigue from bumps and bruises. On a Clubs, the Fatigue level is automatic.

The prison is pretty secure – there are no bars to shoot through and their Toughness is 12 (if the characters shoot it and the Shooting die comes up a 1 or 2, it hits someone in the room). Climbing is at (-6) because there isn't anything to grip.

The arena is crowded with cheering "fans". A voice booms out throughout the arena as a huge mecha steps into the stadium. "We have more guests!" The voice is deep and computerized and elicits cheers from the audience. "Tell, us, mercenaries. Why have you come here?"

This is the characters opportunity to tell their story. This is a Social Conflict, but the characters have it kind of rough with this crowd – they're Unfriendly, so the Conflict is at (-2) to their rolls. They can also find that this is a colony of gemini dredges (those who live in the underbellies of society) who have been living here for a long time with little connection to the outside. They seem to worship the mecha as 'The Titan'.

- 0 If the characters don't get any successes, they're sentenced to death by paksa attack. There is one Paksa Alpha Male [WC]. His pack consists of one Paksa Omega Male [WC] per character. If the characters survive, they are given the researchers and let go (see *Xenopedia*).
- 1-2 The characters are sentenced to trial by combat versus the paksa. There is one Paksa Alpha Male [WC]. They let half his pack into the ring – one Paksa Omega Male [WC] per two characters. If the characters survive, they are given the re searchers and let go.
- 1-2 The characters are challenged to put forth their best warrior to fight against the Paksa Alpha Male [WC]. If the character survives, they are given the researchers and let go.
- 3-4 The characters are challenged to fight the Titan himself. Use the stats for a Mod el-2805 [WC] from *Xenopedia*. If the characters survive, they are given the researchers and let go.

The front prison wall retracts into the ground to fully let the characters into the arena. It's time to fight!

RETURN TO THE SURFACE

If the characters don't cause any more trouble for the dredges or the Titan, they're let go. If they do cause trouble (either when they leave or if they convince the Allied Navy to send troops), use the Soldier stats from the Savage Worlds core book for the dredges.

Assuming the characters live, they'll get their mission objective cleared and can return to headquarters with full commendations.

INFILTRATION

The characters are on patrol when they receive a communication from their MMF along with a mission file.

"We've just gotten word that the hive workers on Gimell are rising up in rebellion. The desert facilities there work to harvest a type of rare fungi that grows below the surface of the planet, and are holding the top ranking staff as hostages. When processed, the fungi is purported to increase an individuals' psionic abilities, and its use is heavily monitored. The workers are threatening to secede from the Alliance, should their demands not be met. While we are in negotiations with the workers, the Alliance isn't willing risk the lives of the corporate staff."

"We believe the terrorist group, Rudra, is somehow connected to the rebellion. Rudra believes that people with psionic abilities are part of an advanced species of gemini who should be in charge of the Alliance. A man named Alec Drex is known to associate with the group, and is acting as the negotiator for the workers in the mine."

"The manager at the mine is a festoon named Abha'taj. The rest of the staff includes seven gemini and two l'nel, who acted as security, for a total of ten hostages. You'll need to meet with the Defiant, and they'll prepare you to make a planet drop. You're to infiltrate the facility and extract the hostages, and, if possible, capture Alec Drex. Understood?"

He answers any immediate questions and then directs them to the mission file up loaded to the characters' ship to get them on their way.

THE DROP

The characters arrive on the Defiant, a mid-class corsair-class ship. Lt. Hunter, a young man dressed sharply in his uniform, meets them. Lt. Hunter tells them that he's in charge of getting them ready for the assignment. He can get the characters any additional gear they might need, although anything outrageous will take a Persuasion roll. Then they're taken to a launch bay where they're loaded into drop pods.

"I hope none of you are claustrophobic," notes the Lieutenant as he seals the characters in. When they're ready, the Defiant makes a jump to Gimell, and ejects the drop pods the characters have been fitted into. The characters need to make a Vigor roll to avoid drop sickness, which inflicts a level of Fatigue.

