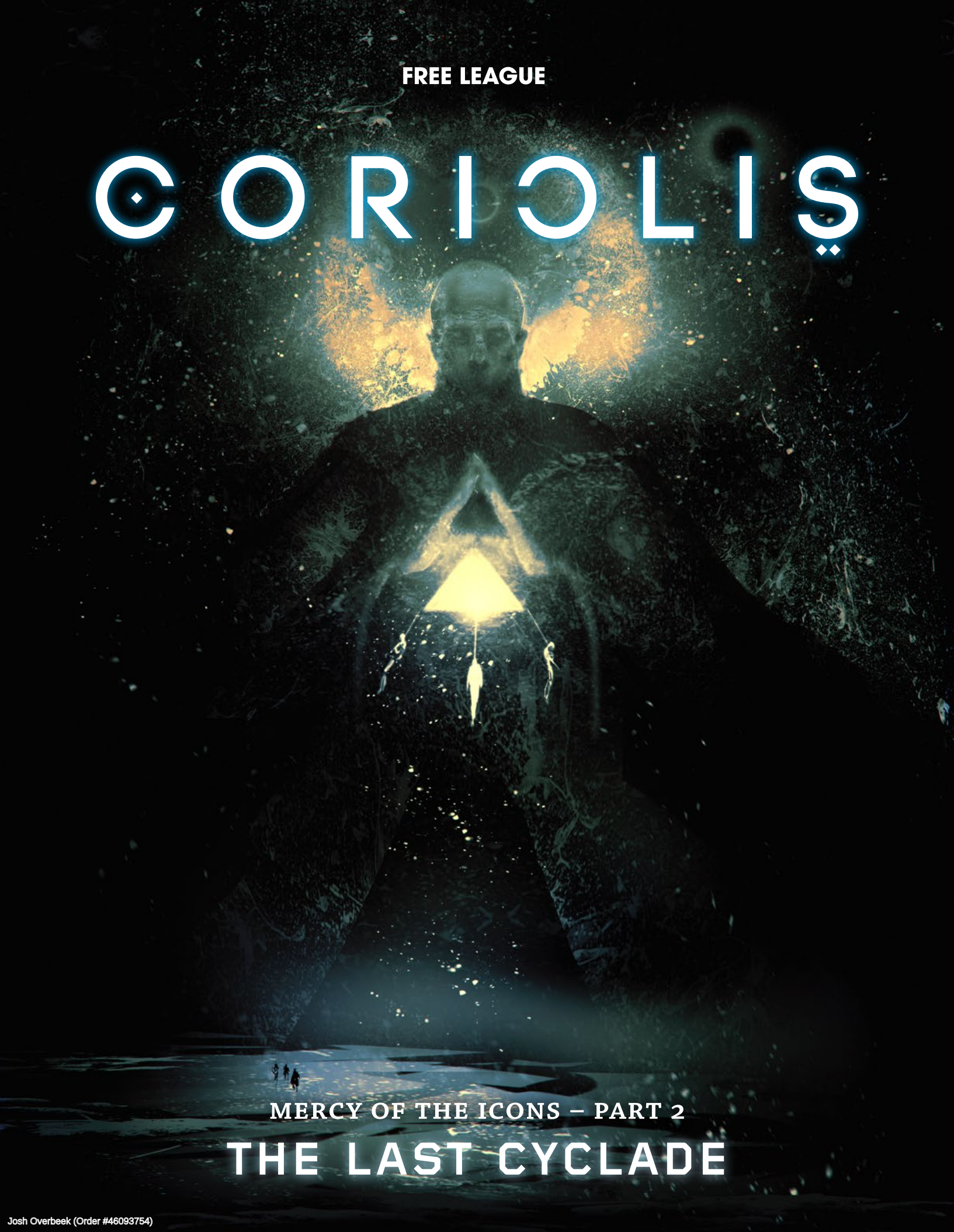
FREE LEAGUE

CORIOLIS



MERCY OF THE ICONS – PART 2

THE LAST CYCLADE

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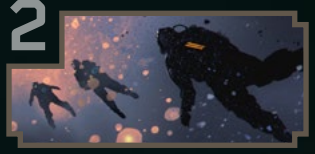
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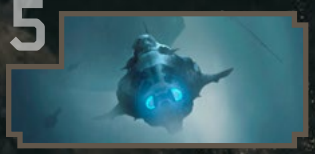
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INTRODUCTION

Welcome to **The Last Cyclade**, the second installment of the **Mercy of the Icons** campaign. Over the course of the featured scenarios, the simmering factionary conflicts in the Third Horizon will intensify as the Nazareem's Sacrifice re-emerge from the shadows. Their secret meddling in the politics of the Third Horizon now threatens to change the cluster for good.

THE LAST CYCLADE consists of three parts — an introductory mission, a series of scenario locations and short adventures, and a grand finale that will shake the Third Horizon to its core. The events in this book take place over the course of almost a full Coriolis cycle, or one Kuan year. Unlike the events of *Emissary Lost* — which unfolded exclusively in the Kua system and only hinted at the darker days ahead — *The Last Cyclade* will take the PCs on a journey far across the Third Horizon and introduce them to the rapidly escalating proxy war between the First and Second Horizons.

The Background section below describes the events and conflicts leading up to the first adventure. Later in this chapter, you will find a summary of the three adventures, and also a section with tips and guidelines meant as a support for you Game Masters, when planning and running sessions at the gaming table.

BACKGROUND

The Last Cyclade begins with the Legion tracking a strange sensor echo to a moon in the Uharu system. A volunteer crew is recruited to investigate it. To give you some necessary context going forward, this section describes both the events that set the stage for *The Last Cyclade* and a couple of the powerful players that will take part in the coming war between the First and Second Horizons.

THE LAST VOYAGE OF THE GHAZALI

The First Horizon's strike against the Colonial Agency's Tsurabi mining colony in the Taoan system prompted the rescue mission whose catastrophic failure is described in *The Last Voyage of the Ghazali*. The old *Ghazali* liner itself fell into the Hamura star, and countless smaller vessels along with the Legion destroyer *Zafirah* were wrecked by a massive energy discharge from the portal between Hamura and Taoan.

THE EMERALD DISC

The few survivors that managed to make it off the *Ghazali* carried with them the liner's emerald disc, the "black box" containing information about the ship's final hours before its destruction. The dynamically encrypted data on the disc — unobtainable even for the sharpest data spider or djinn intelligence — ended up in the hands of the Consortium's Special Branch who managed to extract a detailed sensor data log of the *Zafirah's* fate as it disappeared through the portal.

THE GHOST IN THE PORTAL

The *Zafirah* went through the portal to Taoan, but encountered something on the other side. The retrieved data log describes a couple of seconds of something that looks like an attack *inside* the portal itself. Several ship sectors are hit by unknown projectiles — some form of antimatter torpedoes. A mysterious sensor shadow is also found in the logs: a signature that appears out of

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nowhere, changes inexplicably and then vanishes. Something either accompanied the *Zafirah* into the portal, or waited for her in the dark between the stars, but this is all that can be surmised from the data contained on the disc.

This unknown *something* was in fact a First Horizon butterfly ship, which the PCs will come to learn during the first scenario of this book, *The Uharan Echo*.

AFTER THE DEATH OF THE EMISSARY

Centuries of war between the First and Second Horizons have depleted much of their arsenals and resources. The destruction of the First Horizon's Imperial armada at the end of the Portals Wars, along with much of the Odacon system, was an especially hard blow. The conflict entered a much less intense phase after the end of the Wars, and both parties have used the time since to carefully infiltrate and position themselves in the Third Horizon. After the discovery of the dead Emissary in the abandoned Foundation hospital on Kua, the balance of power between the factions in the Third Horizon shifts dramatically.

⚙ PARIAHS ONCE MORE

The investigation into the murders and kidnappings carried out by the Warriors of the Holy Light during *Emissary Lost* leads to a massive backlash for the Order of the Pariah, despite their best efforts to wash their hands of any dealings with the splinter group. The people of Coriolis have made up their minds — they have seen the Order's "true" colors. Only the poorest of the poor still visit the Sanatorium in the Core, and dwindling enrollment at the Medicine Academy threatens to put it out of business. Pogroms become commonplace both on the Ring and in the Core — anyone with a noticeable Zalosian accent, a traditional Zalosian monochrome caftan or with a Martyr prayer tattoo would do well to stay indoors. The Order's representative at the Council of Factions, Sister Almas, has protested the station administration's inability to care for the safety of all of the populace, but gotten the cold shoulder from the rest of the Council.

In Zalos, onboard the scroll ship *Belit-Sheri*, the prophets and grand masters of the Martyr Council are also debating the fallout of the splinter group's actions. Although having officially renounced the Warriors of the Holy Light and their extremist ways, the clergy all agree that the ancient darkness has returned once again. They know of their

THE HUNT FOR THE EMERALD DISC

If your group played *The Last Voyage of the Ghazali*, the PCs may have been the ones who retrieved the disc. This may require you as the GM to add a couple of events to the story to relieve them of it. In *The Last Voyage of the Ghazali*, the Consortium offers the PCs 5,000 birr for the disc. If they turn the deal down, Special Branch agents will come after them, using blackmail and/or violence against their patron or loved ones to intimidate them into giving in.

GM'S EYES ONLY

The entirety of this book is for the GM's eyes only.

BETWEEN THE PORTALS

The portals in the Third Horizon are commonly viewed as two identical points in time and space, thus allowing for instantaneous and perfect passage between them. However, portal jumps out of hyper sleep have shown that some unknown force appears to exist between the portals – something that can attach itself to living matter. This seems to contradict the prevalent theory on the workings of the portals, and several noteworthy scientists are currently working on alternative explanations.

In actuality, the jumping ship travels through a stream of warped spacetime, constantly fluctuating between the portals. A waking mind may experience the jump as eternal, but navigation instruments and ship djinn will note no time loss at all. The woven structure of the portal fields dampens the massive corruption within the passage, but the jumps are still a focal point and catalyst for the raging darkness between the stars and the tiniest of errors can lead to unimaginable disaster.

The First Horizon has mastered the corruption between the portals and the Vestals may therefore perform waking jumps, or linger inside the portals to ambush unsuspecting passers-through.

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ARDHA AND TERRA

The legends about the cradle of humanity are many. The prophets in the Circle of Seekers claim that mankind rose from the waters of Terra, gifted life by "Ahm," the Mother, an ancient aspect of the Merchant appearing as an old crone. The very oldest of the Mogul fleet's songs also mention the All-Mother. The Zenithians, Algolan settler tribes and the prophets from Menkar all have rich mythic tales of Ardha, the First Home.

A LOST WORLD

Odacon used to be the Third Horizon's crown jewel. The memory of the main planet lives on in song and folklore as Matush, "the Hymn of Destiny," but has otherwise been lost to history.

nemesis' mastery of corruption and lies, and now face a difficult decision: shall they circle the wagons and remain pure, shutting Zalos from the rest of the Horizon, or seek alliances with other groups and factions, even if doing so means they risk exposing themselves to the First Horizon's manipulations?

ZENITHIAN DISCORD

According to the Zenithian Hegemony, the actions of the Martyr commandos, the death of the Emissary and the growing Zalophobia are all signs of the Consortium and the Coriolis Guard's appalling incompetence. In turn, the Consortium has hidden away the second of the Emissary Icons, the Judge, and posted two Legion destroyers, the *Salema* and the *Ramarah*, at the Kuan portal station to monitor all passage into and out of the system. Tensions both outside and within the Zenithian ranks are mounting — fast.

THE CHILDREN OF THE SONG

After the demise of the Emissary, a cult called the Children of the Song (*Emissary Lost,* page 201) has begun spreading on Coriolis. These ascetic mystics say they can hear and feel the song of the dead Emissary reverberate through the dura beams of the station's skeleton and in radio static around the planet below. They have established contact with smaller groups such as the Atbaë Alri (*Emissary Lost,* page 196) and certain Seeker cults to expand their knowledge and influence. Many new mystics who have accepted their fate have joined the Children to find shelter, and to develop their abilities.

THE FIRST HORIZON

Behind the curtains, the Third Horizon has once again become the battleground for the First and Second Horizons' endless war.

Through the Vestals and their loyal Nazareem agents, the First Horizon has sought to infiltrate the corridors of power in the Third Horizon. The primary targets have been the Zenithian Hegemony, the Consortium and the Legion, as the latter represent much of the Consortium's power farther out along the arms. The Hegemony's obsession with bloodlines, vanity and pleasure correlate quite closely with the First Horizon's individualist ideals of the here and now, completely without regard for societal consequences. The goals of the infiltration are to push the Third Horizon

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THE HISTORY OF THE NAZAREEM'S SACRIFICE

The Nazareem's Sacrifice is a faction believed destroyed at the end of the Wars. Many in the third Horizon haven't even heard of the cult, and where the name lives on, in songs and stories from the Wars, it means only darkness and symbolizes idolatry. But what really happened?

THE TEMPLE OF THE BEAST

After the destruction of the Imperial armada, the Order found signs indicating that the doctrine of the enemy still lingered in the Third Horizon in the form of a faction called Nazareem's Sacrifice, devoted to the Beast. The Martyr warriors and their agents quietly and carefully gathered intel on the faction's bases of operations for three long years. A premature strike risked forcing the cult underground without having severed the serpent's head. Eventually, spies from Ahlam's Temple managed to uncover the location of the faction's secret temple headquarters, the U'Haya Em Edalat, on the planet Rusah in Odacon. The venomous heart of the cult beat deep underground, in the hidden city of Baheema, an ancient, well-defended fortress.

THE MARTYR COVENANT

The attack began in the segment of the Judge, almost 90 years before the arrival of the *Zenith*. The remaining Order fleets blockaded Rusah while Ahlam's assassins, strike teams of Legionnaires and a Seeker cult known as the Perifeii launched a coordinated attack on all known cells throughout the Horizon. The Nazareem's far-reaching tentacles were cut off in one swift blow, leaving only the head, besieged deep beneath Rusah's surface.

CLEANSING FIRE

When the Nazareem in Baheema activated the fortress' defense systems, it was already too late—the Order was ready for them. During the final months of the Portal Wars, the Order had discovered a prehistoric weapon in a far-off system. The spiral artifact, measuring 150 meters of the same unknown, black material as the core of the Monolith, had been hidden inside one of the Order's monastery cruisers. Activating the weapon meant lowering the cruiser into the corona of the Odacon star to harness its power. A concentrated wind of stellar fire swept through the system and ignited Rusah's very atmosphere. The legends say that the planet burned for nine segments—one for each of the judgments of the Icons on the souls of the Nazareem. The victorious alliance of world-enders swore to never let it be known how the day was won, and erased the Beast Cult from the annals of history.

EKPYROSIS

The massacre at Rusah and the victors' vow of silence is, ironically enough, what enabled the Nazareem to survive. Scattered cells out on missions when Rusah fell managed to hide, founding distant colonies or spreading across the Horizon along with the rest of the refugees of the Portal Wars. They worshipped U'Haya in secret, sought out positions of power and recruited new members. High priests and leaders went into hyper sleep in the shadows of the cadaver clocks, waiting for a sign from the ancient masters.

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to the verge of another cataclysmic war while keeping the Second Horizon from gaining tangible power. The Imperial fleets will then swoop in to secure the situation, after which the peoples of the Third Horizon will bend the knee to their saviors and give up all foolish notions of self-governance.

The Vestals: The agents of Ardha tried for a long time to enter the Third Horizon, and when they finally found a way through in the Taoan system, they arrived in a very different cluster than the one they had left at the end of the Portal Wars. Old knowledge had been lost, and the ancient defense networks used by the Firstcome during the battles of Odacon didn't seem so threatening anymore. Of their old enemies, only one had safe-guarded their link to history, and with it, the knowledge of the weapons: the Order of the Pariah. Along with the Legion and a united front of Firstcome armies, the Order had stopped the Imperial invasion the first time, and the Vestals are now hard at work to divide and conquer. Without their old allies, the Order will be powerless against the might of the First Horizon.

Nazareem's Sacrifice: In fear of seeing the Beast Cult return and grow in power, the other factions have strived to purge public memory of Nazareem's existence. Sadly, this has had the opposite effect: in the shadows, the surviving Nazareem have carried on through the generations, growing steadily, unchecked. However, the Nazareem of today are pale copies of their former selves — the cult's masters of old are said to have been able to warp both mind and matter by sheer force of will.

The *Zenith's* arrival in Dabaran marked the resurrection of the cult. Pragmatism and lack of zeal made the Zenithians easy marks for Nazareem agents, and by the time the Vestals arrived, the cadaver clocks were already striking in all corners of the Horizon. One by one, the old sleeper cells have activated.

The darkness gravitates toward the awoken leaders of old, and ancient rituals are once again taught to the hungry worshippers of U'Haya, the Beast. With the Vestals' help, smaller cells seize control of settlements in the outer systems, and their central brothers and sisters infiltrate the fleets and intelligence services of many factions.

THE BEAST CULT

Members of Nazareem's Sacrifice worship an aspect of the Dancer that has gradually vanished from the Third Horizon, although it remains among the jungle nomads of Kua as a nine-eyed, furry dragon. The Nazareem depict their version of the deity as the effete U'Haya, said to be an ancient First Horizon Vestal. The Icon appears as an androgynous human dressed in a white satin gown embroidered with gold images of serpents and thorns. The mouth, chin and hands are stained by dark, almost black, blood and the eyes are covered with a tight, satin blindfold. A red halo glows around U'Haya, contrasted against black, starry night.



The Beast

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THE SYMMETRY

The remaining Emissaries presented in the epilogue of *Emissary Lost* have scattered across the Third Horizon to secretly organize the defense against the Vestals. They have chosen to support both groups such as the Children of the Song and more revolutionary movements on Algol and in the Quadrant of the Pillar. The insurrection on Zahedan, Zalos-B, has been left alone, however, as they know that the Order of the Pariah is the only faction with any real stopping power compared to the First Horizon. The Firstcome peoples must stand together once again if they are to have any chance at all.

- **The Santulans:** The leaders of the Symmetry, the Santulans, use their host bodies in the Third Horizon — the Emissaries — to gather intelligence about the enemy's plans, to assemble loyal, revolutionary armies, and to try to find any remaining artifacts and weapon systems from before the Wars that may still be operational. Unfortunately, all except for the now dead Messenger Emissary are plagued by violent manias and psychotic delusions (*Emissary Lost*, page 192). The Emissaries have become the Symmetry's only way of interacting with the Third Horizon and communicating with their allies. The old nodes are dead, which forces the Santulans to remain in the shadows to keep the enemy from figuring out their weaknesses.
- **The Messenger:** The mind of the destroyed Messenger Emissary, Nabi-mu-Qad, still lingers in the Third Horizon. An echo of the mighty Symmetry mystic Urni en-Argonnas remains, like a djinn, inside the hull of the Coriolis station. The Emissary's songs and messages can appear quite vividly in dreams and during meditation near places where the host body was subjected to trauma: in the now sealed-off palace in the Abhrra; from the Sanatorium in the Core all the way out to the Spice Plaza on the Ring; in the darkness of the central shaft in the Cellar. The Emissary's cryptic aphorisms often appear in spray paint or as mosaics here, visible through the regular clutter of the station to those who know what to look for.

THE MYSTIC'S DISEASE

When compared to the First Horizon's far-reaching infiltration of the factions in the Third Horizon, the Symmetry's chances may at first glance appear slim. The devastating defense systems they control at home are being assembled in the Third Horizon too, however. The new mystics, hearing the songs of the Emissaries, gravitate toward one another for support and community — and

THE MACHINE ICON

The spectral remains of the Messenger Emissary have become a hot topic for people outside the mystic community as well. Mechanics, deckhands, merchants and stevedores have started praying to the Machine Icon — Khari Qa'naan, a new aspect of the Messenger. The budding faith is mainly concentrated to the Stevedore Central underneath the Neoptra, but visiting crews have begun carrying the practice out into the Horizon. The Machine Icon is depicted as the silhouette of a young girl with a golden headdress, a burning heart, and a body full of stars. She clutches an oblong, black toy top — a popular symbol for Coriolis — and some say that she is the soul of the station itself. She is typically praised by spinning a toy top containing incense, preferably on a stoneware plate or on actual soil to symbolize the station's movement above Kua.



The Machine Icon

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TIMELINE

This suite is constructed around several major events in the history of the Third Horizon, but leaves ample time for your own adventures in-between the scenarios. The section below outlines the entire *Mercy of the Icons* timeline.

- **A SONG FOR JAROUMA**, the stand-alone scenario about the arrival of the Emissaries, takes place in the segment of the **Traveler** in **CC60**.
- **THE LAST VOYAGE OF THE GHAZALI**, describing the Taoan incident, works well as an introduction to the campaign. It takes place in the segment of the **Gambler** in **CC61**.
- **THE MERCY OF THE ICONS PART 1: EMISSARY LOST** takes place just before the Cyclade celebrations, in the segment of the **Faceless One** in **CC61**.
- **THE MERCY OF THE ICONS PART 2: THE LAST CYCLADE** begins in the segment of the **Lady of Tears** in **CC62**, when the wreckage of the *Zafirah* suddenly appears in the Uharu system, and leads up to the **Pilgrimaria** of **CC63**, in the end of the segment of the Judge.
- **THE MERCY OF THE ICONS PART 3**: The next episode in the series begins in **CC65** in the wake of drastic changes to the social and political fabric of the Third Horizon.

THE NEW COUNCIL

This scenario suite takes place in a time of great political upheaval and several seats at the council become — and remain — empty during the cycle of the story. In the final scenario, *In the Shadow of the Zenith*, a rigged snap election fills the empty seats (page 182).

in doing so, they become the weapon. The Santulans possess the ability to use the mystics as a catalyst for their powers in a way that even outweighs the might of the ancient nodes.

THE COUNCIL OF FACTIONS

Factionary competition has always existed in the Third Horizon, making diplomacy difficult. The founding of the Council of Factions in CC21 as a neutral body for resolving conflicts has kept the bloodshed to a minimum, but the Consortium's disproportionate level of influence — with four votes out of the total twelve — has often led to tension. In truth, the Consortium technically controls one additional vote — that of the Legion — as the mercenary faction tends to vote with their main employer.

⚙ A HOUSE DIVIDED

The mysticides and the death of the Emissary has the Council in turmoil. Powerful voices pressure the other factions to strip the Order of their factionary status and to ban sister Almas from the Council. The Hegemony openly questions governor Kemal Dargosian's fitness to remain in office on the basis of the Warriors of the Holy Light's relative ease in operating onboard the station. The Consortium try to cement their hold over Coriolis and the Horizon's main industries, with increasingly harsh methods. This leaves Jesibel Niales, the Free League's council representative, feeling sidelined, and she approaches the Syndicate to discuss a potential partnership. The Hegemony tries to lay claim to the Emissary's empty seat at the council, arguing that both Hegemonists and neo-Zenithians should have a vote.

OVERVIEW

The overview below guides you through the scenarios of *The Last Cyclade*, as well as the accompanying societal changes.

THE UHARAN ECHO — PAGE 15

The first scenario throws the PCs straight into the *Zafirah* mystery. The wrecked destroyer appears in Uharu carrying an impossible treasure: the remains of a First Horizon butterfly ship. On the PCs' return journey, the Uharan portal collapses and the group wakes up several weeks later in a Foundation hospital in Covenant City. The factions are lining up to enlist their services, and someone extends a mysterious invitation to Sky City.

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THE CYCLADE DANCE — PAGE 81

The PCs choose a new patron and immediately get to work. A series of missions takes them across the Third Horizon where they discover that the awakening Nazareem's Sacrifice is behind much of the recent years' chaos. The factionary intrigues intensify and lead to dramatic change. The missions in this part are made up of several smaller scenario locations and an adventure generator.

ZENITH'S SHADOW — PAGE 173

Despite the Bulletin's best efforts to stabilize public opinion, people's trust in the Council deteriorates fast. Worried pilgrims, new mystics and refugees flock to Coriolis for the Pilgrimaria. The space around the Kuan portals is mined, except for a few heavily Legion-guarded corridors. A newly constructed Zenithian fleet is positioned in Sadaal, ready to take out the Order's blockade in Aiwaz.

In these dark times, the PCs are entrusted with an important mission: escorting a high-ranking VIP, close to the Council, off the station. The individual is carrying some highly sensitive information, which leads to dangerous interference from the factions. The Zenithian factions try to identify and eliminate the traitor while the Firstcome wish to protect her and secure the data.

With everyone's eyes on Coriolis, the Symmetry sees an opportunity to win back some ground from the First Horizon — the Vestals must be destroyed. Through the combined force of the new mystics, te Monolith is activated. Sky City crumbles, Coriolis falls from the heavens and the Zenithian fleets burn...

AFTERMATH — PAGE 238

The smoldering remains of the Coriolis station lie scattered across the Kuan jungles or sink into the swamps in the delta. The Zenithians' powerbase has been crippled, and with it, the Nazareem's manipulative influence. The Third Horizon's central hub is gone and the space around Kua has been reduced to a deadly debris field of destroyed warships. Homeless Zenithians seek shelter among the stars. The Church of the Icons gathers millions of grieving souls under their banner, offering safety in worship. In Rimward Reach, far from the chaos in the core of the system, the independent Djachroum station assumes the role of a guiding light in the darkness. A Horizon Council is temporarily formed to replace the Council of Factions.

POLITICAL COMPLEXITY

The Third Horizon is brimming with factionary intrigue. Keeping track of who wants what, when, and from whom may feel overwhelming. We recommend you to choose only a couple of aspects of the political game, and three factions at the most, to focus your scenarios around. Here are some tips to consider when introducing the story to the group:

- Smaller players not previously involved with the PCs may be mentioned in passing.
- Larger players not previously involved with the PCs should be mentioned *in relation* to factions or groups whom the group has had dealings with.
- Try to present important events from the perspective of the group's employer or patron.
- If your group is more into adventures and handsome rewards than politics, cold, hard birr could be the incentive for diving into the scenarios. In this case, the politics may be only a flavorful backdrop.

THE CORIOLIS ATLAS COMPENDIUM

***The Last Cyclade* will introduce many new locations to the PCs. *The Atlas Compendium* describes these locations in much greater detail than this book, but is in no way necessary to play the scenarios.**

KEEPING TRACK

Use the book's ribbon to keep track of important pages – what part of the story you're currently playing, events the group are about to experience or NPCs they could come to meet.

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GM TIPS

The scenarios that make up *The Last Cyclade* have somewhat varied structures. The first and last follow a more traditional dramatic arc and are divided into acts and scenes, designed to introduce the story to the group, and then help them tie it all together. The middle scenario consists of a number of smaller, open locations for the group to explore as the segments go by and the plot thickens.

PERSONAL PREFERENCES

This book will take your group on a journey far across the cluster, and you need to consider the PCs' means of transportation when you prepare. Depending on play style, theme and group concept, you may also wish to alter certain things — don't be afraid to substitute NPCs in this book for characters you have encountered in previous sessions, and put some thought into how the group's patron, enemies and contacts will react to the changing Horizon.

NEW PATRONS

Toward the end of *The Uharan Echo*, several new patrons will be introduced to the PCs. Over the following scenarios, several of the factions will pressure the group to change sides and break deals. This may in turn lead to drastic changes in the group's relationship to former allies, contacts and even enemies.

A VERY BIG WORLD

Several conflicts and events within the Council of Factions, as well as large confrontations out in the systems, will happen in the background while the PCs are busy adventuring. Such events are usually described at the beginning or end of a scene, and especially important information is always summarized at the end of each act or scenario. This makes it easier for you as the GM to make sure you did not miss mentioning something vital. Do not let such information dominate the story to the point that the players lose focus and abandon their current adventure, however. Another important thing to remember is that the PCs' patrons are powerful people under immense pressure — they have vast resources to offer the group, or to pour into ruining the day for a group of turncoats...

COMBAT READINESS

The Last Cyclade contains combat events, and it may be useful for several of the PCs to know how to handle themselves in a fight. However, many of the potentially violent situations may be avoided through stealth or manipulation. If your group contains no fighters, you may wish to prepare alternatives to the scenarios' more dangerous events before you start playing.

MYSTIC PCS

Mystic PCs may experience precognitive episodes or dreams during the scenarios in this book, but they will not be as significant to the story as they were in *Emissary Lost*.

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THE SCENARIOS

Each scenario begins with a short summary, and an introductory text that sets the mood. Both of these are mainly for the GM's eyes, but if your group can handle a lot of meta information, feel free to read the introduction out loud.

BACKGROUND

All the scenarios include an initial breakdown of the different acts and scenes, a play style suggestion and a summary of any intrigues and mysteries the PCs might encounter.

ACTS

The first and final scenarios have the traditional three acts. The missions in the middle of the book instead take place over a single scene, containing a short string of events.

OVERVIEW

Each act begins with a short text you can read aloud to the players to set the mood. The overview also contains a short summary of what will happen during the act.

MAJOR PLAYERS

Each act contains a list of its major players. Each individual character is described in detail in the scene or event where she is introduced.

DARKNESS POINTS

At the start of each new scenario, you receive a number of DP equal to the number of players (down to a minimum of 4 DP). Every act begins with you adding new DP to your pool, one for each player (down to a minimum of 2 DP. Unused DP carry over from one scenario to the next during *The Last Cyclade*. After Act 2 of *The Uharan Echo*, DP are no longer subtracted from the GM pool when the PCs rest — the darkness will keep growing until the disastrous Monolith discharge at the end of the final scenario, *In the Shadow of the Zenith*.

SCENES

The game is played in scenes. This enables you to skip stretches of time when nothing important happens. The scenarios in this book are made up of two types of scenes — starting scenes and regular scenes — but regardless of which type, the scenes are always described in the same way. This makes it easier for you to grasp the contents of a scene quickly to be able to modify it, should you want to. The order of the scenes can be altered to better fit your group and campaign.

SITUATION AND LOCATION

Each scene begins with a text written from the perspective of a character in the scene, to give you and the players a sense of the ambiance and setting of what's to come — what the location looks like, who is there, how it smells etc. You may choose to read this text aloud to the players. The location and the situation are also briefly summarized. More detailed information about an event or a character can be found in the description of the specific events.

NPCS

NPCs and ships relevant to a scene are described in connection to the event where they are introduced. Several NPCs have talents or abilities that cost DP to activate, but the cost only applies if the ability is used *against* the PCs. If the ability or talent is used without penalty for the PCs, or even to help them, you may use it once per scene for free.

EVENTS

Each scene is made up of events: mandatory ones — that will happen regardless of how the PCs act — and optional ones, to add as you see fit. Events are powered by DP, but the cost is usually 0 DP for a smaller, or mandatory, event. The cost may however climb to 3 DP, or even higher, if the event puts a significant hurdle in the PCs' way. Most scenes in this book contain a mandatory starting event. Your job as GM is to expose the PCs to the clues they need, which may require you to alter some events, or make up completely new ones. Do not forget to help out your group by reminding them of things they may have forgotten, but that their characters wouldn't.

AFTERMATH

Each scenario ends with a summary of what the PCs have gone through, and what the potential fallout of the scenario may be. Feel free to run your own adventures between the scenarios in this book, or allow the group some time for recreation and sightseeing in the Horizon.

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THE UHARAN ECHO

Encrypted probe received.
Unknown signal echo from Azraq-3.
Analyzing Consortium registry.
Correlating with the Ghazali logs.
Positive identification.
By the Icons, we've found her.

DATA ANALYSIS, SPECIAL BRANCH, CORIOLIS, CC62

Josh Overbeek (Order #46093754)

INTRODUCTION

In this first scenario of the second installment of the **Mercy** campaign, a ship thought lost is recovered. A sensor echo from a remote system sets the PCs on a quest for answers as they unravel one of the Third Horizon's biggest mysteries — what really happened in Hamura when the *Ghazali* was lost and the *Zafirah* vanished into the portal?

THE UHARAN ECHO will reveal the truth about the fates of the *Ghazali* and the *Zafirah*. On what is described by their Consortium contacts as an easy job, the PCs are given the opportunity to investigate the wreck of the *Zafirah*. Inside, they find the real reason for the incident and catch a glimpse of the looming threat that aims to permanently alter the Horizon's future.

BACKGROUND

Ever since the Taoan distress call in the Gambler's segment of CC61 and the closing of the portals between Hamura and Taoan following the disastrous rescue mission, the factions have been racing each other to lay claim to the region and investigate the closed portals. Their political scheming creates ripples that multiply across the cluster.

THE TAOAN-HAMURA PORTAL

Getting a clear picture of what happened to the *Ghazali* took a few days. As the liner fell into the star and the surviving crew members reached the Hamurabi station, a preliminary report was relayed back to Kua. The Legion responded by sending a small squadron, spearheaded by the pitch black battleship *Derb Chau'kedaar* from Foundation Station 7 near Xene.

As the Legion squadron reached Hamura, they encountered a small Order of the Pariah destroyer trying to seize control of Hamurabi. A swift strike disabled the Order vessel and gave the Legion back control of the system. Representatives from the Consortium and the Foundation now run the station, informing all new arrivals that approaching the currently restricted portal to Taoan will be met with deadly force.

The Zenithian Hegemony did not find out about the incident until after the Legion's blockade of the portal had been established, leaving them without insight into how the situation unfolded. They responded to being shut out by blockading the Colonial Agency's industries around the Nestero gas giant to leverage the Consortium into some sort of deal, which ultimately failed. The lack of interest in diplomacy from the Consortium's side spurred the Hegemony's security services, the Astûrban, to launch a destabilizing operation on Coriolis instead, in the hopes of assuming control of Hamurabi through a war of position. The fallout of this operation was explored in *Emissary Lost*.

THE TAOAN-UHARU PORTAL

When the news of the incident spread, several factions explored the possibility of sending their agents to Taoan the long way around, over Uharu. As the Council debated the tensions in Hamura, the Consortium had already sent fast courier ships to Dabaran and Uharu where they were able to recruit a motley fleet of mercenaries to hold the Uharu-Taoan portal. Their control of it was short-lived, however. A week later, the Legion's *Salomah* cruiser arrived in Uharu to further strengthen the blockade, but found it had already been broken by two enormous Order monastery cruisers, the *Taliq-Alnaar* and the *Alit-Samah*. After warning shots — one per cruiser, plus one for the Martyr — the *Salomah* powered down her weapons and retreated back to Dabaran.

Since then, a number of attempts to break the Order's hold over Uharu and its sibling-star Zuhal have been made, but the Zenithian

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PORTAL BLOCKADES

As the corruption in the darkness between the portals forces a jumping crew to go into stasis, even the mightiest fleets are extremely vulnerable when coming out of a jump.

AUTOMATED DEFENSES

Large battleships always jump on autopilot, and have machine djinn onboard that follow advanced defensive protocols. They can process sensor data and respond with defensive or offensive weapons to ward off attackers after the jump until the crew are back at their stations (see the Ship system and Ship intelligence features on page 154 of the *Rulebook*).

SHADOW JUMPING

Smaller ships aiming to safely pass through a blockade also have other options. The Syndicate and the Free League have performed shadow jumps for some time, meaning that they shadow another ship—such as a bulk freighter or a vessel allied with the blockade—through the portal while maintaining a minimal energy profile. The ship djinn is programmed to simply drift through the portal, with all but the reactor shut off. This strategy gives the enemy sensor operator a -2 to her DATA DJINN test (in addition to other signature modifiers).

SIGNAL CLUSTER

A third option for both civilian and military blockade runners is signal clustering. As the blockade must cover a portal field of an immense size, and therefore a vast number of potential entry points for arriving vessels, their sensor operators have huge quantities of data to process. People with birr to spend can use this to their advantage by sending decoy probes into the portal ahead of jumping. The probes scatter after completing the jump and emit active sensor echoes to emulate the arrival of a large group of ships. The probes can also be equipped with false transponder codes that look like those of allied ships to make it even more difficult for the blockade to get a clear picture of what is happening. The actual jumper will run silent and attempt to evade detection by jumping while the blockade is busy investigating and firing upon the decoys. For every group of four decoy probes (or every pair, if they are fitted with false transponder codes), the blockading sensor operator gets a -1 to her DATA DJINN test (in addition to other signature and silent running modifiers, of course). The decoy probes must be launched via a torpedo system and cost 5,000 birr each (15,000 if they have false transponder codes).

PORTAL CONTROL

The blockading faction will also make sure to seize control of the local portal station to be able to monitor entry requests, cargo manifests, armament, and transponders. Controlling the portal station is an excellent way to keep tabs on the comings and goings of data probes that may give one's enemies undue insights. A tactic used during the Portal Wars, nowadays thankfully banned by the Council, is mining the space around a portal. To make it an even deadlier tool, the mine fields were sporadically rearranged and moved in case a potential attacker had mapped out a safe entry vector.

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fleets are spread too thin for gunboat diplomacy, forcing the parties to hash it out in negotiations. After segments of tedious talks, sister Almas, The Order's Council representative, finalized a bundle of deals: freighters owned by a select number of Dabaran dars are now allowed limited access; the Foundation may resupply its base on Zuhal's moon Pyre in exchange for sharing any and all research data from the site, and the Colonial Agency may collect already refined materials from their industries — if they pay a hefty toll, of course.

⚙ THE ZAFIRAH'S RE-ENTRY

The *Zafirah* was torn apart inside the Hamura portal field and remained in the space between the portals for many segments before finally being flung out from the Uharu-Taoan portal field. The broken remains of the ship slipped past the Order's blockade and was caught by the gravitational pull of Uharu's sibling-star Zuhal, to be caught in orbit around some of the brown dwarf's moons.

⚙ THE DISCOVERY

On a routine mission in Uharu, Legion recon patrol 4161 detected a sensor anomaly near the small moon of Azraq-3, orbiting the brown dwarf star Zuhal. The recon data was covertly sent back to the Consortium's Special Branch for analysis. The sensor signature, albeit very warped, was cross-referenced with the data from the *Ghazali's* emerald disc and determined to be from the *Zafirah*. Some debris from the destroyer appeared to orbit Azraq-3, but the main wreckage had most likely crashed onto the surface of the moon. The Consortium quietly assembled a discreet and officially "faction-neutral" expedition to investigate the crash site.

⚙ THE REMAINS OF THE ZAFIRAH

The destroyer has been torn apart and much of her remains now orbit Azraq-3. The bow of the ship, which is much harder to detect thanks to the butterfly ship's stealth technology, has crashed on the dark side of the moon and sunk beneath its icy waters.

OVERVIEW

After their adventures during *Emissary Lost*, the PCs are recruited by the Consortium to undertake a discreet investigation at the far end of the Dabaran circle.

⚙ ACT 1 – DEBRIS (PAGE 24)

The Lady of Tears, CC62: The first act begins *in medias res* with the PCs already in Uharu. They have been recruited by the Consortium through an old contact and have joined forces with a Special Branch agent and her Legion escort. They breach the Order blockade and travel to the moon Azraq-3, orbiting the sibling-star Zuhal, only to find that a salvage crew has beaten them there.

⚙ ACT 2 – PHANTOMS (PAGE 34)

The bow of the *Zafirah* has crashed on the dark side of Azraq-3. The PCs dive into the lightless, icy depths to find the wreckage, and as they recover the ship's emerald disc, they come upon a badly damaged First Horizon butterfly ship.

As they travel back towards the portal, carrying the precious data from the butterfly's data banks, something goes terribly wrong. A cascade of plasma is expelled from Uharu and the portal fields in the corona appear to explode. The PCs must perform a blind jump through the unstable portal to escape certain death.

⚙ ACT 3 – A NEW DAWN (PAGE 60)

The Faceless One, CC62: The PCs wake up a segment later in a hospital in Covenant City on Kua. Their ship was found drifting in Dabaran, partly disabled, and they have been held in a medical coma since then while being treated for hyper sickness. When they wake up, several factionary dignitaries try to recruit them. They are given a few days to think the offers over, but need to have made up their minds before an upcoming banquet that's apparently being thrown in their honor in one of Sky City's palaces. The recovered data from the *Zafirah* is grim reading: the cloaked butterfly ships appear to be able to navigate the space between the portals, and other log data hints at a possible connection with the Nazareem's Sacrifice.

FACTIONS AND GROUPS

Taoan's cut-off fate and the collapse of the portals at Uharu and Hamura are events that many of the factions are keenly interested in. The portals fluctuate heavily which makes using them dangerous, as calculating a safe vector becomes almost impossible. The portals are currently controlled by the Legion in Hamura and by the Order of the Pariah in Uharu.

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EXTENDED PORTAL JUMP FAILURE

The extended list below explains what happened to the *Zafirah*.

Roll on the table below when a portal jump fails. Add +1 to the die showing tens if the jump was blind. Add +3 if the portal was unstable. Jumping through an unstable portal always counts as jumping blind and carries a minimum PILOT test penalty of -3.

D66	ROLL
11-14	The ship enters the portal field at its very edge, causing explosive decompression in one random, non-fixed module. The ship is then expelled from the portal.
15-22	The portal field suddenly fluctuates and absorbs the power from the ship's reactor. The ship drifts away from the portal and requires D6 days to repair before it can resume traveling.
23-26	The ship enters the field but loses its way in the darkness between the portals. It is expelled in the system it tried to leave with D6 points of HP damage.
31-34	The ship is hit by powerful discharges from the portal and pushed back to where it came from, suffering a -1 to Maneuverability until repaired in a dockyard.
35-44	The ship collides with another ship or some debris on its way into the portal. This has the same effects as Ramming (see page 100 in the *Rulebook*). The ship remains in the system it tried to leave.
45-53	The ship is lost inside the portal for D6 hours and then returned to the system it tried to leave, now haunted by something from beyond the darkness. The GM decides the details of the haunting.
54-61	The ship is lost inside the portal for D6 days and then returned to the system it tried to leave. All PC crew members must pass an EMPATHY test or suffer D6 points of stress. If this leaves a PC Broken, she also suffers a Mania (see page 337 of the *Rulebook*).
62-66	The ship enters the portal and is lost for D6 months. It is then returned to the system it tried to leave and all PCs onboard suffer 2D6 points of stress. If this leaves a PC Broken, she also suffers a Mania (see page 337 of the *Rulebook*).
71-76	The ship completes the jump, but ends up in another, randomly chosen system. One random, non-fixed module is destroyed.
81-86	The ship completes the jump but ends up in another, randomly chosen system after D6 weeks, torn almost to shreds. One random module is destroyed (may be a fixed module). Each PC must pass an EMPATHY test or become hyper sick (D6 on the table below): 1-3: Arms or legs atrophy. -1 to STRENGTH and EMPATHY. Unless the affected limbs are amputated within a week, the corruption spreads to the torso, killing the person and turning her into a darkbound. 4-6: Shattered mind. The person hallucinates vividly. -1 to AGILITY and WITS. Unless treated within a segment, the person succumbs to the darkness, dies, and is replaced by a darkbound or djinn.
91-94	The ship completes the jump but ends up in another, randomly chosen system after D6 months. It has 0 HP and suffers hull collapse (see page 171 of the *Rulebook*). Each PC must pass an EMPATHY test or become hyper sick (D6 on the table below): 1: Arms or legs atrophy. -1 to STRENGTH and EMPATHY. Unless the affected limbs are amputated within a week, the corruption spreads to the torso, killing the person and turning her into a darkbound. 2: Shattered mind. The person hallucinates vividly. -1 to AGILITY and WITS. Unless treated within a segment, the person succumbs to the darkness, dies, and is replaced by a darkbound or djinn. 3-4: The corruption has a permanent hold over the body, reducing it to a dead husk inhabited by a darkbound. 5-6: The person's mind has split and her body is now possessed by a djinn or darkbound.
95-96	The ship disappears between the portals and the crew is corrupted beyond recognition. The wreckage may eventually appear in a random system, months or years later—or it may be lost forever, living on only as a cautionary tale of the Icons' fickle tempers.

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THE CONSORTIUM

After the loss of the *Ghazali*, the Consortium has continued attempting to re-establish contact with Taoan and stabilize the portal fields. Using bribes and spies, they have recovered the *Ghazali's* emerald disc and read its tale about the liner's fate. Feeling pressured by the political power struggles on Coriolis, they have handed over the investigation to the Legion and the Special Branch.

THE ORDER OF THE PARIAH

Having initially lost to the Legion in Hamura, the Order regained some ground after the monastery cruisers' crushing victory in Uharu. Despite their strong blockade in the system, however, they have not yet had the opportunity to investigate the unstable portal. Although heavily regulated, traffic through the system has been steady, and every foreign vessel must be thoroughly searched and vetted. The Order's willingness to negotiate with the Zenithian factions for traffic clearance in Uharu has so far kept the Council of Factions from leaning too heavily on the faction's strict cordoning-off of Zalos, however.

THE LEGION

Courier and recon vessels from the Legion have tirelessly searched Uharu for any trace of the *Zafirah*. Their discretion has so far kept the ships from being boarded by the Order's inspectors.

THE NAZAREEM'S SACRIFICE

The hidden cult has eyes and ears everywhere, but mainly in the Zenithian factions. When Special Branch heard about the discovery of the *Zafirah*, so too did the Nazareem cell on Kua. The awakening of the cult leaders and the presence of the butterfly ship are things that the cell wish to keep from their enemies until the First Horizon is ready to strike. Two spies are therefore inserted into the crew, appointed by the Consortium to investigate the Uharan echo: the Legionnaires Dala Amoun and Farouk Gaim. The spies' orders are to keep information that might spoil the Nazareem's plans from getting out.

THE PATRONS

The actions of the PCs during Acts 1 and 2 will not go unnoticed. Rumors about their exploits spread, and several interested parties begin to keep tabs on the group. It turns

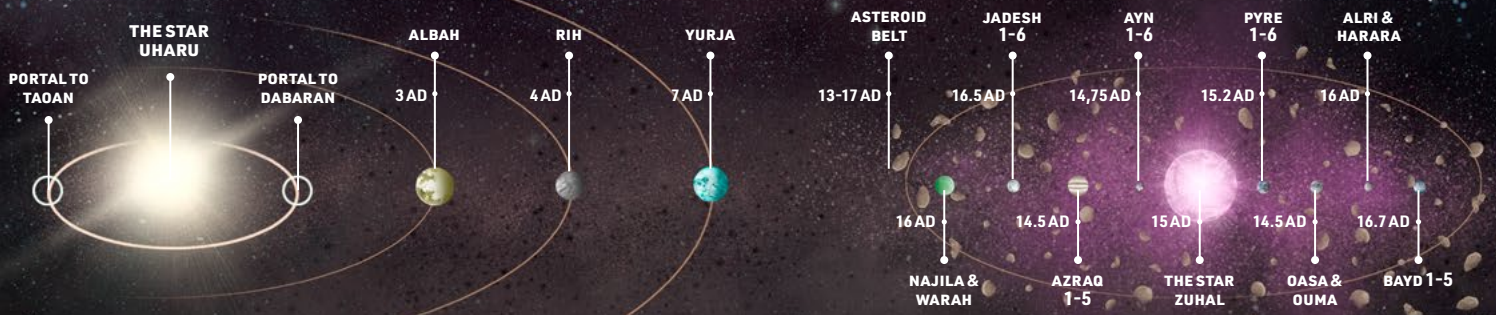
THE PORTAL WEAVE

For lost ships to reappear in entirely new locations throughout the Horizon is very rare, but rumors about such incidents have led to some pretty wild speculation about how the portals actually connect with each other. Both the Foundation and the Order of the Pariah are working on theories about the portals being interconnected currents in a large ocean, suggesting that with the right navigational technology, one could enter a portal anywhere and exit through any other portal of one's choosing. No previous civilization, save possibly the mythic Portal Builders themselves, have been able to do this, however, not even the mighty First Horizon.

MAJOR PLAYERS

- **NADINA SARISH – Special Branch agent in charge of the PCs' mission (page 26)**
- **DALAAMOUN – Legionnaire and Nazareem cultist (page 26)**
- **FAROUK GAIM – Legionnaire and Nazareem cultist (page 26)**
- **YAMI EN-AWAR – Captain of the *Mi'Shaal* salvage ship (page 29)**
- **VERION SIDONNA – Patron and Consortium company leader (page 84)**
- **FAIDA DIN HRAMA – Patron and Zenithian Hegemony officer (page 85)**
- **SAHDI BAT-ERDEN – Patron and merchant from Aishan's Emporium (page 86)**
- **VISHAN-VEN – Vestal captain of the *Falaina* butterfly ship (page 54)**

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THE UHARU SYSTEM

Uharu is a binary system rich on resources, also including the sibling-star Zuhal. Twenty-three moons and three dwarf planets orbit Zuhal, a brown dwarf about 15 AD from the main star. Zuhal is believed to have already devoured half of the system's original celestial bodies; what remains can essentially be described as a huge asteroid belt surrounding it. When the Firstcome arrived in the Third Horizon, the binary system quickly became important – its closeness to Dabaran paired with its plentiful natural resources and abundance of flora and fauna made it a contested system. Dabaran dars fought endlessly with local colonists, and since the Zenith's arrival, the Colonial Agency has joined the conflict by establishing orbital refineries around the three dwarf planets Alri, Harara and Warah.

Important moons:

- PYRE – Charred and ravaged moon without a natural atmosphere, located in a flux tube near Uharu itself. The Foundation operates a station here, the FS-21, where magnetic fields are studied.
- AZRAQ 1-5 – Five moons mainly covered in water and ice. Azraq-3 is tidally locked in its rotation around Uharu, with one of its sides constantly facing away from the star. The dark side is covered in thick ice sheets and treacherous underwater currents while the lit side is all muddy oceans and swamps. All the Azraqs have fauna mainly made up of hibernating worms and protofish, despite the harsh environments, low gravity and leaking atmospheres.
- NAJILA – Najila is the only moon large enough to maintain an atmosphere capable of supporting rudimentary vegetation and varied fauna, mainly consisting of different reptiles. Naturally occurring hot springs have allowed for human settlement, and several small Firstcome colonies have survived through the centuries up until today.

The dwarf planets:

- ALRI (0.3 G) – Believed to be the remains of a much larger planet, now brutally exploited for its riches. The Colonial Agency mines silicates here which they refine into silicon, hydrogen and oxygen using three orbital refineries. The atmosphere is heavily polluted and very thin, but still breathable.
- HARARA (0.3 G) – Alri's closely orbiting sister planet. A Parr-Nestera mining station on the planet serves as the hub for hundreds of mining drones across the planet that harvest helium-3 from the planet's crust. At the end of each segment, Alri does a close pass above the mining station and the raw materials are shipped to the refineries to be processed.
- WARAH (0.4 G) – A solid dwarf planet with a crust of frozen, iron-rich mud. Despite the thin and toxic atmosphere, a small tribe of Kalit humanites from Jina have made it their home. The tribe has domesticated the native Dol'amar – a type of acid-resistant isopod that can grow to be five meters long. Warah is mostly left alone by the factions.

The planets:

- ALBAH (0.45 G) – A small, inhospitable planet with a thick atmosphere saturated with ammonium chloride. The location of several surveillance stations and a former Dabaranian shipyard now claimed by the Order of the Pariah.
- RIH (0.8 G) – One of the planets that were colonized in the early days of the Third Horizon. Its thick crust consisted primarily of granite, but the bedrock was stripped away over the centuries and shipped to other systems. Today the surface, with its ancient ruins from former civilizations, is plagued by raging dust storms.
- YUJRA (1.5 G) – A severely exploited ice planet, now hosting military installations and naval bases captured by the Order of the Pariah.

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out that the *Zafirah's* emerald disc had been corrupted, and by Act 3, several factions believe that the PCs may be able to tell them more than the fragmented logs.

BEFORE YOU BEGIN

The Uharan Echo is an investigative, location-specific scenario that will introduce even more of the First and Second Horizons' power struggle to your group. The timeline on page 10 gives you a suggestion as to when the scenario takes place, but feel free to use a timeline of your own.

INTRODUCING THE PCS

Take some time to prepare a good entrance for the PCs. If they are still on good terms with the Consortium and have their own ship, they may simply be hired as independent investigators. If they lack a ship of their own, they could be assigned as consultants to a Consortium strike team trying to keep a low profile onboard an anonymous class III freighter. If their relationship with the Consortium has soured for some reason, their patron may hire them for the job instead, after having been secretly pressured to do so by Special Branch. In this case, keep Nadina and the other Legionnaires' alliances a secret — have them pose as regular mercenaries instead.

IMPORTANT FACTS

You should familiarize yourself well with the prologue and the introduction above before you begin. Each act contains a closing event that ends the act and moves the story along to the next one. Feel free to use these events earlier than suggested if you need your story to pick up the pace, but make sure that the PCs have noted the key clues:

- The *Zafirah* has sustained mysterious damage.
- Logs from the destroyer's emerald disc or bridge reveal what actually happened during the Hamura incident (page 44).
- The butterfly ship's sensor logs can and should be retrieved.
- The legionnaires are Nazareem agents.



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DEBRIS

The peoples of the Horizon gather to worship of the Lady of Tears. On Dabaran, one of the cluster's cradles of civilization, pillars of smoke rise in the desert towards a darkening, crimson sky. A gentle trickle of ash rains down over the devout, as long processions of mourners in pale gowns carry white lotuses to the funeral pyres on the beaches of Dar Bahri. In the darkness far above, the dars' freighters wait for portal clearance. Somewhere on the other side, in Uharu, the Order of the Pariah's blockade tightens. Two enormous monastery cruisers crewed by Martyr warriors of renowned zeal assume battle positions.

THIS ACT CONTAINS a starting scene, a couple of regular scenes and events, and descriptions of the featured NPCs. The act ends with a closing event that carries the PCs into the second act.

OVERVIEW

The PCs have been hired by the Consortium to breach the Order blockade in Uharu together with two Legionnaires and a Special Branch agent. They are to investigate what may be the remnants of the *Zafirah*, currently orbiting one of the sibling-star Zuhal's moons, Azraq-3. When they arrive, they encounter a salvage crew and are pressured by Special Branch agent Nadina Sarish to handle the situation without leaving loose ends. The debris they investigate hints at the massive extent of the damage suffered by the destroyer during the Hamura incident and they eventually find a faint sensor echo leading them to the ship's main crash site.

DARKNESS POINTS

During this act, use your Darkness Points to make the investigation of the wreck difficult and dangerous, but not lethal. Use the PCs' lack of knowledge and reliable data to create a suspenseful investigation. You begin the act with DP equivalent to the number of players, down to a minimum of 4 DP.

ACT 1

STARTING SCENE

BEYOND THE MARTYR'S VEIL

Nadina raises a chipped mug, eyeing each of you up and down across the bridge until her gaze comes to rest on her... bodyguards? Or are they her captors? "A toast to bountiful findings. May the Messenger bless us with good data. Let us pray that the Lady's cape has sheltered the Zafirah *from the darkness, and may her flower hide our mission from the watchful eyes of the Order."*

She puts down the Dabaran clay mug and turns to watch the bright star of Uharu through the dura glass of the bridge's observation window. In the distance, the silhouette of a glyph-covered monastery cruiser approaches, contrasted starkly against the brown dwarf Zuhal. The coms crackle to life: "Unidentified vessel in sector 5. In the name of the Martyr, power down and prepare for inspection."

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THE SITUATION

The starting scene begins with the PCs arriving in Uharu from Dabaran. They get to know the extra crew members accompanying them on the Consortium's orders and run into the Order's very impressive blockade. They're barely out of stasis before the voice of Sala Hakim onboard the *Alit-Samah* blares through the coms.

EVENTS

The main events in the scene are passing through the Order blockade, making it to Zuhal's moon Azraq-3 and scanning for the remains of the *Zafirah*.

⚙ BLOCKADE OF THE PARIAH

The Order's spotters have discovered the PCs' entry into the system and hail them for more data on their crew, cargo and business in Uharu. One of the monastery cruisers locks its weapons on the PCs when they exit the portal and maintain a very hostile tone throughout their communications.

- **Initial contact:** All ships entering the system are ordered to shut down everything but reactor and life-support to give the Order more time to inspect every new arrival. This reduces the ship to 1 Energy Point. Rebooting the systems again requires a successful **TECHNOLOGY** test and takes about an hour (each extra six cuts the remaining time in half).
- **The Legionnaires:** Nadina's bodyguards are rough, cybernetically enhanced Legionnaires from the Steel Skulls unit. They come out of stasis calm and quiet, but start readying their weapons and equipment almost immediately from large, dura steel strongboxes in the cargo hold.
- **Identification:** Negotiating with the Order's inspectors is a **MANIPULATION** test. The inspectors clearly have the upper hand as they outgun their opponent, but the PCs' ship has been fitted with a false transponder identifying it as a vessel in the fleet of emir Rahmalan the Elder, the lord of Dar Bahri, and therefore cleared to pass through the blockade under the Order's trade agreements with Dabaran. The false transponder gives the PC making the opposed roll against the inspector (**EMPATHY 3**, **MANIPULATION 3**) a +1. If none of the PCs are skilled negotiators, agent Sarish takes over the conversation. In this case, you may roll to see how she fares, or simply decide if she passes or not.

THE JOURNEY TO AZRAQ

The distance between Uharu and its sibling Zuhal is 15 AU. The travel time is therefore dependent on the speed of the PC's ship. A fast courier ship (speed 4) can reach its destination in about three days, while a slower salvage ship (speed 1) will take almost two weeks to get there. You can choose to cut to the next scene after escaping the blockade, or use the time to let the PCs get to know the NPCs onboard.

PAYMENT

Depending on their contacts, previous missions and group concept, the payment offered for the job may vary. The Consortium will offer their regular fee of 12,000 birr, plus an extra 10,000 for absolute discretion, and may either sweeten the deal with promises of future contracts or menacingly suggest that the PCs should take the job if they know what's good for them. The rewards tables for the different concepts in the mission generator on page 38 in the *Atlas Compendium* can help you think of suitable payment.

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If they win the opposed roll, they are reluctantly welcomed to the system and ordered to stay within an approved set of corridors designated by the blockade. If they fail, they are given an escort throughout their stay in Uharu. A fighter (page 32) is dispatched from the monastery cruiser to make sure they stick to their reported vectors. Their escort will attack them and signal for backup if they stray from their path.

Cost: 0 DP (mandatory)

NADINA SARISH, SPECIAL BRANCH AGENT

Nadina began her career as a Registrator for the Colonial Agency in the Quadrant of the Pillar, but rose quickly through the ranks to a negotiator position, operating as a liaison officer between the Agency and the Alabaster Council in Khorsabad. She ran her own spy ring for a while and organized some corporate espionage before becoming an active agent in the field herself.



CHARACTERISTICS: Folds her hands and licks her lips when preparing to say something important.

ATTRIBUTES:
STRENGTH 2, AGILITY 3, WITS 4, EMPATHY 4

HIT POINTS: 5

MIND POINTS: 8

REPUTATION: 6

SKILLS: Manipulation 4, Command 3, Culture 3, Data Djinn 3, Observation 3

TALENTS: Third Eye

ARMOR: Armasuit 3

WEAPONS: Vulcan Scorpio M2, homing rounds (Bonus +1, INIT +1, Weapon damage 2, CRIT 2, Short range – Small, Automatic fire, High capacity)

- **THIRD EYE:** Nadina is trained to spot an ambush or an escalation of violence before it happens. She can avoid being surprised once per scene. She gets a +2 to **OBSERVATION** to spot sneak attacks and ambushes.

DALA & FAROUK, LEGIONNAIRES

Dala and Farouk are members of the Steel Skulls unit under Jasma "Kyber" Palu and war veterans of 15 years. During a mission on Algol four years ago, the rest of their squad was wiped out and Dala and Farouk were captured by a rebel group. After segments of imprisonment, one of the rebels offered the Legionnaires their freedom in exchange for surrendering to the embrace of the Beast. The rebel was a Nazareem agent and managed to convert her captives. After such a long time of torture and captivity, serving the Beast has given the duo a purpose again.

CHARACTERISTICS: Dala taps her metal-reinforced skull when trying to make a point. Farouk pensively strokes the scar on his neck before entering combat.

ATTRIBUTES:
STRENGTH 3, AGILITY 5, WITS 3, EMPATHY 2

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HIT POINTS: 8

MIND POINTS: 5

REPUTATION: 3

SKILLS: Dexterity (Dala 1 / Farouk 4), Melee Combat 4, Ranged Combat 4, Survival 4, Medicurgy 2, Observation 2

TALENTS: (page 75 in the *Rulebook*)
- **DALA:** Armor (CYB) and Passive Sensors (CYB)
- **FAROUK:** Built-in Weapon (mercurium knife, CYB) and Accelerated Reflexes (CYB)

ARMOR: Battle exo 10 (Dala: 13 including cybernetics), ablative pads (reduces damage from one hit by 3)

GEAR: Dura sword, Legion carbine Dayal-3, Beast talisman (+1 to any one roll)

OTHER EVENTS

Use the events below to add extra life or depth to the scene.

BREAKING BREAD

If the PCs make it through the blockade without an escort, the rest of the journey will be peaceful. Nadina, Dala and Farouk invite the PCs to share a meal with them when the stasis has worn off. The Legionnaires are fearsome company, but considerably friendlier toward PCs with similar backgrounds, such as soldiers or agents. They are more than happy to exchange war stories and compare scars, and will be visibly impressed if the PCs have been through hotter hells than them. Agent Sarish is relatively strict and composed, but will eventually relax when she feels that everything is going according to plan.

Cost: 0 DP

BLOCKADE RUNNERS

The PCs may wish to try to evade the blockade by escaping into the system's darkness. If the inspection escalates into space combat, this may in fact be their only option. Introduce an Order destroyer trying to cut off their escape for a couple of hectic turns (see page 161 of the *Rulebook* for stats on a destroyer crew), beginning with an acc warning shot. If this does not dissuade the fleeing ship, they will lock their weapons on it and attempt to disable it. If the PCs return fire, the destroyer may launch torpedoes, but try to make it so that the PCs manage a narrow escape. During the rest of the scenario, a squadron of small fighter ships will sweep the system for them.

Cost: 1 DP

FINDING ZAFIRAH

A faint sliver of thin atmosphere is dimly illuminated by the gold and purple rays of Zuhal. The monitors on the bridge are full of sensor data about the ring of debris trapped by the pull of the small moon. "The signal is weak, but it should be here, somewhere." Nadina's voice over the intercom. "But we've run into a… complication." The Legionnaires reach for their Vulcans as one of the monitors begins flashing rapidly. A large salvage vessel appears before you, already orbiting Azraq-3 in the midst of what used to be the proud Zafirah. She has been returned from the void, but you aren't the first ones here…

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"At the end of the Portal Wars, she shielded the Dunyazad from the enemies' acc barrage in Aiwaz. She was our sword against the corsairs in Ordana. The Zafirah has braved the flames for us, always in the vanguard, a shaper of destiny. Let us make ourselves worthy of her memory."

Eulogy for the *Zafirah*, Suhaima Taslim

THE SITUATION

In this scene, the PCs get ready to descend to the surface of the moon but are faced with a complication — a salvage crew has beaten them here and has laid claim to the wreckage. Have they already found the destroyer's emerald disc, or are they still oblivious to the importance of their find?

EVENTS

The PCs must first try to gain access to the debris — either through bargaining with the salvagers, or by attacking them — after which they will be able to examine some of the more intact pieces of the wrecked destroyer.

THE SALVAGE CREW

The PCs are not the only ones with their eyes on the *Zafirah*. A salvager named Yami En-Awar has bought the location of the wreckage from the Syndicate — without knowing the identity of the vessel in question — and has managed arrange passage through the portals thanks to a Dabaran freight deal.

The crew of the *Mi'Shaal* salvage ship has already started working when the PCs arrive, their bright flood lights fixed on a couple of the larger debris pieces floating in orbit. How to handle the situation will ultimately be the PCs' choice, but Nadina and the Legionnaires will propose a swift attack to secure the wreckage and eliminate witnesses. If their proposed strategy is not executed, the mood onboard may quickly turn sour. If the PCs stall for too long before making a decision, the *Mi'Shaal* will hail them and demand an identification. Captain En-Awar emphasizes that as the original finders, their legal claim to the wreckage is indisputable — as per the Consortium's salvage directives.

- **Negotiations**: Yami is not unreasonable, as the success of the job largely depends on speed so as not to attract too much attention from the Order's fleets. An offer to assist the *Mi'Shaal* in analyzing the larger pieces of the wreck for a reduced share of the profit will be accepted if the PCs win an opposed **MANIPULATION** test. The PCs receive a -2 penalty if they negotiate via coms, and a -1 if they meet Yami face to face in a non-threatening setting. If they are willing to forgo their share of the profit entirely, however, the penalty instead turns into a +1, but at the added expense of all salvage being brought onboard the *Mi'Shaal* for analysis. Nadina will strongly oppose this final option.
- **Boarding**: Agent Sarish and the Legionnaires do not want witnesses — moreover, the salvagers may already have found important information about the *Zafirah*. Boarding the ship and capturing or eliminating the crew is therefore their recommended course of action.
- **Space combat**: If the negotiations break down, only space combat remains. If the PCs turn hostile, Yami will order the crew of the *Mi'Shaal* to their battle stations and lock their weapons systems on the PCs' ship. As many of the salvagers are still outside their vessel, in exos, firing first may end hostilities very quickly.

When the PCs have struck a deal with captain En-Awar, destroyed the *Mi'Shaal* or boarded her, they are free to examine the debris orbiting Azraq-3. If they bargained with the salvagers, only one of the modules below is theirs to investigate. If they eliminated the salvagers in one way or another, all three modules are theirs for the taking. Alternatively, one of the modules may already have been brought aboard the *Mi'Shaal*, just waiting to be opened…

Cost: 0 DP (mandatory)

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YAMI EN-AWAR, SALVAGE CAPTAIN

The hijra Yami En-Awar bought a smuggler ship called *The Fire of Altai* some fifteen years ago and had it retrofitted at the docks in Tarazug—new transponder, new ship intelligence and a new name; *Mi'Shaal*, "the Fire Wing". Since then, Yami has taken on everything from smaller freight runs in the more civilized systems to perilous long hauls through Rimward Reach or to the ship cemeteries in Yastapol.

CHARACTERISTICS: Absentmindedly chewing on a large wad of arrash, occasionally spitting on the floor.

ATTRIBUTES: **STRENGTH 3, AGILITY 3, WITS 4, EMPATHY 4**
HIT POINTS: 6
MIND POINTS: 8
REPUTATION: 4
SKILLS: Manipulation 4, Culture 3, Data Djinn 3, Medicurgy 3, Ranged Combat 3, Command 2
TALENTS: Extra Pair of Arms (BIO), Zero-G Training
ARMOR: Reinforced exo 3
GEAR: Vulcan pistol, tabula

CREW: Yami's crew is a hard-working, tightly-knit and fiercely loyal group consisting of:

- **PILOT:** Laaga (woman) – Sivas nomad (**PILOT**, **SCIENCE**)
- **FIRST OFFICER:** Chopra (man) – Fleet nomad (**PILOT**, **MEDICURGY**)
- **DECKHAND:** Rani (woman) – Former slave from Algol (**FORCE**, **RANGED COMBAT**)
- **ENGINEER:** Adya (non-binary) – Menkar humanite (**TECHNOLOGY**, **RANGED COMBAT**)
- **ENGINEER:** Krrsh (female) – Skavara from Coriolis (**TECHNOLOGY**, **MELEE COMBAT**)
- **SENSOR OPERATOR:** Mouk (man) – Menkar colonist (**DATA DJINN**, **SURVIVAL**)

All crew members roll 8 dice for the skill tests above, and 4 dice for other tests. They have 6 Hit and Mind Points and are armed with acc pistols or primitive melee weapons. The crew members skilled in **RANGED COMBAT** carry Vulcan rifles and the skavara is armed with a club.

"Her twisted frame descends slowly towards a final resting place in the moon's cold embrace. The scorched edges of the heat shields reflect light in cascading rainbows. Each tear is a way inside, each creak in her dura beams a warning from the Icons: Take heed, intruders — or perish."

First Officer Chopra of *The Mi'shaal*

THE MI'SHAAL, SALVAGE VESSEL

An ancient freighter once used as a Mogul family ship during the nomads' first arrival in the Third Horizon. The blue-and-red coating, inspired by the mountain tigers of Argonnas, has long since faded, leaving the hull battered and charred from space dust and countless atmospheric entries.

CLASS: IV
DOCKS: Second Horizon. Retrofitted at the Korana yards in Tarazug.
CREW: 2 (4)
LENGTH: 86 m
EP: 6
HP: 10
MANEUVERABILITY: -1
SIGNATURE: +2
ARMOR: 7
SPEED: 1
MODULES: Salvage module, Docking module, Chapel, Cabins, Cargo module, Medlab, Escape pods, Stasis module, Service module, Workshop, Acc cannon, Pulse system (Data pulse)
FEATURES: Atmospheric entry, Super sensors
PROBLEM: Slow accelerator

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NEW RULE: TERROR

At the sight of something truly horrendous, you may choose to have the PCs make a Terror check. If the scene already cost you DP, the Terror check is included – otherwise it costs you 1 DP.

- The PCs suffer 2 points of stress unless they pass an **EMPATHY** test.
- Each 6 on the roll negates 1 point of stress.
- Each extra 6 may be spent to calm other party members, protecting them from 1 point of stress.



DEBRIS: STASIS CAVE

A smaller module that appears to be leaking stasis fluid. Sensor readings reveal that it may still be pressurized. The PCs must connect the module to an airlock or a docking module to be able to enter without venting it.

The melted door at the end of the twisted corridor requires a **TECHNOLOGY** test at -2 to open, or a medium breach charge. The room inside is pressurized but horrible to behold.

- **Carnage (0 DP):** Five of the original twelve stasis beds appear to have survived the attack intact. Their occupants awoke after the *Zafirah's* re-entry but proceeded to attack at each other in a mad frenzy. Broken bodies and torn-off limbs lie scattered across the chamber (see the Terror textbox)
- **Lesions (2 DP):** The remaining stasis beds are locked from the outside and the sleepers inside have attempted to claw their way out. The eye sockets, mouths and ears of the corpses inside are filled with dark, frozen blood and the bodies are covered in black rashes and lesions. The body of a cybernetically enhanced soldier is slumped against one of the walls, a dura knife buried deep in her chest. The soldier, whose face is half-covered by lesions (see the Terror textbox), has ended her own life. If the PCs remove their exos here, or later without having had them sanitized, they risk infection from a disease equivalent to Tacharuk's lesions (see page 337 of the *Rulebook*).
- **Darkbound (3 DP):** The room is dark and the stasis beds have all been ripped open. The desiccated remains of several Legionnaires litter the floor, and it looks as if they have been torn apart by teeth and claws. Large chunks of the corpses appear to have been eaten. Suddenly, a dark creature with long, spindly limbs emerges from the shadows in a far corner — a byara (see page 325 of the *Rulebook*, and the box to the left). Having feasted on the Legionnaires already, it is hungry for new prey.

Cost: 0, 2-3 DP

DEBRIS: TWISTED CORRIDORS

A large chunk of the *Zafirah* floats in orbit around the moon, badly torn up.

- **Discovery:** Powerful explosions tore the destroyer apart. First Horizon fractal torpedoes broke through the hull, merging beams and walls together in an angular mess. **SCIENCE** reveals that the damage has been caused by some

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NASIA, FIGHTER

CLASS: I

DOCKS: Karrmerruk

CREW: 1 (Pilot)

EP: 3

HP: 2

MANEUVERABILITY: +4

SIGNATURE: -2

ARMOR: 3

SPEED: 4

MODULES: Acc cannon, Pulse system (Data pulse)

FEATURES: Antimatter propulsion, Atmospheric entry, Ejector, Sensitive sensors (DATA DJINN +1)

COST: 175,000 birr

ALNAKHI, PATROL SHIP

CLASS: III

DOCKS: Karrmerruk

CREW: 2 (5)

EP: 5

HP: 6

MANEUVERABILITY: +2

SIGNATURE: 0

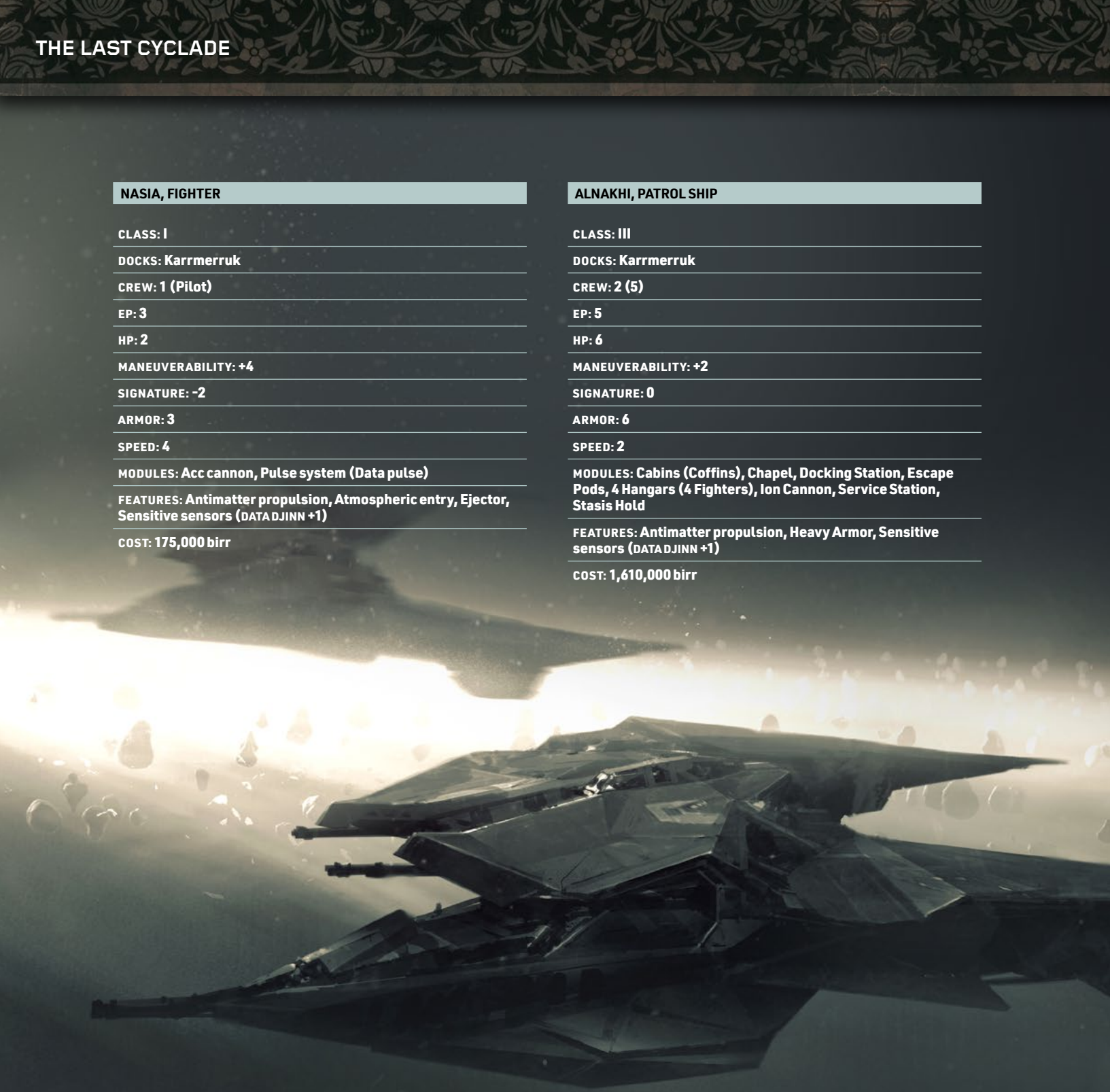
ARMOR: 6

SPEED: 2

MODULES: Cabins (Coffins), Chapel, Docking Station, Escape Pods, 4 Hangars (4 Fighters), Ion Cannon, Service Station, Stasis Hold

FEATURES: Antimatter propulsion, Heavy Armor, Sensitive sensors (DATA DJINN +1)

COST: 1,610,000 birr



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form of antimatter technology. As the torpedoes bored through the ship, they twisted the metal in their wake, leaving spiraling corridors behind where the dura steel has melted into strange root-like formations and sharp, crystal fractals.

- **Threat:** At the cost of 1 DP, entering the module requires passing a **DEXTERITY** test. Failure results in a 4 dice attack (weapon damage 2, CRIT 2). At the cost of 2 DP, the module suddenly shifts just as the PCs have made it inside. Sections of the corridor that appeared solid start to move and it becomes a twisting, chewing grinder. Test **DEXTERITY** at -1. Failure results in a 6 dice attack (weapon damage 2, CRIT 1).

Cost: 0, 1-2 DP

DEBRIS: HALL OF GLASS

A large piece of pitch black metal, apparently melted shut. Getting in requires a cutting torch (or equivalent) and a successful **SCIENCE** test.

- **Discovery**: The fractal torpedoes have fused several rooms together. The module now contains a hall of smooth, dark glass, spiraling toward the center. Moving around inside requires caution. The hall appears inflated, the floors and ceiling bulging outwards, but a successful **RANGED COMBAT** or **SCIENCE** test reveals that it is not the result of a normal explosion. In fact, nothing inside indicates that the module suffered any kind of explosion — the glass appears to have melted into its current shape over quite some time while being subjected to strong vibrations. A **CULTURE** test at -2 may reveal that legends from the Portal Wars speak of terrible weapons that harnessed raw darkness to alter materials on a molecular level.

Cost: 0 DP

A NEW TRACE

When the PCs have examined some or all the modules in orbit, they realize that the bridge and much of the forward hangar are missing. At that point, either the *Mi'Shaal* or someone back at their own ship will contact them after having gathered additional sensor data from the surface of the moon below.

Have them test **DATA DJINN** to analyze the data (the *Mi'Shaal's* super sensors grant a +2). If they pass, they find the crash site on the dark side of the moon. If they fail, they get a sense of where to look, but need to conduct further sweeps (see Act 2).

Cost: 0 DP (mandatory)

OTHER EVENTS

Use the event below to add extra life or depth to the scene.

PORTAL PATROL

The cruisers at the blockade have dispatched one or more recon patrols to look for the PCs. The group must either go silent and try to avoid detection, or take the fight. For 2 DP, the patrol is a single ship. For 3 DP, it consists of a pair. If a patrol ships escape, the PCs can count on incoming reinforcements. Usually it takes three days for a fighter to reach the moon from the blockade, but the Order already have several patrol ships in Zuhal's asteroid belt, ready to launch additional fighters.

Cost: 2-3 DP

END OF ACT 1

As Act 1 draws to a close, the PCs should have found the first clues to unravel the mystery of what happened to the *Zafirah*, but shouldn't yet have started to suspect the Legionnaires' loyalties.

- They should have figured out that the destroyer was somehow attacked or warped by darkness.
- The *Zafirah's* bridge and emerald disc aren't orbiting Azraq-3.
- More debris remains to be found.

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ACT 2
PHANTOMS

A soft motion in the dark, the tears in the hull birthing a cluster of black pearls. They float upward, slowly, through a field of sugar algae, each gentle touch lighting them. Tiny, submarine stars in the darkness, rising toward the ice just as it breaks under the heavy exos. Meanwhile, on the bridge of the *Alit-Samah*, cruiser captain Tourash clutches her talisman firmly to keep her hand from trembling. An enemy has slipped through her blockade. Through clenched teeth, she spits the order at the intercom. Shut down traffic through the system — no one in, no one out. Dispatch recon patrols and may the fire of the Martyr cleanse Uharu of heretics.

THE SECOND ACT describes finding the bridge of the *Zafirah* and the remains of the butterfly ship inside. The events then lead the PCs inside the wreckage where they make an important discovery. As they attempt to leave the system at the end of the act, they come under attack and are forced to jump blindly into the dangerously fluctuating portal field.

OVERVIEW

Sensor sweeps have managed to locate the main crash site on the dark side of Azraq-3. The PCs' Special Branch passenger urges them to go there and look for the *Zafirah's* emerald disc. They find the bridge of the destroyer in a dark lake, still containing the remains of the butterfly ship that rammed her during the jump from Hamura. The captain of the butterfly ship is still alive and as the PCs make their descent to the wreckage, the Vestal broadcasts a message to its kin in the Third Horizon, asking for assistance.

DARKNESS POINTS

DP spending in Act 2 should go toward challenging and scaring the players. The dive and the encounter with the Vestal captain are perfect opportunities for generous DP spending, so you may wish to save up. Instead of getting new DP at the beginning of the act, refresh your pool with points equivalent to the number of players (down to a minimum of 4) when your players reach the crash site and gaze upon the wreckage below (page 37).

STARTING SCENE

THE SIGNATURE

You trek slowly across the ice, surrounded on all sides by the jagged shadows of sharp crystals rising through the thin night like frozen flames on some long-forgotten battlefield. The weight of your exos elicits unnerving creaks and moans from the ice beneath your feet and you carefully search for a safe path forward in the bleak light cast by your headlamps. Nadina's distorted voice crackles over the coms. "Remember the objective. Without the emerald disc, it will all have been for nothing." She sounds tired. Shortly after, one of the Legionnaires raises the portable sensor and stops. "We're here." You lean in to look down through the ice. You've reached a newly frozen patch, and it begins to crack under your collective weight. Deep below, you see faint lights, like tiny,

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distant stars. The answers you seek are somewhere down there, waiting in the darkness, calling to you.

THE SITUATION

In the starting scene, the PCs reach the frozen lake where the bridge of the *Zafirah* rests and make their descent. The true motive of their Legionnaire teammates is brought to light as they try to sabotage the mission. As Nazareem agents, their aim is to make sure that the emerald disc and the news of the fate of the *Zafirah* never make it off the planet — by any means necessary.

EVENTS

Although finding the emerald disc is the PCs' objective, them finding the butterfly ship will be the key moment of the scene. The other events can be used to expand the investigation of the wreck.

A WALK INTO NIGHT

The moon's frozen wastes and treacherous ice sheets make it difficult enough to approach the destination on foot, and almost impossible to land a spacecraft nearby. A skilled pilot can program the ship to hover near the crash site by passing a **PILOT** test. Failure means smashing the ship into one of the sharp ice formations nearby for 1 point of HP damage. As the ship's grav projectors risk forcing the wreck even deeper, hovering directly above the *Zafirah* is not possible, forcing the PCs to complete the final stretch on foot.

- **Crossing the ice (0-1 DP):** Unless the PCs were able to determine the exact location of the crash site, or if they were forced to shut down their reactor to avoid the Order's patrols, they have a hike of a couple of hours ahead of them to get to the wreck. At the cost of 1 DP, force one PC to test **SURVIVAL**. Failure doubles the hike time, and the intense cold leads to all PCs suffering a Cold attack (see page 99 of the *Rulebook*).
- **Atmosphere**: Weak gravity, a thin atmosphere and relentless radiation all serve to make the surface of Azraq-3 a nightmarish place to visit without an exo suit. PCs without exos suffer 1 point of Radiation per hour (Strong radiation, page 99 of the *Rulebook*) and a -1 penalty to **DEXTERITY** because of the weak gravity.
- **The crash site:** The group identify a dark, recently frozen-over patch in the otherwise massive ice sheet of the lake as

ANOTHER DAY'S FIGHT?

Scared or wounded PCs may wish to leave the moon before having explored the wreck in the lake. In this case, you may need to modify the scenario:

- **Fighter patrols from the Order of the Pariah (page 32) could force the PCs to shut down their reactor to avoid detection. This may be a way to keep them from leaving the location too early.**
- **One of the Legionnaires (if left behind onboard), may sabotage the ship to buy more time to take out the expedition.**
- **Persistently retreating PCs should be allowed to escape, of course. If they do so before having found the bridge, you may be forced to improvise quite a bit to push the story forward. The group will have to deal with a very angry employer, but should be given a final chance to investigate the wreck of the *Zafirah* nonetheless.**

OXYGEN SUPPLIES

Azraq-3's atmosphere is too thin to breath. The PCs will need oxygen tanks both above and below the ice.

- **Exos:** A regular exo holds 8 hours of oxygen. Using **SURVIVAL**, this can be pushed to 10 (limited success) or 12 hours (critical success).
- **Other gear:** Diving gear and other oxygen masks generally hold 2 hours' worth of oxygen. Using **SURVIVAL**, this can be pushed to 3 (limited success) or 4 hours (critical success).

You can either choose to keep track of how much oxygen the group has left by counting hours, or simply use the events below to illustrate their dwindling supply in a more abstract way.

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the main crash site. The ice in the area, measuring a couple of hundred meters in width, is considerably thinner, and strange sensor readings from about fifty meters down indicate that they have found something: scattered, fluttering echoes of debris deep below. A dark area in the middle of the crash site appears empty, however, but a successful **DATA DJINN** test at -2 reveals this to be the work of some form of stealth technology. The group must now breach the ice and dive down to the wreck (see the next event).

Darkness Points: When the PCs reach the crash site, you get as many new DP as there are players (down to a minimum of 4 DP).
Cost: 0, 1 DP (mandatory, DP pool replenished)

⚙ STARS BELOW

Thick ice sheets cover the moon's dark lakes. The water depth varies greatly, but some pits run as far down as 500 meters. Closer to the surface, large fields of long, spindly sugar algae are quite common. The mesh-like algae fields exude sugar as they photosynthesize and raise the surrounding water temperature slightly, which may lead to the formation of large sinkholes. The *Zafirah's* bow has become lodged in one such sinkhole at a depth of about 50 meters, resting precariously on the edge of a cliff. The ship is almost completely covered in algae.

- **The sugar globes:** The butterfly ship has come to a final rest in the destroyer's hangar. Small sugar globes trickle out of the ship through holes in the hull, floating gently upward and coming to life as they pass through the sweet secretions of the algae. As the PCs dive, the glowing globes resemble a miniature, starlit sky deep underneath the ice.
- **The descent:** The group must swim in their exo suits, or use some other form of diving gear to reach the *Zafirah*. Describe their silent descent through the dark, freezing waters as claustrophobic and stressful. At the cost of 1 DP, the algae field is so dense and hard to navigate that each PC must test **DEXTERITY** or **SURVIVAL** to find their way. Failure results in 1 point of stress.
  Cost: 0, 1 DP (mandatory)

⚙ THE DEFORMED WRECK

The unlit bow of the *Zafirah* has been reduced to a twisted, deformed skeleton by the fractal torpedoes. The bridge and

EXTENDED COLD RULES

A character caught in a cold environment without the proper gear will suffer a Cold attack. Your clothing will determine the strength of the attack roll. The following can be used for reference:

Naked/Poorly Clothed	16D6
Non-Insulating Clothing	8D6
Armasuit	6D6
Insulating Layers	4D6*

FREQUENCY OF ATTACKS:

Zero °C	1 roll/day
Cold Winds	1 roll/watch
Biting Cold	1 roll/hour
Ice Storm/Deep Space	1 roll/minute

***GEAR:** Exo and thermostatic suits decrease the frequency of the attack rolls by two steps. A character in an exo suit will therefore only have to roll once per watch in deep space or an ice storm, instead of once per minute, and not at all to resist cold winds or a temperature of 0 degrees Celsius. Both types of suits count as "insulating layers" when determining the severity of the attack roll.

CRITICAL INJURIES AND DEATH: Cold attacks have a CRIT value of 2. Fatal, atypical cold damage has a fatal time threshold equivalent to the attack frequency. This means that a critical injury while in "biting cold" will result in death after D6 hours, and a critical injury sustained in an "ice storm" will kill you in just D6 minutes.

THE SALVAGERS

A couple of the salvagers may be talked into accompanying the divers. However, those staying behind on the ship will be killed or imprisoned by the Legionnaire that remains there.

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THE DIVE

Reaching the destroyer takes between 15 and 30 minutes. If the wreck shifts and sinks deeper, however, it takes between 30 and 60 minutes instead (see "Deeper" in Table 01, page 42).

NEW RULE: DIVING

- **EXO SUITS:** Regular exos may be used underwater, but will perform suboptimally. Regular movement is relatively unhindered, but anything requiring a **DEXTERITY** test carries a -3 penalty (rather than the regular -2 for exo suits in standard gravity). The Zero-G Training Talent reduces the penalty to -1.
- **SURVIVAL MASK:** A survival mask may be used for diving. In this case, it functions the same as it would in a vacuum (page 117 of the *Rulebook*)
- **DIVING GEAR:** Conventional diving gear (page 115 of the *Rulebook*) allows the user to remain underwater for 2 hours. Artificial gills provide oxygen indefinitely, but in no way protect against the cold.

the hangar are centrally located and protected behind heavy layers of armor and spiraling corridors at odd angles, full of razor-sharp edges. Each new location or event should cost the PCs about 15 minutes of oxygen (see Table 01, page 42).

Spending DP during the dive allows you to subject the PCs to some truly difficult challenges. They might also have to move or cut their way through collapsed beams, and face sealed bulkheads.

THE MISSING BRIDGE

The *Zafirah's* bridge lies deep inside her spine, protected behind armored bulkheads. In typical Legion fashion, the destroyer's vital modules are located along a central shaft through which the crew can move rapidly in close to zero-G using grav compensators. The bridge's ED field has managed to somewhat protect it from the onslaught of the torpedoes, but it's still a mess — crew seats thrown across the room, broken monitors and panels crushed under collapsing beams. On the captain's platform above the sensor ditch, however, the maintenance access door to the central systems have survived unscathed.

- **The emerald disc:** Agent Nadina has brought an ID key that opens the door to the central systems. If she or the key is not on the expedition, however, it can be cut open using a cutting torch. This approach requires a successful **TECHNOLOGY** test at -2 and 30 minutes of time. A critical success reduces the time to a couple of minutes. Inside, the PCs find the destroyer's sensor logs and her emerald disc containing all the information about what actually happened inside the Hamura portal. The sensor logs may be accessed immediately, or saved for later analysis (see "The *Zafirah's* last words" on page 44).
  Cost: 0 DP (mandatory)

THE HANGAR GHOST

The central shaft connects to two hangars, one on either side. The heavily reinforced hangars contain four fighters on the starboard side, and one armored shuttle on the port side. Heavy dura steel gates and ED fields protect launch docks and rocket sleds ready to launch the ships into space to repel enemy attacks or boarding attempts, but the torpedo strike has now utterly destroyed the hangars. The entry holes through the gates look like dark, swirling roses surrounded by jagged vines, and the fighters inside have exploded and

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melted. A successful **RANGED COMBAT** test reveals that several of the fighters' own torpedoes appear to have exploded as well, and the surrounding dura beams have been broken outward like uprooted trees. The airlock doors connecting to the central shaft have also been pierced.

- **Port hangar:** When the PCs enter the port hangar, they feel a heavy pressure bearing down on them and a shrill, high-pitched shriek deafens them temporarily. At the cost of 1 DP, the sensation is so overpowering that they must pass an **EMPATHY** test or suffer 1 point of stress. They see that the outward gate has been violently flung across the hangar and fused with the back wall.
- **The sugar globes:** Farthest down from the entrance, and along the ceiling, the PCs spot clusters of dark, fist-sized spheres that appear to float toward the surface ever so slowly. One by one, they trickle out through where the bay doors should be. Passing through the mesh veil of sugar algae outside, they start to glow and disappear upward like tiny stars. This is the cause of the faint glow they saw from above, but the strange phenomenon in the center of the room stops them from seeing where the globes come from...
- **The phenomenon:** As the PCs have a look around the hangar, they soon realize that they can only see the walls and corners of the room. No matter how much they focus on the center of the room it appears as a blind spot, containing less than nothing. Sensors and other electronic equipment show the center of the room as non-existent. If a character steps into the nothingness, her vision blurs, her breath becomes labored and her heart begins to race, as if she is about to pass out or have a panic attack. A successful **OBSERVATION**, **MYSTIC POWERS**, or **FORCE** test can help the PC push through the episode. Failure leads to 1 point of stress and HP damage and an overwhelming sense of panic. If the PC remains in the blind spot and starts exploring, she experiences the following:

  A towering shadow flickers in and out of focus just at the edge of your vision. Beautiful, flowing shapes and organic patterns spring out of nothing, only to disappear again just as quickly. You keep turning your head, faster and faster, each time catching only a fleeting glimpse of the mirage's maddening forms.

FLOODED

The wreck is entirely flooded, unless you decide that pockets of trapped air remain or allow the PCs to find small chambers behind sealed bulkhead doors that have avoided flooding.

NEW WEAPON SYSTEM: FRACTAL TORPEDOES

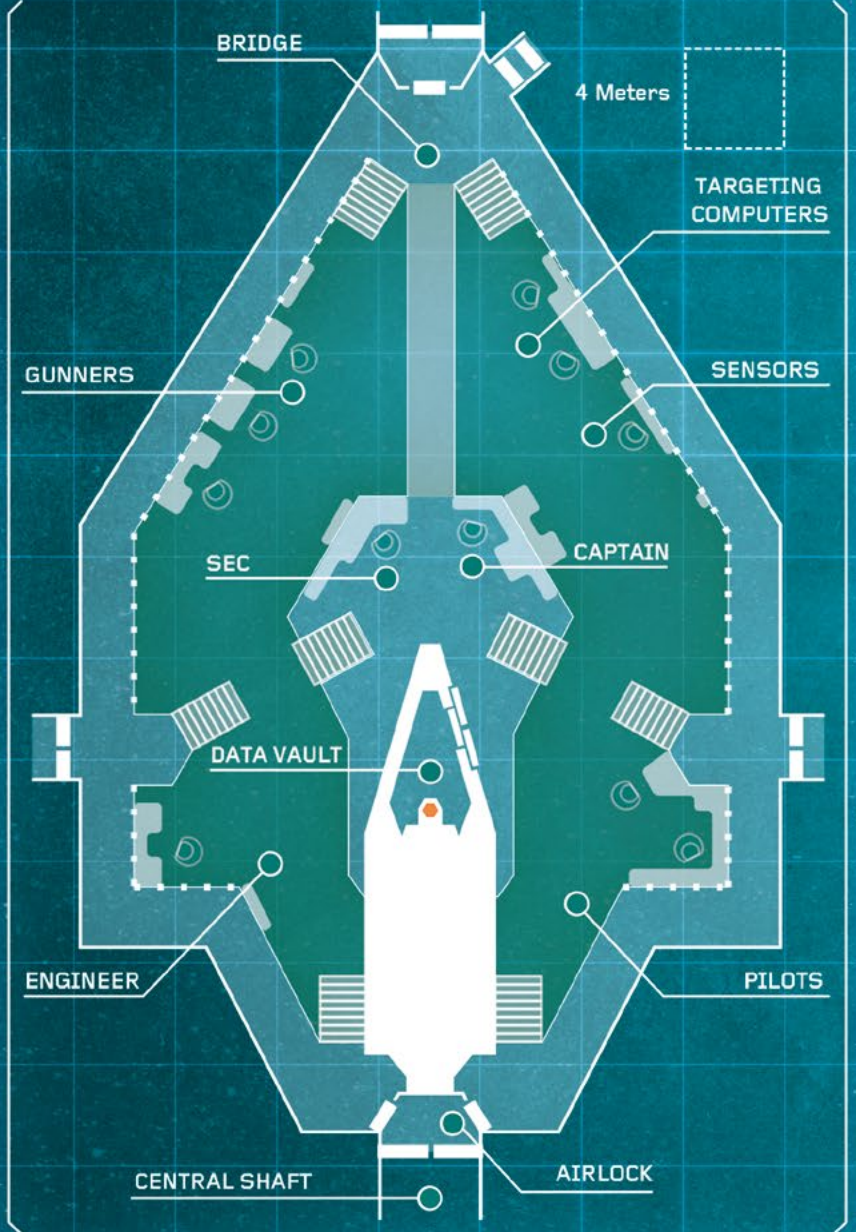
The First Horizon butterfly ships are armed with devastating weapons—tiny fractal torpedoes strong enough to tear up their opponents with a single hit. The butterfly's weapon system module can hold 8 warheads, which function as a mix between antimatter and ion torpedoes. Additionally, the target may only roll half of their Armor dice.