OPEN SESAME

The pods open once they settle, letting the characters out onto the desert planet of Gimell. A quick trek through the terrain brings the characters to one of the surface generators. An elevator is located nearby to allow technicians access for repairs and maintenance. Breaking into the elevator is pretty tough — both a Lockpicking and Repair roll is needed to bypass the various forms of security to activate the elevators without sounding an alarm. If the characters decide to pry open the shaft and climb down instead, they make the Strength roll to open the doors at (-2) and three Climbing rolls at (-4), taking damage for a 60 foot fall (minus 10 ft. for every successful Climbing roll they make.)

Once the team reaches the interior of the mine, they need to make a group Stealth roll at (-2) to remain undetected while they track down information on where the hostages are being held.

FINDING THE HOSTAGES

The characters need to find where the hostages are being held if they want to succeed in this mission. If they've made it this far without being detected, they should have a little bit of breathing room. If the characters have Hacking, they can try hacking into the security systems. Or they can try grabbing one of the miners and using Intimidation (or even Persuasion if they can find a way to bribe the person into rating out his compatriots).

Once the characters have the information, they can plan their attack. The hostages are being kept in Abha'taj's office, which is located above the main transport bay. They'll have to cross the bay and get up to the office undetected, or else things might get pretty messy.

They must succeed at a Dramatic Task, based on Stealth, to get up to the office. Failure at the Dramatic Task results in the terrorists being alerted to the characters' presence. The characters are near the office – each one should roll 3d6 and add them together to determine how many inches they're away from the room. A Failure on the draw of a Club means the characters are 10+3d6 inches away when they're spotted, putting them somewhere in the middle of the bay, and one of the guards contacts Drex before the terrorists open fire on them.

If the characters don't use Stealth and simply try to fight their way through the bay, or they fail the Dramatic Task and are discovered, things start to go really bad. The moment one of the guards has the opportunity to alert Drex that an Alliance team is attacking the mine, the hostages are going to start being killed. The round after Drex is alerted, it begins. One hostage is killed each round until all ten are killed.

Alec Drex and two terrorists per character are in the room with the hostages, and another four terrorists per character in the bay. There's plenty of cover for characters and NPCs to use in the

bay, should they choose to use it (the terrorists go for medium cover as soon as they realize they're in danger).

- Alec Drex [Wild Card] (use the Experienced Soldier stats, but he has a plasma pistol (12/24/48, 2d6+1, AP 4, SBT) and a kevlar vest w/inserts (+4/+8, Covers torso, negates AP 4 from bullets))
- Terrorists (use Soldier stats, but give them a submachine gun (24/48/96, 2d6, AP 1, Auto) and leather armor (+2, Covers torso, arms, legs))

REWARDS

If the characters can rescue all of the hostages, they receive full commendations for the mission. If they managed to take Drex alive, they get a 1,000c reward for his capture (it drops to 500c if they killed him in the firefight).

They lose a lot of clout over the incident if they lose any of the hostages. They'll be suspended for a number of weeks equal to the number of hostages they lost. Feel free to add any other penalties as would be fitting for your campaign. If they lost all of the captives, they might even be assigned to "desk work" until they can somehow re-prove themselves.

BELOW THE DUNES OF RAINE

The characters are at their home base when word comes down from the MMF that the Alliance has located the clan of pengua responsible for the wholesale slaughter of Ichin Mine about six years ago, and they've called in all mercenary troops to act as irregulars in a battle to destroy the clan for their crimes.

The characters have a few hours to wrap up any loose ends planet-side and get their gear together. It's time to go to war. If a character wants more information on Jaffa Athil, they can pull up this entry from a computer terminal:

"One of the most vicious pengua commanders ever encountered is Jaffa Athil, who also happens to be the largest pengua ever encountered. Jaffa and his pengua warriors massacred a mining facility only a mile from Jaffa's settlement. To this day, no one knows why the pengua warriors attacked, since the mining facility didn't seem to threaten their city. The death of so many truly angered the Alliance and a mercenary force was sent in to investigate. This force never returned and their bodies were never found. The Allied Navy decided to step in and clear the penguas out for good, but was too late. The entire city had been abandoned and Jaffa's tribe fled to a new location. Once it was determined that the caverns were completely empty, an investigation showed the penguas appeared to have been preparing for their next migration starting days before the massacre. This may have led to the massacre, but no one, other than Jaffa and his tribal elders, knows the motivation behind the event."

STRATEGY

All the forces involved in the mission are gathered for a broadcast from General Terion, a stern, white-haired gemini. He addresses the groups, and lays out his strategy.

"The pengua live deep inside the planet's core, making it difficult to attack them directly. The planet Raine is also inhabited by a wide range of protected creatures, making it a red-tape nightmare and practically impossible to simply attempt to destroy the planet entirely. That leaves us with a frontal assault on the caverns beneath the planet's surface.

"Each group will be assigned a cavern complex that they will be responsible for clearing. Once each section is cleared, you will report back to the ship for further instructions. Pengua are large and dangerous, especially since they don't need light to see. However, they are sensitive to light, so each team will be given a compliment of six flares in addition to their other gear. Use them wisely.

"I'll hand you over to your team leaders now. For the Alliance!"

The characters have been assigned to team Delta Blue and given Cavern Theta. The group also has some backup – each character gets one mercenary NPC as their companion (use the Soldier stats from the core Savage Worlds rules, but give them each a Tactical Suit (+4) and one weapon of the player's choice). Feel free to name them and give them personalities.

CAVERN THETA

It's night when the characters land, but since they're planning on heading underground, it doesn't make much difference. There is an entrance into the cavern, but it's normally hidden by brush, rocks, and other detritus piled up over the ages. Once they locate it, the small matter of clearing away the entrance still remains, but that is easily accomplished by making a group Strength check and taking some time – four hours, less one hour for each raise to a minimum of one hour. While the characters are about this business, anyone with the Tracking skill can roll to realize they aren't the first people to come through here recently: the entrance shows signs of having been exposed and then perhaps reburied.

Beneath the entrance slab are stone steps leading down into the earth. The walls, although covered with moss and grime, appear to have once been carved with reliefs. If someone has an appropriate Knowledge skill, he can make a check with a success indicating he's pretty sure they depict some sort of ritual or acts of worship. Otherwise, the characters can't make heads or tails of the carvings.

As the characters head deeper into the ruin, they find the stonework is surprisingly intact. A successful Tracking roll confirms that someone has been through here before, and eventually the passage widens into a moderately-sized chamber – about 20 yards by 20 yards. Columns line the room, and a passage exits from the other side.

A Pengua raiding party is hiding in the room, trying to strike with the Drop. If the characters made the Tracking roll, give them +2 to the Notice roll to avoid being taken by Surprise.

➤ Pengua (three per two characters, rounded down) – see *Xenopedia*

EXPLORATION

There are several exits from the room, and it's the characters' job to clear all of them out. This is a Dramatic Task at (-2) using either Shooting or Fighting (or another appropriate skill, if they can make the case to the GM), where the characters need five successes. If the character is using up a resource (like ammo for a gun), he rolls 2d6 each round to see how much he's lost.

Each character is accomplishing the task separately (no group rolls), and the character takes a Wound for each success he fails to make on the task. At the end, the characters find themselves in the Grand Hall.

THE GRAND HALL

The passage winds through several hallways, until it leads into an even larger chamber – twice the size of the previous – with a vaulted ceiling. The room is full

of armed pengua, all apparently guarding a raised, stone dais where the largest pengua kneels. The dais itself supports a low stone fountain from which iridescent energies boil and froth. The pengua leader places his hand upon the dais and sneers at the characters as the energy infuses him and his warriors – treat all of them as if they had deflection cast on them with a Raise. Then they attack!

- Pengua (two per character). If Jaffa flees or dies, they must make a Spirit roll. Those who fail also flee or surrender.
- Jaffa Athil [Wild Card] (pengua leader). If he takes two or more Wounds during combat, he attempts to flee.

CELEBRATIONS

If the characters manage to kill Jaffa, they're in for a bonus of 2,000c each for such a spectacular feat. Any injuries can be treated, and they will be given a bit of leave after the battle, no matter how well they did. If the characters didn't manage to kill Jaffa, they're still commemorated as heroes, and researchers are going to be very interested in their descriptions of the energy Jaffa used.