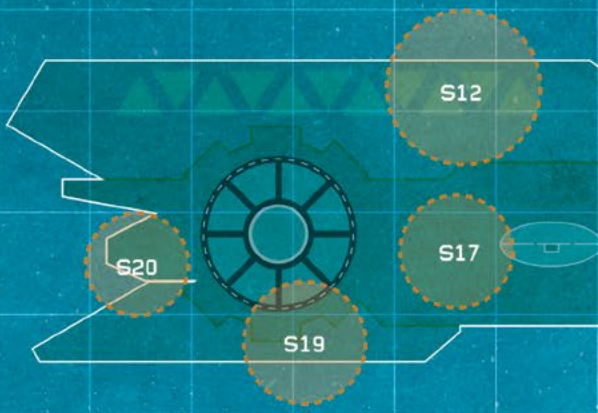
BONUS: 2
RANGE: Extreme
DAMAGE: HP 4, EP 2
CRIT: 1
SIGNATURE: -4

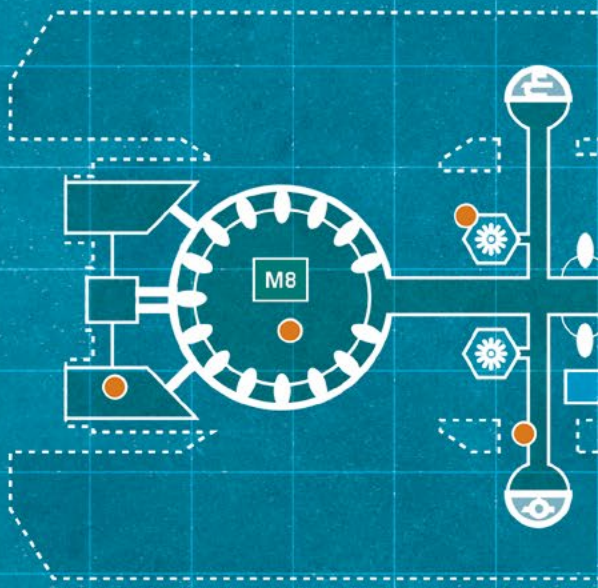
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ZAFIRAH, DESTROYER (THE LEGION)

CLASS: IV
DOCKS: Aiwaz, CC -126
LENGTH/HEIGHT/WIDTH (M): 300/47/94
CREW: 6 (46)
Captain, second-in-command, 6 pilots, 6 engineers, 6 sensor operators, 9 gunners, 4 fighter pilots, shuttle pilot, 12 legionairs
MODULES: 20
Bridge, graviton projector, reactor,
2 hangars, 2 accelerator cannons, 2 torpedo systems, data pulse, countermeasure dispencer, medlab, workshop, service station,
2 cabins (standard, 40 people), cargo hold, stasis hold (80 beds),
escape pods (2x4, 40 people)

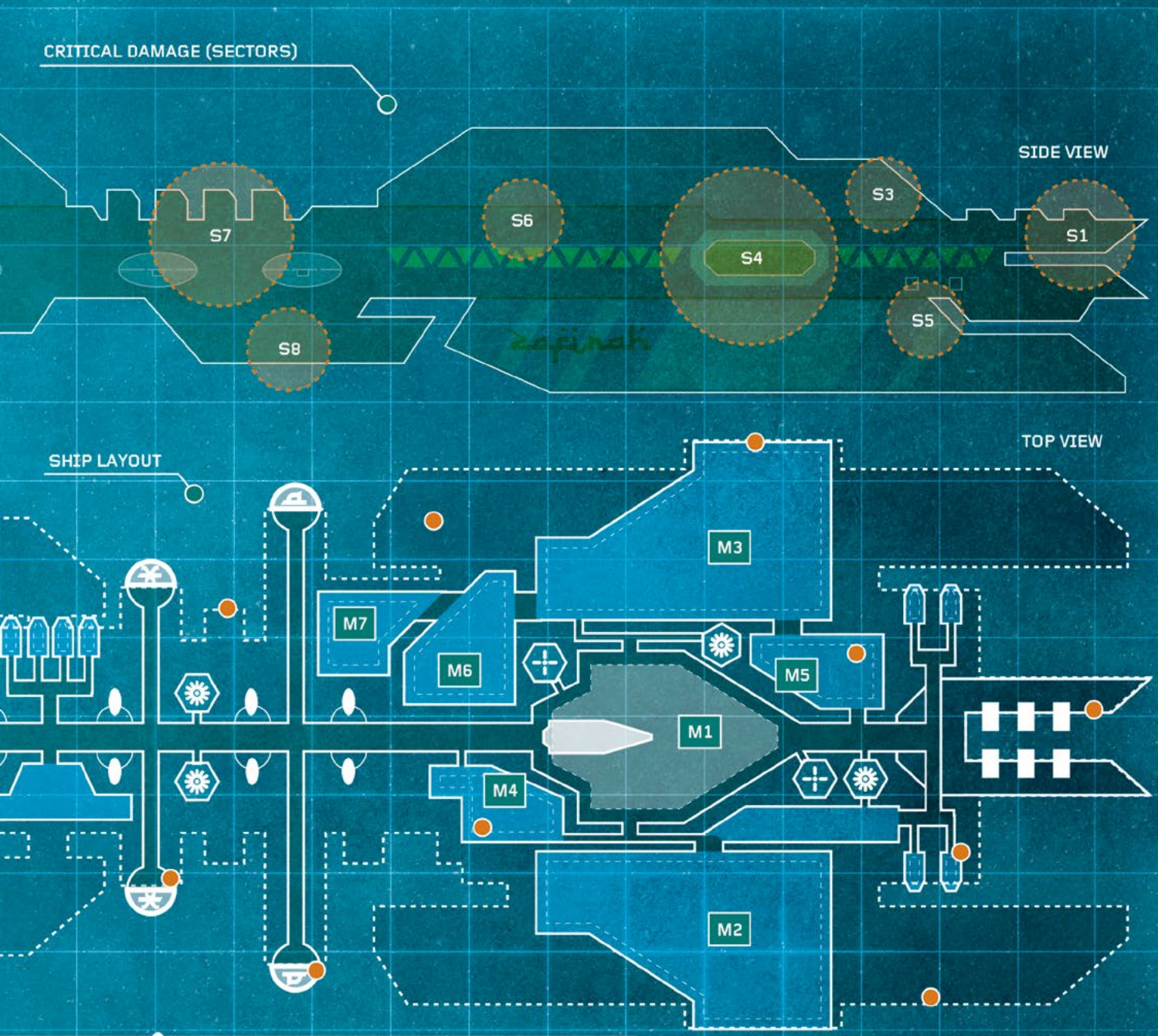






CRITICAL DAMAGE
ACCELERATOR CANNON
TORPEDO CHAMBER
DATA PULSE ARRAY
COUNTERMEASURE

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TABLE 01: INSIDE THE WRECK

Cost: Varies, see DP column.

EVENT	DP	DESCRIPTION
COLLAPSE	1-3	The wreck suddenly shifts and the corridor the PCs are walking down collapses. Falling beams and panels come down on one or two PCs at the cost of 1 DP, or the entire group for 2 DP. Affected characters must pass a FORCE or DEXTERITY test or suffer 2 points of HP damage (armor may be tested, of course). Critical successes (3 or more 6s) can be used to save another character from harm. At the cost of 1 additional DP, a PC who failed her test also has her oxygen tank damaged. The damaged tank incurs a FORCE test every half hour, with a cumulative -1 penalty for every test after the first. A failed test results in drowning (page 97 of the *Rulebook*). Repairing the tank is a TECHNOLOGY test at -2, as the dark waters make the task difficult.
FALLEN BEAMS	1	Broken dura beams block the path forward and the PCs need to cut their way through using a cutting torch, or find a way around. Cutting through requires a successful TECHNOLOGY test and 15 minutes of work. A critical success reduces the time to only a couple of minutes.
PRESSURIZED MODULE	1	Intact bulkhead seals have protected a module from depressurizing. Choose a module from the list below or roll a die: 1) Weapon system: torpedo room 2-3) Weapon system: acc cannon 4) Medlab 5) Officers' cabins 6) Workshop Carefully opening the door is a TECHNOLOGY test at -2. Success means managing to enter and reseal the door without too much air escaping. In this case, there is ample air remaining for the PCs to replenish their oxygen supply. Forcing it open without finesse is an unmodified FORCE or MELEE COMBAT test, but leads to an almost instantaneous flooding of the module. As the module depressurizes, the force of the moving water threatens to inflict 1 point of HP damage (armor may be tested) to PCs who fail a +2 DEXTERITY test. The module contains gear relevant to its intended use.
RADIATION	1	A section of the swirling corridor has been heavily irradiated by the torpedo attacks. The radiation is strong enough to inflict 3 points of Radiation upon entering the section, 2 points of which may be negated by a successful DEXTERITY test (each six rolled negates 1 point). Only loading exos are thick enough to block the radiation completely, and unless the PCs hurry through the section, they will continue to suffer 1 point of Radiation every five minutes.
LIVE TORPEDO	2	A live fractal torpedo has become lodged at the bottom of a winding corridor. Scrolling reliefs cover it, and a successful CULTURE test may reveal that the ornaments vaguely resemble traditional Zenithian patterns found upon ruins and artifazcts left behind by the Third Horizon's earlier civilizations, such as the Nazareem's Sacrifice. The torpedo could explode at any moment if the PCs are not careful, or if the wreck shifts and begins to sink deeper. Have one PC test DEXTERITY to find a safe approach for the group. If she fails the test, roll a die. On a 6, the torpedo explodes. The weapon may be disarmed by passing a TECHNOLOGY test at -1. Only a critical success allows the PCs to remove valuable tech for later study. Failure leads to the torpedo exploding immediately. This disables all electronic gear and drains all energy cells within Long range of the blast, and all characters caught within Short range of the blast suffer a strength 16 (CRIT 2) Explosion attack. The strength of the Explosion attack is reduced by six for each distance further away beyond Short range. After the blast, repairing the power supply of one's exo suit requires climbing out of it and passing a TECHNOLOGY test. Alternatively, a character may attempt to repair it from inside at a -3 penalty.
DEEPER	2-3	The *Zafirah* suddenly slips off the cliff she has been resting on and begins a slow dive deeper toward the bottom of the lake. As the wreck sinks and begins to spin, corridors and room inside turn into dark tunnels full of sharp edges. At the cost of 2 DP, it happens while the group are in a room, giving them a chance to grab onto something. A successful FORCE test protects them from a strength 8 attack (weapon damage 2, CRIT 2). At the cost of 3 DP, however, it happens as they are in the middle of an angular corridor, leading to potentially lethal injuries. Each PC suffers an attack of 4 automatic sixes (weapon damage 2, CRIT 1) that may be prevented only by testing DEXTERITY at -1 (in addition to other active modifiers). Each 6 rolled lowers the attack strength by 1, but as long as at least two 6s remain on the attack, the PC suffers a critical injury. Maximum damage lands at one critical injury and 4 points of HP damage (2 base + 1 per additional 6). The destroyer's descent eventually ends on another cliff much farther down, 150 meters below the ice. From here, the swim back up takes between 30 and 60 minutes.
INTENSE DARKNESS	*	While exploring the *Zafirah*, prayer re-rolls generate 1 extra DP unless the PC in question prayed to the Icons for protection before beginning the dive.

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- **The truth:** The phenomenon is actually an active defense system protecting the butterfly ship that crashed in the middle of the hangar. The Vestals realized that the fractal torpedoes alone wouldn't keep the *Zafirah* from exiting the space between the portals, and chose therefore to sacrifice themselves by ramming her. The butterfly's captain is still alive inside, however, and the partially active reactor enables the continued functioning of the stealth field. The captain is also channeling the surrounding darkness to create an illusion around the ship that stops weaker minds from detecting it, or understanding how badly damaged it actually is. This scene ends when the PCs discover the butterfly ship.

Cost: 0, 1 DP (mandatory)

OTHER EVENTS

Below are some other events that may occur in the scene:

⚙ RESONANCE: GHOSTS FROM THE PAST

Before they dive, as they peer down through the ice, the group's mystic (if there is one) is violently overcome by visions. It affects one person (for 1 DP), or everyone with mystical powers or an **EMPATHY** score of 4 or higher (for 2 DP).

The world blurs and fades away. Those affected must test **MYSTIC POWERS** or **EMPATHY**. Failure means suffering 2 points of stress and suddenly being filled with strong feelings of lust, love or longing for someone or something somewhere else, such as back on the ship. The mission seems pointless and lost as there are far more important things waiting somewhere else — anywhere else. The affected characters also hear a smooth, caressing song floating through their minds (see "A Winged Whisper", page 45) and feel warm and content. The song fades after about a minute, but the urge to abandon the mission lingers for a good half hour. A successful **COMMAND** test can snap the affected characters out of their fugue.

Cost: 1-2 DP

⚙ IN HONOR OF THE BEAST

Neither agent Sarish nor the Legionnaires have much in the way of personal effects. Their cabins are tidy and contain their gear and assorted gun care tools.

- Passing an **OBSERVATION** test at -2 allows an astute searcher to find a small amulet in one of the Legionnaires' cabins. It is a small, white, glazed clay idol of an androgynous person dressed in a long, white gown.
- A successful **CULTURE** test showing one 6 reveals it to be Miran and rather old, possibly made by one of the planet's nomad tribes.
- Two 6s reveal it to be an aspect of the Dancer.
- A critical success (3 or more 6s) allows the PC to identify it as the Beast, an aspect of the Dancer known as U'Haya — the efrite of desire and absolute indulgence — whom the legends associate with the Nazareem's Sacrifice.

- **The confrontation:** If the Legionnaire is confronted with the amulet, they will dismiss it as a keepsake from a battle on Trigon, in Antmira. The Legion was sent in to take out a cell of terrorist fanatics worshipping the Beast. A critically successful **MANIPULATION** test (or a limited success combined with brutal methods, generating 2 DP) reveals this to be lie, however. Using mystical powers or the right cybernetics can also reveal this. If the lie is exposed, the other Legionnaire immediately draws their gun and executes the liar so as not to have their own cover blown. All characters present for the murder suffer 1 point of stress.

  Cost: 0 DP

⚙ OUT OF OXYGEN

During the dive, oxygen supplies are starting to run dangerously low. Choose one of the effects below:

- **Small leak (1 DP):** Affects one PC. The character has lost half of her supply and may need to return to the ship. Finding and repairing the leak is a **TECHNOLOGY** test at -1. Success limits the leak to one lost hour.
- **Rupture (2 DP):** Affects one PC. The pressure gauge suddenly plummets, as if a valve or seal has ruptured. Finding and repairing the leak is a **TECHNOLOGY** test at -2. Passing the test with one 6 leaves the PC with one hour of oxygen remaining; passing with two 6s preserves half of the tank's supply, and a critical success leads to a limited loss of only one hour. The test is without penalty if performed out of water.
- **Sabotage (3 DP):** Affects up to half of the PCs, one by one. The pressure gauges read normal levels, but the gear has been tampered with and the affected PCs suffer acute oxygen deprivation and risk asphyxiation unless assisted (see Drowning, page 97 in the *Rulebook*).

  If the PCs examine their gear using **TECHNOLOGY**, they discover evidence of sabotage. One of the Legionnaires is the guilty party.

Cost: 1-3 DP

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Player Handout: The Zafirah's last words

PORTAL ENTRY PROTOCOL INITIALIZED
APPROACH VECTOR CONFIRMED AND LOCKED.
STASIS UNITS ACTIVATED.
DEFENSIVE EXIT PROTOCOLS ACTIVATED.
CENTRAL SYSTEMS ENTERING TRANSLATIVE STANDBY.
JUMPING IN 3... 2... 1...

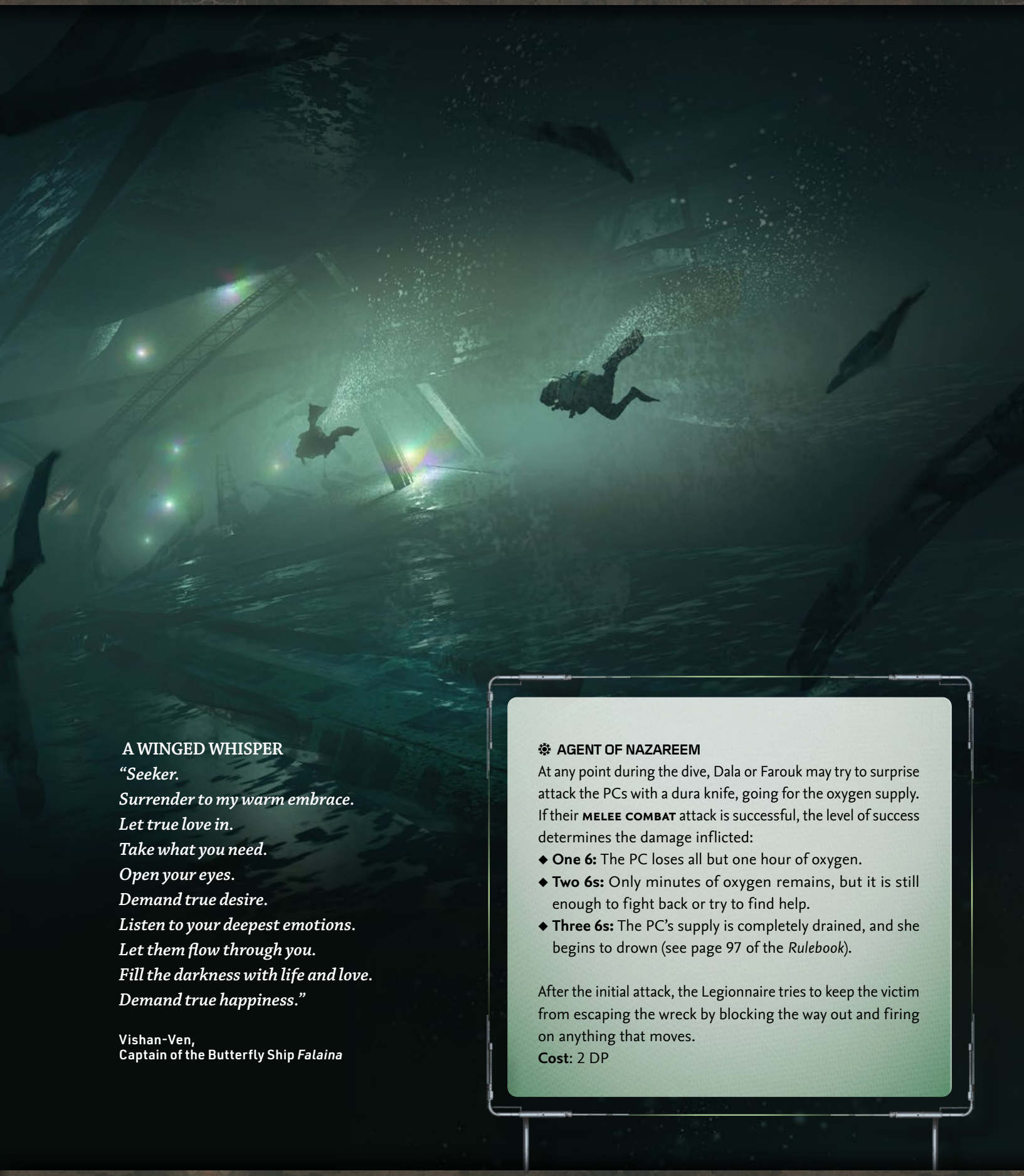
WARNING!
ANOMALY ON ENTRY.
UNIDENTIFIED SENSOR OBJECT.
ACTIVATING PATTERN ANALYSIS.
FIVE UNIDENTIFIED OBJECTS INBOUND.
HULL BREACH IN SECTOR 12
THRUSTERS ARE OFFLINE.
STASIS CHAMBER IS OFFLINE.
PORTAL SPACE FLUCTUATIONS.
UNSTABLE FIELD PATTERN.
DECOMPRESSION IN SECTIONS 3 6 8 19
REACTOR SPIKE.

ACTIVATING EMERGENCY PROTOCOLS.
FIRING AFT PROBES.
LAUNCHING PROBES 1 3 AND 5
FIVE UNIDENTIFIED OBJECTS INBOUND.
MAIN ANOMALY ON COLLISION COURSE.
HULL BREACH AND DECOMPRESSION IN SECTORS 1 5 7 17 20
ESCAPE PODS, SERVICE MODULE, WEAPON SYSTEMS, CABINS, BOW STASIS CHAMBER: OFFLINE.

DECOMPRESSION ON BRIDGE AND IN CENTRAL SHAFT.
ACTIVATING ED FIELDS.
ACTIVATING DEFENSIVE MANEUVERS. PORTAL EXIT PRIORITIZED.
DATA DUMP STORED. RAW ANOMALY ANALYSIS DATA STORED.
PREPARING TO LAUNCH PROBES.
ANOMALY WITHIN CRITICAL DISTANCE.
COLLISION CONFIRMED. STRUCTURAL COLLAPSE IN HANGAR AND CENTRAL SHAFT.
PROBES 2 AND 4 DESTROYED.
EMERGENCY PROTOCOLS: OFFLINE.
CENTRAL SYSTEMS: OFFLINE.

SENSOR DATA FROM THE ZAFIRAH'S EMERALD DISC

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A WINGED WHISPER

"Seeker.
Surrender to my warm embrace.
Let true love in.
Take what you need.
Open your eyes.
Demand true desire.
Listen to your deepest emotions.
Let them flow through you.
Fill the darkness with life and love.
Demand true happiness."

Vishan-Ven,
Captain of the Butterfly Ship *Falaina*

AGENT OF NAZAREEM

At any point during the dive, Dala or Farouk may try to surprise attack the PCs with a dura knife, going for the oxygen supply. If their **MELEE COMBAT** attack is successful, the level of success determines the damage inflicted:

- **One 6:** The PC loses all but one hour of oxygen.
- **Two 6s:** Only minutes of oxygen remains, but it is still enough to fight back or try to find help.
- **Three 6s:** The PC's supply is completely drained, and she begins to drown (see page 97 of the *Rulebook*).

After the initial attack, the Legionnaire tries to keep the victim from escaping the wreck by blocking the way out and firing on anything that moves.

Cost: 2 DP

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THE BUTTERFLY

Inside the dead destroyer, broken dura beams have fused with dark and shattered control boards. A trickle of sugar globes floats slowly upward, twinkling softly like small stars when they pass through the sugary water surrounding the algae fields. You try to look at the center of the hangar but an impenetrable darkness forces your gaze away. The secret that denies itself to you sends throbbing pangs of pain through your head and blood gushes from your nose. Eventually, however, something flashes briefly into focus – something that reminds you of the ship you saw above the Kuan jungles. The butterfly, but dark and dead. The insect's wings are torn and its body broken, and tears through the hull streak its sides – tears large enough for an exo. What answers await you inside?

THE SITUATION

The final scene of Act 2 is somewhat optional. It deals with the details of the butterfly's interior and reveals to the PCs a world of technology equaled only by that of long since dead civilizations, or the weapons built just before the Portal Wars. The scene also leads them to the heart of the ship, where a wounded Vestal waits at the bridge, protected by layers and layers of illusions.

EVENTS

Below are some events that may occur in the scene:

INSIDE A BUTTERFLY

The completely flooded butterfly is no larger than a regular Class II torpedo ship, but still takes up most of the space in the hangar.

- **The Cry:** As the PCs enter the ship, searing pain shoots between their temples and their hearts pound violently. A petrifying, blood-chilling blanket of fear and panic envelops them. They can feel an intruding force or entity inside them and desperately want to cry out for help. They feel inferior, unworthy and sullied.
- **The Illusion:** At the same time, the ship's mother-of-pearl walls turn pitch black. Dark, twisting bones and slithering, oily shapes surround them, as if they are standing inside a huge, rotting carcass. A second or so later, "normal" reality settles around them again. At the cost of 1 DP, the experience is harrowing enough to cause 1 point of stress to anyone failing to pass a **MYSTIC POWERS** or **EMPATHY** test.

The event described above is actually the Vestal captain attempting to call for help, the results of which will be revealed later. During the cry, their focus on the illusion slips, enabling the PCs to see the wreck of the ship as it actually is.
Cost: 0-1 DP

More careful investigations (see below) will add between 15 and 30 minutes to each room depending on how thorough they are. Your group will probably not be able to search the entire ship. Try to steer them toward the central chamber and the bridge.

1. The Central Shaft

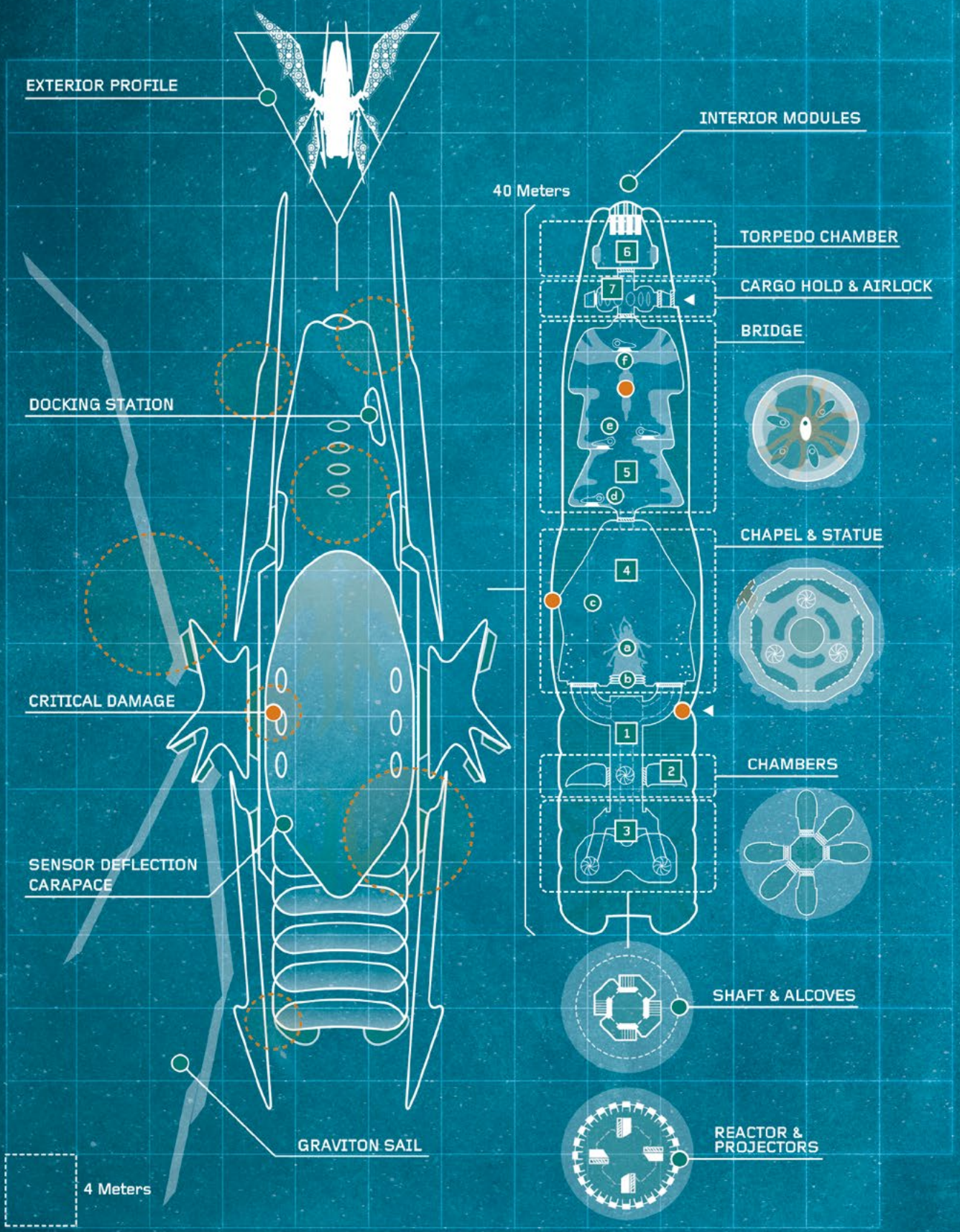
The tear in the side of the ship reveals an octagonal corridor with mother-of-pearl support beams melding seamlessly with smooth walls covered in starry mosaics. The uniform, soft iridescence of the materials used makes it hard to tell walls from floors, floors from ceilings. As they enter, the PCs discover that they must have passed through some form of ED field as the interior of the ship appears to be pressurized. Moving around is as heavy as before, though, as if the ship is too highly pressurized. No electronic sensor equipment of any kind works inside the butterfly, not even sensor cybernetics (see "Corrupted illusion" below).

2. Chambers

Six small chambers can be reached from the central shaft, each through an opening in one of the shaft's eight walls. Finding the chambers reveals that the ship is on its side and that the corridor the PCs are walking through ought to be an empty shaft. The chambers themselves are only a couple of meters deep and wide, and have sloping ceilings that would prevent an adult from standing upright by the far wall. The rooms are made from what looks like perfectly smooth marble, and give off a faint glow. An elevated rectangle measuring three by one meters sits in the middle of each room, topped with a slight, wavy indentation in the middle, curved to comfortably hold a human body. This is where the Vestals rest during portal jumps to battle the corrupting darkness, as they always jump while awake. The only adornment in each of the otherwise empty rooms is a circular mosaic tile on the

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OVERVIEW: BUTTERFLY SHIP INTERIOR



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THE LAYOUT

Butterfly ships are constructed with the gravitational pull emanating from the rear. A central shaft runs through the ship like an atrium, allowing the Vestals to move freely up and down the length of the ship. A combination of low onboard gravity and the Vestals' ability to levitate makes for speedy access to all parts of the vessel.

DESCRIPTION: Describe the walk through the ship as if the group is moving through a tower laying on its side. They walk on the wall of the corridor and will have to drop into, and then climb out of, the rooms ahead.

ANGLE: If the PCs suffered the "Deeper" effect during the *The Deformed Wreck* event, the angle of the *Zafirah* may have changed so that the butterfly now stands upright. The "Deeper" effect could also be played just as they are about to reach the hangar.

EXPLORING THE BUTTERFLY

The butterfly's central shaft connects with the different rooms and chambers through circular, normally touch-operated iris gates. As the ship is now mostly powered down, the doors must be pried open. Have the PCs roll a **FORCE** test the first time they try to pry a door open to determine how quickly they get it done:

- **FAILURE:** Each room requires 30 minutes to enter and investigate superficially.
- **LIMITED SUCCESS:** Each room requires 15 minutes to enter and investigate superficially.
- **CRITICAL SUCCESS:** They PCs quickly master the doors. Moving through each room and having a quick look around takes only a couple of minutes.

ceiling above each of the platforms. A pattern of fine slits in the marble shoot out from the tile, run down the walls and converge by the bed.

3. Projectors

A section of low alcoves just off the central shaft leads via a low ramp to a spherical room centered around a massive pillar. White tiles cover the pillar, and arcing beams extend from it to the walls in perfect symmetry. The pattern resembles the inside of a fusion reactor, and the beams appear to be movable. Sliding them gently out of place by passing a **TECHNOLOGY** test reveals highly advanced technology behind their mounts. A critical success reminds the PCs of the similarities between this room and the structure of the antimatter drives used on some of the Order's more advanced vessels.

4. The Temple of U'Haya

Midship through the shaft it turns into three curved cylinders that spiral into a large chamber spanning the width of the ship. Buoyant, flowing shapes give the chamber an appearance of upward motion, toward a star-shaped hole in the ceiling. The floors are coarse, almost porous, and prickled with tiny holes and irregularities. They appear to be made from sandstone or fossilized anemones. Smooth tiles raised slightly above the rest of the floor trace paths from the three entrances across the chamber. Vats in the floors run along the walls filled with beautiful sugar globes and a fine, silky mesh that now appears to have leaked out, drifting slowly through the air, wrapped in a silvery glow. Investigating the silvery mesh by testing **SCIENCE** reveals it to contain small clusters of tiny sugar globes, as if the mesh and the vats are somehow used to grow the coveted artifacts. A sample of the mesh and the liquid it produces could be highly valuable to the Foundation. The tiled paths converge in the middle of the room where an enormous statue reaches for the hole in the ceiling.

A. The Statue of U'Haya

The statue is cut from a single rock and depicts an orgy of countless humans merging ecstatically into a unified, single person — clawing, kissing, biting and embracing. A statue such as this one is a central part of all butterfly ships, built to exalt the Eternal Emperor and Ardha's majesty. A successful **CULTURE** test reveals that similar statues and depictions are referenced in ancient Miran

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hymns and texts about the Dancer. A critical success on the roll also reveals a connection to the ancient manuscripts said to have been brought to the Third Horizon by the oldest gurus in the Janhagir fleet. These texts praise the Imperator, the prime mover — an omnitemporal World Soul — a god among gods, the will of the many converging into One.

B. The Emerald Disc

A closer examination of the statue reveals that its base consists of a series of rotating rings. Passing a **TECHNOLOGY** test allows a PC to align the rings in the correct way, upon which the floor around the statue pulls away to expose a bundle of transparent cables wrapped around an azure disc inside a gel capsule. This is the butterfly's equivalent of a Third Horizon emerald disc. Unlike the latter, however, it can only be accessed using a mind helmet or through telepathy (see page 51).

C. Bodies

Three twisted bodies with long limbs hover in the air around the statue, wrapped in white silk. They appear almost mummified, and the dry, paper-thin skin struggles to cover a humanoid — although not entirely human — skeleton. The spindly ribs have fused together to form a solid membrane, and the skull and fingers are elongated and much too thin. Pay 1 DP to have the PCs make a Terror check upon seeing the bodies (2 points of stress, may be prevented by testing **MYSTIC POWERS** or **EMPATHY**, see Terror on page 31). A **MEDICURGY** test can reveal that the bodies appear sexless and that they have no ocular cavities. A critical success reveals that although the bodies look very frail, their bones are much denser and stronger than ordinary human bones. If samples are collected and brought to a sophisticated enough humanite biolab, testing can reveal that the bones also appear to lack growth rings.

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5. Bridge
The bridge is accessed through the hole in the ceiling of the main chamber and leads further up in the ship to the weapon systems, the cargo hold and the docking module. A detailed description of the bridge can be found in the "Enter the Heart" event below.

6. Torpedo Room
A small room with smooth, glazed walls. The back wall is dominated by a large barrel containing eight round cylinders. Slits extend from the cylinders along the walls, floor and ceiling and end at two mosaic tiles, one on either side of the room. If the PCs approach the tiles, they feel a heavy weight descend upon them. Testing **TECHNOLOGY** allows the PCs to figure out how to open the cylinders and recognize them as torpedo tubes. A critical success reveals the tiles to be membranes for some form of ED field coolant system.

7. Cargo Hold and Docking Module
A wider chamber can be found next to the torpedo room. Alcoves and mosaics on the walls give the room a part library/part mausoleum look. A hatch in each alcove opens to a smaller chamber, some of which are open, but the closed ones appear locked and have no visible opening mechanism. A relatively ordinary airlock can be recognized in the wall opposite the entrance, consisting of two octagonal doors. The semi-transparent glass of the inner door reveals a small chamber on the other side and the shape of what must be the ship's actual front door.
Cost: (varies, see descriptions)

⚙ CORRUPTED ILLUSION
The true condition of the butterfly is actually kept hidden by the captain's mystic powers. The Vestal on the bridge has created an illusion that bends and confuses the minds of intruders. The ship may appear dry, lit and beautiful but is in reality burned, crushed and filled with dark, oily water. If a character attempts to remove her exo or diving gear, she immediately begins to drown but can see through the illusion. PCs with an **EMPATHY** score of at least 4 get a chance to catch a short glimpse of the world beyond the illusion each time they enter a new room. Roll a die when the character explores a new room. On a 6, the illusion breaks for a few seconds. At the cost of 1 DP, the sight inflicts 1 point of stress, or activates the character's Problem. Dispelling the illusion for good requires beating the Vestal in an opposed **MYSTIC POWERS** roll (see NPC on page 54).
Cost: 0, 1 DP

⚙ ENTER THE HEART
A perfect mother of pearl iris gate blocks the way through the star-shaped hole in the ceiling of the central chamber. It is much harder to open than the previous doors, requiring a **FORCE** or **TECHNOLOGY** test at -2. Firearms or torches appear useless, but explosives may be used. In this case, the door has 6 HP. Use the map of the ship on page 47 to orientate yourself and your group.

D. The sensor ditch
The iris gate opens into something like a small fountain in the middle of the room above. The cylindrical room has elevated platforms extending from the limestone walls, set with amber mosaics. The platforms and walls are covered with the same thin slits as many of the previous rooms, flowing downward to eight azure semi-spheres of about a meter in diameter underneath the platforms. Mosaics similar to those in the reactor room can also be found here. A low ditch in the floor contains a simple stone bed with the same wavy indentation as in the smaller chambers. A successful **TECHNOLOGY** or **DATA DJINN** test can inform the group that this is likely the sensor operator's station.

E. Pilot and gunner's platform
An elevated walkway circles the room, suspended on thick beams extending from the walls. The mosaics here give way to smooth, slate-like surfaces. Another three beds can be found here, evenly scattered along the circle, each with a pair of armrests ending in small cavities for the user's hands. A helmet-like contraption extends from the back support and a handful of blood-red pebbles float in the air by each bed. An Easy (+1) **SCIENCE** test, or the **ARTIFICER** power, reveals small spirals carved into the red stones. They appear to be spent healing scarabs. 2D6 unused scarabs can be found throughout the chamber if the group spends some time searching the room.

F. Captain's seat
A network of skeletal beams arc down from the domed ceiling, converging in a spider web that supports a beau-

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tifully carved, azure semi-sphere adorned with intricate patterns. No ladder or stairs lead up to it from the floor, but another bed hangs underneath it. A spine-like rig over the bed suspends a black helmet just above it. Hundreds of spent scarabs float around the captain's seat. See "The White Icon" below.

- **The Helmets:** The helmets are a form of control unit used to merge the minds of the crew with the ship's system, giving the crew members an instinctive control of the vessel. By passing a **SCIENCE** test at -2, the helmets may also be used by the PCs to access the butterfly's azure disc, located underneath the statue in the central chamber (page 48).

Beyond the network of support beams, another iris gate opens toward the cargo hold, the weapon systems and the main airlock.

Cost: 0 DP



THE WHITE ICON

In the deathly silence of the bridge, among empty beds and the glowing red of the scarabs, something begins to move. A single survivor remains – Captain Vishan-Ven.

- **The White Icon:** The Vestal is nearing the end of their life, a weak shadow in comparison to their former self. As they stands up to gaze at the intruders, the PCs are faced with astounding beauty. Perfect symmetry wrapped in flowing, white silk that moves and shifts like the feathers of an impossible bird. The Vestal's eyes are covered with a silk blindfold and their hands and arms move in an enthralling dance. They floats freely in the air just under the ceiling.

HEALING SCARABS [+1]

ARTIFACT: The scarabs are glassy beads measuring about three centimeters, covered in spiraling glyphs. When placed over a wound, the scarab softens, closes the wound and removes shrapnel. It then turns from smoky white to deep crimson and falls off.

EFFECTS: A scarab requires 3 AP to activate and heals 2 HP. Using more than one stacks the effect of course, but the healing rate cannot go above 2 HP per turn. The person being healed cannot perform any actions during the process. A Broken character is back on her feet after one turn. After restoring the wounded person to maximum HP, any leftover healing powers go toward MP and lastly toward negating the effects of toxins. Five scarabs combined heal one critical injury equivalent to a successful MEDICURGY roll, and reduces the healing time by 24 hours per scarab.

DARKNESS POINTS: 1 (per application, not per scarab)

KNOWLEDGE REQUIREMENTS: MEDICURGY 3 (to comprehend what they are)

VALUE: 5,000-8,000 birr

KNOWLEDGE: When trying to understand the functionality of an artifact like the healing scarabs, a PC rolls SCIENCE or uses the mystical talent Artificer (Rulebook, page 77). Healing scarabs are fairly easy to understand and gives a +1 modifier to the roll (where other ancient artifacts can be much harder to understand).

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THE BUTTERFLY'S EMERALD DISC

If the PCs use the control helmets, they can access the sensor logs from the emerald disc. The data cannot be read, instead revealing itself to be a stream of events and thoughts from the ship's crew. Read the text below out loud to your group or use it to improvise your own:

The ship around you fades away as the helmet covers your head. Isolation and loneliness envelop you. And then – hope. Belonging. You are one with the others, and they are one with you.

You float through perfect darkness. The ripples in the surrounding spacetime tug at your mind. Exert control by submitting to the stream. Embrace the chaos, merge with the dance, in the darkness between the portals. Months and years in a world between worlds. Many have come before, many will take your place should you fail. They are all with you, at all times.

Much time has passed. Suddenly, there is life – blood flowing through the portal, but will it be enough? You move. After what felt like an eternity, your wings come alive again. Light and energy once again flow through the core of the ship. You breach. Taoan, the lost star, blinds you as the walls around the lost Horizon finally crumble.

More time. The others have reached out. The system is ours now. But the exiles' message got out. Someone may have heard it. You have a mission now. No one must find us, not until the servants awaken from their slumber. Return to the world between the stars. Neutralize all threats.

Anxious bliss in the swirling flow of the dance. We are ready. The portal ignites. The ancient enemy is here. A black destroyer carrying frail cargo. Warriors on ice. Frozen meat, awaiting death. The wings light up. Locking on critical systems. Launching torpedoes. Roses of light bending time and space, rending, tearing – but the enemy doesn't yield. The portal collapses. She presses on. If the torpedoes aren't enough, there's only one solution. We begin to move.

We cut through the enemy's belly in the darkness between the portals. A glorious end, certain that others will complete the mission. For the Emperor. Eternally.

Retrieved Sensor Log, *The Falaina*

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TABLE 02: A TEMPEST OF EMOTIONS

D6	EMOTION
1	JEALOUSY: ***"You look upon your companions with loathing and contempt. You shouldn't have to share the Icon's light with the likes of them. It should all be yours. You want to hurt or humiliate them, or reveal a secret flaw of theirs to make them less attractive."*** Test EMPATHY. If you fail, choose another player to challenge to an opposed MANIPULATION test (including a forced prayer re-roll). The winner heals 1 point of MP, the loser suffers 2 points of stress. Extra 6s rolled by the winner inflicts 1 point of stress each.
2	DESPAIR: ***"The world closes in on you, forcing you to make impossible choices. Right and wrong blur together. Anxiety and fear fill you and the sound of your raciwng heart drowns out the world. You're paralyzed."*** Test EMPATHY. Failure results in 1 point of stress and losing 1 AP per turn until the effect is broken. You may no longer ask for or receive advice when it is your turn to act.
3	SHAME: ***"Your vile form repulses you. You are not worthy of the Icon's glorious presence and try to make yourself as small and invisible as possible."*** Test EMPATHY. Failure results in 1 point of stress and automatically acting last every turn until the effect wears off. Additionally, you need to pass an EMPATHY test to be able to assist someone directly (such as using MEDICURGY or COMMAND).
4	JOY: ***"Indescribable joy wells up inside you and you burst out laughing. It is truly a blessing to be chosen for the honor of meeting a living Icon and you want nothing more than to make everyone around you understand just how amazing it is."*** Test EMPATHY. If you fail, you heal 1 point of MP but desperately want to embrace your friends and never let go. Test WITS at the start of your turn. Failure results in you attempting to grapple with your closest PC ally by testing MELEE COMBAT (see page 87 in the *Rulebook*).
5	LOVE: ***"The divine entity before you radiates warmth. To look upon it is to experience unconditional love."*** Test EMPATHY. Failure heals 1 point of MP but leaves you unable to attack or otherwise injure the Vestal unless you pass a WITS test. You may still help and take care of your friends, however.
6	ECSTASY: ***"Passion and devotion surges through you. You want to remain in the presence of this divine being forever, dancing, loving. Your desire intensifies with each flowing motion."*** Test EMPATHY. Failure heals 2 points of MP and 1 HP, but from now on, you must roll a WITS test every turn or become enthralled in the same way as the Legionnaires, acting as a puppet of the Vestal for that turn (see The Devotees).

- **A Tempest of Emotions (2 DP):** Upon meeting the Vestal, the PCs overflow with emotion — crying, laughing, screaming or chanting in ecstasy. The Vestal's manipulation of the world and minds around it wreaks havoc on anyone getting too close. At the cost of 2 DP, roll once per character on the Table 02. The PCs must then try to manage or overcome the violent emotions before or during the conflict that might follow. A critically successful **COMMAND** test allows a PC to break the spell.
- **The Devotees (1 DP):** The Nazareem cultist Legionnaires (page 26) worship an aspect of the Beast based directly on the Vestals. When they see their Icon in the flesh before them, they completely give in to their faith, vowing to serve the Vestal forever and then turning on the PCs. Alternatively, if you desire a slower build-up, the Legionnaires may begin by attempting to convert the PCs, offering to teach them the ways of U'Haya, the one true Icon. At the cost of 1 DP, they turn on the PCs immediately, which counts as a surprise attack (+2 to their Initiative roll the first turn, see page 85 of the *Rulebook*)
- **The Curtain Drops:** When the Vestal channels the darkness to replenish their HP for the first time (see more below), the illusion protecting the ship cracks. Like a mirror bending and shattering, reality itself appears to contort around the PCs, who suddenly find themselves surrounded by oily, dark waters and the true state of the ship. The walls are charred, the panels ripped open and singed, the mosaics shattered. The beams supporting the captain's seat on the bridge are bent to the point of collapse, threatening to bring the room down over them. After losing control of the mirage, the Vestal is unable to regain it for the remainder of the PCs' time onboard the ship.
- **Fight or Flight:** Confronting the Vestal could be highly dangerous to the PCs, especially if they are already wounded

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A DYING GOD

Vishan-Ven Et-U'Haya has been weakened by the crash and by the years spent between the portals.

- -2 to all skill tests.
- Lowered attributes.
- Reduced HP.
- 0-10 HP: One action per turn. 11-14 HP: Two actions per turn. 15-16 HP: Three actions. Each action gets an individual Initiative score.
- No ablative armor effects.

If you need to make the Vestal tougher, feel free to disregard one or more of the weakening effects above. Each effect you negate costs 1 DP.

THE VESTAL'S HYMN

"U'Haya.
You are truth.
The truth of the Self.
You are freedom.
Freedom to shed the yoke of society.
You are devotion to the Now,
breaking the confines of expectation.
You are one with the I.
You are the Beast and the Dance.
You are the Now and the All."

Hymn of U'haya, Nazareem's Sacrifice

or worn down from earlier events. The Vestal is too weak to pursue them if they decide to flee, however, and will spend the last of their strength to start imploding the ship (see below). When the PCs eventually leave the butterfly — regardless of having bested the Vestal or not — the scene ends (see "Farewell Zafirah" below). All that remains after that is to leave the moon and go back home.

Cost: 0, 2-3 DP

VISHAN-VEN ET-U'HAYA, VESTAL

"I am the light of Ardha. Love me."

The Vestals are agents of the Eternal Emperor. They draw strength from the darkness between the stars and have a single purpose – to carry out the wishes of their master. They seek and expect submission and reverence from everyone they meet and their presence alone bends the fabric of reality around them. Vishan-Ven has waited in the darkness between the portals for more than 50 years which, in the warped streams of the space between the portals, has felt like an eternity.

CHARACTERISTICS: In constant motion, hovering and moving its limbs to the beat of some unseen drum. Its motions appear to gently caress reality itself.

The stats below describe the Vestal in its weakened state. The bracketed numbers are the being's original scores. See "A dying god" to the left.

ATTRIBUTES: **STRENGTH 1 (3), AGILITY 3 (4), WITS 5, EMPATHY 5 (8)**
HIT POINTS: 8 (16)
MIND POINTS: – (immune to stress)
REPUTATION: 10 (automatically superior to opponent)
SKILLS: Culture 10, Mystic Powers 8, Command 5, Data Djinn 5, Manipulation 5, Melee Combat 5, Observation 5, Pilot 5, Science 5, Technology 5, Dexterity 2
ACTIONS: 3 AP (one, two or three actions per turn, on individual Initiative scores)
TALENTS: See powers Table 03. Cost 1 DP per activation, except Channel the Void.
ARMOR: – (ablative absorption reduces the damage from the first physical attack each turn by 2 points, negates one critical injury)

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TABLE 03: THE VESTAL'S POWERS

D6	POWER	DESCRIPTION
*	CHANNEL THE VOID	This power is automatically activated when the Vestal reaches 0 HP or when the GM runs out of DP. The Vestal harnesses energy from the darkness. Cracks appear in the air around it, leaking dark, heavy smoke and glittering, black dust. Everyone within Short range of the Vestal must pass an EMPATHY or MYSTIC POWERS test or suffer 2 points of stress. ◆ Each failed test generates 2 DP and heals the Vestal for 3 HP. If the stress leaves a character Broken, roll a die: On a 6, the person also suffers a Mania (see page 337 of the *Rulebook*). ◆ If all affected characters pass the test, the Vestal dies (see "Collapse" below). DARKNESS: Each time the power is activated, the cracks risk becoming wide enough to let something through from the other side. For each activation after the first one, roll a die (one die for the second activation, two for the third and so on). On at least one 6, a darkbound or a djinn breaks through (see page 327 of the *Rulebook*).
1-2	ENTHRALL	The Vestal can make one or more characters within Short range worship it with absolute zeal, as if they had become one with the being. Roll an opposed MYSTIC POWERS test. The Vestal may split its dice pool between multiple puppets. Victims who fail the roll will be controlled by the Vestal for their next turn unless they drop to 0 HP. Each extra 6 on the Vestal's winning roll extends the effects for one turn.
3	LEVITATE	The Vestal can levitate itself or others by testing MYSTIC POWERS + DEXTERITY (effectively 10 Skill dice). Alternatively, anyone within Short range may be targeted for either of the following: ◆ The victim is knocked one distance further away from the Vestal (opposed MYSTIC POWERS vs FORCE or DEXTERITY) ◆ The victim suffers physical damage. Roll a MYSTIC POWERS attack (weapon damage 2, CRIT 2) against the victim. The victim must test DEXTERITY instead of Armor to escape or lower the damage.
4	WARP	The Vestal can create an illusion where one or more opponents believe that their Problems are activated. The Vestal may split its MYSTIC POWERS dice pool between multiple targets. ◆ A successful test activates the target's Problem for D6 turns (or 10 minutes outside of combat). ◆ Each extra 6 inflicts 1 point of stress and allows the Vestal to recover 2 HP.
5	DESTROY	The Vestal challenges a target to an opposed MYSTIC POWERS vs MYSTIC POWERS or FORCE roll. If the Vestal wins the roll, the target experiences a vacuum-like state for one turn per winning 6. ◆ Tissues necrotize and blood begins to boil. The victim must test FORCE at the beginning of each turn until the effect wears off, with a cumulative -1 modifier for each turn after the first. ◆ Failing the roll leads to losing all HP, becoming Broken and dying after D6 minutes unless treated with a successful MEDICURGY test. ◆ If the Vestal reaches 0 HP, the effect ends immediately.
6	CORRUPTION	The Vestal uses dark corruption to alter organic tissue: ◆ The attack is equivalent to the "Interrogation Drug" in Table 10 on page 129, but the effect is measured in minutes. ◆ The power may affect up to as many characters within Short range as the number of 6s rolled on a MYSTIC POWERS test. Affected characters must roll to resist the toxin but feel exhilarated—almost euphoric—while the corruption courses through them.
*	COLLAPSE	See "Farewell *Zafirah*" below.