A TRIP TO REMEMBER

The mercenaries' MMF has assigned the characters to a security detail for an Alliance ambassador going to the planet Erdaz.

"Erdaz has a small gemini colony on it from one of their early attempts to colonize other planets, but they were only recently re-discovered when an archivist found some of the old records of the expedition. Some contact has been made with the locals, and arrangements have been made to have Ambassador Adina Kenton talk with the colony's ruling council. The council resides in a village deep in a local mountain range, which will need to be traversed in ground vehicles. The journey should take about three days, you'll be in the village for another week, and then you'll escort the ambassador back to the shuttle. Your job is to protect the ambassador and assist her in any way you can."

The characters are then sent to meet Ambassador Kenton, who's an attractive woman in her late 20s. She's stern, but not unkind and hopes to resolve this trip quickly and peacefully.

CITY OF GARSEN

Things go smoothly as the characters land in the lush lowlands at the base of the Kerian Mountains. They're greeted by a young man, named Ayden, who gives the characters a tour of the city via cruiser. The technology is a little rustic compared to what the characters are used to, but it serves its purpose. The cruiser has an open deck where they can watch the city from.

It's during this scenic tour that the first of the revolutionaries make an attack on the ambassador and her guards. They attempt to get the Drop on the characters, if possible. Notice rolls are allowed, although everyone does have 2 points of Cover. After the first round, the revolutionaries make a run for it, making it a Chase if any of the characters want to capture (or kill) their attackers. Ambassador Kenton is a Wild Card with a Toughness of 7(2).

- Gemini Revolutionaries (two per character) – use Soldier stats from the core *Savage Worlds* book, but give them appropriate equipment.



Assuming the Ambassador survives the attack, she insists that they continue their journey into the mountains to talk with the council, since the planet is obviously unstable and needs the Alliance's help.

MOUNTAIN JOURNEY

The group has to set out as a small caravan with several of the cruisers. The characters should take this time to do an Interlude. Have each of them draw a card and use the Interlude rules from the *Savage Worlds* core book to give them a chance to tell a story about their character's background. They are assumed to be taking rotating watches during the trip, so they can choose who's with them when they tell their story.

However, it's on the last leg of the journey that things get hairy. As the caravan rounds an embankment, they find that the pass has been collapsed in a rockslide. The cruisers aren't able to cross the rockslide, so the group is forced to disembark.

The characters likely suspect that this is a setup for an ambush. Unless they can convince the ambassador to turn the caravan around, they'll have to brave the dangers and hope for the best. If they can win 5 or more successes in a Social Conflict with the ambassador, she'll agree to turn around a head back to their starship.

If the characters continue on, they find the rest of their journey on foot to be surprisingly uneventful. It turns out that it's because there are worse things afoot in the capital itself.

The Council resides in a town made from the colony ship, Cornucopia, which the original inhabitants arrived on Erdaz in. However, the main gates (hanger bay doors) are closed when the group arrives.

HOSTILE TAKEOVER

It doesn't take long to realize something is wrong. It becomes clear when Ayden tries to contact the guard post

when the bay doors open to reveal a small army of Revolutionaries. It seems they have taken over the Council.

- Gemini Revolutionaries (three per character) – use Soldier stats from the core *Savage Worlds* book, but give them appropriate equipment.

If the characters defeat the enemy or can retreat from combat, they'll have to regroup. The ambassador tells them that she's changing their orders – they're to free the council. While she is important, if the council is killed, she won't have anyone to negotiate with anyway.

The characters need to move from one room to another, trying to find their way to where the elders are being held. This functions similar to a Dramatic Task, however, each round they'll draw a card and deal with their encounter. Each successful encounter gets them a token (and bonus tokens in some cases). When they reach 5 tokens, they find the room.

- | | |
|-----------|--|
| 2 | They found a barracks with a squad of revolutionaries hanging out (2 per character). The characters need to make a group Stealth roll at (-2) ((-4) if they drew a Club). If they succeed, they get a token. With a Raise, they overhear one of the soldiers talking about where the councilmen are and get an additional token. If they fail, they have a fight on their hands before they can go back to this challenge. |
| 3-10 | The characters run into a patrol of revolutionaries (one per character). They can choose to fight or make a group Stealth roll to avoid them. |
| Face Card | The characters are skulking about, trying to find where they need to be going. Make a group Notice roll at (-2) ((-4) if they drew a Club). If they succeed, they find a clue and gain a token. |
| Ace | They find a woman named Nala who lives here. She's willing to help the characters for a cost. If they can pay her 1,000c, she helps them (or they can make a Social Challenge to convince her to help them without payment). Get two Tokens if they gain her help. |
| Joker | They find a boy who works as an apprentice to the Council who's trying to find help for his master. He agrees to help guide the characters. Get two Tokens automatically. |

COUNCILMAN'S FOLLY

When the characters finally find their way to the council room, they are confronted with another group of revolutionaries; however, it's the conversation that's happening that's of most interest.

Most of the councilmen are bound and sitting in the room, however, one is unbound and is giving orders to the revolutionaries. If the characters try to negotiate with him, he gives them the opportunity to leave unharmed, but doesn't want "Alliance scum" polluting his world. If the characters talk first, give them a Benny as a reward for giving up their opportunity to get the Drop. If they move to attack (or refuse to leave), there is another fight.

- Gemini Revolutionaries (three per character) – use Soldier stats from the core *Savage Worlds* book, but give them appropriate equipment.
- Councilman Jesson [Wild Card] – use Soldier stats from the core *Savage Worlds* book, but give him Command and Inspire.

IN THE END...

As long as the Ambassador survives, the characters have fulfilled their duties. If they were able to save the council and allow her to actually finish the negotiations, then they've earned some serious honors and a bonus.

WHERE THE WILD THINGS ARE

The mercenaries are on Coursian when they get called in for a more personal mission. Their MMF calls them in to take a personal assignment from him.

"I'll be paying for this from my own pocket, but I want one of my teams on this case. A friend of mine was the lead guitarist in a band called Broken Hearts. She and her band were found murdered this morning in a hotel room at the Paradise Hotel downtown. I don't know who she might have pissed off, or what she got herself into, but I want you to find the SOB who killed her."

"Her name was Stephanie Brigg. I haven't seen her in several months, and don't have much information. Here's her home address. Oh, and her manager is Jax Kingston. Here's his number and address. Broken Hearts just managed to get one of their songs on the Interstellar Top 40 list, so they were getting some real fame, and then this happened..."

The MMF is obviously upset about this and tries to give the characters what information he has. He doesn't know the guy in charge of the investigation (he's a newbie looking to get some fame so that he can rise up in the ranks).

PICKING UP THE PIECES

The characters are going to need information if they want to try and figure out what's going on. Here are some sources they can turn to:

Police: One place the characters can go is to the detectives to see what forensics has dredged up. If they want to get any information, though, the characters are going to need to make a Social Challenge to convince Detective Lucas to let them in on the case. If they get 1 to 2 successes, he tells them this is the third case where a band was killed in just the last month. If they get 3-4 successes, he confides that he's pretty sure they were all killed by some sort of psionic attack, but he doesn't have enough information to make an arrest. He's trying to track down the band's manager, since he was in the room earlier in the evening, according to video surveillance in the lobby, but apparently left several hours before the time of the murder. Only if they make 5+ successes does he actually allow them into the crime scene directly.

Crime Scene: The characters can head to the Paradise Hotel to get details of the crime directly from the source (or maybe talk with Detective Lucas if he's still gathering evidence at the scene). See above for the Social Challenge to get into the crime scene itself. If they're successful, they're allowed into the room which is still splattered with blood. It appears that whatever caused the band's death ruptured their blood vessels and caused massive bleeding. A raise on a group Investigation roll turns up something the police missed – a napkin that's been tossed into the trash with a note saying "Shuttleport @13:00". If they show it to the police, they'll take it and send a patrol to the shuttleport to see if they can track down someone connected to the group there. This gives the characters four police officers as backup in the final confrontation.