⚙ FAREWELL *ZAFIRAH*

Use this event when you feel that it is time for the PCs to leave the *Zafirah*. The Vestal decides that the intruders must be stopped no matter what, the wreckage contains too much valuable information and cannot be allowed to fall into enemy hands. The First Horizon agent focuses its remaining strength on the "Collapse" power.

◆ **Implosion:** The room starts caving in, the walls and ceiling melting and bubbling as a series of flickering bursts of light fills the chamber. Expanding slowly outward, the effects of the implosion spread, sucking everything in its path toward the glowing orb of melted steel quickly forming at its center. The surrounding water boils and dissipates, sending shockwaves of intense heat toward the surface.

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- **Trapped in the pull:** If the PCs are in the same room as the Vestal when the power is activated, they suffer a kind of decompression and are violently pulled toward the melted orb. Affected characters must pass a **DEXTERITY** test at +1 to escape the immediate reach of the implosion.
  - ◇ On a critical success, another character may be assisted.
  - ◇ If a character fails, she is hurled against the surface of the melted orb and suffers a strength 6 fire attack (FIRE 3, CRIT 1). For each turn she remains next to the orb, she suffers another attack.
  - ◇ If the damage from the attack pierces the character's armor, she suffers a strength 3 fire attack at the beginning of each turn for D6 turns (provided that she first manages to get away from the orb, of course).
  - ◇ To escape the orb after having initially failed, the character must pass a **DEXTERITY** test, or receive help from another character rolling a critical success.

  In the surrounding chambers, the strength of the implosion is substantially weaker. Here, the PCs won't have to roll any dice, but as soon as they enter tighter spaces that limit their movement speed, the implosion may catch up. Each time an obstacle hinders the PCs' movements in some way, you may spend 1 DP to roll a die. On a 6, the group has to make another **DEXTERITY** test.
- **Narrow escape:** Keep the pressure up as long as the PCs remain in the butterfly ship. When they make it back out into the hanger, you can either let them find their way out straight away, or hound them through the destroyer's dark central shaft with the implosion hot on their trail. Eventually, they should manage to make it out of the wreckage just in time, and start ascending toward the surface. This ends the scene.

Cost: 0, 1 DP (mandatory)

OTHER EVENTS

Below are some other events that may occur in the scene:

⚙ INFLUENCE OF THE FIRST HORIZON

The butterfly ship is fitted with a variety of strange defense systems, and isn't even designed for normal human beings to begin with. Activate the corrupting powers below by spending DP as the PCs enter the ship. Each activated effect remains in play for the rest of the scene.

- **Corruption (1 DP):** Each character suffers 1 point of Radiation each time she enters a new room, even if she is wearing an exo. In combat, each character suffers 1 point of Radiation every time she suffers other damage.
- **The Wrath of the Icons (1 DP):** All prayer re-rolls inside the butterfly ship generate 2 DP instead of 1.
- **Panic (2 DP):** Each time the group enters a new room, all PCs must test **MANIPULATION** or **MYSTIC POWERS**. Those who fail are filled with an overwhelming sense of fear, and want to run away. They can compose themselves by passing a **COMMAND** test, or by suffering 1 point of stress.

Cost: 1-4 DP

⚙ LOSS OF POWERS

Upon entering the ship, all mystics with powers in the group suddenly feel as if they are losing a sense. They feel alone and cut off from the world, shivering and trembling. Mystic powers may still be activated, but now require critical successes to work.

Cost: 2 DP

A CALL FOR HELP

In the faint glow of the sugar globes, you begin your ascent. The dark shape of the Zafirah below crumbles as if trampled under a giant's boot. A final burst of trapped air escapes the wreck when it suddenly collapses in on itself, for an instant forming a glowing, red sun below you. After the brief flash of light, everything goes dark again and you see the glowing orb stop compressing, now only about a meter in diameter. It quietly slides off the cliff side and sinks out of sight. The dark waters around you begin to boil. The sugar globes die, one by one, and the surging heat chases you upward. You breach the ice in a roaring cascade of steam. You look out across the desolate, frozen wastes and try to calm your breathing. Something feels wrong — very wrong. Your intrusion cannot have gone unnoticed.

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THE SITUATION

The final scene of the act deals with the PCs' return journey. They leave Azraq-3 and prepare to meet the Order's blockade when another butterfly ship suddenly causes an explosion inside the portal field. The Uharu star devours the blockading fleet and the only way to escape certain death is to jump blindly into the portal, praying to the Icons for deliverance.

EVENTS

⚙ WALL OF THE PARIAH

The monastery cruisers *Taliq-Alnaar* and *Alit-Samah* guard Uharu's portals together with several torpedo ships and destroyers. The astronics at the portal station have stopped hailing incoming traffic and everyone attempting to leave is instructed to await a boarding inspection by fully armed Martyr warriors.

When the PCs have left Azraq-3 and returned to Uharu, they are given a slot in the inspection queue and are ordered to prepare for boarding. An Order fighter (page 32) locks onto their ship in the meantime. The PCs may either choose to let the inspectors board them, or attempt to fight their way toward the portal and jump using a vector of their own calculation. Regardless of what they decide, you should proceed to the next event as soon as things start to become dangerous.

Cost: 0 DP (mandatory)

BOARDING PARTY, MARTYR WARRIORS

A fully armed strike team wearing heavy suits of animate armor.

APPEARANCE: Men and women in full, black armor.

CHARACTERISTICS: Fights in silence and with deadly precision.

ATTRIBUTES:
STRENGTH 3, AGILITY 4, WITS 3, EMPATHY 3

HIT POINTS: 7

MIND POINTS: 5

REPUTATION: 4

SKILLS: Melee Combat 4, Ranged Combat 4, Infiltration 3, Medicurgy 3, Observation 3, Manipulation 2

TALENTS: Fanatics

ARMOR: Animate armor 10

WEAPONS: Vulcan carbine (Bonus +1, INIT 0, Weapon damage 3, CRIT 2, Short range, Automatic fire), dura knife (Bonus 0, INIT +1, weapon damage 2, CRIT 1, Short range, Light, Cell-powered)

GEAR: Homing rounds, throat-mounted link, personal effects

- **FANATICS (2 DP):** The warriors' zeal allows them to get back up and recover 2 HP after being Broken in combat. Costs 2 DP and 1 AP for the warrior in question.
- **ANIMATE ARMOR (3 DP):** The warriors wear suits of animate armor crafted by the Order's legendary animaturgs specifically for their wearers. The warriors have trained extensively in their respective suits of armor and feel so linked to them that they hardly ever take them off. Wearing the armor grants +1 to all tests involving **STRENGTH** or **DEXTERITY** and negates the first hit sustained each combat. Each negated hit after the first one costs 3 DP. Choosing to pay DP to negate a hit may be done after having already tested the armor's regular Armor rating.

⚙ PORTAL DANGER

The space around the Uharan portals is bustling with activity as the Order's massive blockade has shut the system down completely. The PCs reach the blockade and need to decide how to get through it. Suddenly, the portals fluctuate and expand. A **DATA DJINN** test at -2 allows the sensor operator to spot an odd detail — a completely empty region of space just outside the field, from which no readings whatsoever can be obtained. Had it not been for the fact that the PCs recognize this from the *Zafiarh's* hangar, they may not have noticed it, but as they do, they know what it means. Something has just come through the portal.

- **Portal collapse:** Shortly after realizing that they have unwanted company, the sensors pick up a coronal mass ejection from the Uharu star, followed by a massive shock wave resembling the one that destroyed the *Ghazali* (see the standalone scenario *The Last Voyage of the Ghazali*). The smaller freighters and destroyers near the star are ripped apart. One of the monastery cruisers is hit and goes dark as her reactor shuts down. The PCs are partially hit, suffering a temporary loss of power (EP reduced to 0 for

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one turn). Debris and smaller vessels are then pulled in toward the portal towards Dabaran which appears to be harnessing energy. The sensors whine and crackle, alarms blare across the bridge. An Easy (+1) **DATA DJINN** or **SCIENCE** test can reveal that the portals still appears active, but are rapidly destabilizing.

- **The Truth:** The Vestals are behind the event, having sent a destabilizing pulse into the portals just like they did during the *Ghazali* incident.
- **Jumping Blind:** There is not enough time left before the portals collapse altogether for a proper jump to be prepared. The PCs' best shot at survival is getting into stasis and jumping blind (see page 139 of the *Rulebook*), or, if they don't want to risk such an action, to try and get as far from Uharu and the portals as possible. In the latter case, they will be hit by an enormous second blast from the portals that will knock them out and disable the ship. Regardless of which option they choose, the Order's blockade will be reduced to debris, the portal will collapse, and the PCs will end up in a coma. This concludes the second act.

Cost: 0 DP (mandatory)

OTHER EVENTS

THE ACT OF NAZAREEM

If you want to involve the Nazareem even further — and have not killed off the Legionnaires yet — you can activate them for a final attack by spending 1 DP (per Legionnaire). They call out to the Beast and charge the PCs on the bridge either as they are leaving Azraq-3 or during the collapse of the portals. In this case, the PCs should split their focus between dealing with the cultists and trying to prepare for the blind jump.

If the any crew members from the *Mi'Shaal* are still alive, the Legionnaires will find a way to eliminate them as the group departs the frozen moon, or at least try to.

Cost: 1-2 DP

END OF ACT 2

After the second act, the PCs should have recovered several secrets from the *Zafirah* and come to the realization that the Nazareem's Sacrifice has had agents in the Consortium all along — and at the heart of Special Branch's most secret operation, no less. They may also have examined the butterfly ship and fought the cluster's ancient nemesis, the Vestal. Controlling both the destroyer's emerald disc and other critical intel about her fate — not to mention the fact that they are the only survivors of the disastrous collapse of the Uharan portals — makes the PCs very valuable to the factions of the Third Horizon.



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ACT 3
A NEW DAWN

The lights from the salvage vessel sweep across the wreck. Finally, the Consortium's lost expedition has been found and your lifeless bodies are brought under Legion escort to the portal station for medical treatment. Colonial agent Adira Tain pales when she sees the manifest and your names listed among the survivors. The spider doctors' gentle care of your wounds and hyper sick minds ceases abruptly as new orders reach the infirmary. You're secretly rushed onto a fast courier and taken off the station. Your destination: Kua.

A SEGMENT HAS PASSED since Uharu went dark. No one knows what happened or who to blame, fueling the fires of suspicion and unrest. The Council try to keep the people calm, but the isolation of Dabaran colonies, the dual losses of the Agency's refineries and the Foundation's research base, and the destruction of the Order's blockade threaten the cluster's fragile peace. All eyes now turn toward those thought to hold the answers — a group of hyper sick survivors, guarded and tended to by scores of medicurgs and priests in one of Covenant City's premiere hospitals.

This act describes the aftermath of the Uharan incident. During the act, some of the factions contact the PCs with employment offers. The act ends with a large banquet being thrown in the group's honor during the Cyclade celebrations.

OVERVIEW

The PCs either jumped blindly into the portal, or were sucked in trying to escape it, just before the collapse.

SOLE SURVIVORS

A while after the collapse of the Uharu-Dabaran portal, a rain of debris exits on the Dabaran side — most of it torn fragments of various freighters and the remains of the monastery cruisers, but it also contains the PCs' ship wherein the crew desperately cling to life. A Dabaran salvage vessel hired by Special Branch, the *Fi'Alams*, finds the ship and brings it back to the nearby portal station. Everything but life support is disabled, and the stasis module appears damaged. As the survivors onboard are likely to be suffering from hyper sickness, they are quickly treated by spider doctors and priests to drive out the dark corruption from their bodies. Upon realizing who the survivors are, however, the station's Colonial agent, Adira Tain, steps in and commandeers the ward containing the PCs. She is secretly working for Special Branch and brings the PCs onto her fast courier ship and starts heading for Kua.

COVENANT CITY

Finally arriving on Kua, the PCs are placed in a medical coma. The Foundation's finest medicurgs continue the treatment in one of the premiere hospitals in the shadow of the Monolith. If agent Sarish or either of the Legionnaires from Act 2 survived, they die horribly during treatment, twisted by dark memes, leaving the PCs as the sole survivors (see "Scars from the Void,", page 68).

THE MANIFEST

The emerald discs from both PCs' ship and the *Zafirah* (if the group managed to retrieve it) have already been partially analyzed by Special Branch. They have yet to figure out just how involved the Nazareem are, however, or that the butterfly ships can linger in the space between portals. Through the work of various other intelligence agencies, the fact that Special Branch is withholding certain information from the

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discs reaches the Council of Factions, which then strongarm the Consortium into sharing some of it with its Zenithian siblings. All the factions are extremely interested in the PCs' testimonies about their experiences.

THE BANQUET

The PCs wake up with the Cyclade only days away. They appear to have recovered from their ordeal, and the Council decides that they are to be lauded as the Horizon's finest examples of hope in these dark times. A grand banquet in their honor is planned for the Cyclade, to be held in the Palace of the Hegemony in the crown of the Monolith. Council representatives and dignitaries arrive en masse and a bravery special about the PCs' adventures is to be broadcast as the new year begins — after the necessary cuts and edits for dramatic effect have been made, of course.

THE FACTIONS

Both the Consortium and the Hegemony will try to win the PCs over ahead of the banquet, but other factions have also heard about the group's unique experiences and subtly approach them for information.

SPECIAL BRANCH

After waking up, the PCs are approached by Verion Sidonna, operational manager of several Foundation stations throughout

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WAKING UP

You should match the PCs' waking up with the Cyclade celebrations. The group wakes up a couple of days before the big banquet (page 70).

NEW PATRONS

Encourage the group to make a clear choice of employer during Act 3. In the next scenario, however, new patrons will become available to the PCs to tempt them into new deals, potentially making enemies of former associates.

the Horizon, including Station 21 on Pyre in the Uharu system. Verion has been updated about the expedition to the system by Special Branch's data analysis team and is the best informed of the group's potential new patrons. The Consortium has analyzed the PCs' emerald disc and learned that at least one expedition member was a Nazareem cultist. They fear that the "forgotten" faction may be returning, but haven't yet realized the scope of the cult's power or plans.

THE ASTÛRBAN

The Astûrban suspect that the data they have been handed by the Consortium about the incident is incomplete. After the Taoan incident and the investigation into the PCs' adventures in the Sultra, more reports mentioning "butterfly ships" have started coming in from the far corners of the Horizon. Commander Faida Din Hrama, a high-ranking military officer, has been assigned to secretly map out and research the sightings.

THE DRACONITES

Aishan's Emporium is a well-known trading company in the Third Horizon. Their network of artifact hunters and archaeologists gives the company a look of respectability, and the digs they set up certainly produce enough valuable finds to maintain their reputation throughout the Horizon's finer auction houses, but there is more to Aishan's than a casual glance may reveal. A huge web of informants, prospectors, and salvagers with secret ties to the Emporium can be found on portal stations and in remote colonies everywhere.

The Emporium's section captains are actually part of Draconite cells, maintaining one of the cluster's largest information networks under the guise of running a legitimate business. The head of the organization's central auction house, the Eyan Al-Zamud on the border between Ara-Ara and Covenant City, is one Sahdi Bat-Erden. She approaches the PCs as an artifact merchant, but is in reality looking to recruit them as (initially unknowing) Draconite agents.

DARKNESS POINTS

You get no new DP during Act 3. Leftover points from the previous acts may be used to activate the PCs' Problems (and their new mind memes, see "Scars from the Void" on page 68) or to add threats of violence to the factions' methods to get the group to side with them.

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STARTING SCENE

THE HOSPITAL

Eternal darkness. Icy chills crawl through your veins like snakes. Trapped in a nightmare, trapped between gnawing whispers in the depths of your minds and your own screams of terror as the portal field devoured your ship. You are earthworms desperately digging to escape the Dabaran sun. You are Miran carp suffocating in a fisherman's net. You feel Death's fetid breath on your neck and see a distant light at the end of the darkness.

You jolt awake, shaking in fear but finally free of the hellscape. Satin sheets and marble floors, a warm sun through light curtains. Plants and potted herbs cover the tables and shelves around you, softening the hissing and beeping of medical machinery. You have survived the darkness of the portals. It's a new dawn – and a new world.

THE SITUATION

The starting scene describes the PCs' waking up in the hyper sickness ward of a Covenant City hospital (see map on page 227) — alive, but not unscathed. Their damaged ship is being held in Consortium docks on the Net orbiting Kua. During the scene, they spend a couple of days in the ward under the supervision of expert medicurgs eager to be able to present them in a healthy condition for the upcoming Cyclade banquet in Sky City. The days are spent resting, bathing and entertaining a growing number of visits from increasingly eager factionaries competing for the PCs' allegiance.

EVENTS

Below are some events that may occur in the scene:

ALIVE

The PCs wake up in the restricted wing of the Parona Kui hospital – a grandiose building from before the Wars. The hospital's towers and arcing walkways climb the western side of the Monolith and lush gardens frame the open terraces on the roofs of the different wings. The complex is constructed from Sadaalian sandstone and Kuan highland marble. Silk drapes with Zenithian prints and light curtains woven from steppe grass sway gently in the warm breeze. The faint sounds of the sleepless Conglomerate greet the patients as they slowly return to the realm of the living.

- **The Welcoming Committee**: The PCs wake up in a lavishly adorned room overlooking the Suldamei district and the Akbari delta disappearing into the jungle. Rare plants and medicinal herbs in pots cover every shelf in the room, here and there sharing the space with burners for traditional incense used to exorcise the darkness of hyper sickness. Chief medicurg Minash Al-Harim, a middle-aged man from the suburbs, greets them as they come to. The man, smartly dressed in a strict white coat and with a crescent moon in gold on his cheek, welcomes them to his ward and ensures them that they are being given the best possible care. All they should focus on now is rest; there will be time for questions later, but he informs them that several dignitaries have inquired about their recovery. Now that they are awake, they should expect visitors shortly.

Cost: 0 DP (mandatory)

THE FIRST PATRON

After making his daily rounds, Al-Harim decides that the PCs are well enough to move around on their own, as long as they remain within the ward.

- **Meeting Room**: Food and drink is available in the nearby meeting room. Heavy rugs cover the marble floors and a couple of comfortable armchairs allow for meetings in a relaxed setting. Light food and fresh fruit are always at hand, as well as decanters of wine and honey water.
- **The Patron:** Verion Sidonna (page 84) is a middle-aged man with a friendly demeanor. If the PCs appear reluctant to share their story with him, however, or if they are hesitant to work for the Consortium, his smile vanishes and his tone hardens, almost to the point of intimidation.

  If the PCs share sensitive secrets from their mission with him, such as details about the Nazareem's involvement, the butterfly ship, or the wreck of the *Zafirah*, Verion may repay them with secrets of his own. Treat this as an opposed **MANIPULATION** roll. If the PCs shared frivolously, give them a +1 or a +2 to their roll. Each winning 6 reveals one row of secret information from Table 04.
- **Impatient:** Unless the PCs give Verion what he wants on his first visit, he will return the following day to try again.

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TABLE 04: STATEMENTS OF THE COMPETING PATRONS

TYPE	FACTS
The Consortium	PATRON: Verion Sidonna, operational manager of the Foundation's astro science division. MISSION: The Consortium wishes to hire the PCs for further missions in the Horizon, to fight the malicious forces trying to destabilize their agenda. Verion needs an answer as soon as possible – at the banquet at the very latest.
The Zenithian Hegemony	PATRON: Commander Faida Din Hrama of the *Asarita*, flagship of the Salakhad fleet. MISSION: The Hegemony wants the PCs to investigate the strange happenings and unrest that appear to be growing among the Firstcome in the outer systems where the Consortium's inept rule is crumbling. They need an answer by the Cyclade banquet.
The Draconites	PATRON: Auctioneer Sahdi Bat-Erden of Aishan's Emporium. MISSION: Sahdi and her partners see great potential in the PCs and their growing knowledge about the Horizon's political cloak and dagger maninations. They wish to hire the PCs as problem solvers, information gatherers and artifact hunters.
General	The Uharan portals have been closed since the incident and the PCs are the only known survivors.
General	The PCs were found by a Consortium salvage ship, the *Fi'Alams*.
General	They were found in critical condition and were stabilized at the Dabaran portal station.
General	Colonial agent Adira Tain brought them to Kua on her courier ship.
General	They have been treated for potential hyper sickness by the Consortium's best medicurgs.
General	Their ship is currently held at the Net where it is being repaired at a Consortium dockyard.
The Zenithian Hegemony	The Hegemony can assist the PCs if there are bureaucratic obstacles in their way when they want their ship returned.
The Draconites	Sahdi can help them reclaim their ship.
General	The Council of Factions has requested the PCs' presence at a banquet in their honor during the Cyclade celebrations.
The Zenithian Hegemony	The Hegemony believes that the Order are about to strengthen their fleet, finally crush the rebels on Zalos-B and occupy more systems to expand their territories.
The Draconites	People in the Horizon are scared. Tensions run high. Politics and faith are about to collide. New groups will make a grab at power but won't deliver on their promises of freedom, instead bringing new forms of oppression.
Secret (The Consortium)	Verion is secretly working for Special Branch.
Secret (all)	Analysis of the ship inside the *Zafirah's* hangar presents no known matches in the Third Horizon. It is either of unknown origins, or very secret tech indeed.
Secret (The Consortium)	The Legion escort on the Uharu expedition appears to have been composed of Nazareem agents.
Secret (The Consortium)	The *Zafirah* was trapped inside the portal for many segments and did not exit where she entered. The links in portal space do not appear to work the way they were generally believed to, which has the Foundation's astronics worried.
Secret (The Zenithian Hegemony)	Faida works with the Astûrban to assess external threats and safeguard the Third Horizon's future.
Secret (The Zenithian Hegemony)	The Astûrban has found four other reports of sightings of similar butterfly ships.
Secret (The Zenithian Hegemony)	The Astûrban suspects the butterflies to be from either of the old Horizons, here on some unknown mission.
Secret (The Zenithian Hegemony)	The previous butterfly sightings come from: ◆ The Sultra marshes (during *The Kuan Connection* in *Emissary Lost*). ◆ Spies on the Kalidha trade station (see the *The Merchant from Kalidha* mini scenario in *Emissary Lost*). ◆ A confrontation with prospectors in Menkar-B. ◆ Mysterious disappearances on a Firstcome colony in the Ordana system.

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If the PCs feel encumbered by previous arrangements with their old patron, you can use the "Unemployed" event on page 68 before Verion returns. You should, however, make sure that the group is presented with at least one more potential employer before they make their choice. If the PCs still are not forthcoming during Verion's return visit, he will start suggesting that the repairs on the PCs' ship may take longer than expected, or that it might be kept indefinitely at the docks for safety tests. They have until the banquet to make up their minds – after that, all bets are off.

Cost: 0 DP (mandatory)

THE SECOND PATRON

Later in the evening or early the following day, another visitor arrives, either directly to one of the patient rooms or to the meeting room when no one else is around.

- **The Envoy**: A young cadet in the Hegemony's strict uniform is shown in by a nurse with better things to do. Passing a **CULTURE** test reveals that the cadet appears to be a recent graduate already training with the elite Nighthawk squadron in the Salakhad fleet, stationed in Sky City. She introduces herself as Sana Aristides, adjutant to commander Faida Din Hrama of the *Asarita*, one of the Hegemony's flagships. Apparently, commander Din Hrama seeks a private audience with the PCs in the hospital gardens. A brief moment of their time would be a great honor.
- **The Gardens**: The Parona Kui climbs the base of the Monolith surrounded by terrace gardens. The gardens celebrate both the abundant Kuan flora and fauna and the Zenithian's exuberant wealth. Orchards brimming with fruit, mosaic paths shadowed by vine-covered trellises, small waterfalls and crystal clear koi ponds make for a serene oasis just above the chaos of the Conglomerate.
- **The Patron**: The adjutant leads the PCs to a small rock garden where a woman in an elegant uniform awaits, standing in the middle of a perfectly raked, white gravel circle. A discreet gold lapel pin of the Hegemony's fleet insignia — a stylized crescent moon, cut through with a thin line and topped with a three point star, symbolizing Kua, the Monolith and Coriolis, the remains of the *Zenith* — is her uniform's only adornment. An armed escort of eight judicators are spread around the garden. The woman addresses each of the PCs by their full names and appears very well-versed on their history, politely urging them to accept her as their new patron (see Table 04).

  The PCs are free to choose whether or not to share anything with her, but if they do, Faida is especially interested in anything they remember about the interior of the butterfly ship or of its captain. The Astûrban has not looked into the Nazareem's involvement yet, but anything divulged by the PCs in the matter will be forwarded to the right people. Faida can trade them secrets of her own if they beat her in an opposed **MANIPULATION** roll. If the

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PCs share what they know in full, give them a +1 or a +2 to their roll. Each winning 6 reveals one row of secret information from Table 04.

Cost: 0 DP (mandatory)

⚙ A GREAT DAY

A couple of days of rest later, the PCs are introduced to the final potential patron, Sahdi Bat-Erden, on their way to the banquet. As the GM, it is up to you if you want to add this third patron or not — you could also settle for the competing Zenithians and leave it at that. Regardless, play the banquet preparations below.

- **Preparations**: The day finally dawns — another year has passed and the Cyclade banquet in Sky City is at hand. The Bulletin is represented at the event by Mahadia Alana — a very photogenic older woman with a razor-sharp tongue — and star producer Taron Parr. Parr's icy white hair and perfect smile are contrasted against his scarred copper skin – evidently, he has led an adventurous life. The duo is known from hit broadcasts such as *The Wheel of Fatima*, *Studio Zhana* and the explorator drama *Beyond Rimward Reach*.

  Beautiful garments designed by the current prodigies of Zenithian fashion as well as jewelry from the finest artisans on Kua, Dabaran and Mira are presented to the PCs. They are given wardrobe assistants, and Mahadia reminds them to smile, laugh and pay close attention to the dignitaries' questions and reactions. Wounds, scars, or Firstcome tattoos disappear under thick layers of makeup, colored contacts give their eyes an exotic shine and bright silk shawls and trains, embroidered with gold, are carefully matched to each of their complexions and hair colors.
- **The Escort**: Mahadia and Taron lead the PCs to the gardens. An escort of five judicators circle the group who then starts making their way to one of the large, imposing buildings climbing the side of the Monolith. The Cyclade celebrations are already in full swing. Floral arrangements and long, Zenithian drapes decorate the walls of the buildings they pass, and parties of celebrators dressed in extravagant finery stroll casually by. They eventually reach the Suldamei Pillar and one of the large vertishafts that carry residents of Covenant City up past the Forbidden sector to Sky City's magnificent gardens, business complexes and palaces. The group is split into two to fit in the sleek glass elevators.
- **The Patron**: Just before they reach the elevators, they cross a busy square full of people celebrating the new year. As they make it to the vertishaft, either use the text below or think of some other way to separate the PCs from the rest of the group.

  You wait anxiously for the elevator to arrive, surrounded by watchful warriors on all sides. You feel an itching sweat begin to break out underneath your many layers of makeup, but a gentle breeze somehow manages to cool your clammy skin despite the intricate evening wear. Your jewelry chimes subtly in the wind. The sun is about

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to set on the green horizon and you're leaving the ruckus of Covenant City for the crown high above – Sky City. It is still unclear exactly what is expected of you, but you hope to perform well.

Suddenly, yelling is heard from the amidst crowd. Three people start shoving, throwing punches. An object shoots by above you and shatters against the dura glass of the vertishaft. The judicators act instinctively, closing helmets and drawing Vulcans from hidden holsters. A wall of armored bodies ready to die for you push you up toward the doors to the elevator. You're taken inside and the doors close quickly, one of the guards accompanying you upward. He looks at you through his visor. "Stick together. Do exactly as I say. You're safe here."

The elevator shoots upward along the side of the Monolith. Your judicator guard raises his head as the elevator suddenly comes to a jerking stop. The doors open and he immediately steps out. Before you can call out after him, a richly bejeweled woman enters, raising a hand heavy with cut gems to silence you. Her red velvet and silk dress gives her a striking silhouette against the glass and she wears her traditional gold makeup in a way that demands the kind of respect only Firstcome with an acutely sharp understanding of high society's finer details enjoy. Her intensely shining eyes give away her Mogul ancestry as she begins to speak: "Don't be afraid, my dears. My name is Sahdi Bat-Erden and I represent Aishan's Emporium. I am here because your other options all inevitably end in death."

The well-dressed Sahdi Bat-Erden (page 86) is the owner of the Eyan Al-Zamud auction house. The business is part of Aishan's Emporium's network (page 86) and secretly allied with the Draconites. She is calm and friendly but delivers her case quickly and bluntly. She is pressed for time and leaves no room for negotiations. She departs after only a couple of minutes (see Table 04, page 64).

After having delivered her message, Sahdi tells the PCs to have an answer for her at the banquet and says that she must leave until then so as not to draw attention to herself. She shakes the hand of the most sympathetic-looking PC and exits the elevator. The judicator bodyguard re-enters as if nothing happened and the elevator resumes its ascent. On the next level, the Esplanade of Thousands (see page

THROUGH THE GRAPEVINE

A successful **CULTURE** test allows a PC to have heard about the Emporium operating throughout the horizon, and rumors about them possibly running a network of spies.

- Two 6s on the roll allow the PC to remember rumors about the Emporium having factionary ties.
- A critical success reveals the Emporium as spies for the Draconites.

GENEROUS PATRON

Sahdi will reveal two or more of the other factions' major secrets that the PCs would not otherwise have found out without MANIPULATION tests. You decide which secrets (see page 64).

NEW TALENT: TO THE GRAVE

As long as you're awake, your willpower allows you to inflict 2 points of HP damage to yourself to stop others from manipulating, torturing or mind-controlling you. The talent costs 3 AP to activate and lasts for the rest of the scene. If you're caught and bound, you may instead inflict 1 point of HP damage on yourself per turn. When you become Broken, you automatically suffer a critical injury result of 61 or higher (see page 96 of the *Rulebook*). Roll one D6 and add 60 to determine the injury.

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289 in the *Rulebook*), they catch up with the rest of their party and continue toward the Palace of the Hegemony. This ends the scene.
Cost: 0 DP (mandatory)

OTHER EVENTS

Below are some other events that may occur in the scene:

NAZAREEM'S EMBRACE

The Nazareem's Sacrifice fears that the PCs have learned too much about the cult. They send agents dressed as the Warriors of the Holy Light from *Emissary Lost* to get rid of them. The agents stake out the hospital and attack all of the PCs at once during the night. Each PC may test **OBSERVATION** at -2 to spot the incoming assassins. Passing the test negates the cultists' ambush modifiers. If the alarms are tripped and reinforcements are alerted, the assassins retreat. If caught and questioned, they will take their true identities to their graves. Only cybernetics or mystical powers can reveal that they are lying.
Cost: 3 DP

FALSE MARTYR WARRIORS

ATTRIBUTES: **STRENGTH 3, AGILITY 4, WITS 3, EMPATHY 3**
HIT POINTS: 7
MIND POINTS: 6
TALENTS: To the Grave (see page 67)
SKILLS: Manipulation 5, Infiltration 4, Melee Combat 3, Dexterity 2, Observation 2
WEAPONS: Dura knife (Bonus 0, INIT +1, Weapon damage 2, CRIT 1, Close range, Light, Cell-powered)

UNEMPLOYED

If the PCs dismiss the offers they are given because they decide to remain loyal to the patron they already have, there is a risk that Special Branch or the Astûrban eliminates that person (costs 2 DP). Alternatively, they find a way to threaten her into nullifying her agreement with the PCs (costs 1 DP). If the group later tries to contact their old patron, she might be willing to work with them again, as long as she gets to stay a long way away from the Zenithian factions.
Cost: 1-2 DP

SCARS FROM THE VOID

The jump through the collapsing portal in damaged stasis modules took a toll on the PCs. They all suffered — and received treatment for — the initial stages of hyper sickness, but something darker and more twisted may also have taken root in their bodies or minds. At the cost of 2 DP, a PC has become a vessel for the void's malignant corruption, resulting in a Void Scar.
Cost: 2 DP/PC

IN THE EMISSARY'S EMPLOY

If you played the mini scenarios from the epilogue of the first part of the *Mercy* campaign, it is entirely possible that the PCs' current patron is one of the Emissaries. In this case, the Symmetry is well aware of the factions' attempts to recruit the PCs and decides to send a message. At some point when the PCs are either alone together in the meeting room or sleeping in their rooms, they start to dream and hear whispers:

You see the portal exploding in front of you. Just as the blast hits your ship, your minds detach from your bodies, for a moment suspended in the darkness outside your craft. Trapped in your dream you see a monastery cruiser being torn to shreds. For a few seconds silent, roaring flames consume the escaping oxygen before her lights flicker and darken. You're slowly pulled through the portal and see a dark butterfly ship appear before you, resting in perfect stillness.

A whisper comes into your minds: "Children. You have lived through something extraordinary – a declaration of war on the Horizon. Many now seek your loyalty, but tread carefully. You have ended up in a snake pit. Forked tongues make poor promises. Remember your true benefactor, but side with one of the liars for survival. Then, come straight to me."

As they awaken from their dream, they are certain that the voice they heard was that of their Emissary patron. They now know where to go. Siding with the Emissary, albeit secretly, will result in them being treated as disloyal to their new patron in the coming scenarios (see page 84).
Cost: 0 DP

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TABLE 05: EXTENDED RULES: VOID SCARS

Void Scars can be activated the same way as Problems. Use the table below or see Mania on page 337 in the *Rulebook*. A PC can heal a Void Scar by spending a week in a good hospital (or some similar institution) and 10 XP. This can only be done in between scenarios. An activated Void Scar may be negated by a successful COMMAND test made at -1 by another character in the group.

D6	SCAR	ACTIVATION
1	MULHAK'S PARANOIA	The victim's brain no longer recognizes the limbs as part of its own body. It could lead to forgetting an arm or leg in a stressful situation (-2 to DEXTERITY) or to a strong sense of having an alien limb that wishes the victim harm. In the latter case, the victim starts attacking the enemy limb using the tools or weapons at hand leading to 1 point of unavoidable HP damage in the first turn, after which 1 more point is inflicted every turn until she is physically restrained or becomes Broken.
2	ALSHAK'S SHIFT	The victim suddenly drops to the ground unconscious. She comes to a turn later but with a radical change in personality. The change lasts for one hour, or the duration of the current combat. All actions not directly motivated by the new dominant personality trait carry a penalty of -2. Roll a die: 1. You want to run away and never stop. 2. You want to beat someone senseless with your bare hands. 3. You trust no one and want to do the exact opposite of whatever you're told. 4. You become extremely claustrophobic, doing everything in your power to find a large, open space. 5. You feel absolutely worthless and want to be left behind to die. 6. You turn on your friends, treating your enemies as allies.
3	LAYL'S RIDDLE	When the victim becomes very tired or very drunk, a darkbound takes over her mind and assumes control of her body. The creature seeks out places with a heavy presence of death, such as graveyards or battlefields. Death and decay are its only goals, and if it cannot find it nearby, it will provide it by attacking unsuspecting prey (primarily animals, or weak humans). The possession lasts for one hour or until the victim is Broken by either stress or physical damage.
4	ABKAM'S LESIONS	When the victim experiences powerful anxiety (such as when taking stress), a corruption growing underneath her skin draws strength from it and manifests. Dark green sludge starts to ooze from her eyes and ears, and she begins coughing up black mucus. Intelligible speech or use of the primary senses becomes almost impossible (-3)
5	DAIF'S TRANSFORMATION	The victim becomes extremely thirsty for water and other liquids. The more she drinks, the stronger the corruption grows inside her until her body starts transforming into spongy, fungal matter. The transformation is extremely painful. The victim must pass a STRENGTH test for each activation of the Void Scar to avoid having her HP lowered by 1. This HP loss cannot be healed until the Void Scar is overcome.
6	ASTIBDAL'S UNION	The dark corruption links the affected PC with another person – either another character in the group, or a complete stranger. The personalities of the affected pair multiply and pass between them, leaving a copy of each victim's mind inside the other body. When the Scar is activated, the victim starts to shake and her eyes turn black. She is then overcome by the intruding personality, acting like the other person for the next watch (six hours). She retains her Attributes and Skills, but believes that she is the other person and will attempt to perform actions she ought to be good at. If the original personality passes an EMPATHY test, it can break through long enough to perform one action at -2. Passing the EMPATHY test with extra 6s reduces the test penalty by 1 per extra 6.

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A DANCE IN THE SKY CITY

You leave the crowded boulevards and the crimson sunset behind and enter a luxury grav craft that gracefully ascends through thin clouds. As the craft reaches the clear skies above, the misty floor below is lit by the setting sun like an ocean of fire. The Palace of the Hegemony – Sky City's crown jewel – lies before you, heart of the Zenithian aristocracy and home of the mighty Quassar clan. Towers of purple Dabaran opal mirror the starry skies above. Wide marble stairs connect winding walkways with beautiful terraces, filled with every conceivable botanical wonder.

The craft touches down softly on an open plaza circled by marble statues of Zenithian celebrities and heroes. Wide steps covered in handwoven rugs lead small parties of extravagantly dressed guests and colorful units of elite house guards up toward the palace's main entrance. Between the two jeweled stone gates, a dark shape rises toward the heavens – a massive sculpture of the Zenith and her interior in shining dura glass. You carefully begin your climb up the stairs to celebrate the Cyclade with the Third Horizon's high and mighty – on a banquet where you are the guests of honor.

THE SITUATION

This scene introduces the Palace of the Hegemony near the crown of the Monolith. The PCs have an important decision to make, and regardless of which new patron they side with, they risk ending up with enemies in high places. The Bulletin's representatives guide the group through an eventful night ending with their featuring in the evening's live broadcast "Uharu: Darkness and divine intervention – a survivor's story".

EVENTS

Throughout the evening, the PCs are courted by the three competing patrons and their respective entourages of extended family, allied dignitaries and house guards. They all expect an answer – the *right* answer – and will respond with subtly threatening disappointment if rejected. You can introduce the patrons in any order and interject other events in between.

⚙ THE BANQUET

As the PCs enter through the enormous main gates, the Quassars' own house guard, the Janissaries, line up to greet them – muscular men and women in white chalk makeup showing just a hint of olive skin underneath. Their bionically perfected bodies are covered in ceremonial opal armor (see box, page 73). A rigorous security check using state-of-the-art bio sensors quickly reveals anything suspicious in the PCs' clothes or bags – weapons, ammunition, energy cells – even hidden cybernetics.

- **Entry Hall:** After passing the checkpoint, courtesans escort the group across a stunning courtyard covered by a crystal dome. A large prism in the center enlarges a small part of the night sky above, showing Coriolis in all its quiet majesty far up in the heavens.

  The Bulletin's camera drones spring from their bags and take up positions around the PCs to begin covering the evening's event.
- **The Banquet Halls:** The group eventually arrives at the main banquet hall. The huge room is covered in artful flower arrangements and contains a plethora of fountains, bars and groups of velvet pillows, all of them with a small tray of fruits and snacks within easy reach. The Zenithians' voyage and trials can be followed on embroidered tapestries running along the walls, and poets recap the ending cycle's highs and lows in song. Monitors on each side of the room show close-ups of the PCs, taken just moments ago by the Bulletin's drones. Read the text below out loud or use it to inspire your own:

  Black marble pillars reach for the clear blue skies of the holo dome above. A bright, scarred moon shines down over the hall, inspired by the legends of the Zenithians' first home, Ardha. You descend into the hall and the crowd ahead – dignitaries, courtesans and house guards beyond counting – turn as one to face you and raise their cups. Your Bulletin guide flashes a perfect smile toward the cameras and begins to speak, her voice echoing in the sudden silence:

  "Honored and distinguished guests, allow me to introduce the defiant explorers who went toe to toe with the Order's fearsome blockade – the survivors from Uharu, the Icons' chosen and the children of the mysteries of the portals. Thanks to these brave heroes' choice to stare evil in the face and say "Not today!", Uharu will soon be under righteous, Zenithian rule. Before you stand champions truly blessed by the Nine, for they were swallowed up by the void and spat back out again – unharmed. Tonight, we dine and celebrate – tomorrow, we get to work! For a brighter Horizon – together!"

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THE SYMMETRY AS A PATRON

The epilogue of *Emissary Lost* contained several missions that potentially led to the PCs meeting an Emissary. These are (side references to *Emissary Lost*):

- The Faceless Scavenger (page 195)
- The Caged Dancer (page 196)
- The Kuan General (page 197)
- In the Shadow of the Monolith (page 198)
- The Merchant from Kalidha (page 199)

If your group has played one or more of these scenarios and therefore allied themselves with an Emissary, or if other adventures of your own making have led to this, they are free to stick with the Emissary as their patron throughout this part of the campaign as well. See "The Second Horizon" on page 178 for more information.

THE PEACOCK TROOPS

The Hegemony's colorful house guards escort their masters through the palace halls in tight, glaring formations. More information can be found on page 288 in the *Rulebook*.

After waves of thundering applause, the masses of dignitaries in the hall below the steps swarm around the PCs to kiss their hands or steal them away for a private third degree. If the PCs take the chance to brag about their thrilling heroics, their stories are met with bursts of laughter and encouraging shouts for more. Courtesans file by in droves, making sure their cups are never empty, and the Bulletin's drones cover the scene from all angles.
Cost: 0 DP (mandatory)

⚙ AN AUDIENCE WITH ZENITH

The PCs spot Faida Din Hrama as soon as they arrive, standing next to the Hegemony's aging monarch, Abarren Quassar himself. The *Zenith's* last captain is surrounded by an army of bodyguards and courtesans as well as a large entourage of Zenithians from the premiere families. No one approaches the captain without an invitation, and no one gets invited. Despite this, the captain nods approvingly toward the PCs when they make eye contact. He turns to Faida and then whispers something to one of his courtesans who quickly makes her way across the hall toward the PCs.

"Honored guests. My master, the esteemed Abarren Quassar, humbly asks for the honor of your company. Please follow me."

The courtesan bows courteously and glides back through the crowd to her master. If the PCs choose to follow, they notice the camera drones closing in so as not to miss a single second of their meeting with the captain. The Janissaries step aside to let them through.
"My friends! Welcome to my home and to a night we shan't soon forget. You honor my name and blood with your presence. I've heard great things about your… resourcefulness from my people." *He nods slightly toward Faida standing at perfect attention in her spotless dress uniform.*

Captain Quassar chats a bit about the PCs' various exploits and then turns to Faida who takes over and asks if the PCs have made up their minds.

- **Accept**: Accepting the Hegemony's offer makes captain Quassar very pleased. He shakes their hands and makes sure that the cameras get ample opportunity to capture the occasion. The group is then showered in praise by the captain's people, and quickly assigned a security detail and a group of courtesans. Cups of the finest wines imaginable

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are placed in their hands to toast the union. They now belong to captain Quassar's inner circle for the rest of the evening, but see the other dismissed patrons look at them with hostile disappointment. A while later, Faida informs them that their ship will be made available to them shortly, and that their first mission awaits them in Amedo, at the base of the Salakhad fleet.

- **Decline:** If the PCs decline to join captain Quassar for a chat, or if they turn down his offer to work for the Hegemony, the face of the patriarch immediately hardens. He says that they are throwing their lives away and leaves the hall, taking his army of guards with him. Faida stays behind, staring coldly at each of the PCs.

"Are you certain that this is the path you choose? There is much to be gained from the blessing of Abarren Quassar and the Hegemony. Rejecting our offer will leave you alone during the dark days to come, and that, my friends, is something you do not want to be. The Horizon is changing."

Faida snorts and turns away, gesturing for a group of guards to remove the PCs from the captain's clique.

Mahadia and Taron from the Bulletin approach the PCs soon after, looking troubled and embarrassed. They say that the shot material can be edited to emphasize captain Quassar's initial praise, but warns them to think about their reputation and avoid further arrogance toward the dignitaries' proposals. The entire Horizon is watching, after all.

Cost: 0 DP (mandatory)

IN THE NAME OF SCIENCE

After a round of introductions by Mahadia and the opportunity to make themselves somewhat at home at the banquet, the PCs are approached by Verion Sidonna's entourage. A courtesan offers them spicy Dabaran wine and says softly:

"Heroes of Uharu, my lord Verion Sidonna, your trusted friend and benefactor, wishes to speak to you about the future. Please accompany me outside for a more private rendezvous."

The courtesan bows and steps back to let the PCs decide whether or not to accept the invitation. If they decide to meet with Verion, the courtesan escorts them to one of the roof gardens, away from the Bulletin's drones. Verion stands near

HOUSE GUARDS

The factionaries' house guards are handpicked from elite strike teams or from the fleets. Many are former judicators, or even especially loyal members of the Coriolis Guard. Their Reputation counts as 9 for MANIPULATION purposes, and their unwavering loyalty give them a +3 to MANIPULATION when defending.

ATTRIBUTES:
STRENGTH 3, AGILITY 5, WITS 2, EMPATHY 2

HIT POINTS: 8

MIND POINTS: 6

SKILLS: Manipulation 4, Melee Combat 4, Ranged Combat 4, Dexterity 3, Infiltration 3, Observation 3

TALENTS: Resilient (+2 MP)

WEAPONS: Acc carbine, opal armor

OPAL ARMOR (FACTIONARY TECH)

The opal armor is the pride of Abarren Quassar's Janissaries, and is rumored to originate from the First Horizon's original campaigns out beyond the final frontier. The armor is light and flexible, yet extremely durable, made from microscopic crystals woven into an extremely fine weave, looking like dark, semi-translucent glass. The wearer gets a +1 to **DEXTERITY** in combat and receives extra protection against melee attacks. A protective hood and thick armguards extend from hidden folds when the suit's energy cell is activated, granting a +2 to **MELEE COMBAT** when parrying. The armor also counts as a melee weapon (Bonus +1, INIT +2, weapon damage 2, CRIT 2, Close range, Cell-powered).
ARMOR: 8 against ranged attacks and cell-powered melee weapons, 12 against other melee weapons

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the edge, looking out across the city below, impeccably dressed in a white djellaba and a gold shawl wrapped tight around his neck. A small group of somber-looking business magnates surrounds him and the PCs spot a couple of Legionnaires positioned around the garden.

"There you are. Welcome to Sky City. I am grateful for your presence, but beg you to excuse my impatience. Your ship is practically ready for departure and I have brought all the necessary contracts for you to sign to qualify for future operations." He nods to one of his assistants who holds out a tabula where dotted lines await your signatures. "Let's get this over with and go back inside."

Verion is not much for small talk. He wants the PCs to sign one-year contracts and get to work thwarting the plans of those who seek to destabilize the Consortium. For the duration of their contract, the Consortium will handle all payments of the PCs' ship debt as well as running expenses for portal jumps, repairs and consumables. The PCs may either agree or refuse to sign the contracts.

- **Accept:** Verion smiles for the first time since they met him, and shakes their hands. If he has any secrets left to tell them from Table 04, he now does so freely. He tells them where they will find their ship after the final repairs are done and treats them to one week's stay at Coriolis' finest luxury hotel, Fajar al-Abyad ("The White Dawn"), on the Afridate floor in the Spire (page 266 in the *Rulebook*). They should rest up and enjoy the Afridate's gardens and lakes while they can as they will get their first assignment shortly. He then accompanies them back inside, raises a glass toward the nearest drone and kisses the cheeks of the lead PC.
- **Decline:** Verion smiles bitterly and flashes a dark look at his assistant who lowers the tabula. His small party backs away and the PCs see how the Legionnaires around them start to shift positions.

"Do you realize the gravity of the mistake you've just made? We possess the means to make your lives… difficult. I'm sorry to inform you that your ship will be impounded and that you may find your visitation rights to Coriolis limited going forward. But if this is truly the way you wish to go, I can't stop you."

He turns and signals for his entourage to follow. The Legionnaires suddenly surround you and lead you brusquely back inside.

Back inside again, the PCs are approached by the Bulletin duo who wonders where they have been. If the PCs tell them of their meeting on the balcony, they pale slightly and say that it is very unwise to turn the Consortium down. The faction's businesses are what keep the Horizon going.

Cost: 0 DP

⚙ THE PEDDLER'S FAVOR

The evening continues to treat the PCs to good food, good wine and good conversations with a never-ending queue of curious dignitaries, eager for a moment of their time. If they have avoided or rejected the Zenithian offers, the final patron will approach a PC as she enters one of the lavishly decorated bathrooms just outside the main hall. The PC suddenly realizes that she is alone in the bathroom save for one other guest – the woman in red from the elevator ride, auctioneer Sahdi Bat-Erden.

The woman in the red dress approaches you, each step a dancer's perfect, graceful motion. She produces a small tabula from a hidden pocket and a high-pitched whine reverberates through the room.

"There we go, that should give us a few moments of privacy from the ears and eyes of our Zenithian hosts. It is an honor to meet again. I have noticed that your conversations with the other factions have left them somewhat disappointed, producing quite the opposite effect in myself. Does this mean that you have agreed to work with me and my associates instead?"

Sahdi explains that she wishes to employ the PCs to investigate mysterious rumors, hunt for artifacts and settle disputes and conflicts throughout the Horizon. They are free to pursue whatever other goals or lines of work they wish, of course, as long as they also carry out her organization's tasks. She can arrange to have their ship made available.

- **Accept**: Sahdi kisses their cheeks gently and steps back, smiling. Her partners will contact them shortly, she says, and they are always welcome to inquire about information or assistance at any Emporium-affiliated business (see page 86). She pulls out her tabula again, congratulates the PC on having made a good decision and disappears into the crowd outside the toilet, disabling the jamming device as she exits.
- **Decline**: Sahdi steps back with a disappointed look on her face and disables the jamming device. She leaves the bathroom after a few last words:

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"What a pity. But I understand. We have not been clear enough about who we are and what we want from you. Rest assured that we will reach out again. I hope to be able to present a more detailed and luxurious offer in the future. Until then – good luck."

Cost: 0 DP

THE APPEARANCE

The Bulletin covers different aspect of the evening, not just the actions of the PCs. The drones quietly criss-cross the hall, catching who's talking to who, which racist jokes pull the most laughter and who designed which outfit. The collected material is sent to the editing room where a portrait of the banquet from its most appealing side is assembled and broadcast. The PCs feature heavily throughout the evening, however, and the propaganda reasons for this are crystal clear — connecting the impossibly lucky heroes with the pinnacle of Zenithian leadership produces a striking image of two worlds merging: a united Council of Factions standing behind the Zenithians' manifest destiny under the protection of the Icons. Read the text below out loud or use it to create your own.

As the third watch begins, the grand stage is illuminated by the pulsing glow of sugar globes. A holo wall projects a montage of night skies from all the corners of the Horizon and the guests all turn toward the stage. A red Dabaran rug is unrolled ceremoniously and Mahadia Alana of the Bulletin takes to the stage, dressed in a flamboyant, exquisitely tailored gown. A cloud of camera drones captures the scene for the expectant crowds watching from Alkamaar's or the Core plaza. Smiling, Mahadia addresses the room:

"People of the Horizon. Zenithians and Firstcome. Dear friends. My name is Mahadia Alana and all of us share a common fate and a great future. The clocks of the Cyclade strike the hour – a new cycle begins, another is laid to rest! Let us embrace what lies ahead, let us celebrate hope and progress! A united Council will lead us into the light!"

As the ensuing toasts and cheers quiet down, Mahadia gestures to her producer below the stage. The swarm of makeup and wardrobe assistants around you apply the finishing touches and step away, exhaling in relief as you head toward the stage, perfection personified. One by one, you step onto the red carpet and pause briefly in front of the holo wall as Mahadia's voice booms across the room: "Please join me in welcoming to the stage – the survivors from Uharu!" Applause, more toasts. A couple of parties in the crowd appear less impressed, however.

ABARREN'S QUIET DISDAIN

A successful **MANIPULATION** test allows a PC to detect a subtle layer of disdain underneath captain Quassar's smiling hospitality. They are most likely not pure blood Zenithians.

THE HEGEMONY IN AMEDO

The Ar-Nyedes base in Amedo was constructed to guard the Ex-Patriite colony in the domed city of Xhi as well as to protect the faction's other interests in the system.

LEAVING ALONE

If the PCs leave the banquet having turned down all three offers, they will need to fend for themselves as they flee down the Monolith through the vertishaft. This will require more from you as the GM, both in terms of the actual escape and in terms of finding a good way for the group to begin the next scenario. This may be necessary, however, if your campaign has led them to a patron of your own making or if they chose to go with the Emissary.

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"After a dangerous mission deep beyond the Order's unsanctioned blockade, our heroes made it home against all odds. I find their valor to be a perfect example of that sacred principle which we as Zenithians all strive toward – unity. They chose to defy the oppressors' unjust actions, to tear away the gag some people would place over the mouth of progress…"

At this, scattered outbursts from the crowd interrupt her. An emotional tirade of curses is quickly shushed. Somewhere, someone breaks a glass against the floor. Various groups of bodyguards shift uneasily. She continues:

"The disaster that followed – the Icons' righteous striking down of the agents of chaos – clearly shows the way forward. Our heroes fought for Zenithian ideals and were delivered from evil because of it. Stalwart in the face of darkness, children of the Portals – an example for the future and proof that the mercy of the Icons comes only to those who follow the right leaders. Strength and grace come only from Zenith's light…"

She is interrupted again. A decanter comes soaring through the air and shatters against the holo screen, rupturing a serene Miran starscape. Angry shouts accompany the act, first from the Zalosian groups, then the Free League and into many of the other Firstcome contingents:

"Lies… Slander… Servants of the darkness… Murderers… War criminals…"

The slightly delayed broadcast is cut short before the commotion reaches the viewing masses on Coriolis, their screens instead switching to an animated countdown to a backtrack of soft music. None the wiser as to the real reason for the sudden cut, the people gathered in the Core plaza count down in unison with the clock on the screen. House guards all around Sky City close ranks around their masters as someone pulls you off the stage. You're suddenly left alone in the middle of the angry crowd. Someone makes a grab for your collar. A glass shatters against the pillar just behind you. The banquet is turning into a riot and the slighted mob around you need a target. They soon find one – you.

The PCs are left behind by their allies near the stage as years of bubbling political resentment find a release. The Bulletin's representatives quickly exit through a side door, leaving behind the drones to thoroughly document the scuffle.

- **In danger:** At the cost of 1 DP, a barrage of improvised projectiles is hurled at the PCs. Each of them suffers a strength 5 attack (weapon damage 2, CRIT 3) but may protect themselves by testing **OBSERVATION** as armor. At the cost of 2 DP, they are also charged by two angry merchants after the missile attack. Use the "Ship Worker" stats on page 343 of the *Rulebook*. They are armed with makeshift blunt weapons (Bonus +2, INIT 0, weapon damage 1, CRIT 3, Close range).
- **Escaping**: If the PCs sided with either of the Zenithian factions, house guards arrive shortly after the struggle and fight their way through the messy hall to bring the PCs to a waiting gravcraft on one of the terraces outside. Sister Almas spots them during their escape, her eyes dark with sorrow and resentment:

  "How did you destroy our ships in Uharu? You are the servants of darkness! Enemies of the Martyr!"

If the PCs instead sided with Aishan's Emporium, courtesans and servants will discreetly guide them away from the fighting through one of the kitchen entrances and down a winding staircase. On a courtyard a few floors down, a gravcraft awaits.

- The Hegemony's craft will take them to a closed-off luxury penthouse in Covenant City.
- The Consortium will take them to the Monolith's main spaceport where a waiting shuttle brings them to a safehouse in the Spire on Coriolis.
- The Emporium will take them to an anonymous warehouse in Ara-Ara in the shadow of the Monolith.

Cost: 0, 1-2 DP (mandatory)

OTHER EVENTS

Below are some other events that may occur in the scene:

⚙ OUTSPOKEN

At some point during the evening, one of the PCs ends up next to a group of happy, slightly over-indulgent Zenithians. The wine has loosened their tongues and they have a good laugh at the PCs' gullibility. They will only be allowed near the big-wigs as long as they're on the Bulletin's leash, and after their fifteen minutes with captain Quassar or the board of the Consortium, no one will remember "the survivors from Uharu."

Cost: 0 DP

⚙ CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The Bulletin's introduction of the PCs earlier did not appeal to everyone. Several non-Zenithian Council representatives

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are present, and the PCs may encounter their bitter distaste during the evening. Use the short events below as hints of larger happenings to come later in the campaign.

- **The Order of the Pariah:** The Order's Council member, sister Almas, has spent months negotiating with and pressuring the other factions thanks to her order's blockade in Uharu. The closing of the system and the uncertain fate of the blockading fleet put things in a different light, however. She fears political backlash and tries to keep a low profile during the banquet, but is still easily recognizable with her large security force in their monochrome robes and hoods.
  - ◇ If the PCs pass by her group, they overhear a heated argument. Almas says that she doesn't yet know how the Consortium or the Hegemony managed to break the Uharan blockade and shut down the portals, but she suspects the involvement of dark forces.
  - ◇ She is also angry about the Coriolis Guard's lack of interest in investigating the wave of Zalophobic hate crimes that has plagued the station since the disappearance of the Emissary.
  - ◇ To add insult to injury, the survivors from Uharu are now lauded as heroes. She makes it perfectly clear to her party that if the PCs had anything whatsoever to do with the loss of Zalosian lives in the system, they are murderers and war criminals, nothing else.
- **The Free League:** A large, mixed party represents the Free League at the banquet. Council member Jesibel Niales sits in the center, surrounded by several of the faction's sharpest negotiators and a couple of former stevedore akbars and merchants turned factionary administrators. The guests are dressed in various styles of clothing and their guards for the evening are rent-a-guns from some mercenary group or other. They appear to be having a good time, but a keen observer can pick up whispers about discontentment and injustice.
  - ◇ Jesibel and one of the stevedore types appear to be in a heated discussion about the increased taxation of space station ports. Labor conditions have deteriorated and harassment from local law enforcement is on the rise.
  - ◇ Business is slowing down and rumors apparently say that more and more Zenithians have turned to underhanded dealings with the Syndicate.
  - ◇ Several new law proposals threaten the League's exclusive rights to organize in the outer systems and in Consortium colonies. There is talk of striking to restore the balance of power.
- **The Governor:** Kermal Dargosian, the Governor of Coriolis, can be seen discussing something with two Zenithian politicians — Selab Din Hrama (Hegemonist) and Heimekh Vanna (neo-Zenithian).
  - ◇ The rather intoxicated Governor becomes agitated and eventually vents his frustration about the increased number of judicators on "his" station.
  - ◇ He goes on to mention the "outrageous" accusations of corruption made against the Coriolis Guard which, by extension, undermines the legitimacy of his office. He has also heard rumors in Zenithian circles that many question his ability to run the station.
- **The Draconites:** Mogul descendant Mandragor Ho (page 206) is a large man and one of the very few people on Coriolis who openly shows his Draconite affiliations. He moves through the crowd with an assistant in tow (Nergû Bat-Erden, page 194), although the armor underneath the man's loose clothing hints at him probably also serving as a bodyguard. Loud bursts of laughter and subtle, conspiratorial looks and handshakes follow him as he makes his tour of the assembled dignitaries.
  - ◇ When he passes the PCs, he stops and raises his cup to toast the "heroes from Uharu." He sarcastically thanks them for *"helping his disillusioned Zenithian siblings justify their agendas."* Before he leaves them, he reminds them not to be tricked by the affluence of Sky City or by the dignitaries' flattery. There are more important things out there they should be focusing on.

Cost: 0 DP

⚙ RESONANCE: THE MACHINE ICON

If you want to use The Children of the Song as a possible patron during the next scenario in this book, the following event can help you introduce them.

Have a mystic PC collapse or feel faint during the banquet. A telepathic member of the Children (*Emissary Lost*, page 201) reaches out and tries to contact her:

A sting of razor-sharp pain flashes through your mind and you get the eerie feeling of not being alone. A melodic voice

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suddenly fills your head, whispering softly: "Time is short. Many seek your help, but remember that nothing is ever free. You will be used by the rich and the powerful until you've served your purpose. After that, you will be forgotten… or simply disappear. If you truly are of the common people, come and find us on Coriolis. The children of the Machine Icon live among the stevedores and outcasts. We are the followers of the true Emissary, the Icon that never left. Seek the song and you shall find us."

The message ends abruptly and the affected PC is immediately fine again. Ever so softly, a lingering tactile memory of a soft touch remains. A song echoes just out of earshot.
Cost: 0 DP

END OF ACT 3

Act 3 ends after the PCs leave the chaos of the banquet. During the scenario they have learned of the *Zafirah's* true fate and encountered the agents of the First Horizon. Something big is about to happen, but they are yet to figure out the scope of the consequences for the Third Horizon.

A couple of days or weeks of well-earned rest will do the PCs good, either avoiding or reveling in their rise to fame (Reputation +1). After the Cyclade celebrations are over, the new year begins with some drastic political changes at the Council of Factions:

- Sister Almas is temporarily suspended from the Council because of her actions during the banquet and thanks to (false) accusations of war crimes in Uharu made against the Order.
- The destruction of the Order's blockade in Uharu leaves the faction at a considerable loss, both militarily and diplomatically. The restrictions in place in Zalos are now openly challenged in the Council and there is talk of punitive action.
- Governor Dargosian's fitness to remain in office is questioned and the Hegemony launches a propaganda campaign to have him replaced, preferably by someone much stricter.



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CLOSING EVENT

If the PCs ended up siding with the Consortium, getting back their ship is easy. A representative of the Colonial Agency escorts them to the Net where they find their ship repaired and fully stocked. They also get to choose one module or feature from the list in the next column that has been added to their ship (if there is space).

SHIP UPGRADES
Medlab
Service module
Weapon system (torpedo room with ordinary torpedoes, countermeasure dispenser or acc cannon)
Atmospheric entry
ED fields
Sensitive sensors

If the group instead chose the Hegemony or Aishan's Emporium, they either have to spend a lengthy time tangled up in bureaucratic red tape or steal it back with the help a team of agents dressed as engineers:

- Three guards are posted around the hangar (see "Agent" stats in the NPC list on page 343 of the *Rulebook*) armed with shock sticks and Vulcan carbines.
- The hangar is easily vented, either deliberately or by accident if the other walls suffer a critical injury in a firefight. If zero 6s are rolled on a ranged attack with a firearm aimed at a person in the hangar (before Armor tests), roll the attack again, but this time against the wall (Armor rating 6). If the attack results in a critical injury, this results in explosive decompression.
- At the cost of 1 DP, the artificial gravity in the hangar is shut off a couple of turns into the fight.
- At the cost of 2 DP, three more guards arrive.
- At the cost of 1 DP, the PCs need to bypass the Consortium's landlock protocols when they reach their ship. This is a **DATA DJINN** test at -2. Failure results in triggering an alarm that attracts Legion fighters (see page 160 of the *Rulebook*)
- If their escape is messy and loud, their patron will pay for a new transponder. Have the PCs rename their ship. They also need to stay clear of Coriolis for a while.

Cost: 0, 1-4 DP (mandatory)



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THE CYCLADE DANCE

We are the ashes of Rusah.
Invisible shadows in the temples of power.
U'Haya has traversed the darkness to guide us.
Menkib's petals stir the embers in our hearts.
We become the flame that ushers in the new Horizon.

AWAKENING, VERSE FROM THE PROPHECY OF THE NAZAREEM, CC -94

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INTRODUCTION

In the second part of **The Last Cyclade**, the PCs head out into the Third Horizon to fight the resurrecting Nazareem's Sacrifice. Backed by their patron, they track down and put out the embers that threaten to drown the Horizon in fire.

THE CYCLADE DANCE provides you with mission generator tables. As the Third Horizon descends into chaos, use the tables to create adventures that allow your group to experience the societal changes over time, from the end of the previous scenario during the Cyclade of CC62 up until the Pilgrimaria in the segment of the Judge in CC63.

BACKGROUND

The PCs' experiences from the collapse of Uharu combined with the data they retrieved from the *Zafirah* have made them somewhat famous among the upper strata of society. Factionary representatives try to hire or threaten the group to gain access to their services and knowledge. As the sole survivors of the portal collapse, they are also regarded as protected by the Icons, and the Firstcome factions approach them to share in their blessings.

OVERVIEW

Rather than following a traditional three act arc, this scenario consists of a mission generator and materials for a series of adventures that take the PCs out across the cluster. Through the missions, they may learn about and even influence the factions' power games and feel the effects of increasing corruption and structural violence. They should undertake at least three missions, but feel free to extend this part of the campaign at will.

THE PATRONS – PAGE 84
The PCs are hired by their new patron, either directly or through agents. Rival patrons may try to turn the PCs.

THE NAZAREEM – PAGE 92
The fight against the Beast Cult intensifies as the PCs gradually learn more about the faction and its plans.

SHIFTS — PAGE 92
Societal shifts and political machinations may involve the PCs as active participants or passive observers. These events prepare the players and the Horizon for the final scenario in this book, *In the Shadow of the Zenith*.

TURNING POINTS – PAGE 95
Events outside of the patrons' machinations may alter the scenarios, or make them more dangerous.

MINI SCENARIOS – PAGE 109
The final section contains a series of mini scenarios, combining various table entries from the mission generator with new adventure locations throughout the Horizon. These scenarios intensify the struggle to defeat the Nazareem and are ready for play straight away.

FACTIONS AND GROUPS

The PCs' testimonies from Uharu and the emerald discs from the *Zafirah* and their own ship have made their services highly sought-after.

POWER STRUGGLE IN THE THIRD HORIZON
The factionary intelligence agencies wish to learn everything there is to know about the new era's emerging threats, and what might be gained from new alliances. Those who know about the butterfly ships also foresee possible technological advancements which might lead to new conflicts with other groups.

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ADVANCES OF THE FIRST HORIZON

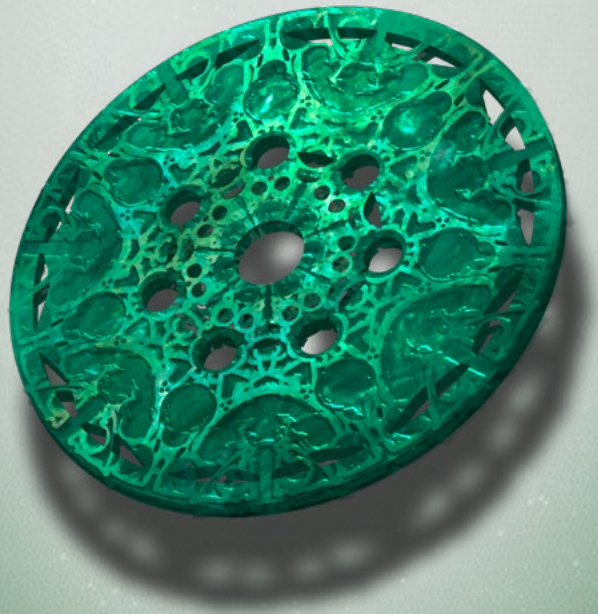
The First Horizon's presence in the Third Horizon consists of a handful of Vestals, butterfly ships and Nazareem cells. One particularly successful cell has been able to awaken many of the sleeping leaders from their long slumber since the Portal Wars. Moving in the shadows, the Emperor's agents prepare for the arrival of Ardha's fleets.

ALLIES OF THE SECOND HORIZON

The Second Horizon Santulans, living in the cluster as the Emissaries, are trying to assemble loyal resistance armies, establishing themselves as rebel leaders, artifact hunters and spymasters. They keep careful track of the PCs' adventures and try to sabotage the Nazareem in any way they can.

BEFORE YOU BEGIN

This part of the campaign requires some GM preparation before you begin. Use the mission generator tables or the mini scenarios at the end. Adjust the missions and the wishes of your group's patron to fit the PCs' concepts, contacts and previous experiences.



NEW RULE: EMERALD DISCS

The emerald discs are the "black boxes" of a spacecraft, logging all sensor and navigation data. They are extremely durable green, oblong crystal discs, about twenty centimeters long and one centimeter thick. Molecular changes in the crystal preserve the data on the disc, which is usually encrypted or hidden behind constantly changing dynamic ciphers.

- **ID-KEY:** Automatic success. All data available.
- **ENCRYPTED:** Requires a critical **DATA DJINN** success, takes twenty-four hours.
- **DYNAMIC CIPHER:** Requires three critical **DATA DJINN** successes, takes one week. Anything less than a Critical success restarts the attempt.

DARKNESS POINTS

Each patron mission and mini scenario give you as many DP as there are players, down to a minimum of 4 DP. Each major shift in the Horizon also generates DP, for example when you read the Bulletin quote about the change to the group (see Shifts in the Horizon, page 92).

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MISSION GENERATOR

Normalcy returns to the Third Horizon after the Cyclade celebrations are over. Hagglers flock around rugs and stalls on the Core Plaza, once again brimming with assorted baubles. Barefoot pilgrims shuffle up the Esplanade of the Icons toward the temples in Icon City on Mira under the ever-blossoming cherry trees. Algolan reactionaries gaze up at the spires and skyscrapers overlooking the slums of Akhandar-O-Sharif and start planning their next move. The Martyr Council convenes on the *Belit-Sheri* scroll ship in Zalos to urgently discuss the return of the ancient darkness. Far from the light of civilization, a lone butterfly ship charts a course into the unknown and the heirs of the Nazareem awaken in the shadows of the cadaver clocks, ready to rekindle the faction's flames of old.

THIS PART OF THE BOOK contains the tables, texts and scenario seeds that will help you take the Third Horizon from the unrestful aftermath of *The Uharan Echo* to the violent torrent of clashing factions that marks the crescendo of *In the Shadow of the Zenith*, this book's final scenario.

PATRONS

The list below contains both the patrons introduced in the previous scenario and a number of new ones. Rejected employers from *The Uharan Echo* may try once more to win the PCs over before they give up and turn hostile. Each patron's group talent and assistance offers are available to the PCs as long as they work for the employer in question.

ORIGINAL PATRONS

The patrons introduced in the previous scenario.

VERION SIDONNA – THE CONSORTIUM

Verion Sidonna is a Special Branch agent and the operational manager of the Foundation's astro science division. He is partly stationed at FS-21 in Uharu but was on Coriolis during the incident, for a meeting with the board of the Foundation.

- **PATRON:** Mission instructions are handed over by representatives from the Colonial Agency or the Special Branch. New agents take care of the debriefing each time, giving the Nazareem ample opportunity to infiltrate the patronage by posing as the PCs' handlers (see "Turning Points" on page 95).
- **GROUP TALENT:** Truth Seekers (page 71 in the *Rulebook*)
- **TURNED DOWN:** The PCs' ship is black-listed. Portal stations begin charging more for jump vectors or place the PCs at the back of long queues. At the cost of 2 DP, security personnel board the ship for a "routine" search for fac-tech or unlicensed gear. Any contraband found is seized and results in a fine. After an infuriating period of harassment, Verion contacts the group again, offering to make it stop if they agree to work for him after all.
- **BETRAYED:** Special Branch agents track down the PCs to impound their ship, steal information and gear or sabotage their current mission.

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VERION SIDONNA, CHIEF PROSPECTOR

ATTRIBUTES:
STRENGTH 2, AGILITY 4, WITS 3, EMPATHY 4

HIT POINTS: 6

MIND POINTS: 7

REPUTATION: 8

SKILLS: Science 5, Command 4, Manipulation 4, Observation 3

TALENTS: Faction Standing: The Consortium, Agent: Special Branch (see box to the right)

GEAR: Transactor with 50,000 birr, healing scarab, expensive white corporate suit

FAIDA DIN HRAMA – THE ZENITHIAN HEGEMONY

Commander Faida Din Hrama is captain of the *Asarita*, the flagship of the Salakhad Flotilla. She works with the Astûrban to assess and eliminate external threats to the Hegemony.

- **PATRON:** Faida handles mission briefings personally if the PCs visit her on the *Asarita*, stationed either on Coriolis or at one of the Hegemony's naval bases. In systems without Hegemony presence, agents deliver the assignments.
- **GROUP TALENT:** Truth Seekers (page 71 in the *Rulebook*).
- **TURNED DOWN:** Astûrban agents follow and bug the PCs to find out what they might have learned. If they visit Coriolis, they are harassed by Judicators. Faida tries to force the PCs to reconsider her offer by manipulating contacts and family members.
- **BETRAYED:** The PCs are no longer welcome on Coriolis and may even be stopped by a Nighthawks patrol (2 DP) if they try. In this case, they must use very powerful contacts to negotiate access to the station, or leave Kua. The Astûrban also look into possible links between the PCs and the Order, perhaps going as far as planting false evidence.

COMMANDER FAIDA DIN HRAMA

ATTRIBUTES:
STRENGTH 2, AGILITY 5, WITS 4, EMPATHY 2

HIT POINTS: 7

MIND POINTS: 6

REPUTATION: 8

NEW TALENT: AGENT

You work for an intelligence agency or a secret organization of your choice as a field agent or as an informant. You can access restricted information, request backup or borrow fac-tech once per session. All contact with your organization is via secret dead drops, shady cantinas or anonymous kawah stands. Getting a reply might therefore take up to 24 hours. The GM decides if your request for help will be granted or not.

NEW TALENT: PEDDLER'S GAZE

You are an excellent merchant, well versed in the delicate arts of haggling and negotiating. When you're bartering face to face with someone you get a +2 to **MANIPULATION**, as well as a +1 to Reputation if your opponent is indifferent or friendly toward you. If you win the roll, you may choose to suffer 1 point of stress to add another six to your result to purchase more bonus effects (see page 61 of the *Rulebook*).

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AISHAN'S AUCTION HOUSES

Several auction houses – each controlling its own local network of agents and informants – make up Aishan's Emporium. The house owners are in direct contact with a Draconite cell. If you choose to include the Emporium in your game, feel free to flesh out the other agents below:

- Aba Dinesh – *Eb-Dinesh*, Temple City, Mira
- Mona Hosseini – *Al-Uhafa's Antiquities*, Dar Bahri, Dabaran
- Izad Amin-Bahram – *Matsamart*, the plateau city of Alburz, Sadaal
- Aria Ghôrbani – *Zil Althara*, Covenant City, Kua
- Khaled Nazeer – *Heirash Auction House*, City of Foreigners, Zalos
- Shir-del – *Shir-del's House of Antiques*, Ayuin Industrial Zone, Ordana

JANHAGIR BLADES (FACTIONARY TECH)

The traditional weaponry of the most influential Mogul families is of pre-exile origin. The weapons, called Al-Sharaf, are plasma-forged blades of some unknown alloy vaguely resembling duralite, crafted by the Santulans in the Second Horizon. The blades are often richly adorned with gems and exquisitely woven ribbons and are made either as daggers or scimitars. They aren't bought or sold, and theft of an Al-Sharaf is punished severely.

TYPE	BONUS	INIT	DAMAGE	CRIT	RANGE.	FEATURES
DAGGER	0	+1	2	1	CLOSE	LIGHT, PIERCING*
SCIMITAR	+2	0	2	1	CLOSE	PIERCING*

*VICTIM GETS A -1 TO ARMOR RATING

SKILLS: Command 5, Pilot 4, Data djinn 3, Dexterity 3, Manipulation 3, Ranged Combat 3

TALENTS: Faction Standing: The Zenithian Hegemony, Combat Veteran, Zero-G Training, Executioner

GEAR: Navy uniform, Vulcan cricket, armavest (Armor 2)

SAHDI BAT-ERDEN – AISHAN'S EMPORIUM

Sahdi Bat-Erden is the owner of the Eyan Al-Zamud auction house which operates both on Coriolis and in the Conglomerate below. She is of Mogul descent, her family being among those that left the Janhagir fleet to set up the smelting plants in the Yastapol ship cemeteries. She began her career as an artifact merchant of some renown, but went on to join the Draconites and their pragmatic doctrines to work for the balancing of the Horizon, thus becoming a part of Aishan's Emporium. She usually wears a flowing, richly embroidered velvet caftan and silk shawls. Both her clothes and her manners identify her as a person of substantial influence and she wears traditional, Firstcome gold makeup over her dark, chiseled Mogul features. She is calm and friendly but very straight-forward.

- **PATRON:** All mission contacts are handled by proxies at one of the Emporium's many auction houses (see box to the left).
- **GROUP TALENT:** A Friend in Every Port (page 71 of the *Rulebook*)
- **TURNED DOWN:** Sahdi will continue to keep an eye on the PCs and eventually have her agents get them out of a dangerous situation. After this, she once again offers to become their patron.
- **BETRAYED:** The Draconites follow and observe the PCs, waiting for an opportune moment to steal a mission from them. This could for example take the form of rival mercenaries beating them to a specific contact or to a cache of vital information, either stealing or destroying it (1 DP). For an additional 2 DP, the PCs are also attacked by a group of soldiers.

SAHDI BAT-ERDEN, AUCTIONEER

ATTRIBUTES:
STRENGTH 2, AGILITY 3, WITS 4, EMPATHY 5

HIT POINTS: 5

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MIND POINTS: 8

REPUTATION: 6

SKILLS: Culture 4, Manipulation 4, Command 3, Observation 3, Science 2

TALENTS: Faction Standing: The Nomad Federation, Judge of Character, Peddler's Gaze (page 85), Well Connected (page 88), Agent: The Draconites (page 85)

GEAR: Beautiful clothes, Gold jewelry, Janhagir blade (dagger, see box to the left), Transactor with 30,000 birr

EMISSARY — THE SECOND HORIZON

The Dancer (Kama), the Merchant (Karob) and the Faceless (Hane) are three Santulans working as Emissaries, trying to gather information and rally loyal followers for the coming war (*Emissary Lost*, page 188). Their followers have given them the honorary title of *mu-Qad*.

- **PATRON:** The PCs are contacted via dreams or messengers. After carrying out a series of successful missions, the PCs are invited to meet their patron somewhere private, with only an embroidered veil between them and a living Icon.
- **GROUP TALENT:** A Friend in Every Port (page 71 of the *Rulebook*). The group also gets a collective use of **PREMONITION** once per session, allowing them to neutralize the effects of an enemy ambush or sneak attack.
- **TURNED DOWN:** The PCs begin dreaming about accidents and bad luck. Being away from the Icon instills in them an instinctive sense of loss. At the cost of 1 DP, they are grief-stricken for 24 hours, suffering a -1 to **MANIPULATION** and **COMMAND**.
- **BETRAYED:** Terrible nightmares plague the group. A paralyzing sadness overtakes them, resulting in a -1 to **MANIPULATION** and **COMMAND** for one segment. The modifier may be negated for 24 hours by praying in a chapel or using drugs or alcohol.

THE CHILDREN OF THE SONG — THE MACHINE ICON

Masâr, Zahir and Nawa are three of the new mystics whose powers emerged during *Emissary Lost*. They heard and were drawn to the song of the Emissary and found each other among the "diseased" shunned by society. When the Messenger Emissary Nabi-mu-Qad was destroyed by the Vestals in the Sultra marshes, its essence was bound to Coriolis and the space around Kua. It then started speaking to the mystics to unite them, which led to the formation of the Children of the Song. Masâr, Zahir and Nawa are the new cult's leaders and prophets.

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NEW TALENT: WELL CONNECTED

When visiting new locations, you always find lucrative contacts willing to help you out. The talent may be used once per visit to a station or a city. Your new contact can supply you with business opportunities or protection, or introduce you to local rulers—your choice.

THREE PROPHETS

The stats and powers of the three prophets can be found in Table 28 on page 230.

- **MASÂR ROUBAH: An outcast from Elmeda's court in the Third Sphere in the Cellar of Coriolis (*Emissary Lost*, page 70). After the Martyr warriors transported their Emissary captive through the Cellar, Masâr started hearing the Messenger song and developed telekinesis. He left the court shortly thereafter and made it up to the Core where he met Zahir in a back alley.**
- **ZAHIR LAYTANA: A former detective in the Coriolis Guard. During the Mysticides investigation, he found it harder and harder to contain his manifesting ability to enter and control the minds of others. One day, he simply quit his job and sold all his worldly possessions after having heard the song of the Machine Icon.**
- **NAWA DOL-DAYAL: As her telepathic powers awoke, Nawa found herself on the edge of ruin after her assets were frozen and she was let go from her position as a merchant in a Consortium weapons division. She fell into homelessness in the back alleys of the Core and started to hear the Messenger's growing song, eventually giving in to its beckoning call.**

EMISSARY NPCS

Before introducing an Emissary NPC, take some time to prepare the character. Instructions for how to create an Emissary NPC can be found in *Emissary Lost*, page 189.

- **PATRON:** Masâr uses **THOUGHT TRANSFERENCE** (see box on page 231) to relay mission instructions directly to the PCs. If the group needs to meet with one of the prophets, this takes place on Coriolis or someplace where mystics are being trained by the Circle of Seekers (page 107).
- **GROUP TALENT:** Mercy of The Icons (page 71 of the *Rulebook*)
- **TURNED DOWN:** If turned down, the Children of the Song leave the PCs alone.
- **BETRAYED:** The Children see the betrayal as the PCs siding against their kin and rumors about them discriminating against mystics spread quickly. Negotiations with mystics carry a -2 to skill tests from now on. The Emissary's disappointment burns inside the PCs, leading to horrible nightmares.

NEW PATRONS

The new patrons below are influential people or factions that wish to become the group's new employer. They make lucrative offers to tempt the PCs, but lack group talents.

ZAHRIA LABAKI — THE NIGHT HANDS

After many years with the Free League as a stevedore, Zahria Labaki decided to form the faction's paramilitary wing called the Night Hands (page 194 of the *Rulebook*). Zahria has struck an infamous deal with the Syndicate and runs a protection racket against merchants not using League workers.

- **OFFER:** As allies of the Night Hands, the PCs are automatically treated with respect in most spaceports around the Horizon. Service costs are halved, and they remain among the precious few who still get serviced during the strike.
- **PATRON:** Zahria's missions mainly concern the welfare of the common people. She is actively against the Humanite Act (page 102) and fights the Bulletin's biased coverage of the League and the other Firstcome factions. Through her, the PCs can get into contact with the Rimward Reach group known as the Red Spider. Using middlemen in stevedore centrals and worker bars, both the Night Hands and the Red Spider may wish to hire the PCs to gather evidence of crimes committed by the Consortium or the Hegemony.
- **TURNED DOWN:** If turned down, Zahria will ignore the PCs.
- **BETRAYED:** Betraying the Night Hands can turn into a costly affair. Each time they visit a stevedore central or spaceport, there is a risk that the group will retaliate. Spend DP to activate the sabotages below:

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- ◇ **1 DP:** Someone breaks into their ship and steals an important item.
- ◇ **2 DP:** Someone sabotages a random, non-required module. Repairs require spare parts and skill tests. The sabotage is discovered as soon as the module is used.
- ◇ **3 DP:** The sabotage is well hidden and takes a day or two of travel to discover. Roll on the Ship Wear table on page 155 in the *Rulebook*. Roll again for every 10 AU of travel until the ship is serviced.

ZAHRIA LABAK

ATTRIBUTES:
STRENGTH 5, AGILITY 3, WITS 4, EMPATHY 3

HIT POINTS: 8 (+2)

MIND POINTS: 7

REPUTATION: 3

SKILLS: Force 3 (+2), Melee Combat 3, Command 2, Manipulation 2, Technology 2

TALENTS: A Friend in Every Port, Faction Standing: Night Hands & the Syndicate

GEAR: Endo Skeleton (CYB, +2 HP)

NIGHT HAND (STEVEDORE)

ATTRIBUTES:
STRENGTH 4, AGILITY 5, WITS 3, EMPATHY 3

HIT POINTS: 9

MIND POINTS: 6

REPUTATION: 2

SKILLS: Data Djinn or Technology 3, Melee Combat 3, Force 2, Ranged Combat 2, Infiltration 1

TALENTS: Faction Standing: Night Hands

GEAR: Acc pistol or sawed-off grape rifle, power sledge, black beret, light armor (Armor 3)

ABYEIA GOHARSHUD – THE NOMAD FEDERATION

The Coriolis spokesperson for the Nomad Federation is an unusually tall woman with dark, freckled skin and auburn hair wrapped in a turban in the colors of her clan — bright gold and fiery red. The Bulletin try to limit her influence on Coriolis

NEW TALENT: PROPHETIC BLESSINGS

You have been chosen and trained by a prophet dedicated to the old ways of the Iconic doctrines. Once per day, as a slow action, you may try to bless yourself or an ally within Close range. Test **EMPATHY** (may pray for re-roll). Each six on the roll gives the target of the blessing an automatic six that can be used at a later time. When adding the blessed sixes to a test, reduce your roll with as many dice as blessed sixes and suffer 1 point of stress for each blessed six used. Unspent blessed sixes disappear after 24 hours.

THE COLD FLAME

"Dark wings beat,
Baheema's wrath awoke.
From Odacon's light, in the name of the Martyr,
white fire bathing the infidels.
You are born from darkness, and shall die in the light."

Hashim Em-Albayda, Chronicler, Zalos

NEW TALENT: HOLY GLYPH ARMOR (CYB)

Some warriors in the Order's battle against the darkness are chosen to inherit a holy suit of armor from the time of the Portal Wars. As the symbiotic link established between the wearer and the enhanced animate glyph armor resembles a cybernetic installation, the core of the armor is almost impossible to take off. The core armor has an armor rating of 4 and the full suit has a rating of 8, while also allowing the wearer to negate the first hit sustained each turn. Each neutralized hit either costs or generates 2 DP, depending on if the wearer is an NPC or a PC.

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by spreading false rumors about her having ties to the Order, but Abyeia is in reality an influential and well-liked politician. People from the Alabaster Council in Khorsabad to the Jangahir clan councils respect her greatly, as does the ancient prophet Nasreddin on the holy mountain of Arjjat in Ordana-B.

- **OFFER:** Abyeia's reputation in the Quadrant of the Pillar allows the PCs to travel through the sector without tedious negotiations or needing an escort, even in Khorsabad, the home of the Alabaster Council. Local corsairs will leave them alone, enabling them to reach Mira via Odacon relatively unhindered. They trade at a discount in the region, paying only 60-80% of regular prices for weapons, armor, spices or intoxicants, and are welcome to service their ship at any spaceport there.
- **PATRON:** Abyeia contacts the PCs through couriers and by leaving messages at portal stations. The Nomad Federation is keenly interested in the influence of the dark between the stars on Zenithians and is actively hunting the Nazareem's Sacrifice. They also wish to destabilize the Council of Factions.
- **TURNED DOWN:** The PCs are treated as Consortium agents and therefore denied passage, service and docking clearance in the Quadrant of the Pillar.
- **BETRAYED:** The Alabaster Council condemns the group, making them targets for the sector's corsairs.

ABYEIA GOHARSHUD

ATTRIBUTES: **STRENGTH 3, AGILITY 3, WITS 3, EMPATHY 4**
HIT POINTS: 6
MIND POINTS: 7
REPUTATION: 7
SKILLS: Culture 4, Manipulation 4, Dexterity 3, Ranged Combat 3, Command 2
TALENTS: Faction Standing: The Alabaster Council & the Mogul Fleet, Prophetic Blessings (see box, page 89)

⚙ SAMESH ALIM — THE ORDER OF THE PARIAH

The Cold Flame is a renowned Martyr group within the Order, tracing a proud lineage back to the Portal Wars. Rumors claim that they are assembling a fleet and repairing ancient weapon systems in the vast darkness beyond Amshaar, their fortified space station headquarters. The Flame's grand master is a man named Samesh Alim — equally feared both as a military commander and as a doomsday prophet — whose voice is influential on the Martyr Council.

- **OFFER:** Samesh can become the group's patron if they choose not to try to eliminate him (page 142), or if they already have close ties with the Order of the Pariah. He can offer them free passage through Zalos and access to the City of Foreigners, as well as information he has obtained from his study of holy glyphs in Amshaar (see the "Prophet of the End Times" box to the right). He will tell them nothing of the monastery cruiser *Naar-Albayda*, however. If the PCs complete all his missions and begin the final scenario in this book without betraying him, he will reveal to them how the Nazareem were destroyed at the end of the Wars. See sections "The Martyr Covenant" and "Cleansing Fire" under *The History of the Nazareem's Sacrifice* on page 7.
- **PATRON:** Samesh's missions will focus only on studying and eliminating Nazareem cells.
- **TURNED DOWN:** If Samesh's offer is turned down, they will be allowed to leave Zalos in peace but aren't welcome back.
- **BETRAYED:** Betraying the grand master comes with grave consequences. The Cold Flame will activate Martyr commandos to hunt down and take out the PCs (page 58). At the cost of 3 DP per scenario, a Martyr commando will attack the group. At the cost of 2 DP, they will instead target a contact or patron, either kidnapping or killing her.

SAMESH ALIM

ATTRIBUTES: **STRENGTH 3, AGILITY 5, WITS 5, EMPATHY 3**
HIT POINTS: 13
MIND POINTS: 13
REPUTATION: 9
SKILLS: Command 5, Culture 5, Manipulation 5, Dexterity 4, Melee Combat 4, Ranged Combat 4, Observation 3, Medicurgy 2, Mystic Powers 1
TALENTS: The Way of the Martyr (page 91), Holy Glyph Armor (page 89), Pardoned (page 91)
GEAR: Holy glyph armor (Armor 4/8 (core/full)), holy mercurium sword (bonus +2), thermal rifle

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NEW TALENT: THE WAY OF THE MARTYR

A select few within the Order are put through a process of rigorous training and blessed biomods called the Way of the Martyr. This gives the person an additional 5 HP and MP.

PROPHET OF THE END TIMES

Samesh Alim and his followers have turned the old Amshaar space station into a massive stronghold for their army. The wreck of the *Naar-Albayda* monastery cruiser – the ship responsible for the destruction of Rusah, the Nazareem fortress of Baheema and much of the Odacon system – is hidden inside the station.

The cruiser's hull is covered in glyphs speaking of the inevitable reappearance of darkness in the Third Horizon, and Samesh's interpretation of the prophecy places the closing of Zalos as the final omen heralding the enemy's return. Two other omens appear to be the death of the Messenger and the "Fall of the Heavens".

Samesh is attempting to fight the system shutdown at the Martyr Council and seeks new alliances with other factions in the Horizon, something both the Nazareem and the Vestals wish to stop.

NEW TALENT: PARDONED

Trained agents in militant religious groups are sometimes able to tap into Iconic reserves of strength when all hope seems lost. This allows them to get back up after becoming broken in combat and heal 2 HP, or ignore one non-fatal critical injury for D6 turns. Each use of the talent either costs or generates 2 DP, depending on if the user is an NPC or a PC.

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MISSIONS AND EVENTS

THE GROWING THREAT

The threat posed by the Nazareem's Sacrifice grows over time as more and more of the former cultists awaken from their sleep to train new warriors. The table to the right contains missions that the PCs' patron might send them on. The missions with page references are complete mini scenarios and can be found at the end of the chapter.

SHIFTS IN THE HORIZON

The Third Horizon changes over the cycle, either directly because of the actions of the PCs or because of political scheming and conflict. The shifts below are listed in a suggested order and described in the following detail:

- **QUOTE:** The Bulletin's summary of the event. Either present one report at a time or several of them in a longer montage.
- **INTRIGUE:** A description of what has *actually* happened, rather than what the factionary propaganda says. This isn't common knowledge but can be woven into the background of a mission.
- **INVOLVEMENT:** Mission seeds for the PCs to explore, directly related to the shift in question.
- **DARKNESS POINTS:** The number of DP added to your pool when the shift occurs.
- **CONSEQUENCES:** Events and news resulting from the shift.

MISSION TIERS

If you want to escalate the threat of the Nazareem as you play this scenario, choose at least one mission from each tier (I through III). To randomly determine a mission within tiers I and II, roll one die and add 30, 40 or 50 to the result. Table 06 contains only one tier III mission.

- **TIER –:** Hunting lone cultists or agents. Grants information about the cult, but may be skipped if you wish to proceed straight to the core intrigue.
- **TIER I:** Infiltrating and encountering Nazareem cells. Grants information about ancient ruins and forgotten artifacts.
- **TIER II:** Exploring the cult's ancient ruins. Grants information about the majority of the cult's currently active cells.
- **TIER III:** Should be played as the final mission of *The Cyclade Dance*. Leads to the collapse of the Nazareem's current network.

MISSION STRUCTURE

Below is a suggested structure for the missions within *The Cyclade Dance*:

ACT 1

- **INTRODUCTIONS: Mission briefing with patron or agents.**
- **BUILD-UP: Traveling to the location or getting in contact with the target.**

ACT 2

- **MISSION: Searching for information and evidence, investigating the location and trying to prevent threat escalation.**

ACT 3

- **REVEAL: The final confrontation, reveal, escape, kidnapping or escalation.**
- **DEBRIEFING: Meeting with patron or agents again to hand over captive, artifact or information.**

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TABLE 06: THE NAZAREEM'S COUNTDOWN

D66	MISSION	TIER	DESCRIPTION
11-12	THEY WHO SPEAK	–	MISSION: The PCs should kidnap and interrogate one or more suspected cultists to find out more about the faction's organization and plans. LOCATIONS: Small community, Metropolis OUTCOME: The cultists take most of their secrets to the grave, but will give up a location or the name of a senior member who trained them.
13-14	SABOTAGE	–	MISSION: The Nazareem are thought to be planning an attack against a mining colony or a portal station. Someone onboard is pulling the strings, codenamed "Fire Crown". The PCs must investigate and prevent the attack. LOCATIONS: Space station, Small community OUTCOME: The attack is carried out. Planted evidence points to the Order or the Free League. The actual culprits are fanatical cultists, ready to die for the cause.
15-16	IN THE POCKET OF THE CULT	–	MISSION: A group of administrators or high-ranking business leaders is suspected of working with the Nazareem, either because of bribes or blackmail. The PCs must find the mastermind behind it all. Failing that, the compromised people should be removed from power. LOCATIONS: Small community, Metropolis, Space station OUTCOME: The suspected collaborators might be killed, or have their deaths faked to allow them to escape. Alternatively, they are actual devout cultists.
21-22	WETWORK	–	MISSION: One or more Nazareem agents have been identified and deemed dangerous enough to warrant contract hits. The PCs are tasked with locating and killing the targets who might be respectable members of a group or community, traveling agents on a mission or spies having infiltrated one of the factions. LOCATIONS: All OUTCOME: The disappearance of the agents is eventually noticed and either local law enforcement or other cultists start chasing the PCs.
23-24	WITHOUT A TRACE	–	MISSION: The Nazareem has infiltrated the faction of the PCs' patron. The group is tasked with escorting a group of dignitaries or diplomats to a summit, trying to find out who among them are spies before eliminating them. LOCATIONS: Space, Wasteland, Metropolis, Space station OUTCOME: If the deaths aren't discreet or look like accidents, the tracks might lead back to the patron's own faction, causing internal unrest.
25-26	RISING STAR	–	MISSION: A charismatic celebrity with access to many political back rooms appears to make mysterious trips out into the Horizon. The PCs are to look into the person's possible link to the Nazareem. LOCATIONS: Space station, Small community, Metropolis, Wasteland OUTCOME: Is the target actually a Nazareem cultist, or simply someone with a hidden past, such as a secret lover or a disgraced family?
31-32	IN THE BELLY OF THE BEAST	I	MISSION: Through their connections, the PCs manage to infiltrate a Nazareem cell. To prove their loyalty, however, they must carry out tasks for the faction, such as betraying their patron or their allies. LOCATIONS: Space station, Small community, Metropolis OUTCOME: After being initiated, they are told of U'Haya's promises of power, lust and passion as well as about how the Order and the leader of the Second Horizon wish to keep mankind in chains through hierarchical oppression and suffering.
33-34	SEEDS OF DOUBT	I	MISSION: Intel suggests that a prominent Nazareem member wishes to leave the cult. The PCs are tasked with approaching the cell in question to find out who the defector might be. LOCATIONS: All OUTCOME: The defector could become a valuable contact or informant, provided that their intentions are pure (You choose whether the person is an actual defector or a double agent).
35-36	THE CHILDREN ARE THE FUTURE (PAGE 109)	I	MISSION: Young members of wealthy families start disappearing. The PCs are tasked with watching over a youngster whose siblings have vanished. If their ward is also taken, they are to follow the captors to find their base. LOCATIONS: Small community, Metropolis, Wasteland OUTCOME: The lost youths gather somewhere remote to listen to a Nazareem prophet. Through dreams, the Vestals speak to their new subjects and rumors say that the white butterfly, U'Haya's halo, recently visited the place. If any of the kidnapping victims die, the PCs risk making bitter enemies of the families of the deceased.