Jax: Jax isn't answering his phone, and if the characters stop by his luxurious apartment, he's not answering the door either. Breaking in is an option if they have

Lockpicking (at (-2) because of the quality of the lock). Once inside, it seems Jax isn't in residence and his place is a mess. At first blush, it looks like the place has been tossed, but a group Notice roll reveals that he's probably skipped town, unless the burglar was interested in taking the contents of Jax's dresser and bathroom.

FINAL CONFRONTATION

It takes an Investigation Dramatic Task to track Jax down at the shuttleport, getting ready to leave Courisan. If the characters succeed, they find him, but he's terrified. He thinks that someone is after him, and he may be right. A humanoid with thick facial features, six fingers, and two small tusks that grow from his bottom teeth approaches the group and Jax tries to run. The alien is carrying a strange 8-stringed instrument. Characters can make a Common Knowledge roll at (-2) to recognize the xeno as a listrydan – a type of alien known for their psionic abilities and psychotic rages. The listrydan attacks Jax and anyone who tries to defend him.

If the characters fail the Dramatic Task, they find Jax standing in front of the Listrydan looking petrified. Deal Initiative. If the characters failed on a Clubs, the Listrydan can make an attack with the Drop on Jax, and then deal Initiative.

➤ Listrydan [Wild Card] (one) – see *Xenopedia*

JUSTICE

If the listrydan is killed, then the murder spree is stopped, but it's only if Jax is kept alive that the real story of why the murders happened in the first place is revealed. The listrydan, convinced of his musical supremacy, became jealous and angry when he was denied an opportunity to perform a concert at the Megaplex Concerthall. The two other bands had just performed there, and Jax was making arrangements for the Broken Hearts to do a concert. The listrydan must have gotten wind of it and decided to cancel the next act permanently.

UNDER THE SEA

The characters have done well with their last assignment and have been given leave on a paradise planet, Neptunia. The planet is dotted with beautiful islands and makes for a perfect vacation spot.

The characters are staying in an underwater hotel that shows off the beauty of the coral reefs under the planet's waters. However, there's something much darker going on in these waters. One note for this particular adventure is that this is supposed to be a vacation, so the characters aren't going to have as much in the way of weapons and armor. Be sure to check their gear and enforce that the characters aren't taking a small arsenal of weapons unless they actually have the Hindrance Quirk (Always Armed).

PARADISE REVEALED

Give the characters a chance to explore the hotel a little bit once they arrive. Here are some interesting locations:

Their Suite: This is the suite of rooms the characters have been given. It's luxurious and has a window view of the coral reef. If a character spends some time looking out the window, he can make a Notice roll. With a success, he notes that some of the reef looks like it's dying (turning white, brown, or black instead of the vibrant pinks, blues, yellows, and greens of the rest of the structure). With a raise,



he catches a glimpse of something that looks like a large black tentacle retracting into one of the dead corals. It gives him the creeps, though he's not sure why.

Main Ballroom: This huge room is being set up for a large banquet dinner that all the guests are invited to. If the characters want to talk to the employees to ask questions, a young manager named Antonio interjects and helps them. Any of the characters that visit here can make a group Notice roll at (-4). If they succeed, they notice an odd fishy smell coming from the first employee they talked to. Antonio also tells the characters that dinner will be ready in a few hours, and then there will be some entertainment from a local show, and he hopes to see them there.

Library: This comfy room is richly appointed, making it easy to want to stay and enjoy the atmosphere. Lizbeth Tyler, an ambitious journalist, is enjoying herself here before dinner. She automatically recognizes the characters if they're Seasoned Rank or higher, but have her make a notice roll (d8) if they're still Novices. If she does, she tries to arrange an interview with them later in the week.

Kitchens and Staff Areas: These areas are supposed to be off-limits to guests, so snooping around them is going to require Stealth if they don't want to get caught and asked to vacate the area. If they succeed, they find the place has an odd smell that comes from one of the kitchen's prep rooms. Looking inside, they find a large, rotting carcass of some sort of black octopod that's being carved up and put into a huge stock pot. If the characters cause a scene, the staff explains that the creature is a local specialty, and they aren't required to try it if they don't want to.

DINNER IS SERVED

Once the characters are settled in, it's time for dinner. If they decide to not attend the dinner, or if they leave before the show finishes, just have them state where they've gone to. There are plenty of other patrons that the characters can interact with, if they desire. Feel free to drop Miss Tyler or even another miscellaneous NPC from their past onto the table they're sitting at.

Once dinner winds down, the show starts. Characters that ate the food must make a Spirit roll at (-2) or take a level of Fatigue from drowsiness. Characters that

get a Critical Failure fall asleep on the table. That's when things get dicey. If the group has split up, that's fine. Each grouping is attacked by cultists.

- Cultists (three per character) – use the stats for Soldiers from the *Savage Worlds* core rules, but they have 1 point of Armor, and are using blackjacks (Str+d6, non-lethal) or Tasers (3/6/12, 3d4, non-lethal).

WHY CULTISTS?

At this point, it's hard to interpret what the characters will decide to do, so here's some information for the GM so that she can react to her players.

If the characters (or any NPCs they'd like to save) are defeated, they'll be taken down to the lowest part of the hotel where a ritual circle has been inscribed on the floor. Here, they'll hold them captive to sacrifice to the paikdtee they are serving.

If they are all not captured, they'll have to choose whether to try and make an escape (a Dramatic Task to get to one of the starships at the top of the hotel), or if they want to try and be the heroes and stop the cultists. There are now a total of five cultists per character, plus any surviving cultists from the fight earlier.

At midnight the cultists start offering up their sacrifices, so the characters need to act fast if they want to save the other vacationers.

ANGRY GODS

If the characters kill most (or all) of the cultists, they're able to escape with the others, but they've made a powerful enemy: a paikdtee. It will remember this slight and will make plans to teach the characters a lesson at some future point.

On the other hand, they'll be rewarded by anyone who they saved.

GHOST TOWN

The team is contacted by their MMF with another job, but this one is a little more dubious than some of their other dealings. A man, who calls himself Mr. Smith, is in the office with their MMF and gives the group the information once they agree to the job. If anyone asks about Mr. Smith's motives, he says that he's working for a patron who wishes to remain anonymous. The only up front information Smith gives them is that the work is on Courisan, and they'll be finishing up a job from a year ago that "wasn't efficiently dealt with at the time". Assuming the team agrees, Mr. Smith opens up a link and uploads a mission packet to them with all the particulars for the job and, unless the team has any other questions for him (most of which he'll say should be answered in the packet), he takes his leave.

According to the data, it's pretty much as Smith said: his patron wants them to go into Old Meniton and take down a sorgilun known as Chronus. A team was sent in to deal with the sorgilun, but apparently it was able to escape its fate and killed the other team.

Mr. Smith's patron wants the sorgilun killed. Unfortunately, the exact location where Chronus is hiding is unknown, although the area has been narrowed down to an abandoned Laboratory complex in Old Meniton.

LEG WORK

It's likely that most teams want to see if they can scrounge up a little more information to work with, either through Investigation or Streetwise. For the most part, Investigation can be used to dig into Chronus or the Laboratory (Genesis Labs), however, any Investigation rolls suffer a (-2) penalty if the team is trying to

accomplish them from anywhere except Old Meniton. In any case, the Investigation should be handled as a cooperative roll and results in the following information:

- Failure (Chronus): The characters find links to an old game that was really popular.
- Failure (Genesis Labs): These labs used to cover five square miles of the planet, but were shut down two decades ago when the man in charge of the labs was sent to prison.
- Success (Chronus): Chronus is the name of a sorgilun cat burglar who's pilfered millions of credits worth of technology. He's wanted on several planets.
- Success (Genesis Labs): Genesis Labs' CEO was accused of massive genetic experimentation and of developing a eugenics program amongst the staff. The place was supposed to be destroyed, but bureaucratic red tape has kept it standing for decades.
- Raise (Genesis Labs): There are rumors that homeless individuals and gangs now use the facility as a place to live. The characters might be able to find more information from these people about Chronus.
- Two or more Raises (Genesis Labs): Some conspiracy theories state that even some of the experiments in Genesis Labs survived and got loose, which is why the facility was shut down.