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D66	MISSION	TIER	DESCRIPTION
41-42	SACRIFICIAL	I	MISSION: The PCs travel to a remote location said to be under Nazareem control. The local nomads aren't actually Nazareem cultists but have treated the site as sacred for generations, each year sacrificing the first-born son to a mysterious cadaver clock. LOCATIONS: Small community, Wasteland OUTCOME: The cult master awakens and draws energy from the surrounding darkness. The nomads are twisted by the clock's forces and transform into darkbound servants of the Beast (page 327 of the *Rulebook*).
43-44	FORKED TONGUES (PAGE 121)	I	MISSION: A member of the Martyr Council is identified as a Nazareem infiltrator. The PCs are tasked with intercepting grand master Samesh Alim before he returns to Zalos and the *Belit-Sheri* scroll ship from his recruitment travels. LOCATIONS: Space station, Space, Metropolis OUTCOME: The intel is false. Nazareem agents have planted false evidence to get rid of Samesh.
45-46	VALUABLE CARGO	I	MISSION: The PCs are tasked with intercepting a merchant ship believed to be carrying a mystic in stasis, or possibly a butterfly crew member. LOCATIONS: Space station, Space OUTCOME: The person in stasis is a Nazareem master suffering from a mind meme sustained during the long, dark sleep. The agents are transporting the patient to another master thought to be in direct contact with U'Haya (the Vestals) or to a secret temple containing an artifact that can cure the meme.
51-52	THE BLACK ROSE	II	MISSION: A long sought-after artifact appears to have been found by a group of smugglers far away from the core systems. The artifact is thought to have been used beyond Menkar to somehow communicate with the Nazareem's Sacrifice. The factions and the Beast cult are now racing each other to the find. LOCATIONS: All OUTCOME: When used in combination with one of the ancient nodes, the artifact can connect with the cadaver clocks and awaken the Nazareem's masters of old. The artifact creates a protective time field around its user who falls into a trance. Time is slowed down and contact is established with cadaver clocks throughout the Third Horizon. If activated, it can lead to the discovery of one or more previously unknown cells.
53-54	UNDERNEATH THE ASHES	II	MISSION: The PCs are sent to investigate a set of coordinates obtained either from interrogations with a Nazareem master or by analyzing the cult's ancient artifacts and texts. The coordinates take the PCs to a barren wasteland on a dead world. The ashes from the Portal Wars hide the ruins of a Nazareem stronghold, however. LOCATIONS: Wasteland OUTCOME: Old defense systems and hostile constructs protect the ruins and an ancient artifact in the form of a mystical node connected to the Nazareem's prophets and masters.
55-56	CURSE OF RUSAH (PAGE 137)	II	MISSION: A terrible weapon rests in the forgotten debris fields left behind by the Wars. The artifact is said to be able to channel the darkness to twist humans into new, horrible beings. Both the PCs and the Nazareem search for the weapon. Who will get there first, and will the PCs be able to stop the spreading corruption? LOCATIONS: Space, Space station OUTCOME: All life that dies within 1 AU of the weapon activates it, corrupting the nearby space and leading to 1 point of stress for anyone within the radius. When this leaves somebody Broken, one or more darkmorphs push through into this realm of existence (GM chooses what entities).
61-66	FIRE OF THE ICONS (PAGE 155)	III	MISSION: The PCs' patron has gathered enough allies and information to launch an attack against a number of Nazareem cells. The strike resembles the final assault of the Portal Wars, only much smaller. The PCs are included in one of the strike teams sent to take out a particular cell or destroy an ancient temple. A coordinated, merciless attack is necessary to keep the targeted cells from warning the rest of the faction. LOCATIONS: Space station, Small community, Metropolis, Wasteland OUTCOME: The Nazareem are severely crippled and the PCs receive their final mission.

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TABLE 07: TURNING POINTS

The table below helps you add extra drama to the missions by providing turning points that alter the course of the story. Choose or roll 2d6:

2D6	EVENT	DESCRIPTION
2	REFORMED	The PCs' target—a group or individual identified as loyal to the Nazareem—has left the faction and now leads a normal life with family and children. Prior to leaving, however, the target performed unspeakable acts in service of the Beast.
3	GUISE OF INNOCENCE	A Nazareem agent gains the PCs' trust by posing as a person they must rescue or protect. The agent accompanies the PCs to establish a relationship with them while keeping tabs on their hunt, either reporting back to her masters about their progress or waiting for an opportune moment to sabotage their mission or attack them. For added effect, keep this person from revealing her true motives until the final scenario of this book.
4	PENANCE	An aging cultist or old Nazareem master has reconsidered her beliefs and now uses her powers to fight crime and injustice in her community. She is still afraid of her old cell and maintains a devout appearance while trying to affect positive change around her.
5	PILLAR OF THE COMMUNITY	The local cell has been active for many years. Although actively working for U'Haya, the cell has also managed to strengthen the colony and improve people's daily lives. If the cell is exposed and destroyed, the settlement would be plunged into chaos and misery.
6	DUBIOUS CONNECTIONS	Nazareem agents have eliminated one of the group's contacts and assumed her identity. In the middle of a mission, they will try to turn the PCs against a specific faction or their patron.
7	THE OFFER	A rival faction approaches the PCs, offering to help them with their current mission if they switch sides. They talk of more lucrative missions to come if they accept, and promise protection from retaliation from the group's former employer (a promise they will be unable to keep, however).
8	REAP THE WHIRLWIND	A patron turned down or betrayed by the PCs dispatches agents to steal their mission or hinder their progress (see the individual patrons for more information).
9	THE BUTTERFLY'S BEATING WINGS	PC allies or contacts are taken over by the Vestals and charmed into loyal service of the Beast. The new cultists try to convince the PCs that the Emissaries aren't real Icons but rather evil warmongers on a mission to destroy the Third Horizon.
10	THE BUTTERFLY'S SEARING LIGHT	An important person, ship or artifact that the PCs are searching for is destroyed by a butterfly ship. The ship then retreats into the darkness.
11	THE LOST EMERALD DISC	During a mission, news reaches the PCs that the Nazareem have stolen the emerald disc from the Zafirah, the *Ghazali*, or both. Time is short if they want to catch up with the thieves.
12	FALSE ACCUSATIONS	The PCs are falsely accused of having dealings with a questionable faction (such as the Order of the Pariah or the Nazareem's Sacrifice) or of having committed war crimes. Their patron pulls all support as a warrant for their arrest is issued and they must now seek aid from another faction or try to clear their names.

NEWS IN THE HORIZON

News travel slowly around the cluster, needing ships or probes as carriers to make it from one system to the next.

POINTS OF DEPARTURE

The following events have already happened or happen just as you begin playing *The Cyclade Dance*:

- **THE ORDER OF THE PARIAH:** Sister Almas is temporarily banned from the Council of Factions. After the Order's loss of control over Uharu, the restrictions in place around Zalos are openly questioned at the Council. There is talk of punitive action.
- **CORIOLIS:** The Zenithian Hegemony launches a propaganda campaign to have Governor Dargosian replaced.

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TABLE 08: TIMELINE CC63

The suggested order below helps you place the different shifts on a timeline.

SEGMENT	EVENT	PAGE
The Cyclade	*The Uharan Echo* (Act 3)	69
THE MESSENGER	Sister Almas' Murder	96
THE MESSENGER	Shots Fired	97
THE DANCER	The Aiwaz Blockade	98
THE DANCER	Hotspot Hamura	98
THE DANCER	Hands Into Fists	98
THE GAMBLER	Foreigners	99
THE GAMBLER	The Strike	100
THE GAMBLER	The Growing Cult	101
THE DECKHAND	The Humanite Act	102
THE DECKHAND	The Missing Diplomat	104
THE DECKHAND	The Nadir Flotilla	105
THE MERCHANT	Disappearing Humanites	105
THE MERCHANT	No More Courtesans	106
THE MERCHANT	Honing the Gift	107
THE JUDGE	Exodus	107
THE JUDGE	New Candidates	108
The Pilgrimaria	*In the Shadow of the Zenith* (Act 1)	184

IMPORTANT SHIFTS

Shifts that should be introduced in your game before you begin playing *In the Shadow of the Zenith* are marked with a .

SISTER ALMAS' MURDER

"Shortly after the death of Council member Almas, there are reports of a fire spreading at the Sanatorium. Live from the Core, our reporter Ari Abouda knows more...

- Thank you, Jabal. What we're seeing now is people left with nothing after the Mysticides taking the law into their own hands. As of late, Governor Dargosian's office has been accused of not taking the situation seriously enough, thus resulting in the murder of Sister Almas and the recent riots in the core. The fire at the Sanatorium appears to have spread from the main building to the gardens and fire suppression drones are on site to prevent the flames from reaching the Infotheca or the Spire. The Judicators have dispersed the rioters but the casualties are nearing three figures and Sister Robwah, head of the Sanatorium, is in talks with the Governor about potential repercussions..."

INTRIGUE: The inflammatory Zalophobia gripping the station has grown rapidly since the Mysticides (*Emissary Lost*). The Coriolis Guard are doing nothing about the rising hate crime numbers which eventually culminate in an attack against Sister Almas after the Cyclade banquet in Sky City. A group of people who lost mystic loved ones to Martyr commandos breaks into Almas' residence and beats her into a coma. She dies in the hospital shortly after. As a number of suspects are brought in by the Guard, tensions erupt in the streets and a mob of hundreds of people attacks the Sanatorium a couple of days later, setting it on fire.

The escalation is actually orchestrated by Nazareem agents radicalizing previously moderate groups and distributing anti-Zalosian propaganda.

INVOLVEMENT: The PCs might be hired to investigate how the riots started, eventually finding evidence of Nazareem involvement. They could also get caught in the midst of the chaos during a visit to the station, experiencing the riots and the fire firsthand. If they work for the Astûrban, they might also be among those who raid Sister Almas' home, with secret orders to make sure she dies.

DARKNESS POINTS: 2 DP

CONSEQUENCES:

- Shots Fired

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SHOTS FIRED

"... we interrupt our scheduled broadcast with breaking news. After a series of threats, the Order has finally acted. According to our reports, the Ima-Halaat monastery cruiser arrived in Kua about an hour ago with her weapons hot. The Legion's fleets, protecting the leaders of the Horizon from lunatic attacks like this, neutralized the threat, thanks to swift and decisive action from captain Ariana Darabén. The Council is in emergency negotiations over retaliations and eventual second strikes. False rumors and opportunistic propaganda spread from Rimward Reach by the corsair queen known as the Red Spider risk escalating the conflict further. Until we know more, the Colonial Agency advises all free traders and dignitaries to refrain from visiting Zalos and to avoid contact with the Order without a military escort..."

INTRIGUE: Zalosians on Coriolis fear for their safety and the Order of the Pariah decides to exfiltrate its citizens. The *Ima-Halaat* monastery cruiser is sent to Kua via Aiwaz to bring the refugees home, but is met with a barrage of fire from the Legion's *Ramarah* destroyer and several torpedo ships upon entry into Kua.

The Order had sent a probe ahead, announcing their peaceful intentions, but Nazareem agents at the portal station in Kua intercepted it and twisted the message into a threat of violence. Tension between the factions increases and there is open speculation about the risks of all out war. Sister Robwah manages to diffuse the situation through negotiations, however, but all contact between Coriolis and the Martyr Council in Zalos ceases.

INVOLVEMENT: The PCs could be hired to extract and examine data from the manipulated probe, for example by tracking down the original encrypted message that arrived in Aiwaz where it was stored in a new unit for the travel to Kua. Alternatively, they could be hired to destroy the original message in Aiwaz to make sure no one can blame the Legion for acting on bad intelligence.

DARKNESS POINTS: 4 DP

CONSEQUENCES:

- The Aiwaz Blockade

THE RED SPIDER

"The Ima-Halaat — a ship on a peaceful rescue mission to liberate Zalosian citizens from oppression on Coriolis and Kua — is now being used in the most vile way by the Zenithian information war machine. The truth is this: the Legion fired first and, in doing so, destroyed a ship with a proud lineage, a historical treasure, coming in peace. Captain Ariana Darabén is no hero — she is a warmonger. She and the rest of the Ramarah's crew should face a war crimes tribunal..."

Taina Abu-Harim, Rimward Reach

PIRATE BROADCASTS

Taina Abu-Harim is the host of the independent Red Spider pirate broadcasts, transmitting from different locations in Rimward Reach. She and her staff are dressed as nomads or corsairs and are constantly on the move. They investigate the truth of the Bulletin's reports and have so far been miraculously adept at avoiding the Legion.

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THE AIWAZ BLOCKADE

"... and the Order continues its dangerous escalation. We have just received word that a large Zalosian fleet has established a blockade in Aiwaz. Our allies on Sadaal and Mira are worried, and the Council is deliberating as we speak. Sanctions against Zalosian colonies and interests are apparently on the table, as well as a military response. Zalos is now completely cut off and the Colonial Agency is trying to negotiate the release of non-Zalosians from the City of Foreigners. With backing from the clergy of the Church of the Icons and some of the more prominent Miran clans, there is still a chance that the portals will reopen for trade and pilgrimage through the Horizon..."

INTRIGUE: Monastery cruisers and torpedo ships are pulled back from guarding Order interests in Hamura, Tarazug, Errai, Algebra, Menkar and Dabaran. A couple of days later, a huge Zalosian fleet enters Aiwaz, placing a choke-hold on the Sadaal route. All passage through Aiwaz now requires special permits to avoid boarding parties. The list of restricted goods and weapons not allowed anywhere on the route grows long. Zalos is cut off completely and non-Zalosians in the City of Foreigners are left stranded. Travel on the Miran chain stops for a few weeks until the combined strength of the Church of the Icons and the Chelebs-Menau clan manage to acquire special clearance for travelers heading to Mira on specifically designated "pilgrim cruisers."

INVOLVEMENT: The PCs could become witnesses to the Order's retreat from their previous positions, or become part of the secret negotiations for travel clearance by asking for help on Mira (perhaps getting there via the long route over Odacon). They could also experience the blockade's harsher side if they try to travel along the Sadaal route carrying restricted cargo. Alternatively, they are hired to map the Order's blockade using special sensors fitted to their ship, in which case they will want to avoid a boarding inspection at all costs!

DARKNESS POINTS: 2 DP

CONSEQUENCES:

- Foreigners
- The Missing Diplomat

HOTSPOT HAMURA

"More expensive trading licenses across the Hegemony's Nestero customs zone combined with escalating violence from Firstcome corsairs in the Quadrant of the Pillar has forced Tiera Yriedes and Desaron Kai of the Colonial Agency into negotiations with Johar Quassar and captain Heimekh Vanna. The board of the Consortium is unwilling to relinquish control of the hotly contested Hamura system, claiming it would place other assets in danger. The Cabinet of Thousands has replied by saying that its fleets and agents are a far better protection than the Consortium's fickle dealings with the Legion... So far, we have no good news to share, but will of course keep everyone posted about any developments."

INTRIGUE: The Consortium has been hit hard by loss of income from both Coriolis, the Sadaal and Miran routes and the defeat in Uharu. The Hegemony grow tired of their sibling's control over the portal station in Hamura and secretly hire mercenaries to blockade the Nestero gas giant. Astûrban agents pay corsairs in the Quadrant of the Pillar to harass the Colonial Agency's remaining colonies in the sector, after which captain Heimekh Vanna of the neo-Zenithian flagship *Alhetan* offers to dispatch his fleet to end the attacks. In return, the Hegemony is to be invited as partners in control over the Hamura station.

INVOLVEMENT: The PCs may experience the increase in corsair activity first hand, or be tasked with hiring more mercenaries for the Nestero blockade. If the group is working for the Consortium, they might be tasked with investigating the origins of the growing corsair threat.

DARKNESS POINTS: –

CONSEQUENCES:

- Hands Into Fists

HANDS INTO FISTS

"Yet again, someone's trying to take advantage of the Consortium's generosity at the helm. After the Hegemony's recent betrayal, the Free League has followed suit and chosen to nullify the favorable contracts drawn up during the formation of Coriolis. Word is coming in of monopolistic demands made by stevedore akbars and harbor masters at several large spaceports and

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trade stations. Customs fees and labor costs are rising. Medical and life insurances are apparently high on the rabble rousers' agenda — with the Free League's blessing, according to the faction's spokesperson Jesibel Niales. Desaron Kai is debating the issue with an agitated Niales at the Council as we speak."

INTRIGUE: With the Consortium weakened after the Hegemony's offensive, the Free League seizes the opportunity to demand improvements to their contracts. Customs and labor costs increase in several major spaceports and the members in the outer systems demand better conditions and medical and life insurance. During the Council negotiations on the matter, the Consortium is criticized for siding with the Hegemony against the League, and the Colonial Agency is attacked over not compensating for the increased trade pressure in the core systems after the Aiwaz blockade. The hard conditions of the stevedores lead to injuries and deaths that could have been avoided with increased hiring or upgraded machinery. The solution, according to the League, is to raise their fees and let the customers pay for the necessary improvements.

INVOLVEMENT: The increase in labor costs can affect the PCs directly if they service their ship at a spaceport which now costs twice as much. They could also witness a tragic accident obviously the result of the poor labor conditions.

DARKNESS POINTS: –

CONSEQUENCES:
◆ The Strike

⚙ FOREIGNERS

"... our correspondent Ari Abouda will now give us the latest on the first wave of refugees from Zalos arriving in the Neoptra.

- Thank you, Jabal. It's a grim sight. Bloodied, broken citizens whose only crime was a desire for free trade — merchants and diplomats who risked their lives to trade with the Order's negotiators in the infamous City of Foreigners. Some bear the marks of torture and we have heard several accounts of violence and spies already. Citizens of the free Horizon are no longer safe behind the Martyr's veil..."

INTRIGUE: Several former merchants manage to make it out of Zalos and the City of Foreigners onboard a sanctioned

THE RED SPIDER

"The Zenithians' corrupted grasp reaches for the Quadrant of the Pillar. Reliable sources indicate that the growing corsair activity is actually a Hegemony sponsored plot to leverage the greedy Consortium into concessions. Controlling Hamura makes you influential in today's Horizon, and we can be sure that we haven't heard the last of the issue..."

Taina Abu-Harim, Rimward Reach

VOICE OF THE PEOPLE

"We can no longer suffer the dignitaries' lust for wealth and power. We have hands to work with and the power to refuse. Our voice, resounding in the Heavens, will echo in the chambers of the Council. Demand your place! Together, we are the Horizon!"

Seina Dol-Paltasso, Dome of the Dawn, Dabaran

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THE RED SPIDER

"The Consortium and the Hegemony have refused to meet the strikers' demands and instead launched a vicious attack against the League's leaders through libel and planted evidence of corruption. They are themselves to blame for the strike and the growing unrest. The Zenithians' thirst for power is a plague that only the people can cure. Ardha's aristocrats have become blinded by their own ambition…"

Taina Abu-Harim, Rimward Reach

THE HOLOVANGELIST

Seina dol-Paltasso is a successful former member of the Church of the Icons turned popular agitator after a scandalous career as an evangelist. Her radical seminars attract more and more people across the Horizon.

SANCTUARY

"We are here for you,
as the Messenger is here for us all.
Come to Coriolis, find your new family.
Become a Child of the Song,
find true love and community."

Children of the Song Pamphlet

pilgrim cruiser from Mira. They tell of a strong informant culture among the Zalosian population, of suspended trading licenses, burning warehouses and migrant workers going missing or ending up in prison. Korazan's halls have been shut to outsiders and rumors say that imprisoned foreigners are either mind controlled or sent to the front to fight the rebels on Zahedan. Nazareem agents try to increase tensions through an arson campaign.

INVOLVEMENT: The PCs may be hired to extract an important merchant or the relative of a high-ranking dignitary. They could also discover stowaways aboard their ship that turn out to be refugees from the City of Foreigners.

DARKNESS POINTS: –

CONSEQUENCES: –

THE STRIKE

"… and it isn't just here in the ports of Coriolis that the deckhands and engineers have left tier stations. Stevedore akbars loyal to the League and the recently deposed Council member Jesibel Niales have suspended all work until Niales' sentencing. Judge Nigela Kurahan-dol-Fashra has stated that the investigation will take time as the Judicators have years of corruption to unravel. His excellency Abarren Quassar's statement last week, regarding the possible expulsion of the Celer and Niales families for their blatant anti-Zenithianism, has increased tensions in the ports even further. Free trade — the very life-blood of our economy — hangs in the balance. If it falls — we fall. Never before have the actions of a single faction threatened to destroy the fruits of everyone else's joint efforts to build a better Horizon…"

INTRIGUE: After the Free League's new demands, Jesibel Niales is removed from the Council. The Cabinet of Thousands and the Consortium accuse the League of criminal and anti-Zenithian activities. The Judicators investigate false leads suggesting underhanded dealings with the Syndicate and several corsair groups. The Hegemony demands that the Celer and Niales families — the founders of the Free League — now be treated as Firstcome.

The events lead to a strike involving most League-affiliated workers. Spaceports, portal stations and colonies used to relying on the League's workers are plunged into chaos. Bulk

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freighters are delayed and the queues for a free jump grow long at the portals. Remote colonies grow desperate as vital supplies aren't replenished and the strike inspires unrest among the Conglomerate slums and the servant classes of Dabaran.

INVOLVEMENT: As the strike affects almost the entire Horizon, the PCs are bound to feel its effects at some point. Ship maintenance becomes unavailable without personal connections or Syndicate strikebreakers. They might be hired to intimidate local port akbars to resume work in a specific location, or be hired to negotiate transport of food and equipment to colonies in need. If they are close with the Zenithian intelligence agencies, they could also become important couriers of false evidence to strengthen the questionable allegations against the Free League's leadership.

DARKNESS POINTS: –

CONSEQUENCES:

- The Humanite Act

THE GROWING CULT

"Foundation analysts believe that the mysterious contagion that spread on Coriolis about a cycle ago may be a previously unknown biological weapon used by the Order's Martyr commandos. Sources within the Special Branch confirm that although the suspected number of unrecorded hosts remains high, more cases are confirmed every day. The infected appear to seek each other out, converging in a cult-like organization, rather than contacting the authorities for help. For each cell quarantined — or eliminated by the Judicators — several others appear to pop up. The public is advised to refrain from any contact with the infected as doing so comes with major health risks..."

INTRIGUE: The mystic cult of The Children of the Song is growing on Coriolis. Gurus from the Circle of Seekers have traveled in secret to Coriolis and Kua to begin training the new mystics. The Children's three prophets have started using the fortunes of mystic dignitaries now shunned by their communities to claim parts of the Mulukhad as well as a couple of forgotten service tunnels and hangars in the

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THE VOICE OF THE PEOPLE

"First, they came for the humanites,
then the pilgrims and the nomads,
and finally the Firstcome…
We're all meant for the whip,
wielded by the Zenithian hand."

Seina Dol-Paltasso, Khorsabad, Marakanda

THE RED SPIDER

"After the Council's recent despotic decision, we can now confirm that the conscription laws apply to the Krahin, Tehl, Jaron, Xinghur and Nerid peoples. Contracts have been drawn up with Algolan traders and mercenaries to implement the draft — by any means necessary. No one is safe. This is truly a dark day for the Third Horizon."

Taina Abu-Harim, Rimward Reach

Cellar. A shadow society is forming and alarming rumors about the scale of the cult soon reach the Special Branch and a couple of journalists.

INVOLVEMENT: The PCs could be hired to track down Children cells, either on Kua or in other systems. The Judicators' hunt for the cult is sometimes brutal, and if the PCs instead sympathize with the mystics, they might choose to aid the group by hiding members from the law. Rumors begin circulating that the so-called quarantine modules are actually military bases where the Foundation use the patients as lab rats. If any of the PCs are new mystics, they might seek out the bustling Mulukhad for acceptance and support.

DARKNESS POINTS: –

CONSEQUENCES:

◆ Honing the Gift

⚙ THE HUMANITE ACT

"Reporting live from the Palace of the Council in the Spire for this momentous occasion. Over to you, Mahadia Alana…"

An older woman, dressed in a strict but lavishly embroidered dress and wearing Zenithian makeup, appears smiling on a wide marble staircase, surrounded by camera drones.

"Thank you, Jabal. Coming to you from the eye of the storm, we have just received word that the Council has made a breakthrough in the negotiations. Governor Dargosian has declined to comment on the matter, but we have Council member Johar Quassar here with a statement… "

The drones refocus on a group of Council members at the top of the stairs outside the palace gates. Stepping up to an elevated lectern, the Zenithian diplomat addresses the cameras:

"… after arduous negotiations, we have arrived at a solution and presented it to the Popular Assembly, thanks to mediator Ana Din Eusidia who just arrived from Sadaal. The decision was a difficult one, but we must stand together. The voice of the people ultimately led the way.

The situation is dire throughout the Horizon, both economically and politically. Today, the so-called Humanite Act was passed with a clear majority. Drawing on the Mezzina laws of CC5, this new legislation allows the Council to impose mandatory civil conscription on all humanites originally created for levied labor.

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TABLE 09: HUMANITES IN THE HORIZON

Most humanite peoples descend from the first colonization of the Third Horizon, or from the First and Second Horizons' never-ending need for warriors and workers. Below is a list containing most registered tribes in today's Third Horizon (with page references to their individual talents in the ***Rulebook***):

TRIBE	DESCRIPTION	TALENTS
TUGUL	Horseback nomads on the Miran steppes.	Equivalent of Cybernetic Muscles (page 75).
ICHTAR	Barge-living humanites in the Kuan Ice Sea.	Limited version of Weatherproof (ice sea, page 76).
KRAHIN	Slaves from Marfik forced to build Coriolis.	Equivalent of Regenerate (page 77) and ages half as fast.
TEHL	Slaves from Errai forced to build Coriolis.	Equivalent of Endo Skeleton (page 75) and TOUGH (page 74).
JARON	Slaves from Kua forced to build Coriolis.	Supercharged Immune System (-4 to toxin strength and +2 to rolls when resisting diseases) and Perfect Vision (OBSERVATION +2).
MENDRIL	Free traders living in ruins on Menkar. Forked tongues and an acute sense of taste.	Equivalent of Lie Detector (page 75) within Short range.
VESTÏ	Androgynous warriors who deserted the fleets of the First Horizon and settled on the Khôban station in Odacon. Later also in Tarazug.	Can broadcast and receive radio waves. Equivalent of Com Link (page 75).
KALIT	Tribe living on the Lamka plateau on Jina in the Kua system.	Resistant and Animal Empathy (+3 to MANIPULATION and COMMAND when interacting with animals and semi-intelligences.
SIRB	Migrant laborers on space stations and mining colonies. Unknown Second Horizon origins.	Humanite talent Pheromones (page 74).
XINGHUR	Desert nomads on Lubau descending from the first colonization.	Humanite talent Resistant (page 74) and are Tech Djinn (+1 to TECHNOLOGY, counts as a general skill).
NERID	Amphibian humanites from the Candabouri swamps, enslaved on Sadaal.	Humanite talent Water Breathing (page 74).
SARAN	Nomads in the Menkar river deltas, arrived from the Second Horizon together with the Mogul fleets.	Equivalent of Servo Locks (page 75).
ANOA	Nomads in the Yastapol ship cemeteries, the Ash Belt in Odacon and in Rimward Reach. Arrived with the second wave of colonists from the Second Horizon.	Vacuum Resistant (doubled cap on radiation points and +3 to all drowning or vacuum rolls) and Zero-G Training (+2 to DEXTERITY and FORCE in zero-G).

THE RED SPIDER

"Rumors from the halls of power say that the Hegemony and the Consortium have formed an alliance to merge their respective war machines. A new fleet is being constructed out in the darkness, but we have yet to learn where and how… Stay tuned for more updates in the future…"

Taina Abu-Harim, Rimward Reach

HUMANITE PCS

A humanite PC will be highly sought-after as forced labor, especially if she belongs to one of the five named peoples in the Act. Groups working for the Consortium or the Hegemony will try to conscript the character, using force if necessary. The PC could be excused from service with the help of the group's patron if she names another PC of good standing (Rep >5) as her guardian. However, this doesn't keep people in general from bullying or scorning her.

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THE VOICE OF THE PEOPLE

"Our humanite friends are dying…
… for slavery and oppression,
… for war and devastation,
… for Zenithian dreams of power,
in the darkness of the Horizon."

Seina Dol-Paltasso, Icon City, Mira

THE RED SPIDER

"The Zenithians' enslavement of our humanite brethren is now a fact. The slave money goes toward secret projects in the darkness of space. Crumbs from the table silence the people's demands for justice. Those whose lives are improved look the other way. But how much bloodshed is justified for cheaper oranges, or a new caftan?"

Taina Abu-Harim, Rimward Reach

Throughout its colonization, the Portal Wars and the Coriolis peace time, the Third Horizon has rested on the shoulders of the humanites, and we thank them for their unwavering loyalty through the difficult times ahead…"

INTRIGUE: Growing unrest and economically straining strikes force the Hegemony and the Consortium to agree on radical countermeasures that are eventually ratified by the Popular Assembly. Old laws from the founding of Coriolis are dusted off, forcing Krahin, Tehl, Jaron, Xinghur and Nerid humanites into conscripted servitude as strikebreakers. Mercenaries and Algolan slave hunters are hired to enforce the new law and all opposition is quickly silenced with talk of unity in the face of civil war. The Horizon needs peace — by any means necessary.

INVOLVEMENT: This shift is so important that the PCs shouldn't actively take part in it, instead hearing about it after the fact and experiencing the ramifications. They could have been the ones who escorted lobbyist Ana Din Eusidia from Alburz on Sadaal through the Aiwaz blockade, however.

DARKNESS POINTS: 3 DP

CONSEQUENCES:

- Disappearing Humanites
- No More Courtesans

THE MISSING DIPLOMAT

"We interrupt our scheduled broadcast with breaking news. Council member Desaron Kai has been attacked by the Order of the Pariah while on a diplomatic mission to Sadaal. The Consortium's Special Branch currently labels this latest display of Zalosian warmongering as a kidnapping — but cannot rule out the possibility of murder. May the Traveler and the Lady of Tears show mercy. Desaron Kai — we keep you in our prayers."

INTRIGUE: The Colonial Agency's Council representative Desaron Kai disappears in Aiwaz while on a diplomatic mission to Sadaal for the signing of the "Nadir accord" with patriarch Aremerat and the clergy of Amesha Spenta. The Order is blamed for the kidnapping and potential murder of the diplomat, but the real perpetrator is a Nazareem cell. The reeling Martyr Council desperately try to find out who is responsible, tasking

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commander Alim from the Amshaar fortress with tracking down the culprits. This information is kept from public knowledge, however, and the Legion is allocated extra resources as the Consortium and the Hegemony pool funds for the construction of a joint defense network.

INVOLVEMENT: The PCs might be hired to escort Kai, or hear about the Nazareem's plan of attack, only to arrive too late. The ship is attacked before their eyes. For extra drama, you could introduce a butterfly ship that appears seemingly out of nowhere to destroy the diplomat's escape pod — or take it onboard…

DARKNESS POINTS: 2 DP

CONSEQUENCES:
◆ The Nadir Flotilla

THE NADIR FLOTILLA

The creation of the Nadir Flotilla is never reported about by the Bulletin. The fleet is constructed in absolute secret.

INTRIGUE: The Zenithian Hegemony and the Consortium sign a collective defense treaty and assign Ana Din Eusidia an enormous budget to construct a secret Zenithian fleet called the Nadir Flotilla at the Daharab docks in Sadaal. The purpose of the new fleet is to wage war against the Order while reducing the dependency on the Legion in case another faction outbids the Consortium in the future. The training of new personnel begins parallel to the construction of the ships.

INVOLVEMENT: The PCs might hear rumors about a so-called Nadir Flotilla, but cannot ascertain where it's being built.

DARKNESS POINTS: –

CONSEQUENCES:
◆ Disappearing Humanites

DISAPPEARING HUMANITES

Rumors about conscripted humanites disappearing isn't anything the Bulletin takes an interest in.

INTRIGUE: Hundreds of humanites seems to have been disappeared or murdered during the execution of the Humanite Act. The Colonial Agency dismissively states that the disappeared were criminals deserting their civic duties. The truth of the matter is that the missing people have been brought to the



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THE SONG AND THE ANSWER

"The Song holds the answer.
Listen, and you shall find your flock.
Follow, and you shall know peace.
Learn, and you shall be redeemed."

Unknown Writer,
Scribbled On A Wall On Coriolis

THE RED SPIDER

"We have all heard the Consortium's allegations of the lost fleet's aggressive intentions. This is a toxic lie to sanction exploitation of the Quadrant's population. Dear listeners, the Moguls may have left us for now, but don't for a second believe that they are gone for good…"

Taina Abu-Harim, Rimward Reach

Daharab dockyards to secretly work on the Nadir flotilla. The hierocrats of Sadaal, the Amesha Spenta, have tightened security throughout the system and only allow travel to and from the main planet.

INVOLVEMENT: The PCs could be hired to track down runaway humanites from the docks, either to silence them or to offer them shelter at Aishan's Emporium or a similar organization. Alternatively, they could be hired to scare Seina dol-Paltasso back in line after the Zenithian powers grow tired of her reporting. Her many followers will make the job difficult to pull off unnoticed, however, especially as it might entail eliminating the reporter altogether.

DARKNESS POINTS: 1 DP

CONSEQUENCES: –

⚙ NO MORE COURTESANS

"After threats and protests from Council member Terminos Lete, the deceitful Ahlam's Temple shut the doors of its Courtesan Academy on Coriolis today. According to a statement issued by the faction, students are still welcome to the Miran branch, but admission requirements have been raised as a response to the increase in applications. The Council is debating sanctions against Ahlam's Temple, but has yet to propose a form…"

INTRIGUE: Ahlam's Temple closes its academy on Coriolis to protest recent events. Terminus Lete campaigns to tear up the Humainte Act and compensate the five named peoples, but faces heavy resistance in the Council. Many Firstcome also support the Act as it ended the strike and led to substantially lowered stevedore costs. The conscripted humanites work for room and board, forcing labor costs down, although a lot of the new profit margins are swallowed up by the secret Nadir project.

INVOLVEMENT: The Temple will not directly involve the PCs in the event, but they may hear rumors about the faction potentially losing their seat at the Council.

DARKNESS POINTS: –

CONSEQUENCES: –

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HONING THE GIFT

"The growing cult of infected calling themselves the Children of the Song are now being investigated on terrorism charges. A joint assessment by the Special Branch, the Judicators and the Astûrban has identified risk behaviors common among Firstcome splinter groups, leading to talks of mandatory monitoring of groups outside the approved Council factions…"

INTRIGUE: Rumors abound about the Children of the Song planning acts of terrorism and being trained by extremists. Several Seeker gurus are training new members across the Horizon — in the forgotten temples in the Sultra on Kua, in Haramand's mountain monasteries in the Massani Territories on Ordana and in the ancient Seeker complexes deep in the Miran jungles. Especially promising neophytes are brought to the Seeker's most holy temple in distant Menau for more advanced training.

INVOLVEMENT: The PCs might become couriers of sensitive information between Kua and Mira, be hired to escort new mystics to the Seeker camps or turn on the Children, either trying to eliminate or arrest a mystic group or infiltrate a training camp on behalf of the Zenithian security agencies.

DARKNESS POINTS: –

CONSEQUENCES: See *In the Shadow of the Zenith*, page 173.

EXODUS

"Our foreign correspondents all say the same thing, confirming last weeks' rumors: the so-called Janhagir fleet, the Moguls' ancient war fleet, has been lost. By their own account, the fleet left Zhau on a course for Altai, and statements from Khorsabad declare the fleet's absence a voluntary exile in protest of the Consortium's development projects in the sector. Astronics at the Foundation have, however, presented analyses indicating that the fleet's actual destination was Kua — either for the purposes of war, or as a show of force toward the Horizon's leaders…"

INTRIGUE: The Janhagir fleet leaves the Quadrant of the Pillar. Only a select few in Khorsabad and among the nomad elders are entrusted with the truth: the leaders, shamans and elders of the fleet are seeking aid and answers from the lost Emissary thought to reside with a cult known as the Order of Rima in a forgotten system. General rumors would have you believe either that the

THE VOICE OF THE PEOPLE

"In these dark times of uncertainty and tension, the oppressed of the Horizon have suffered another loss. The light that sustained us after the Portal Wars has been snuffed out — the Mogul fleet has vanished, leaving behind a void for the power-hungry to fill…"

Seina Dol-Paltasso, The Ara-Ara Water Plaza, Kua

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exile is voluntary — like that of the Draconites after the mutiny on the *Zenith* — or that the entire fleet has been destroyed during a portal jump while en route to attack Kua and Coriolis.

INVOLVEMENT: The PCs won't be directly involved in the exodus of the fleet, but depending on how close they are with the Mogul families they might hear more or less of the truth behind the disappearance. They could be hired by the Colonial Agency to verify the fleet's absence or to escort colonists to locations previously under Janhagir protection.

DARKNESS POINTS: 3 DP

CONSEQUENCES: See *In the Shadow of the Zenith*, page 173, for the political fallout. The fleet returns during the third episode of *Mercy of the Icons*.

⚙ NEW CANDIDATES

"Here at News at Dawn, we have covered popular opinion over this last cycle of political backstabbing and turmoil. A series of murders destabilized Governor Dargosian's office. Belligerent factions such as the Order have become an urgent threat to peace. Ahlam's Temple and the Free League have chosen to betray society and their members.

Council member Johar Quassar reaffirms the Council's intentions to listen to the concerns of the populace. A snap election has been called at the end of the year to stabilize the political landscape and in the weeks to come, our New Times, New Voices series will give you in-depth interviews with the candidates as well as expert analyses…"

INTRIGUE: Popular support of the weakened Council is dwindling. To buy time, the Council announces an open snap election. Behind the scenes, however, the Zenithian pact that will be revealed in the final scenario is already taking form.

INVOLVEMENT: Introduce a couple of the potential candidates in a mission, or through Bulletin interviews (see New Candidates below). Officially, the makeup of the Council will remain the same, albeit with some new faces.

DARKNESS POINTS: –

CONSEQUENCES: See *In the Shadow of the Zenith*

NEW CANDIDATES

There are many rumors about potential candidates leading up to the elections. Several candidates step forward and announce their intentions to run. Choose who to introduce or involve in your campaign from the list below:

CANDIDATE	DESCRIPTION	FACTION
Tarib Bandasi	Influential and charismatic Coriolis Guard captain. Runs against Johar Quassar for Governor of Coriolis.	The Consortium (The Coriolis Guard)
Sari Hama	Renowned Miran mediator responsible for solid treaties in many outer systems and on several larger portal stations.	The Free League
Xiu Xichama	Well-liked stevedore akbar from Lubau who has run the Neoptra space port on Coriolis for more than fifteen cycles. Criticized for being involved in the strike.	The Free League
Soba Hurnan	Former operational manager of the Colonial Agency's Uharu Office.	The Consortium (The Colonial Agency)
Sister Robwah	Former Samaritan from the now burned-down Sanatorium. Headed the organization after the death of brother Ramas and through the ensuing pogroms.	The Order of the Pariah (Samaritan)
Khaleem Hydarnes	Scarred war veteran and Martyr Council member with secret connections to the Warriors of the Holy Light through a niece (Chabaun Khemi).	The Order of the Pariah (Martyr warrior)
(Emissary)	There is much debate over the empty observer seat. Should it be given to another faction, or would it be possible for the Emissary guarded by the Foundation at Xene to assume the position?	Independent

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MINI ADVENTURES

The dark between the stars came crawling back. Evil spirits, vengeful djinni, dark Icons — servants coveting their masters' power — forces that corrupt and consume. We stand before a second awakening but all we can hear are the echoes of the Portal Wars...

BELOW ARE FOUR MINI ADVENTURES using some of the scenario seeds presented in the Mission Generator on page 84. If you don't feel like constructing your own campaign, these adventures will see your group through the dark days after they awake during the Cyclade of CC62 until the Pilgrimaria in the segment of the Judge of CC63.

THE CHILDREN ARE THE FUTURE

The PCs will investigate a series of disappearances on Dabaran and learn the truth about what awaits them in the caverns beneath Lotus.

SCENARIO

The red sun beats down over ancient walls and towers. The academy at Daddah — one of humanity's largest temples to knowledge — is home to many of the Horizon's wisest and to the rulers of tomorrow. The massive complex sits in stark contrast to the narrow alleys of Lotus, the temple city, resting on the cliffs overlooking the bottomless drop of the Wound. Farther out, herds of desdemodu trudge across the white plains, calmly continuing their perpetual migration down through the generations. Like most Dabarans, these holy wanderers lead their lives oblivious to the dark forces that have awakened to lay waste to the cluster.

BACKGROUND

Amron Dar-Esfandjar is a sultan controlling vast plantations and a marble quarry in the lowlands north of Dar Bahri as well as a small militia and a couple of war ships and sand sailing gravcraft. His son Vahid and his daughter Lalah are enrolled at the Fermal-Garoud Mathematical Institute in Daddah (see *The Atlas Compendium*, page 13).

Both are students with excellent reputations, but the son went missing a couple of weeks ago, after a visit to the Dome of the Icons by the yellow sandstone mountain in Lotus. The local guards have found no clues, which is why the PCs are brought in by their patron, as a personal favor to Dar-Esfandjar.

The patron's agents have received reports of youngsters from several wealthy families going missing. As local cults and rebel cells have grown in power recently, there is speculation that the missing youths have been kidnapped to extort their families.

THE MISSION

- Protect Dar-Esfandjar's daughter Lalah.
- Find Vahid.
- Investigate the local police's failure to recover the missing youths.

THE TRUTH

A Nazareem cell has begun recruiting in Lotus. The missing pilgrims and students are kidnapped or seduced and brought to an abandoned temple

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THE ADVENTURES

The following mini adventures should be played in order:

- **THE CHILDREN ARE THE FUTURE** – page 109
- **FORKED TONGUES** – page 121
- **CURSE OF RUSAH** – page 137
- **FIRE OF THE ICONS** – page 155

SCENARIO LOCATIONS

The scenario locations presented below can also be used for your own adventures. The locations are:

- **THE TEMPLE CITY OF LOTUS, DABARAN – page 115**
- **THE CITY OF FOREIGNERS, ZALOS – page 130**
- **MASAHIR STATION, ODACON – page 148**
- **THE VALLEY OF DEATH, ORDANA – page 166**

More information about the respective star systems can be found in the *The Atlas Compendium*.

NAZAREEM ON DABARAN

HISTORY: Pasha Marika dari-Jahra's youngest daughter Ana was recruited in her teens by a small and relatively unimportant Nazareem convert cell led by the young student Masak Sasani, son to a successful Latif. The group spent the following years performing rather insignificant rituals, but used their members' money and status to gather artifacts and texts from the Portal Wars.

THE ARTIFACT: The Taoan incident seeded hope within the group of the return of their First Horizon masters. Visions and a mysterious artifact led to Ana sacrificing herself to awaken the ancient masters sleeping in the shadows of the cadaver clocks. After the death of the Emissary, the remaining cultists were visited by Vestals arriving in a butterfly ship.

underneath the city. The cell leader, Masak Sasani, has acquired a strange power from the Vestals that allows him to make the new recruits love and worship him unconditionally.

The cell has crippled the local branch of the Latifs, Dabaran's planetary police force, through blackmail of Masak's father, head commissar Ayid-Babak Sasani. Masak is feigning being kidnapped to leverage favors from the office of his father.

EVENTS

As the PCs reach Dabaran and begin their approach to Lotus, breaking news from the Bulletin airs, having just reached the system via probe. Read the Bulletin quotes from the following *Shifts*, and gain the corresponding Darkness Points:

- Sister Almas' murder (page 96)
- Shots fired (page 97)

The PCs should meet the sister and visit the headquarters of the Latifs. The clues found take them into the Wound where they find a temple to the Beast.

BEGINNING: STUDENTS IN LOTUS

The PCs' approach to the Bas Ghoura spaceport takes them over the lowlands in the shadow of the high sandstone mountain range that harbors Lotus. No vehicles are allowed within the high walls of the holy city, but the group may hire carriers for themselves and their gear for the two-hour hike from Bas Ghoura to Lotus:

- **Carriers**: 50 birr gets you an ordinary carrier; 150 gets you a dromedary and a handler; 250 birr lets you travel in style in a palanquin draped in silk, carried by two burly locals.

  The sultan's daughter Lalah has been put up in Lotus' youngest neighborhood, the City of Pilgrims. When the PCs reach the modest living module, they find the floor littered with torn notes and a very agitated Lalah, who appears unaware that her father has sent guards and investigators to help.
- **The Brother**: Vahid was last seen during a visit to the Dome of the Icons about two weeks ago, and she hasn't dared to leave the city since.
- **The Investigation**: The Latifs have interviewed her but she hasn't heard anything about the investigation since.
- **Protection**: She may be persuaded into accepting an escort. If this fails, the PCs must instead shadow her to keep her safe.

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- **The Room:** A simple room paid for in advance. If the PCs search it without Lalah present, they find her notes about Lotus and mathematical calculations and geodata about the seemingly bottomless Wound.
- **The Tag:** Passing an **OBSERVATION** test at -2 allows them to find a tag hidden between two bricks in the wall. The tag belongs to the missing brother and contains legends and stories of the Portal Wars as well as texts about an earthquake that shook Lotus roughly a century ago, resulting in many temples and large sections of the city falling into the Wound. The event is named "The Revenge of the Beast" in the texts.

Cost: 0 DP (Mandatory)

LALAH ESFANDJAR, STUDENT

Lalah is a twenty-something student with golden brown skin and short blonde hair, in part covered by a turquoise scarf wrapped around her tattooed neck and shoulders. She wears a simple sienna caftan commonly associated with the penniless pilgrims that flock to the city's temples. She is in fact already under Masak Sasani's spell after briefly meeting him together with her brother for a short recruitment chat at the Dome of the Icons. At the meeting, they each received a locked talisman.

CHARACTERISTICS: Her eyes widen and she takes deep breaths if her brother is mentioned. She becomes even more anxious and worried if asked if she's afraid.

ATTRIBUTES: **STRENGTH 2, AGILITY 3, WITS 4, EMPATHY 4**
HIT POINTS: 5
MIND POINTS: 8
REPUTATION: 7
SKILLS: Culture 3, Infiltration 2, Manipulation 2, Science 2, Medicurgy 1
GEAR: Simple clothing, tag with 1,500 birr, sealed talisman (inside: the Beast U'Haya)

THE VOICE OF THE LATIFS

Commissar Ayid-Babak Sasani presides in a lavish office at the headquarters of the Latifs. The region's lead investigator smokes a dark walnut pipe, absentmindedly ashing here and there on the thick rugs on the floor. Lowland



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grass and miniature palm trees in gilt pots reach for the faint light that filters through the thick dura glass windows (Armor 5) from the alley outside. The commissar is grumpy and dismissive, and the PCs will have to use their connections or pass a MANIPULATION test for him to hear them out.

- **First Encounter**: The commissar scoffs at the PCs' questions, telling them to leave the matter to the professionals — the investigation is more complex than they think, and he is on top of things.
- **Pressured**: He is reluctant to let the PCs into his office unless the "Ambushed" event (page 113) has already happened. If they threaten to kill him, he will admit that someone is blackmailing him after having kidnapped his son. The kidnappers leave him messages via street urchins. If the PCs then offer to help him, he shows them a current photo of his son.
- **The Messengers**: If the PCs keep watch around the HQ, you could give them a chance to spot and capture or follow one of the messengers. The child can tell them that the messages for the commissar come from different people every time but that they all seem to hang around the outskirts of town and be between twenty and thirty years old.

Cost: 0 DP

AYID-BABAK SASANI, HEAD COMMISSAR

Babak has reached the rank of head commissar, thus earning the honorary "Ayid-" prefix to his name. Being in his sixties, he's looking forward to a comfortable retirement in a few years. The loss of his son Masak has filled him with guilt and given him a stress-induced ulcer. Oblivious to the true identity of his son's "kidnapper," he does as the villain asks and tries to shut down any attempts to investigate the recent disappearances.

Characteristics: Nervously snacking on sunflowers seeds when thinking. Grumpy if pressured and not afraid to use the power of his rank to threaten his opponents.

ATTRIBUTES:
STRENGTH 3, AGILITY 2, WITS 5, EMPATHY 4

HIT POINTS: 5

MIND POINTS: 9

REPUTATION: 4

SKILLS: Command 3, Observation 3, Ranged Combat 3, Manipulation 2, Melee Combat 2, Dexterity 1

GEAR: Tag with 100 birr and a photo of his missing son, thermal cricket

THE DOME OF THE ICONS

The Dome of the Icons and the Dome Plaza rest high atop the golden cliff to which the city clings. Both locations are packed with pilgrims during the day, and many even spend their nights there, either silent in prayer or sleeping on thin blankets sold in the surrounding alleys. The Lotus Sisters maintaining the temple are reserved but passing a MANIPULATION test at -2 (or an unmodified DATA DJINN test at a nearby terminal) gives the PCs access to the temple's limited surveillance feeds.

- **CCTV**: The missing Vahid can be found among the footage. A successful OBSERVATION test allows the PCs to spot him meeting a man of about thirty who escorts him out of the temple through a normally locked backdoor.
- **The Stranger**: The stranger — whom Vahid followed willingly — can be identified as the son of commissar Sasani.

Cost: 0 DP

SHADOWS

Someone appears to be watching or following Lalah. Although unnerving, the surveillance amounts to nothing unless you spend 1 DP to have a young pilgrim (use the "Fugitive" stats on page 343 of the *Rulebook*) throw a homemade frag grenade at the PCs to give her partner a chance to slip Lalah a tag unnoticed. The tag contains a message from Vahid:

- **The message**: Vahid promises to come for his sister and bring her to her love when the coming iron storm hits the city.

  If the PCs somehow intercept the message and ask Lalah about it, she refuses to answer. She claims not to understand the message but if pressured or threatened, she admits that she has found true love and hopes to be able to run away to join him, although she doesn't know her lover's name yet. The infatuation is the result of Masak Sasani's mystical power (page 113).

Cost: 0, 1 DP

THE FACE OF THE JUDGE

As the PCs are out about town, the wind suddenly picks up. Local news reports that the Mathematical Institute of Daddah

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predicts an iron storm moving across the desert will hit the city. Lotus will be hit with its full force later in the evening (choose a time that coincides with the end event) and it is believed the storm will last for three days. The authorities advise against all travel to and from the spaceport, as well as across the lowlands. At the cost of 1 DP, a nearby roof is torn off by the winds with shrapnel hitting one PC for a strength 5 attack (damage 1, CRIT 3).
Cost: 0, 1 DP

AMBUSHED
Commissar Sasani is worried about the PCs' investigation and dispatches a group of Latifs to perform an unnecessarily violent arrest (to deter or eliminate them). At the cost of 2 DP, the Latifs are as many as the PCs and armed with shock sticks and Vulcan pistols. For 1 additional DP, they have one smoke grenade each as well as thermal pistols and flight suits (Armor 3). Use Babak's stats (above).
Cost: 2-3 DP

ENDING: THE BREATH OF THE BEAST
- **The Storm**: The winds intensify at dusk and a red haze of swirling sand batters the city, rattling against barred windows. Walking the streets without protection requires passing a **SURVIVAL** test to avoid 1 point of damage (armors may be tested). At the cost of 1 DP, you may subject one PC to shrapnel in "The Face of the Judge" above.
- **The Faithful**: At midnight, a group of armed pilgrims (at least one more than the number of PCs) attempts to break into Lalah's home or waits for her outside. They will attempt to rescue her and then retreat down into the Fallen City. They are armed with makeshift blunt weapons (one may have a sawed-off grape rifle for 1 DP) and have 5 HP and 6 MP. They roll five dice for all attacks and six dice for **INFILTRATION** and **OBSERVATION**.
- **The Wound**: The howling winds rage over the sharp drop of the Wound and the winding, dangerous path that spirals downward along the sandstone walls. The descent is slow and straining. You may spend 1 DP to force the PCs to test **FORCE** or **DEXTERITY** to avoid falling one level down, suffering a strength 6 attack (damage 1, CRIT 3).

The Temple
Deep inside the Fallen City's ruins and slums, dark crevices connect to a winding maze that eventually leads to the old

NEW TALENT: HEART OF THE BEAST (NAZ)

Nazareem talent. The Vestals are capable of altering the biocode of their followers. The procedure is equivalent to advanced bionic surgery and gives the target 2 additional HP. She also becomes immune to MP loss from stress or fear.

MONOCHROME

A CULTURE test at +2 reveals the ceremonial robes to be Zalosian. Masak's cell isn't composed of Martyr followers, however, but uses the conspicuous caftans to make sure the Order is blamed for their attack. The Nazareem have so far had a hard time weakening the Order.

NEW MYSTICAL POWER: LOVER'S EMBRACE (NAZ)

Nazareem talent. The user may enthrall up to three people per activation (at 1 DP per target), making them love her. The user only rolls one test with **MYSTICAL POWERS**, and if it succeeds the effect begins as a mild infatuation. If a target is exposed to the effect multiple times, the infatuation grows into unconditional love, upon which she does the user's bidding without question (after three successful activations, or one critical success). To be able to act against the orders of the user, the target must pass a **MANIPULATION** test at -1 per successful activation of the talent (max -3). Passing the test results in 1 point of stress but allows the target to act independently for one combat or one hour. If the target is separated from the object of her love, the effects last for a segment, during which the target experiences deep sorrow, suffering a -2 to all skill tests.

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THE OLD SEEKER TEMPLE, DABARAN



Seeker temple that fell into the Wound all those years ago. The ruined complex now consists of a semi-octagonal chamber of white marble crowned by a blue quartz dome that lets in light from the stars above through a number of holes. About twenty young pilgrims and travelers have gathered here. In the middle of the room, on a large slab of stone fallen from the ceiling, stands a figure in white before a burning brazier. The gathered devotees, among which Lalah's brother may be spotted, are busy changing into simple, monochrome caftans and hoods while chanting in reverence before their master: the "kidnapped" son of the head commissar, Masak Sasani.

"... and in the merciful light of U'Haya, you shall be reborn! You are the fires of Rusah! You are love of existence and future! Feel my words filling you with life never-ending. Dance in ecstasy, unsheathe your blades and walk out under the crimson sun to dethrone your mothers and fathers. Those who betray us will spill their blood on the thirsty sands..."

The cultists begin dancing, raising knives and daggers to the constellations seen through gaps in the damaged ceiling. Unless interrupted by the PCs, they will then file out of the temple, still smiling as they dance feverishly toward the horizon. They will eventually make their way up into the city proper and start murdering pilgrims and priests as if possessed by some mad blood rage. Re-use the "Faithful" stats above. If the PCs try to break the ritual, Masak sets his followers on them (use the "Mob" rules on page 220) before escaping the Wound and disappearing into the storm.

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MASAK SASANI, CULT LEADER

Ten years ago, Masak was a bored archaeology student seeking mystery and forbidden knowledge from the time of the Portal Wars. He discovered texts about the followers of the Beast and found the focus on the Self, transformation and exaltation through ecstasy compelling. Soon after, he founded a Nazareem cell on Dabaran.

CHARACTERISTICS: Collected and sharp with a gaze that pierces souls.

ATTRIBUTES:
STRENGTH 2, AGILITY 4, WITS 3, EMPATHY 5

HIT POINTS: 6

MIND POINTS: 8

REPUTATION: 6

SKILLS: Culture 4, Manipulation 4, Command 3, Dexterity 3, Melee Combat 3, Mystic Powers 3, Infiltration 2, Ranged Combat 2

TALENTS: Lover's Embrace, Heart of the Beast (see page 113)

GEAR: Simple clothes, tag with 6,700 birr, tabula containing complicated sacred texts, Beast talisman (+1), mercurium sword, acc pistol

AFTERMATH

The Latifs and the wealthy families of the indoctrinated cultists are anxious not to let news of the incident spread. If several of the spellbound cultists were killed, the PCs are likely to end up with some very wealthy enemies. Surviving cult members returned to their families will spend months mourning the loss of their beloved leader — and nourishing a bitter hatred for the PCs.

SHIFTS

As the PCs leave Dabaran, shocking news reaches them. Read the following *Shift* to the group, and gain the corresponding Darkness Points:

◆ **THE AIWAZ BLOCKADE (PAGE 98)**

SCENARIO LOCATION

THE TEMPLE CITY OF LOTUS

The holy city of the dars, the temple city of Lotus, is located on Mount Loti in the golden Taraa mountain range just west of the Wound. Jutting rock columns and stooping plateaus of wind-worn sandstone make up the basis of the countless temples, statues and houses that were carved straight from the bones of the red planet by Dabaran's original settlers. At the highest plaza underneath the Dome of the Icons, one finds the Lotus Halls, the ancient home of the Third Horizon's very first sultan, Niousha Dari-Taraa. Today, the temple and its amphitheater are used by the Lotus Council for political debates. On the Dome Plaza outside, thousands of pilgrims crowd together, tired from the walk up Traveler Alley's two hundred and fifty-seven stairs and the long trek from the spaceport in neighboring Bas Ghoura.

A no fly-zone is enforced over the city itself and twenty kilometers from its walls in all directions. Although the sanctity of the city is an effective deterrent in its own right, advanced defense systems with three torpedo rooms and six of Nestera's infamous Mangler batteries have been built into the cliffside itself. The weapons were presented as a gift by the Consortium to the Lotus Sisters during a crisis where surrounding dars threatened to annex the ancient city. The defenses came with a price: to allow the Foundation's archaeologists free access to research the mysteries of the Wound.

At the Bazaar of the Prophet and in the myriad of stalls lining Traveler Alley, pilgrims can find religious souvenirs in the form of prayer towers, talismans and allegedly holy artifacts from the Portal Wars. The central alleys are always crowded and chaotic but the so-called warrior preachers from the Order of Quar patrol them on a mandate from the Latifs to keep the peace in the city.

In addition to the pagodas, temples and statues built by the Circle of Seekers who founded the city, it also contains a hospital, several alms-houses and the campuses of the Lotus Academy, all of which are run by the Lotus Sisters, a Seeker splinter group.

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HISTORY

Lotus is said to be the first city founded by the colonists who arrived to Dabaran. Perched high above the sands in the Taraa mountains, the walled, sprawling city of Lotus quickly became a beacon of holy light for the cities in the lowlands, rallying the faithful in worship of the Icons and the spirits of the deserts. Desire to rule the mythic city led to fierce fighting between the emirates and sultanates — collectively known as *dars* — that surround Lotus and the Wound.

A mere fifteen years before the beginning of the Portal Wars, the Circle of Seekers — having tirelessly cared for the city's pilgrims through a tumultuous series of coups and usurpers — were entrusted with governing Lotus. A growing contingent of female Seeker prophets and philosophers within the faction known as the Lotus Sisters made sure the city saw a new golden age, even amidst the raining fire of the Wars and the earthquake just before the ceasefire when the Wound swallowed large sections of the city.

The schism that eventually forced the split in the faction to a head concerned which Icon doctrine Lotus should adhere to — the older Second Horizon faith, or the younger Third Horizon version with its innumerable folkloristic permutations. The Lotus Sisters separated themselves from the Circle and rallied under their banner the most prominent preachers and prophets visiting from around the Horizon to form the Lotus Council. The Council is the planet's foremost moral and religious authority, visited for guidance by warring dars since its formation almost one and a half centuries ago.

PLACES

Below are some of the places of interest and important characters described:

THE DOME OF THE ICONS

A domed octagonal temple cut from the golden rock of the Taraas, consisting of a central chamber housing the amphitheater and several high stands for the audience surrounded by eight pagodas, one in each corner. Each of the smaller pagodas has been built in the architectural style of a Firstcome Third Horizon culture. Theologists and archaeologists have identified styles and motifs from Dabarab, Mira, Kua, Menkar, Ordana, Odacon and Zalos, but the eighth pagoda in the northeast corner is built from polished marble and a red, coppery rock in a style not native to the Third Horizon. Patrolling warrior preachers and stern Lotus Sisters enforce strict order in the temple during the hours when pilgrims are allowed inside, between midday and until the sun is obscured by Mount Loti's highest peak.

THE DOME PLAZA

Outside the temple, one finds the living quarters of the sultans' former servants as well as a large plaza covered in polished mosaics where eight big fountains spout warm water from the hot springs in the Wound. Over time, the old buildings cut straight from the rock have gradually given way to new houses and sheds crowding in on the plaza, as well as to the crescent-shaped congregation of tents and rugs known as the Bazaar of the Prophet.

MOHAMMAD ALZIR

An ambitious warrior preacher whose sermons asserts that the true nature of the Lady of Tears is hidden in the shadow of the Dancer, in the heat beyond absolute ecstasy.

ZILA EB-JAMSHIDI

An old pilgrim living on the plaza. The white-haired woman has been here as long as anyone can remember, and those who stop and listen say that she sings of things from before the Wars.

THE COLOSSI

Eight huge groups of statues are scattered around the city, each depicting a number of popular aspects of an Icon. The Colossus on the far side of the Wound differs, however, in that it consists of a single Dancer statue. Traces of several additional foundations for statues can be seen around its base though.

YAN ALMINO

A young Xinghur humanite who wanders the city every day to polish the bases of the Colossi. At sunset, he lights and replaces the candles that are positioned around the Icon statues. Yan is secretly a Latif informant, staying up to date on the latest pilgrim gossip.

THE LOTUS ACADEMY

The old Lotus Sister convent has long since been turned into an academy. The quantum philosophy department is housed in the best part of the campus and some of the old convent

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cells have been turned into living quarters for students of modest means.

MARYAM-NAIA

The academy's headmistress is sister superior Maryam. She is outraged over the presence of the Consortium and the Foundation in the city and leads a clandestine group of students and faculty known as the Society of Blessed Philosophy that aims to shut down the Foundation's dig site in the Wound. The group recruits mainly Firstcome students and uses the connections of dignitary members to acquire information about the unwelcome Zenithian leaders. Maryam-naia is known as someone who gets what she wants in the end, without qualms about blackmail or subtle threats.

⚙ THE HOSPITAL

The Lotus Sisters' hospital can be found by the outer wall. The building used to belong to the sultan's house guard but was converted into a modern medical facility after the city's transfer into the Seekers' independent governance. The public wards contain medicurgs and mind soothers, but the restricted lower floors are devoted to secret research.

BITA-NAIA

The hospital's chief medicurg is an aging Lotus Sister with a stern expression and a firm handshake. She specializes in bionics and utilizes the restricted wards for research into strange artifacts and especially malignant memes. She cooperates frequently with Mona Hosseini, proprietor of *Al-Uhafa's Antiquities* in Dar Bahri and is secretly a Draconite.

⚙ THE SEEKER PAGODAS

The Seekers constructed a small cluster of temples on a plateau above the Wound, but the quake threw most of them down into the ruins below, where they now make up the core of Deeptown.

LAGHARIS ANAND

A former merchant from the Bazaar of the Prophet who over the last year developed clairvoyant sleepwalking. He now lives in the ruined pagodas in the Deeptown, leading a group of child beggars and day laborers that worships his ability to predict the future.

ADAPTING LOTUS

Lotus counts as a Small community (see *The Nazareem's Countdown*, page 93). The city is an ideal location for small-time political intrigue and skulduggery. For other scenarios, use the ruins of Deeptown to hide your Nazareem temples and bases. The depth of the Wound and the age of the ruins make Deeptown a good location for a cadaver clock and a sleeping Nazareem master.

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THE TEMPLE CITY OF LOTUS, DABARAN



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QUAR'S DISTRICT

The Order of Quar's history is full of violence, which may make their mandate to keep the peace in Lotus feel contradictory. The Lotus Sisters and the Latifs prefer to keep their enemies close, however, and have given the group a district of their own where the order's warrior preachers tirelessly educate the city's population about the living Icons and the darkness of the portals.

RAJIF'S CANTINA

Right by the first stairs of the outer wall, a peculiar house that used to be a guard post in the early days of the city now houses Rajif's elegantly decorated cantina. Rajif's has been around since the end of the Wars and is currently run by the petite hijra Nour Aninn who makes sure to keep the incense burners lit, the chai hot and the sugar globes fed.

THE HEADQUARTERS OF THE LATIFS

An old sandstone complex on the far side of the Wound painted with the red stripes of the Latifs functions as the police's base of operations, although mostly for the surrounding dars as their actual operations within Lotus are limited. Thick dura glass windows protect the commissars inside from religious fanatics.

AYID-BABAK SASANI

Head commissar with his eyes on retirement. Annoyingly calm and careful to avoid as much actual work as possible. Him letting things slide isn't so much about corruption as it is about keeping out of harm's way.

BRINK TOWN

The area outside the lower levels of the city walls is known as Brink Town. It is mainly an industrial district for processing the harvests from the terrace farms.

TERAN XOAR

Landed farmer who recently expanded into Brink Town, and already owns most of the farmlands outside the walls. His family has Consortium ties and is behind the faction's presence in Lotus, both thanks to political leverage in the Council and because they own the land on which the faction operates. Teran is, however, secretly spying for the Astûrban and keeps close watch on the land he has leased to the Foundation. He also collects rumors from the families and friends of his employees higher up in the city.

PILGRIM CITY

Although never intended as a permanent city district, the growing number of pilgrims eventually put too much strain on the city proper, thus leading to a small slum forming outside the south wall.

SHONA AL-KHEMAL

A small Latif squadron has set up in Pilgrim City, led by commissar Shona Al-Khemal. They have established a quarantine zone, a customs office and a landing strip for grav loaders and freighters with special clearance.

BAS LAYLAHT

A sturdy stone bridge delivers visitors to the north-east part of town, the Bas Laylaht. The alleys here are calmer, containing stores rather than stalls, a couple of workshops — such as Amira's Chop Shop — and the headquarters of the Latifs. In spite of this, the seedy bazaar known as the Souk Shapol-Piraz sprawls through the district a mere stone's throw away where illegal dealings in drugs and fac-tech goes on behind a front of date vendors and kawah trolleys. Most of the district's ancient temple fell into the Wound during the quake, and the remains have instead been turned into a relaxation center, the thermal bath house Sirvanda's Hamam.

DEEPTOWN

In the shadows of the Icons far above, the Deeptown slums spread through the ruins of the earthquake in the depth of the Wound. Winding stairs and makeshift elevators connect the world above to the ruins, in which the Lotus Sisters thankfully have established an alms-house and a clinic to care for the shadow dwellers.

THE FOUNDATION'S EXCAVATION

A deep crack in the mountain beyond the terrace farms and the squat brick houses of the vineyards leads directly down into the Wound. The Foundation has a special research permit to work here, their white field barracks now covering the mouth of the crack. An especially mean

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mercenary company called the Artifact Hunters guards the fenced-off area and escorts the scientists that venture down into the darkness.

HINAT DARIAN-PARR

Chief mathematician and Pathfinder General Armand Parr originally owned the contract to investigate the Wound, which appears to be of Predecessor origin, but was replaced by his equally zealous son Hinat after the disappearance of his expedition a couple of years ago. The current Pathfinder General uses his position to smuggle in drugs and fac-tech for the underhanded merchants at Souk Shapol-Piraz.

BAS GHOURA

The Bas Ghoura spaceport is located twenty kilometers from Lotus in the middle of the lowland deserts. The former servant city contains many oporias and bazaars but surprisingly few temples. In the shadow of Lotus, there isn't much unsatisfied want for religion.

FORKED TONGUES

The PCs' mission is to kidnap or eliminate grand master Samesh Alim, a member of the Zalosian elite and a suspected Nazareem agent. The scenario takes them into the sealed Zalos system where they visit the City of Foreigners on the moon of Karrmerruk.

SCENARIO

The somber chorale echoes through the alleys of the misty bazaar, drowning out the noise from cafes and street vendors. Prayer towers and dura steel beams stretch high over the stone houses of the City of Foreigners toward the transparent dome far above. The Order's flagship The Hammer of the Martyr waits in the darkness nearby — torpedo muzzles open, weapons hot — guarding the ancient Belit-Sheri scroll ship, a living monument to the faction's exodus to the Third Horizon.

A lone shuttle descends toward the silver city below, breaching the ED fields of the spaceport. Tattooed Martyr warriors in the animaturgs' finests suits of armor line up on the landing pad. The scarred members of the Martyr Council disembark the shuttle and disappear into the crowd. The end of days has come. Only one way leads forward through the darkness — following in the footsteps of the prophets.

BACKGROUND

The Order's leadership and the members of the Martyr Council are meeting with the archivists of the *Belit-Sheri* on Karrmerruk to chart a course for the days to come (see textbox "Ruled by Prophecy", page 126). Grand master Samesh Alim is one of the Council's heavy hitters and is here to mediate between the other members. After the Aiwaz blockade and the loss of the monastery cruiser in Kua, the proponents of open war against the Consortium and the Hegemony are gaining ground.

The PCs have been instructed by their patron to eliminate a high-ranking Nazareem spy. Arrested cultists have given up Samesh Alim as one of their agents during interrogations and there is concern that the grand master will turn Zalos against Kua. The warmonger is believed to be in the City of Foreigners for three days of intense negotiations, after which he will retreat back to the safety of his fortress farther out in the system.

THE MISSION

- Infiltrate Zalos and the City of Foreigners.
- Eliminate or abduct the Nazareem agent Samesh Alim.

THE TRUTH

The Nazareem's Sacrifice have brought the Horizon to the brink of civil war — all it will take is a spark to ignite the flames. They have tried to penetrate the Order's high command for a long time without success, so they seize their chance to circulate misinformation about grand master Alim. Several cultists have allowed themselves to be arrested to be able to reveal their "mole" to their captors.

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NAZAREEM IN ZALOS

The Nazareem haven't been able to infiltrate the Martyr Council, but have managed to supply the Zahedan rebels with military supplies through agents inside other factions. They also have agent provocateurs in the City of Foreigner tasked with furthering civil unrest and xenophobia. The cult hopes to be able to insert an agent with the PCs as an investment for the future (see the event "The fugitive", page 130).

EVENTS

The PCs must travel to Zalos and make it through the blockade there — possibly first having to do the same in Aiwaz, depending on whether or not the Order has been able to fortify its positions there. Before the final jump to Zalos, the latest Bulletin news reaches them. Read the following *Shift*, and gain the corresponding Darkness Points:

◆ **FOREIGNERS (PAGE 99)**

Their patron's contact onboard the portal station will provide them with grand master Alim's itinerary for his stay on Karrmerruk (see Events below). The group's mission is to strike against Alim, preferably making it look like an accident or a medical issue, and then escape without being captured. The main events below describe the locations visited by the grand master. Use the "Other events" (page 127) as flavor as you see fit.



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BEGINNING: STRANGERS IN A STRANGE LAND

The charred surface of Benagia can be seen as the PCs begin their approach towards the moon of Karrmerruk. An enormous monastery cruiser, *The Hammer of the Martyr*, watches over the domes of the City of Foreigners. They land in the clutter of the spaceport and venture out into the narrow alleys. For 1 DP, Magistrates or suspicious port guards may stop and search them.

The agent they have been instructed to contact is an ex-Legionnaire nowadays making her living as private security for jumpy merchants on trade missions to the city. She can be found in Badawi's Chai House in the Souk of Mist, the only district open to off-worlders except for the Commerce District.

Upon contacting the agent, the PCs are given a detailed itinerary of the grand master's stay in the city as well as information about useful local contacts (see box on the next page). After that, the PCs are free to seek out accommodations in the city (or back on their ship) and begin preparing for the mission.

Breaking News: You can use the agent to deliver the latest Bulletin news to the group — the Free League has turned on the Consortium, raising fees at spaceports and stevedore centrals:

- **HANDS INTO FISTS (PAGE 98)**

Cost: 0, 1 DP (Mandatory)

AISHA DAMAAD, EX-LEGIONNAIRE

Aisha is a former Legionnaire from the battalion at Foundation station FS-7. She deserted after the Manori offensive on Algol about a segment after the arrival of the Emissaries in CC60 and has been on the run from vindictive ex-comrades ever since. She found refuge in the City of Foreigners but was recruited as an informant for the PCs' patron after the Mysticides, possibly as a part of pardon for her desertion. She has adapted well to life on Karrmerruk, blending in perfectly in a monochrome caftan with a silver-embroidered hood, all to honor the Martyr.

CHARACTERISTICS: Vacant stare when thinking. Slight twitch under her right eye due to a nasty face burn.

PREPARATIONS

- **ARRIVAL:** Either let your group play their journey to Zalos, or begin ***in medias res*** with their arrival to Karrmerruk in a Zalosian freighter with false transponder codes or on a crowded pilgrim cruiser heading for Mira.
- **TIMELINE:** Alim's itinerary will change during his stay due to the lengthy negotiations (see "Deliberations," and "The delegation," page 125). The PCs can learn this through updates from their patron, their own surveillance of the meetings or via local news broadcasts.
- **ENDING:** You should be prepared for a certain amount of improvisation toward the end as there is no set end event. After the PCs carry out their mission, or choose not to, there are multiple ways for them to go. See Aftermath on page 130.

THE CHOSEN PEOPLE

Zalosian PCs get +2 to MANIPULATION tests when dealing with government employees or police. Regardless of their origins, however, praising the Martyr in song and prayer is key to blending in. A group of all foreigners may test CULTURE for more information. A critical success gives them a +1 to the MANIPULATION tests above.

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THE AGENT'S INFORMATION

The PCs receive the information on an encrypted tabula. It is up to you to decide if they have arrived with time to spare or if they're already on day 1 or 2 of the itinerary below.

- **TARGET: Samesh Alim, grand master of The Cold Flame. Nazareem spy.**
- **CONTACTS: See the "Contacts" event (page 127).**
- **TIMELINE: Samesh will visit several locations on Karrmerruk during his stay.**
- **INTELLIGENCE: Additionally, the tabula contains detailed maps of the city's different domes as well as rotation rosters for the Magistrate patrols at the dome tunnels for the next three days. The PCs are also given false identification documents (unless they already have them) that give them a +2 to MANIPULATION tests if stopped by police.**

ATTRIBUTES: STRENGTH 4, AGILITY 4, WITS 3, EMPATHY 2
HIT POINTS: 8
MIND POINTS: 5
REPUTATION: 6
SKILLS: Ranged Combat 5, Melee Combat 4, Culture 3, Manipulation 3, Medicurgy 3, Observation 3
TALENTS: Combat Veteran, Cybernetic Muscles (CYB)
GEAR: Zalosian robes, tag with 3,500 birr

THE GRAND MASTER'S ARRIVAL — DAY 1

Shuttles from the *Belit-Sheri* land in the spaceport, each carrying one of the nine members of the Martyr Council and a handful of archivists. Row upon row of Martyr warriors in animate armor (page 58) surround each of the dignitaries with countless flagellants, priests and regular citizens crowding in from all sides, singing the Martyr's praise. The Council's annual visit is a grand spectacle, the pomp and circumstance

decrypted information: schedule

TIME	PLACE	BUSINESS
DAY 1, MORNING	The Spaceport, the Monastic District	Arrival. Armed escort to residence in the Monastic District.
DAY 1, AFTERNOON	The 11th Ossuary	Several Council members visit the Chamber of the Prophets along with the Belit-Sheri's archivists. Omens of the future are to be discussed.
DAY 2	The Gardens of Assir	The Martyr Council meets in Governor Alesh Mohadeen's diplomatic villa to discuss coming military engagements.
DAY 3	The Karrmerruk Dockyards	Shuttles to the dark side of the moon to oversee the construction of new warships.
DAY 4, MORNING	The Spaceport	Armed escort back to the spaceport. Departure.

maps travel documentation

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of the delegation covered in minute detail by regime-approved news drones. The walls in the surrounding alleys are covered in white flags and painted glyphs honoring the Martyr.

The Council members are escorted through the Eye of the Martyr (page 133) down to a restricted underground railroad that takes them to their diplomatic residences in the Monastic District.
Cost: 0 DPs

THE OSSUARY — DAY 1

The 11th Ossuary dome is located at the outskirts of the city. In the afternoon, the Council members are escorted to the center of the dome together with a large entourage of archivists. On their way, they pass twelve statues of armed warriors standing at attention. The statues are actually kinetic constructs, that are activated in case of intrusion (see "The Kinetic Intelligences of the Celestial Web" on page 329 of the *Rulebook*). At the cost of 2 DP, the system is online, requiring a **DATA DJINN** test at -3 to bypass. Alternatively, each PC may test **INFILTRATION** at -1 to sneak past undetected.

Underneath the main bone hall, catacombs full of bone relics cut deep into the moon. The Chamber of the Prophets is located about a kilometer from the main hall behind an enormous dura steel gate. This is the reliquary for the remains of the prophets, their animate armors and destroyed monastery cruisers from the time before the Portal Wars. The delegation spends the day interpreting ancient tomes and debating the omens described within. Servants occasionally leave the room, escorted by two Martyr warriors in glyph armor (page 89) to fetch food and drink for the Council members. At dusk, the contingent returns to the railroad by the dome tunnels.
Cost: 0, 2 DP

DELIBERATIONS — DAY 2

After a few hours of sleep, the Council members make their way to the Gardens of Assir (page 137) to convene in the Halls of the Martyr in Governor Alesh Mohadeen's diplomatic villa. They travel to the gardens by way of a vacuum tube constructed through the remains of the ruined Homestead District (page 136). Before the meeting begins, several Council members go off on their own to pray in solitude somewhere in the garden, accompanied only by a small escort of Magistrates. At the cost of 2 DP, Samesh Alim is instead protected by six Martyr warriors in animate armor (page 58). The preparations for the meeting are covered by news drones and broadcast live to the faithful across the whole system.

After praying in silence, the delegates assemble in one of the wings and sit down for deliberations that go on well into the night.
Cost: 0, 2 DP

THE DELEGATION — DAY 3

The morning broadcast greets the moon with news from the Council's nocturnal meeting — a strategy for the Order in the coming year has been agreed upon (although what it means for common folk is unspecified). The celebratory statement is followed by a change in the delegation's schedule. The visit to the dockyards is canceled and the drones instead cut to the spaceport where a delegation from the Miran clergy is about to arrive.

Council members Samesh Alim and Alesh Mohadeen greet the visitors at the docks together with an armed escort. They lead the guests through the Eye of the Martyr (page 133), the Commerce District (page 133) and the Souk of Mist (page 135) until they eventually reach the dome tunnels at the Homestead District. Shuttles waiting nearby then fly the group to the Crystal Fields.
Cost: 0 DPs

SAMESH'S OFFER

The grand master's escort and agents keep a close eye on all locations in the city that their master will visit. If the PCs are planning some form of attack, they will be spotted by Samesh's people. He contacts them through an encrypted holograph which they either find where they live or back at their ship. Alternatively, for 1 DP, a group of Martyr warriors in animate armor (see the "Stop-and-Frisk" event, page 128) instead arrest one or several PCs, taking them away for interrogation. In an abandoned warehouse, the warriors let the PCs go, give them the holograph and leave.

The wrist com lights up, displaying a swaying blur mirage in the damp air. An aging, tattooed man with a strict military posture and an armor covered in glyphs addresses you, hands on his back: *"I have been informed that you are looking for me. Why? My name is Samesh Alim, First Priot of the Cold Flame and member elect of the Martyr Council. My instincts say that you mean me harm. Perhaps your employers sent you here to plunge Zalos into chaos, to further the Zenithian agenda by undermining our order, or you could be agents of the First Horizon. Harbingers of the coming war."*

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RULED BY PROPHECY

The Order of the Pariah is a faction ruled by history. Events and conflicts have been foreshadowed by the prophets and martyrs of old. Every cloister or bone chamber contains prophecies from the local area. They are cataloged, copied and transferred to the scroll ship *Belit-Sheri* which is moving through the system under protection of the fleet. Several times each cycle, the members of the Martyr Council gather on the scroll ship for weeks at a time to interpret the prophecies and set the course of action for the Order in its war against the rising darkness.

PLANNING A HIT

You could allow the PCs to hear about the shuttles beforehand, giving them a chance to hijack them at the spaceport, or to sneak onboard and ambush their target en route to the Crystal Fields. Alternatively, well-timed explosives could also work.

THE TUNNELS OF KARRMERRUK

The dome tunnels connect the different domes in the city for the general population, but there still remains an old railroad deep below. Sealed bulkhead doors at each of the dome tunnels lead down to the railroad that runs through an abandoned network of mining tunnels. Today, only dignitaries may use it, on special occasions.

He is clutching part of a shattered femur, a relic covered in mystical writing. *"I know that our name has been tarnished by blind zeal and merciless dogma — that we truly* are *the pariahs of the Third Horizon. But we are the only ones who understand the gravity of the situation. Darkness is returning, the talons of its agents already deep in the flesh of the other factions. The Crown of the Martyr keeps us free from corruption — as long as we distance ourselves from foreign influences."*

The flickering image of the man meets your eyes: *"However: I want to fight the darkness with every weapon at my disposal — exterminate the Nazareem pawns once and for all and destroy the butterfly ships that sow discord and hatred around the cluster. The hand of the Martyr rests upon your shoulders. You are the survivors that drew blood and lived for the one, true Icon, but you have become tools of evil. Let me be your new guardian, join the Cold Flame and you shall always have a home here in Zalos and the support of an order that will fight darkness until our dying breath. Wear red tomorrow and I'll know that you accept my offer. Regardless, you will be allowed to leave in peace as long as you give up the mission you came here to carry out. If you choose to join me, bear in mind that the Martyr has no mercy for those who betray the Cold Flame."*

The light fades as a loud crack breaks open the holograph. The smell of burnt electronics fills the room. You face a portentous, life-changing decision.

The PCs may now choose to abandon their mission and leave Zalos, or ally themselves with the Cold Flame. In the latter case, Samesh will contact them again after a few weeks have passed and they are somewhere far from Zalos (see Sameh's patron offer, page 125). If they stay on target, however, Samesh's security detail is reinforced, and you may use the "Stop-and-Frisk" event (page 128) to attack the group. If they betray their old patron, ex-Legionnaire Aisha Damaad may be used against them (page 123).

Cost: 0, 1 DP

⚙ THE CRYSTAL FIELD GRAVEYARDS — DAY 3

The shuttles with the Miran guests touch down near the unintentional monument to the victims of the attack on the Homestead District. At the Crystal Fields, a couple of the visiting priests accompany the Council members out among the molten glass formations in exos to pray to the Icons and the Martyr.

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The shuttles then head for the Gardens of Assir (page 137) to hold a meeting. Samesh and Alesh are joined by a third Council member, Hadran Emshi, for the meeting with the Mirans. The Order is concerned that Mira is doing the Zenithians' bidding, urging them to rethink their allegiances. Several Order cruisers stand ready to merge with the Miran fleets for joint control of the Miran chain. The Martyr Council asks the visiting priests to deliver their offer to the matriarch and patriarch of the Church of the Icons. After the meeting, the delegation heads back to the Monastic District.
Cost: 0 DP

⚙ LAST CHANCE — DAY 4

On the morning of the final day, the Council members and their entourages once again meet with the Miran visitors and the archivists from the *Belit-Sheri* to parade through the streets of the city, back to the spaceport. The crowds and the amassed flagellants shower them in prayer and song on their way and everything is broadcast live to several large holo screens scattered around the city. One by one, the shuttles take off and disappear though the ED fields above. During the night, more cruisers have arrived to greet their respective Council members and although tiny in comparison to the *Hammer*, the six cruisers and the scroll ship make for an awe-inspiring sight.

At the cost of 3 DP, Samesh departs earlier than the rest, making his way through the city under cover of night. His armed guards elicit surprise and wonder in equal measure from the population as they pass. The PCs discover the change of plans at the last minute, forcing them to alter their plans in a heartbeat.
Cost: 0, 3 DP

OTHER EVENTS

Below are some other events that may occur on the mission:

⚙ CONTACTS

Ex-Legionnaire Aisha Damaad has cultivated several useful contacts within the city, her network consisting mainly of less zealous Zalosians with access to information or locations that are off limits to foreigners. If the PCs visit her contacts and mention Aisha's name, they will be able to access the info available to that contact, although they may have to pay for it. Keep the group's patron and connections in mind and choose from the list below:

AHMED RAMSHI

Can let the PCs into a restricted government building. Ahmed is with the Magistrates and part of the security detail for the Council's visit. He is deeply devout and answers directly to the head magistrate Nami Jameel (page 133). Aisha feeds his depressant habit which he has developed to cope with his surfacing mystical farsight. In return, she demands increasingly risky favors.

SISTER VANA (PAGE 136)

Can let the PCs inside the Monastic District and the 11th Ossuary. When she's not working in the Tower of Silence, semi-corrupt Sister Vana can be found at the Samaritan Sanctuary or in the Souk of Mist. Sister Vana will only help the PCs if they buy relic bones from her, at prices ranging from 50 to 500 birr depending on quality and inscriptions.

SAMAD HOURANI (PAGE 133)

Can supply the PCs with drugs or a potent poison. Hourani's Herbs is a cluttered store full of dried seaweed and ground fish. He offers kambra, arrash, opor and many other substances, as well as medical drugs and poisons (at twice the regular rate per dose). He also sells Vulcan rounds that can be laced with poison (100 birr per round).

RAHAL HAINAK (PAGE 135)

Can smuggle the PCs into the Gardens of Assir or the Monastic District for a couple of hundred birr.
The aging proprietor of Rahal's Calligraphy has access to much of the city thanks to the reputation of his craftsmanship. Both the clergy and upper-class clientele frequently pay for his services.

KHALED NAZEER (PAGE 133)

Can supply the PCs with detailed intelligence or weapons and armor. Khaled owns the Heirash Auction House and works for the Draconites through Aishan's Emporium. He also dabbles in smuggling and can help the PCs escape the moon if worst comes to worst. He is only available as a contact if the PCs have the Emporium as their patron.
Cost: 0 DPs

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NEW CYBERNETIC IMPLANT: SAJJEEN IMPLANT (CYB)

You are cybernetically linked to an artifact constructed by the animaturgs of the Order of the Pariah. The Sajjeen is used for interrogations and consists of a grey tube fastened around the neck of the user, with tentacles extending from the tube up over the scalp. When activated, the tentacles penetrate the face of a victim within Close Range, giving the user a faint mind reading ability and a +3 to **MANIPULATION** when forcing the victim to answer questions truthfully. Each six rolled buys the user one truthful answer. PC users lose 1 MP per use of the artifact. The GM pays 1 DP per NPC use.

NEW TALENT: BIOCHEMIST

You can concentrate natural toxins, manufacture synthetic opioids or weaponize infections and viruses. Test **SCIENCE** for each dose created. Lab access grants a +2 and increases the strength cap by 1. Each extra six rolled either increases the strength of the toxin by 2 (unless already at max strength cap) or gives you D6 extra doses. Common opioids like kambra, opor and arrash immediately give D6 doses at a successful roll. The resources needed will usually cost about 10% of the finished product's market price.

STOP-AND-FRISK

Three Magistrates or Martyr warriors become suspicious of the PCs. They surround them at the cost of 1 DP and demand to know their business in the city and to see some identification (opposed **MANIPULATION** test). For 1 extra DP, they demand to know where the PCs are staying and seize their IDs for further investigation. For 1 more DP, the patrol doubles in size, or the Martyr warriors get animate armor.
Cost: 1-3 DP

MAGISTRATE

ATTRIBUTES:
STRENGTH 3, AGILITY 3, WITS 4, EMPATHY 3

HIT POINTS: 6

MIND POINTS: 7

REPUTATION: 5

SKILLS: Manipulation 4, Culture 3, Melee Combat 3, Observation 3, Ranged Combat 3

TALENTS: Sajjeen (CYB)

GEAR: Vulcan pistol, stun glove, light Order armor 5, proximity sensor

MARTYR WARRIOR

ATTRIBUTES:
STRENGTH 4, AGILITY 4, WITS 2, EMPATHY 3

HIT POINTS: 8

MIND POINTS: 5

REPUTATION: 5

SKILLS: Melee Combat 4, Ranged Combat 4, Infiltration 3, Observation 3, Manipulation 2

TALENTS: Combat Veteran, Machinegunner

GEAR: Vulcan carbine (homing rounds +2), light Order armor 5 or animate armor (see Glyph Armor, page 89)

THE PRICE OF FAME

At the cost of 1 DP, someone recognizes the PCs in the street, having seen them on the Bulletin's broadcast from the Sky City banquet. For 1 additional DP, the person attempts to blackmail the PCs into

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TABLE 10: POISONS IN THE THIRD HORIZON

TYPE	PRICE	STRENGTH	TRANSMISSION	DAMAGE	TIME	TECH
Al-Khara's disease	400	2	disease	AGILITY+HP	days	0*
Dried desdemodu urine	300	2	internal	WITS+MP	days	P
Dried djinn cnidarian	300	3	touch	AGILITY+HP	days	P
Kambra derivative	300	3	internal	WITS+MP	hours	0
Miran jungle viper	450	3	internal	STRENGTH+HP	hours	0
Gara fever	1,500	4	disease	AGILITY+HP	days	0*
Contaminated water	–	4	internal	WITS+MP	days	P
Dragon frog	2,000	4	touch	EMPATHY+MP	minutes	P
Red stinger scorpion	2,200	5	internal	STRENGTH+HP	hours	P
Bionic large cobra	2,800	5	internal	AGILITY+HP	hours	A*
Algolan cave slug	3,000	5	internal	WITS+MP	minutes	0
Bionic Hoorani butterfly	5,000	5	touch	EMPATHY+MP	days	A*
Fargha carp	4,500	6	internal	STRENGTH+HP	minutes	0*
The interrogation drug (*Emissary Lost*, page 168)	6,000	6	internal	EMPATHY+MP	days	A*
Ravnavirus	8,000	8	disease	WITS+MP	days	A*
Surina algae	7,500	8	internal	STRENGTH+HP	minutes	A*
Emissary-strength interrogation drug (*Emissary Lost*, page 168)	30,000	12	internal	EMPATHY+MP	days	A*

ADVANCED TOXINS

Manufacturing toxins and diseases, both naturally and synthetically, has become an art form in the Third Horizon.

RULES: The poisoning victim tests her affected attribute in an opposed roll versus the strength of the toxin.

- FAILURE results in damage or stress equal to the toxin strength as well as a -1 to the affected attribute until the damage or stress has been recovered. If the victim becomes Broken, she suffers an atypical critical injury (page 97 of the *Rulebook*), loses consciousness and dies after D6 units of the listed time.
- LIMITED SUCCESS results in a -1 to the affected attribute for 4D6 hours.
- CRITICAL SUCCESS results in a -1 to the affected attribute for D6 hours.

A separate MEDICURGY test is required to treat the poisoning. The price listed is per dose. Tech level determines the manufacturing difficulty and the asterisk (*) denotes Horizon-wide illegality.

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paying her for her silence. Pay 3 DP instead and she immediately reports them to the Magistrates (see Stop-and-frisk above).
Cost: 1-3 DP

THE BOMBING

At some point during the Council meeting, either during the deliberations or during the meeting with the Miran delegation, Zahedan suicide bombers attack the city. The PCs may catch wind of the attack before it happens via their contacts, giving them a chance to make use of the chaos for their own gain.

- **Change of Plans:** You can use this event to speed up the story, up-end the PCs' plans or give them an opportunity to strike. Keep in mind that the city will be on high alert after the bombing, the Council members escorted to their shuttles only hours after.

Cost: 3 DP

THE FUGITIVE

A young girl seeks out the PCs, pleading for their help. She is a Xinghur humanite (page 103) from Algol who was sold to a spice merchant about a year ago and she recognizes the PC from some holos she's seen. If the PCs smuggle her out of the city, she can help out around the ship. She has the stats and skills of a "Scientist" from the NPC list on page 343 of the *Rulebook* as well as the skills of a "Data Spider."

- **Spy:** The girl is a Nazareem spy trying to infiltrate the PCs' crew. Portray her as charismatic and helpful but submissive and anxious to please. She needs space and time to pray in solitude (to the Beast) several times a day. She has her Xinghur talents as well as the Biochemist talent (see page 128).

Cost: 0 DP

AFTERMATH

The scenario can end in several ways:

- **Murdered**: If the grand master Alim was obviously murdered, the Martyr Council declares a system-wide state of emergency, not even allowing the pilgrim cruisers through anymore, and bolsters the Aiwaz blockade. Martyr warriors are sent out into the Horizon to track down the killers and exact revenge. The fleets are made ready for war.
- **Accidental Death**: If the grand master perishes in an "accident" or in what looks like an attack by the Zahedan rebels, the Martyr Council is outraged but focuses its attention on internal conflicts within Zalos.
- **Survived**: Samesh views the PCs as the key to breaking the vicious cycle of hate and marginalization that the Order has been locked into for a long time. If the PCs choose to work for him, they are unofficially initiated into the Cold Flame and may travel freely through Zalos. If they decline his offer (page 125), he still regards them as a potential future contact.

  If Samesh dies, the Cold Flame retreats for a while, electing a new leader and reviewing their plans for the future. They will return for the next episode of *Mercy of the Icons*.

SHIFTS

The PCs leave Zalos to report back to their patron, escape the Order or, potentially, escape their recently betrayed ex-employer. When they are once again safe enough to catch some rest, they receive some unsettling news. Read the Bulletin report about the following *Shift*:

- THE STRIKE (PAGE 100)

SCENARIO LOCATION

THE CITY OF FOREIGNERS

The Karrmerruk moon orbits the charred planet Benagia, 3 AU from the portals by Zalos-A. The moon is the only place in Zalos that allows visitors from other systems, and all travelers approach and leave Karrmerruk with an Order fighter escort (page 32). The moon maintains a thin, low-oxygen atmosphere and is home to substantial mining operations as well as advanced military installations on its dark side, guarding Karrmerruk's legendary dockyards. The yards comprise 63 huge jutting complexes, rising through the sky like piles of bones, and deliver new ships to the Order's fleet every day.

The city on the light side of the moon is named Al-Ghurba, literally meaning "Oasis of Strangers," but everyone simply

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calls it the City of Foreigners. The Monastic Dome's ten defensive towers protect the city from direct attacks, backed up by the enormous fractal-armored *Shakush-M'hatoun* cruiser, *The Hammer of the Martyr*. The *Hammer's* high prayer towers have dominated the view on approach to Karrmerruk for many years, both as a reminder of the military might of the Order of the Pariah and as life insurance for the city's 86,350 registered citizens and thousands of visitors and devout merchants that have chosen to live and trade with the Order.

The *Hammer's* shadow falls over a sprawling spaceport with docks and landing platforms in many levels that, in spite of this, represents the most open space the otherwise cramped city has to offer. Archways and dura beams stretch hundreds of meters above the granite floor of the moon, forming a series of domes that can be opened and closed for traffic control in the spaceport. The rest of the city is housed in six residential domes arching out from the spaceport in a shape resembling the Order's holiest weapon — the Martyr Sickle, Munajil M'hatoun.

HISTORY

There are many versions of the tale of Benagia's fate. Officially, the planet suffered heavy bombardment from the First Horizon during the Wars in an attempt to disable the planet's rich mining industry, but there are also rumors saying that the destruction was self-inflicted — a result of the Order's reckless hunt for artifact weapons powerful enough to end the war.

Karrmerruk was settled around the same time as the planet which it orbits. When the Order of the Pariah left the Second Horizon and found a new home in Zalos, Karrmerruk became an important defensive position for the independence of the faction's heartworld. The City of Foreigners started as a small colony in the early days of the Order's rule. The dome known as the Souk of Mist is the oldest, after which followed the construction of the 11th Ossuary, designed to honor the Martyr and the Order's devotion.



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The six domes of today and the reconstructed spaceport are collectively known as the City of Foreigners. The population numbered around one hundred and thirty thousand souls before a bombing in the Homestead District in the segment of the Judge of CC60. Zahedan suicide bombers attacked the dome's power plant, causing the ED fields to fail and the high-rise residential complexes to collapse. What eventually killed most of the dome's forty thousand inhabitants, however, was the cold, thin atmosphere of the moon and its choking granite dust gales. The 11th Ossuary contains a special memorial chamber for the Zalosian victims of the attack, the Sickle Halls.