Investigating any other topics doesn't net the team anything useful to their purposes. Streetwise can really only be used in Old Meniton; after all, it's hard to dig up accurate info on the streets if they're in the wrong city. In any case, it should also be treated as a cooperative roll. Assuming they spend a little time pounding the pavement, with a success, they find that no one knows Chronus, but they do know a gang, called Three Eyes, claims the labs as their territory. They'd be the ones to talk to.

THIRD EYE BLIND

Sooner or later, the team has to start physically looking around. The place is six-stories tall and looks ancient (a successful Investigation or Streetwise roll tells the characters it's almost one-hundred-fifty years old). It doesn't seem to have weathered the years very well, either: it visibly sags and seems to lean against a neighboring building that's almost twice its size. The structures around this place have been reinforced or even rebuilt into large apartments and low-rent offices, leaving it only a small shadow.

The front doors to the building are locked and sealed with a heavy chain and rusted padlock. A successful cooperative Notice roll reveals a side emergency exit that's locked, but not chained. There's also a number of broken and boarded up windows (or not boarded up, once you get three floors up), and an old fire escape that looks like it'll fall over at the slightest suggestion. However, it appears that the windows on the top floor have been removed and replaced with brick and plaster. If the characters decide to just break into the building, the doors and locks can be smashed down (they have Toughness 12). The main door suffers a (-4) penalty to Lockpicking because of the rusted lock.

If the characters stake out the place, they can see that people go in and out of the Emergency exit pretty regularly. They can get some info from the residents; how-

ever, they attract the attention of the gang. The team is confronted by a group of Three Eyes Gangers who don't appreciate the group trespassing on their territory. If they can't make a successful Persuasion roll to convince them that they aren't here to mess with the locals, there's going to be a fight.

- Three Eyes Gangers (two per character) – use the stats for Soldiers in the *Savage Worlds* core rules.

Assuming the characters don't botch the Persuasion, the gangers tell them that Chronus lives up in the sixth floor. They don't mess with him, and he doesn't mess with the gang, so it's a good symbiosis. Getting to the top is going to be problematic, though. See, Chronus can fly, so he just enters through a window on the sixth floor. The only other way up there was to use the elevator, which lies smashed at the bottom of the elevator shaft. Unless the characters have something that allows them maneuver up a 3x3 yard alleyway, they have to climb either the exterior or the elevator shaft.

GOING UP

If the characters climb the outside, boarded windows have Toughness 8, but require an Agility roll to safely get through (Failure results in 2d4 Damage). Upper windows don't require breaking, but do require both a successful Climbing roll for each floor ascended, as well as the above Agility roll to enter.

The fire escape can be used to more easily ascend the building (eliminating the need for Climbing rolls), but roll a d6 every time they go up another story: if the number rolled is equal to or less than the current floor, the whole fire escape collapses and any characters on it take Damage of 1d6 per story (in other words, falling from the fourth floor results in 4d6 damage).

Inside, the building has high ceilings and cracked tile flooring. Most of the building's pipes and wiring are exposed (just painted over), and where there is light (the fifth and sixth floors), the bulbs are in sturdy, wire-enclosed sconces and only provide a dim flickering light ((-1) Lighting penalty; the penalty is (-2) on lower floors).

Climbing the elevator is similar to climbing the building, except the characters will have to pry open the doors on both ends (Toughness 12). If they are clever, they can use the stairs inside to get to the fifth floor and then only have to make one climbing roll to get to the top floor.

Once the characters are in, they find that the top floor is decorated in the sorgilun's "treasures" - a small hoard of valuables like gems, paintings, and antiques. Chronus isn't interested in going peacefully and waits in ambush using the Invisibility power until he can get the Drop on one of the characters.

- Chronus [Wild Card] (one Sorgilun) – see *Xenopedia*

RETURN

If Chronus is killed, the characters get their full reward for the job. However, some questions might come up about his collection. The Sorgilun was a master thief and most of the items there belong to rich and famous individuals around the galaxy. If the characters have a good connection to a fence in the black market, they might be able to make a small fortune from these, but for most groups, it'll be much easier to collect the rewards for returning the stolen goods (2d4x1,000c each).

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