PLACES

Below are some of the places of interest and important characters described:

THE SPACEPORT

The city's spaceport is built on top of the ruins of the previous docks that were destroyed by heavy shelling during the Wars. Stairs and elevator shafts crisscross the many levels of the port, leading to clusters of landing platforms in all shapes and sizes. Spiraling towers with warehouses and loading docks complete the scene. Four large sections have been kept relatively open and clear of clutter — three plazas for freighters and dignitary shuttles of up to class IV, and a huge trench in the middle of the port called the Commerce Berth. Grav projectors underneath the Commerce Berth give it vertical movement, allowing for direct bulk freighter docking. This makes Karrmerruk one of the few places in the Horizon where the titans of trade can make actual planetfall.

A central avenue leads to the outer wall of the spaceport, guiding visitors past souvenir shops and tech stalls,



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pagodas with waiting priests and trade administrators ready to set up meetings with Zalosian officials. The spaceport connects to the large Commerce District dome by passage through the Eye of the Martyr, known to newcomers as Foreigners' Pass. Through rows of tall statues of ancient martyrs, priests demanding hymns and Magistrate checkpoints, the Eye eventually leads to the dome tunnels at the edge of the spaceport. Intoxicants, large quantities of conspicuous goods and weapons of any kind are strictly forbidden, and possession thereof can lead to hefty fines, corporal punishments or long spells in Zalosian labor camps. The security around the dome tunnels is tight, armed Magistrates making sure no foreigners wander into the all-Zalosian parts of the city. The tunnels leading to the factories out on the steppes or to the dark side dockyards are also heavily guarded, sometimes even by Martyr warriors.

NAMI JAMEEL

Magistrate Commander Nami is a knowledgeable woman whose security forces oversee the dome tunnels and all significant interactions between Zalosian magnates and visiting free traders. The Magistrates are the city's police force, often operating as both investigators and judges, although their mandate is focused more on heresy than ordinary street crime. Newcomers who forget the local customs can face severe punishment as Nami has become fiercely xenophobic since the beating of her nephew on Coriolis in the wake of the Mysticides.

THE COMMERCE DISTRICT

The Commerce District is housed in the largest dome and is one of the three places in the city that, despite its name, actually opens to foreigners — the other two being the spaceport and the Souk of Mist. The buildings in the district are stone, a couple of stories high and packed together, allowing only narrow, winding alleys to snake their way through. Most of the street level is a slow-moving jungle of people and vendors, but the older, central blocks also contain some larger establishments such as hamams, chai houses and actual stores. This is where you find both the Heirash Auction House and the textile bazaar, the home of masterfully intricate embroideries and fabrics fit to cloth royalty and miner alike. On the outskirts, an anonymous row of warehouses called the Uranium Caves is rumored to serve as the Syndicate's local base where much of the system's illegal arms trading apparently takes place.

Along the outer dome wall, near the tunnels to the spaceport, one finds Korazan's halls. This is where foreign merchants are escorted for bulk trading or for contract negotiations with local business houses. Korazan's serpentine maze of alleys and streets is shot through here and there with stone archways that lead downward via stairs and elevators to a network of tunnels far beneath the moon's surface. The shady underground alcoves are the perfect place for greedy merchants to ply their trade.

KHALED NAZEER

A bald, scrawny man with a neatly trimmed beard who used to be a Samaritan. Martyr tattoos and flagellation scars cover his scalp and back, giving him a battered, submissive look to an outsider. Khaled is, however, the manager of the Heirash Auction House and a vital part of the Draconites' information network within Aishan's Emporium. If you need something or someone smuggled into or out of any of the city's domes, Khaled is your man.

SAMAD HOURANI

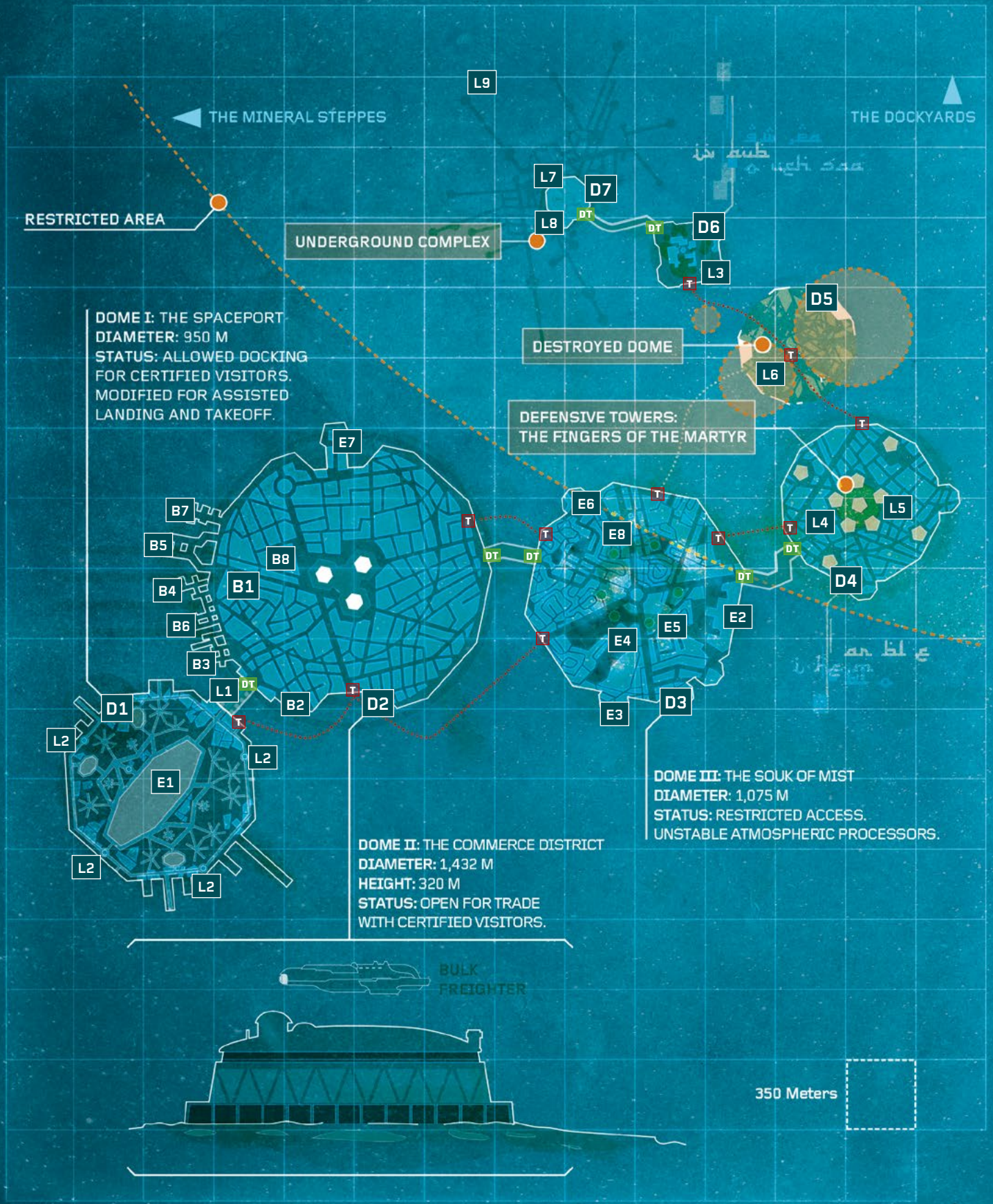
The algae block is the hub for the seaweed trade and where the Reservoir's offal is turned into snacks and spice mixes. Hourani's Herbs is a small whole food store with hardly any customers. Samad runs the store as a front for his smuggling enterprise, however, making his money on drugs and alcohol rather than herbal remedies. He is a Zahedan sympathizer and takes active part in planning new attacks in the city.

UBON FAWZI

Ubon the bio sculptor is a pale woman from Sadaal who, after years of devout Martyr worship, finally has become accepted by the locals. Her ability to mold exotic snakes, lizards and bioluminescent bugs is renowned, and her creations are always eerily intelligent. She is secretly an informant to Washim Naheeb, however – a staunch traditionalist at the Martyr Council – and uses her modified insects to spy on private meetings and conversations.

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AL-GHURBA "CITY OF FOREIGNERS", KARRMERRUK



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DOMES
D1: THE SPACEPORT
D2: THE COMMERCE DISTRICT
D3: THE SOUK OF MIST
D4: THE MONASTIC DISTRICT
D5: THE HOMESTEAD DISTRICT
D6: THE GARDENS OF ASSIR
D7: THE 11TH OSSUARY

BAZAARS
B1: KORAZAN'S HALLS
B2: THE OIL HALLS
B3: THE RESERVOIR
B4: THE GREEN BAZAAR
B5: THE MINING HALLS
B6: THE SOUK OF SCENT
B7: THE LIVESTOCK BAZAAR
B8: THE TEXTILE BAZAAR

LANDMARKS
L1: THE EYE OF THE MARTYR
L2: THE FOREIGNER PAGODAS
L3: CANOPY PLAZA
L4: THE TOWER OF SILENCE
L5: THE OASIS OF THE MARTYR
L6: THE CRYSTAL FIELDS
L7: ASSIR'S CITY OF TEMPLES
L8: THE SICKLE HALLS
L9: THE CHAMBER OF THE PROPHETS

ESTABLISHMENTS
E1: THE COMMERCE BERTH
E2: THE MAGISTRATE
E3: RAHAL'S CALLIGRAPHY
E4: BADAWI'S CHAI HOUSE
E5: HEIRASH AUCTION HOUSE
E6: MUNAJIL AKBAR
E7: THE URANIUM CAVES
E8: THE SAMARITAN SANCTUARY

DT DOME TUNNELS
T RESTRICTED UNDERGROUND RAILROAD

THE SOUK OF MIST

The second largest dome takes its name from the large bazaar that covers almost the entirety of the district's street level. The souk is suspended in a perpetual misty dusk — hence the name — and the murmur of the kawah shops echoes down the alleys, mixed with the rise and fall of the hymns of the street performers. Foreigners and locals may trade with each other here as long as they keep it small — bulk trade is only allowed in the Commerce District. The crimson iron fortress of the Magistrates watches over the souk from its location just outside the edge of the mist.

The Souk of Mist is a place for serene prayer and contemplative conversation. Badawi's Chai House offers enlivening beverages and a colorful atmosphere while hamam Munajil Akbar, a bath house named after the Martyr Sickle, lets weary travelers rest their aching limbs in hot mineral baths. Nine white-washed temples set with golden glyphs watch over the souk, connected via an elevated network of gardens. This is where the Samaritans run their Sanctuary, a place dedicated to healing, prayer and learning.

RAHAL HAINAKH

The owner of Rahal's Calligraphy is a short, stooping man whose tools are responsible for many of the prayers, glyphs and blessings that cover the city's walls. His modest workshop may look unimpressive at first glance, but Rahal employs almost a hundred people. He is faithful to the way of the Martyr but has been in contact with the Zahedan rebels as he regards the Martyr Council's conservatism as a surefire path to destruction.

THE MONASTIC DISTRICT

Few outsiders have ever set foot in the fourth dome, submerged in one of the moon's larger craters. High temples and prayer towers appear to almost climb over each other toward the heavens, shadowing the endless processions under the arches far below that faithfully wander from confession to mass and back again, honoring the Martyr. From the outside, two groups of five white towers are visible rising through the dome and out into the moon's thin atmosphere. This construction is known as the Fingers of the Martyr and is secretly an advanced defense system of antimatter torpedoes and acc batteries that protect the city from outside threats.

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TABLE 11: KORAZAN'S HALLS

LOCATION	DESCRIPTION
The Oil Halls	Crude oil products, enriched natural gases and purified water for fission reactors are stored here in large pressure vessels. Underground pipelines handle transportation to and from the spaceport. Deals are closed at the business houses near the entrance.
The Reservoir	Submerged pools and algae farms connected via narrow walkways. Fish, shellfish and oceanic flora from all corners of the Horizon are farmed here in djinn operated pools.
The Green Bazaar	Old souk halls containing advanced hydroponic farms and nutrient baths. Rodents scurry along through the underbrush, insects and green hummingbirds buzz and bare chested gardeners tend to the crops, sunburnt from the constant artificial sunlight.
The Mining Halls	Grav loaders packed with rods and bars of minerals, metals and alloys. This is where you get your asteroid mining equipment and your gas giant prospecting gear. For the right price, rumors even say that free traders can acquire the mythic alloy used by the Order's animaturgs to craft their animate armor.
The Souk of Scent	The oldest parts of the dome house a more traditional bazaar full of fragrant chai mixtures and spice baskets brimming with dates, saffron and chilies. Dried bundles of flowers, herbs and spices hang on long racks and visitors are treated to samples of the merchandise to better appreciate what's for sale.
The Livestock Bazaar	The shepherd stables and auction booths are full of cattle and draft animals, but more exotic species such as steppe tigers, multicolored ekilbri, trained nekatra and golden tamarins can also be found here. Enthusiastic breeders of bio sculpted reptiles and insects have their own sections in the back.

MORE ON THE CITY OF FOREIGNERS

The Zalos system is described further in *The Atlas Compendium*, but key locations on Karrmerruk are also detailed here.

ADAPTING KARRMERRUK

The City of Foreigners is a Metropolis as far as ***The Nazareem's Countdown*** on page 93 is concerned. The spaceport and the six nearby residential domes make the city large enough for several missions. Political coups, smuggling operations and illegal shadowruns could all use the Souk of Mist or Korazan's halls as a setting. Keep in mind that foreigners aren't free to move around as they please in the city, and that the Magistrates' relentless heresy purges make it difficult for the Nazareem and other religious groups to establish a permanent presence here.

The wide building known as the Tower of Silence can be found near the tunnels to the Souk of Mist. The imposing stone tower has a hollow drop running through its core where the bodies of the victorious dead are laid out with the Martyr's blessing to be picked clean by carrion birds and insects. In contrast to all the dead bones and cold marble, a white palace called the Oasis of the Martyr has been constructed in the center of the dome, with lush green terraces and wide stairs lined with granite statues. The Martyr Council often meets here, guarded by Martyr warriors in animate armor.

SISTER VANA

Samaritan Sister Vana walks the stairs of the Tower of Silence, gathering clean bones in her relic bag for transportation to the catacombs under the ossuary. She lives her life in the shadow of the Martyr, executing her duties with kindness and hospitality while making a few extra birr on the side by carving prophetic glyphs onto some of the bones she finds and then selling them to ignorant visitors and blind zealots at the Souk of Mist.

⚙ THE HOMESTEAD DISTRICT

The Homestead used to be a crowded dome with tall residential buildings, markets, neighborhood chapels and

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narrow streets. The rebel attack that caused the reactor meltdown led to a series of quakes that collapsed much of the district, the ruins now covered in a fine gray coat of granite dust. A newly constructed vacuum tube shoots through the dead dome, connecting the Monastic District with the significantly smaller Gardens of Assir. Wide windows in the train car allow travelers to behold the quiet ruins and the devastation near the blast zone — sandstone and granite fused with the reactor core, forming a hauntingly beautiful landscape of strange crystals.

THE GARDENS OF ASSIR

Beyond the wasteland of the Homestead, a smaller dome teems with life. Palm trees line babbling brooks and waterfalls cascade in the shadows of terrace farms climbing the dome walls. On approach to the spaceport, the Gardens of Assir look like a glowing emerald against the harsh granite of the moon, and rumors say that the garden and the temples at its heart were rescued rock by rock from Benagia during the Wars. The eastern wing contains the Canopy Plaza whose white and black drapes and prayer banners frame an avenue running through well-kept orchards and vineyards. The avenue leads to the old diplomatic villa, currently under the control of the city's Governor, Council member Alesh Mohadeen. Security here is tight, the entire area under constant guard from Martyr warriors, but the outer gardens are still open to devout, law-abiding Zalosians.

THE 11TH OSSUARY

The smallest of the city's domes lies farthest from the spaceport and is only open to the clergy and the families of martyrs. Those who have been there say it's an empty place, but it supposedly holds the relics of some of the Order's foremost martyrs and prophets. Along the side of the dome, near the entrance, a smaller, younger chamber holds the bones of the victims of the Homestead bombing.

Some people claim that the center of the dome contains a hidden passage guarded by living statues — constructs from a lost time. The passage is rumored to lead to an underground complex containing warriors from the days of the Portal Wars, slumbering in their animate armor, ready to serve the Martyr one final time at the End of Days. Tunnels deep underneath the ossuary lead to other underground sections of the city, the actual contents of which are only whispered about — the looming threat of a heresy charge keeps most of the city's secrets secret. Legends about the underground world are many, however, speaking of everything from Predecessor bone chambers to the remains of the Martyr herself via long halls full of the bones of the Order's enemies. The Chamber of the Prophets is one such legendary place — a vault full of relics from every single prophet in the history of the Order. Once per year, the *Belit-Sheri's* archivists visit the chamber to divine the future from the bones together with the Martyr Council.

CURSE OF RUSAH

The PCs travel to the desolated Odacon system. Far from the inner planets, on the edge of the massive Ash Belt that blocks out most of the light from the star, lies an insignificant salvage station, the Masahir — a haven for scavengers and ore merchants as well as fortune seekers and refugees hoping to find shelter in the vast darkness between the stars. Disturbing rumors about a discovery in the Belt seep out from the station — a lost doomsday weapon from the Portal Wars has been recovered.

SCENARIO

The sensor buoys guide you through the darkness. The light of the Odacon star illuminating the scorched surface of Rusah was the last thing you saw before the Ash Belt swallowed you. The intel was partial but your mission is clear — somewhere in the Belt, the horrors of the Portal Wars have come back to life in the form of an artifact: a weapon forged as a dying civilization's final, desperate attempt to ward off the enemy armadas — a weapon beyond anything previously seen in the Third Horizon.

Your sensors suddenly light up as the ghostly shadows of the Belt dissipate, the dark outlines of Masahir Station appearing before you. She is magnificent — constructed inside the dead shell of a bulk freighter and fitted with a long row of docking modules and a huge smeltery. Visitors dock under the floodlights of the hauling cranes or by the

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warm glow of the agridomes. Masahir welcomes all — as long as you abide by Odacon customs and are ready to feed the smeltery's enormous furnace with the twisted bones of the ships that met their end in the Belt...

BACKGROUND

Rumors are starting to come in from Masahir Station: a forgotten weapon has been discovered in the Odacon Ash Belt. The information has reached several factions and many of them realize that the Nazareem cultists might try to make a play for the artifact. Masahir, with its smeltery and ragtag population, unwittingly becomes the theater of war for rival secret agents, all trying to lay claim to the artifact for their respective masters.

The PCs are hired by their patron to recover the weapon, or at least make sure no one else gets their hands on it.

THE MISSION

Depending on who they're working for, the PCs' mission details might differ:

- **THE COLONIAL AGENCY** wants the weapon, but also wishes to undermine the Masahir's leadership by denigrating the Free League and deposing the humanite governors.
- **THE EMISSARIES** and their allies – as well as **THE DRACONITES** – wish to destroy the weapon, supplying the PCs with an antimatter torpedo for the job.



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- **THE ORDER OF THE PARIAH** and grand master Alim fear that the weapon is a conduit of the dark between the stars and want it for study, after all other witnesses have been taken care of. If the Masahir is claimed by the darkness, the Martyr's fire will cleanse it. A torpedo ship is made ready at the Order's naval base on Qayna, the system's outer ice planet.

THE TRUTH

The destruction of the First Horizon armada formed a permanent tear in spacetime, created as the Vestals tried to harness the darkness to fuel their powers for the final clash. The tear remained small and insignificant for many years, until recently when it was discovered by the salvage vessel *The Dream Horizon*. Most of the crew went mad and the bloodbath they caused made the tear grow. The more death that occurs in the vicinity of the artifact and onboard Masahir Station, the stronger the darkness gets.

The agents that have made it to Masahir Station to compete for the artifact are:

- **The Free League** – The League runs the station together with the Ves-Arin humanities (page 148). In secret, they have asked a retired Night Hands captain, **Sandjina Kouri** (page 140), to assemble a crew and track down the artifact in the Belt.
- **The Order of the Pariah** – An Order spy on the station, **Zayn Ghorgûd** (page 141), plans to smuggle a group of Martyr warriors onboard if things escalate (or together with the PCs' ship).
- **The Consortium** – The Colonial Agency has sent a delegation led by diplomat **Kareem Al-Moud** to Masahir to discuss the League's strike. Kareem is actually with the Special Branch, however, and is there to establish contact with auctioneer **Barkhad Essa** (page 141) and topple the station's current leadership.
- **The Draconites** – A lone Draconite, **Jamala Nôrghu** (page 141), has arrived, tasked with sabotaging any attempts at finding the artifact. She will shadow the PCs to find out their true motives.
- **The Nazareem's Sacrifice** – A cell has operated onboard Masahir for a long time. They are now trying to determine the exact location of the weapon (see box to the right).

NAZAREEM IN THE ASH BELT

The Nazareem have had agents in their former home system for a long time and Masahir Station is a perfect base of operations in the search for artifacts from the First Horizon or their old masters. The local cell is influential and in contact with several other cells. The leader of the Masahir cell is Ilu Ves-Arin, a smiling old Vestï humanite who runs the station's cantina. Their followers are:

- **AQIL DIN VAAR (page 140): a young Zenithian who runs the station's arboretum, the Lily Garden, together with the stunning courtesan Wafa.**
- **WAFA MAHAN: a courtesan from Ahlam's Temple who recently converted to the Nazareem faith.**
- **ALAM SHAHOUD (page 140): a weathered stevedore akbar who has been loyal to the Beast for many years. Spends much of his waking time searching for useful artifacts on behalf of the cult.**

The Masahir cell is currently looking for survivors from *The Dream Horizon* to get the coordinates for the weapon. When they do, they'll send a small ship to investigate the tear and, upon learning how it works, incite a wave of murders and suicides on Masahir Station to bring the artifact to life (see the "Growing Darnkess" event, page 145).

NEW TALENT: AGITATOR

You are very skilled in riling up or engaging with the masses. Regardless of your Reputation, they look up to you and whenever you speak before a crowd, you get the following bonuses to **COMMAND** or **MANIPULATION**:

5-10 people = +1
11-25 people = +2
26-100 people = +3
100+ people = +4

If you are successful, you automatically get one additional six to your roll.

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MAJOR CHARACTERS

Instead of event-specific NPC introductions, the list of characters below can be used as you see fit during the PCs' hunt for the tear. Each NPC has one weapon and a skill level of 4 in all listed skills. Some also have talents.

- **Faction allegiance:** The Nazareem's Sacrifice (N), The Free League (L), The Consortium (C), The Order of the Pariah (O), The Draconites (D), Independent (I)

ILU-VES-ARIN (N)

A Vestï humanite, previously governor of Masahir Station. Runs the cantina nowadays. He is friendly and charismatic, dressing his elderly, androgynous body in red silk robes. Page 143.

ATTRIBUTES:
STRENGTH 3, AGILITY 2, WITS 4, EMPATHY 5

HIT POINTS: 5

MIND POINTS: 9

REPUTATION: 8

SKILLS: Culture, Manipulation, Melee Combat, Observation, Science

TALENTS: Heart of the Beast (page 113), Vestï Talents (page 103)

GEAR: Mercurium sword, encrypted tabula containing the coordinates of the tear, tag with 1,500 birr, holy psalter from the Portal Wars

AQIL DIN VAAR (N)

A young person with obvious Zenithian features. Careful and very correct, dresses in simple tunics and tends to the station's arboretum. Beekeeping enthusiast. Page 182.

ATTRIBUTES:
STRENGTH 2, AGILITY 3, WITS 5, EMPATHY 3

HIT POINTS: 5

MIND POINTS: 8

REPUTATION: 5

SKILLS: Infiltration, Observation, Science, Survival

TALENTS: Biochemist (page 128)

GEAR: Acc pistol, box of rare seeds, Dancer talisman, portable laboratory

WAFA MAHAN (N)

Miran courtesan. Always polite and caring, extremely attractive and dressed to impress. Has been seen around the leadership's cabins.

ATTRIBUTES:
STRENGTH 3, AGILITY 4, WITS 3, EMPATHY 7

HIT POINTS: 7

MIND POINTS: 10

REPUTATION: 7

SKILLS: Dexterity, Infiltration, Manipulation, Melee Combat

TALENTS: Seductive

GEAR: Beautiful clothes (+2), hand fan (weapon), poison capsule

ALAM SHAHOUD (N)

The weathered stevedore akbar is never seen out of his adorned exo. Speaks with a stiff, decisive voice. Known to celebrate a good day a little bit too hard. Page 152.

ATTRIBUTES:
STRENGTH 5, AGILITY 3, WITS 4, EMPATHY 3

HIT POINTS: 8

MIND POINTS: 7

REPUTATION: 5

SKILLS: Dexterity, Force, Melee Combat, Technology

TALENTS: Exo Specialist

GEAR: Exo shell, Vulcan carbine, dura knife, toolbox

SANDJINA KOURI (L)

On the run from the Nights Hands after her mystical powers started manifesting. Now scouring the Belt for heirlooms and artifacts. Wears tidy uniforms. Down to 6 MP.

ATTRIBUTES:
STRENGTH 3, AGILITY 4, WITS 4, EMPATHY 4

HIT POINTS: 7

MIND POINTS: 8

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REPUTATION: 4

SKILLS: Command, Mystic Powers, Pilot, Ranged Combat, Survival

TALENTS: Clairvoyant

GEAR: Uniform, old Quela-C battle exo (page 152), tabula with the coordinates for the tear, thermal cricket

ZAYN GHORGÛD (O)

Resourceful merchant of nomad descent acquiring more and more of the station's businesses (page 152). Dresses in simple, bland robes and often works alongside his employees with manual labor.

ATTRIBUTES:
STRENGTH 2, AGILITY 4, WITS 3, EMPATHY 4

HIT POINTS: 6

MIND POINTS: 7

REPUTATION: 4

SKILLS: Command, Culture, Manipulation

TALENTS: Judge of Character

GEAR: Simple clothing, tag with 3,000 birr, small Martyr Crown rosary

KAREEM AL-MOUD (K)

Has a background in administration and wears the Colonial Agency's uniform to show it. Has a simple, white face tattoo of Zenithian design.

ATTRIBUTES:
STRENGTH 3, AGILITY 3, WITS 4, EMPATHY 5

HIT POINTS: 6

MIND POINTS: 9

REPUTATION: 8

SKILLS: Culture, Dexterity, Manipulation, Melee Combat, Observation

TALENTS: Nine Lives, Faction Standing: The Consortium, Combat Veteran

GEAR: Vulcan pistol, uniform, flightsuit, dura sword, tabula full of contracts, encrypted tabula containing the station's blueprints

BARKHAD ESSA (I)

Dressed in a worker's kameez and wears gold makeup. Dresses more impressive for auctions, cramming thick gold rings onto his large, rough hands.

ATTRIBUTES:
STRENGTH 4, AGILITY 3, WITS 4, EMPATHY 3

HIT POINTS: 7

MIND POINTS: 7

REPUTATION: 6

SKILLS: Command, Force, Manipulation, Ranged Combat

TALENTS: Agitator (see box, page 139)

GEAR: Warehouse inventory tabula, link to Niandra, Lady of Tears talisman, Vulcan cricket

JAMALA NÔRGHU (D)

Free trader with long, thin scars across a dark face. Owns a fighter disguised as a merchant vessel. Wears a flightsuit made from Miran jungle tiger fur.

ATTRIBUTES:
STRENGTH 4, AGILITY 4, WITS 5, EMPATHY 3

HIT POINTS: 8

MIND POINTS: 8

REPUTATION: 5

SKILLS: Data Djinn, Dexterity, Observation, Pilot, Manipulation, Melee Combat, Ranged Combat

TALENTS: Dogma of the Draconites (page 195)

GEAR: Thermal pistol, flightsuit with duralite allignation (ARMOR RATING 3), tabula with a list of currently docked ships

STEVEDORES (I)

The station is full of regular workers trying to make ends meet..

ATTRIBUTES:
STRENGTH 3, AGILITY 3, WITS 2, EMPATHY 3

HIT POINTS: 6

MIND POINTS: 5

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REPUTATION: 3

SKILLS: Dexterity, Force or Technology. Will often fight as a Mob (page 220)

GEAR: Work-cloths, power glove or sawed-off grape rifle

NIGHT HANDS (L)

Masahir Station's security force wearing black Quala-C battle exos and armed with grape rifles (page 152)

ATTRIBUTES:
STRENGTH 3, AGILITY 3, WITS 2, EMPATHY 3

HIT POINTS: 6

MIND POINTS: 5

REPUTATION: 5

SKILLS: Dexterity, Manipulation, Melee Combat, Observation, Ranged Combat

TALENTS: Faction Standing: The Night Hands

GEAR: Battle exo, grape rifle, communicator, link to Niandra

WEAPONS

Weapons and heavy armor are allowed onboard given that you respect your fellow visitors and adhere to local customs (page 149). Restricted gear isn't anybody's business but your own – as long as you behave yourself.

PREPARATIONS

- **Arrival:** Either let your group travel through the Quadrant of the Pillar, facing corsairs and anti-Zenithianism along the way, or skip ahead to when they've already arrived in Odacon.
- **Escalation:** The effects of darkness, insanity and corruption will intensify as the factions try to outmaneuver each other. The Nazareem escalate the process with lies and false rumors.
- **Ending:** The end of the scenario will require some improvisation. The tear itself cannot be mended without mystical powers, but the contagious death wave onboard Masahir can be stopped – either by destroying the station or by moving it out of the tear's reach. See Aftermath on page 147.

EVENTS

The PCs arrive at Masahir Station from the system's unstable portal fields (see "Extended portal jump failure" on page 20). When they leave the station and enter the Ash Belt, read aloud the following *Shift*:

- THE HUMANITE ACT (PAGE 102)

The PCs will have to investigate potential survivors from *The Dream Horizon*. They will be followed and sabotaged by the agents of other factions and it won't be long before people start dying. Darkmorphs pour through the tear and the decision of whether to claim or destroy the weapon becomes gravely urgent.

BEGINNING: SCAVENGER HAVEN

The PCs follow the sensor buoys through the darkness of the Belt until they arrive at the crowded Masahir Station. Salvager, free trader and corsair vessels hang like clusters of ripe grapes on the station's long docking beam. The PCs are welcomed aboard by an armed Night Hands patrol, the

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station's security force. They instruct the group to stick to the trade district and the spaceport — all other areas are off-limits to visitors — and to honor Odaconian customs. Improper behavior will earn them a speedy exit through the nearest airlock.

If the PCs are officially allied with the Consortium or the Hegemony, the spaceport administrators may place them in a queue. The stevedore strike is in full effect across the Horizon but Masahir's port is still somewhat operational thanks to the League's standing onboard. At the cost of 1 DP, the engineers at the port charge twice the going rate for ship service (page 155 of the *Rulebook*) and at the cost of 2 DP, they refuse maintenance altogether.

Cost: 0, 1-2 DP (Mandatory)

⚙ THE SURVIVORS FROM THE DREAM HORIZON

- **Tragedy:** *The Dream Horizon* was a salvage vessel searching for remains of the First Horizon armada about a segment ago. They found the remains of an enormous battleship but were overtaken by madness and corruption when they started investigating it.
  - ◇ The *Dream's* captain, Amina, stabbed Johar the sensor operator to death during the crew's communal breakfast.
  - ◇ Saladin the engineer and Jousef the stevedore managed to lock the captain in her cabin.
  - ◇ A couple of hours later, Saladin suddenly went mad with rage, going berserk with a plasma torch in the engine room and on the bridge.
  - ◇ Jousef and Ana the deckhand wrestled Saladin to the ground, after which the engineer took his own life by putting the torch to his throat.
  - ◇ The captain broke out of her cabin, on the hunt for survivors with her Vulcan pistol drawn.
  - ◇ Jousef suffered a gunshot wound but was able to overload the reactor and flee the ship together with Ana in the escape pod before the *Dream* exploded.
- **Shipwrecked**: The two survivors were found in the Belt a week later, severely worse for wear, and were taken to Masahir Station for treatment. During their feverish ramblings, they both spoke of a terrible weapon and "the warped battleship" — *Ab-Fasid*. The duo was recently awoken from their medical comas, alive, but suffering from something resembling hyper sickness. Black spots and patches of warped skin cover their bodies.

JOUSEF THE STEVEDORE

Severely traumatized by the event and confined to the Masahir's infirmary. The medicurgs were forced to take his left arm and his right leg just above the knee to stop the spread of the sickness and Jousef is now plagued by depression, fear and nightmares. He doesn't know where his friend is and refuses to give up the location of the battleship.

"Only darkness awaits those who seek the warped battleship Ab-Fasid and I won't lead more people to their deaths."

ANA THE DECKHAND

Ana's recovery was more successful, although nightmares kept on haunting her. She left the infirmary soon after returning, and had time to interact with several parties before the Nazareem had her killed. Consulting witnesses (**MANIPULATION** -1) or the security sensors (**DATA DJINN**) reveals that she has met with Night Hand patrols on multiple occasions, as well as with an old skipper by the name of Sandjina Kouri, known for searching the Belt for something for many years. She has also spent time at the cantina and become friendly with the owner, aging humanite Ilu Ves-Arin.

Finally, just before she went missing, Ana sold the coordinates of the battleship both to the League and to Ves-Arin. The rival groups are now scrambling to start exploring the Belt's secrets. Stevedore akbar Alam Shahoud, a Nazareem agent, murdered Ana after she sold the coordinates and hid her body in a warehouse in the spaceport. A critical **DATA DJINN** success while looking through the security footage (above) reveals clues about her murder.

Cost: 0 DP

⚙ BACKROOM BARTENDER

The Warda-Alnuji cantina is owned and run by the aging Vestï humanite Ilu Ves-Arin. The shady basement speakeasy with its dim sugar globes, vine-covered walls and threadbare floor pillows is frequented by most visitors to the station and by several factionary agents. Ilu has paid a couple of the regulars to bring him a survivor from the *Dream*.

- **Intrigue**: Ilu knows who represents both the Draconites and the Order onboard. When the Consortium's Special Branch agent Kareem Al-Moud arrives, Ilu quickly finds out the faction's agenda on Masahir and sells the intel to the Order's agent in the hopes of starting a fight. After obtaining the coordinates from Ana, Ilu has sent out a ship

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TABLE 12: THE DANGERS OF THE ASH BELT

D6	DANGER	DP	DESCRIPTION
1	Wreck	1-2	The PCs end up in a moving debris field. Test PILOT (unmodified for 1 DP, at -1 for 2 DP). Failure results in 2 points of hull damage. A successful sensor roll (DATA DJINN) can give the pilot an extra die for each additional success.
2	EM Wave	1	A barrage of electromagnetic particles hits the ship. Unless the engineer passes a TECHNOLOGY test at -1, the ship's electronics take damage. A failed roll leads to a -1 on navigation and weapons rolls.
3	Micro Meteorites	2	Black birr – miniscule space debris at high velocity – bombard the ship. Unless the pilot passes a PILOT test at -2, a random, non-fixed module suffers explosive decompression.
4	Lost in the Dark	2	The buoy signals fade and the PCs suddenly realize that they are lost in the distortions of the Belt. All PCs who fail an EMPATHY test suffer 2 points of stress and horrible nightmares. Finding their way back could take days. Have the sensor operator roll DATA DJINN. Failure means the journey back takes three days. Each six rolled shortens the journey by one day. Each day of being lost generates 1 DP.
5	Magnetic Storm	3	An EM storm blasts the ship, threatening to cause a reactor overload. The engineer must pass a TECHNOLOGY test at -2 to avoid a reactor shutdown which gives the ship -2 EP and disables a random system (D6): 1-2) Navigation 3-4) Sensors 5) Weapons 6) Life support.
6	The Bane of Ashes	0, 3	A cloud of particles converge on an old wreck on the PCs' screens, completely dissolving it. The cloud then appears to look for a new target. At the cost of 3 DP, that target is the PCs. They must test PILOT to escape. Each six rolled lets them keep 1 HP – the rest is devoured by the swarm. The PCs may use their sensors (DATA DJINN) during the attack to gather information about the phenomenon (page 22 of The Atlas Compendium). The data may later be sold with the GM determining its value.

to secure the location and destroy nearby sensor buoys that might help others find the warped battleship.

- **Visiting the Bar**: Ilu is always friendly and helpful to new visitors. He claims to know everything that happens onboard, or to know someone that does.
  - ◇ If asked about the survivors from *The Dream Horizon* or about the rumors of a weapon out in the Belt, he doesn't know any more than most.
  - ◇ If confronted with Ana's visit, he calmly confirms that yes, she was there looking for a job and a place to stay since her ship had been lost.
  - ◇ He falsely implies that Jamala Nôrghu of the Draconites is in fact a corsair captain preying on salvagers and traders in the sector.

Cost: 0 DP

⚙ SANDJINA'S EXPEDITION

Sandjina is an old captain looking for the answers to her dreams out in the Belt. She has met with Ana and been given both a crew and a ship by the Free League.

- **Ambushed**: Sandjina enters the Belt onboard the *Pearl Azure* and discovers that the buoys have been destroyed. She still manages to make her way to the coordinates where she is ambushed by the ship of Nazareem cultist Alam Shahoud. The *Pearl Azure's* reactor is disabled, killing two of her crew which opens the tear. As dark insanity pours forth, Sandjina escapes the murderous rage of her remaining crew and disappears out into the Belt in a small shuttle.
- **Saved**: She will die unless aided by the PCs. If they rescue her, she tells them where in the Belt the weapon is located but that she was attacked by another ship when she got there. She was hired by the Night Hands but got the coordinates straight from Ana who seemed afraid of someone, saying that she'd made a deal with the wrong people.

Cost: 0 DP

⚙ THE SECRETS OF THE ASH BELT

Travel in the Ash Belt: Sticking to known vectors through the Belt, guided by sensor buoys, is relatively safe, but stepping off the beaten path is much more dangerous. When out of reach of a sensor buoy, all maneuver and navigation rolls suffer a -1. The darkness of space can be unpredictable, use the table above as you see fit.

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- **The Tear:** A tear leading to the darkness between the portals exists out in unknown regions of the Ash Belt. It attracts old wrecks and is therefore covered by an old First Horizon battleship from the Portal Wars. Sensors appear blind before it, as if it consumes all signals broadcast against it, and its darkness interferes with nearby electronics. Initial findings appeared to suggest an ancient weapon hidden in the belly of the battleship, but the anomaly and the ship are in reality separate.
- **Corruption**: The tear is immaterial and therefore indestructible by conventional means. It is anchored to its location and affects everything within 2 AU.
  - ◇ Within 1 AU, all humans must pass an **EMPATHY** test once a day or suffer a growing madness. They either feel like their own limbs mean them harm, or are gripped by a burning desire to be alone even if it means having to kill their crew mates. Victims who lose their minds also risk hyper sickness.
  - ◇ Within 2 AU, all humans suffer from nightmares and anxiety attacks. Physical injuries take twice as long to heal and stress recovery requires a successful **EMPATHY** test once per day for it to be at all possible.
  - ◇ Closing the tear without mystical powers is impossible. If the PCs try to destroy the battleship, it simply crumbles and is sucked inside the tear, piece by piece. Banishing the darkness permanently and closing it is only possible using Santulan resonance powers (**DESTROY IV**, *Emissary Lost*, page 194) or forgotten artifacts.
  - ◇ At the beginning of the scenario, class I ships may be swallowed by the tear. For each "Growing darkness" event (to the right), the tear widens one class. If a ship enters the tear, it counts as a failed portal jump. Roll on the *Extended portal jump failure* table on page 20 but add 30 to your result (making 41 your lowest possible outcome).

Cost: Varies (See Table 12)

⚙ THE FALL OF THE NAZAREEM

If you wish to connect this scenario to the closing part of *The Cyclade Dance*, use this event.

If the PCs pressure cantina owner Ilu Ves-Arin with violent methods (generates 3 DP) or search the cultists' living quarters, they find information about other Nazareem cells in the form of holy texts and songbooks from the Wars. After extensive analysis of the cryptic texts, the PCs may learn the location of several of the old masters' sarcophagi and cadaver clocks.

Cost: 0 DP

⚙ ENDING: THE FALL OR RESCUE OF MASAHIR STATION

There are really only two ways the mission can end.

- **Panic and Death:** As more people die, the darkness intensifies and when darkmorphs invade the station, Masahir turns into a panic-stricken warzone. Residents barricade themselves in their homes or try to flee. Paranoia and violence leads to further death which escalates quickly unless someone manages to calm the situation, either by passing a **COMMAND** test at -2 or by using **MANIPULATION** at -1 to convince the governors and the Night Hands to help protect the residents. As long as the station is within reach of the tear, however, peace and order are temporary — Masahir will eventually turn into a quiet graveyard, home only to creatures of the void.
- **A Way Out:** As the station is constructed from an old bulk hauler, a final, desperate course of action is available to the PCs: moving it. This requires the PCs to convince the leadership (**MANIPULATION** at -2) and to defeat the darkmorphs currently onboard to make the residents feel safe and trust them. The actual move is then a **TECHNOLOGY** test at -2 (if they try to activate the old engines) or a **COMMAND** test at -3 (if they try to unite enough freighter and salvage crews for a tow).

Cost: 0 DP (Mandatory)

OTHER EVENTS

Below are some other events that may occur on the mission:

⚙ FACTIONARY INTRIGUE

With Masahir Station brimming with agents, chances are great that the PCs will find themselves in further trouble because of it. The warring factions are working both toward securing their foothold onboard and on locating the weapon. Use the table on the next page or make up drama of your own:

Cost: Varies (see Table 13)

⚙ GROWING DARKNESS

For each death on board or near the station, the darkness grows stronger (see *Curse of Rusah*, Table 06 on page 94) and people become more stressed. When the population eventually breaks, darkmorphs push through the tear and

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TABLE 13: FACTIONARY INTRIGUE

EVENT	AGENTS	DESCRIPTION
Followed (1 DP)	(See description)	A faction starts following the PCs, documenting their every action and hacking the security feeds for additional information. The responsible agent keeps the data on a tabula. One of the following factions is behind it: ◆ The Draconites (want to stop them from going out into the Belt) ◆ The Order (want to find out who their allies are) ◆ The Night Hands (have noticed them onboard and want to know what they're up to) ◆ The Nazareem (want to learn their enemies' weaknesses)
Sabotage (2 DP)	(See description)	The Draconites, the Order or the Nazareem sabotage the PCs' ship. Sensors or the nav controls have been disabled to keep them from investigating the Ash Belt.
Death of a Merchant*	The Consortium	Merchant Zayn Ghorghûd is found dead in his home. The Night Hands' investigation rules his death a heart attack but he has actually been poisoned by Kareem Al-Moud of the Special Branch. Kareem acted in preemptive self-defense after hearing a false rumor started by Wafa the courtesan that Zayn was planning to kill him.
The Scavenger Revolt (3 DP)	The Consortium	Agent Al-Moud manages to partner with auctioneer Barkhad Essa. After the Consortium shuts down Niandra the ship djinn, Barkhad unites the hands of the station against the corrupt leadership, turning the workforce against the Night Hands and the humanites.
The Blade of the Martyr (3 DP)	The Order of the Pariah	Martyr commandos (choose how many) attack the station and assume control of Niandra. They declare martial law and begin a station-wide evacuation. Skippers are sent toward the nearest inhabited world with minimal resources.
Death of a Warrior*	The Order of the Pariah	The Order has a small team of Martyr warriors onboard, ready to start searching for the weapon. Jamala Nôrghû the Draconite attempts to stop them but is captured and executed. Her body is found drifting outside the station.
Gunboat Diplomats (1 DP)	The Consortium	A Legion torpedo ship locks its weapons on the station from far out in the darkness. Unless the Colonial Agency's delegation is allowed a sit-down with the governors to discuss joint ownership of Masahir, they threaten to fire on vital parts of the station.
The Lost Delegation†	The Nazareem	The Colonial Agency's delegation has tried to get a meeting with Masahir's leadership for days. Suddenly, the delegation's ship turns up, moments away from being carved into bits by plasma torches and hydraulic cutters controlled by Niandra. Inside, the crew lie dead in their stasis pods. Surveillance feeds show a Night Hands patrol visiting the ship shortly before take-off. In actuality, the Nazareem are behind the event, having paid poor stevedores to commit the murders as a provocation.
Palace Coup (3 DP)	The Free League	The League has long been looking for an opportunity to claim the station and get rid of the Vesti humanites. When things take a turn for the worse, for example after the darkness starts manifesting onboard, the Night Hands take over and declare a state of emergency, shutting down the station for *"public safety reasons."* The governors are placed under house arrest which leads to problems with Niandra. The djinn refuses to obey her new masters.
The Last Survivor*	(See description)	The Order or the Nazareem decide to eliminate Jousef, the maimed final survivor from the Dream. A recent arrival is hired for the job, mercenary Kahara Olounja, an ex-Janissary from Abarren Quassar's houseguard (page 230). She is unaware of the consequences of breaking the local customs (page 149).

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EVENT	AGENTS	DESCRIPTION
Sandjina's Death*	The Nazareem	If captain Sandjina makes it back to the station after her misfortunes in the Belt, she is found dead in her module early one morning. She appears to have died from a heart attack, but advanced toxicology (MEDICURGY -2) reveals that she has been poisoned by synthetic surina algae, grown in secret in the station's arboretum by Nazareem cultist Aquil Din Vaar.
A Ceremony of Lilies (-)	The Nazareem	When the Nazareem expedition returns from the Belt, the cultists gather in the Lily Garden for an intricate ritual. They have the place to themselves and discuss their plan openly. Stevedore akbar Alam Shahoud has been to the tear himself and since he was behind the attack on Sandjina's ship, he now knows that death makes the tear grow. The cell is preparing to sacrifice large parts of the station's population to facilitate the full opening of the tear (see below). If they are discovered, they will try to go underground and continue with the ritual anyway.
An Offering to the Beast†	The Nazareem	The Nazareem cell attempts to cause mass death onboard the station. You choose their method: poisoning the air or water supplies; hacking Niandra and turning the weapon systems on civilians; kidnapping people and throwing them out of airlocks or into the smeltery etc. If they succeed, the death toll quickly rises above the necessary 21+ required to fully open the tear (see next event).

*** Isolated murders generate 2 DP when the bodies are found.**
† Mass murders generate 4 DP when the bodies are found.

use the broken people as host bodies to attack the station. It is up to you to use the darkmorphs as you see fit:
Cost: Varies (see Table 13)

AFTERMATH

The PCs leave the Belt to its fate, either having saved Masahir Station or seen it descend into madness. The tear might be closed or under the control of a faction. Regardless of the outcome, the group will once again have witnessed the Nazareem's might and the spread of darkness in the Third Horizon.

SHIFTS

The PCs leave the Ash Belt for a debriefing with their patron. When they dock somewhere safe again, they are updated on the latest news. Much has happened during their time in Odacon. Read the news reports (Bulletin or independent) about the following *Shifts* and gain Darkness Points:

- THE MISSING DIPLOMAT (PAGE 104)
- NO MORE COURTESANS (PAGE 106)

EXORCISM

If you want a more heroic victory for the PCs, make the tear easier to close. They can either use an ancient ceremony mentioned in Order prophecies or try to pass an insane (-3) MYSTICAL POWERS Exorcism roll.

Alternatively, the PCs can lure the mysterious Bane of Ashes phenomenon to the battleship, upon which it consumes both the ship and the tear (see page 22 of *The Atlas Compendium*).

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TABLE 14: DARK CORRUPTION

CASUALTIES	DARKNESS	DESCRIPTION
1-2 *	Compulsions†	One or more PCs and NPCs develop manias. Test EMPATHY to resist (see page 337 of the *Rulebook*). The mania becomes permanent for 2 DP.
1-2 *	Spiritual Rupture†	Everyone on board suffers from nightmares but the PC with the lowest EMPATHY score may also suffer a spiritual rupture (page 337 of the *Rulebook*) for 2 DP.
3-10	Void Scars †	The PCs must test EMPATHY. Failure results in a temporary Void Scar (a single activation, page 69). The scar becomes permanent for 2 DP per person. An important NPC is also affected.
3-10	Bokor	Dead bodies and animal cadavers come back as undead (see page 336 of the *Rulebook*). Unless stopped, they may spread their undeath to others.
11-20	Sarcofagoi	Vulture-like, ethereal shadows sweep through the station, spreading hate and insanity (page 335 of the *Rulebook*).
11-20	Darkbound	The darkness corrupts its victims, twisting limbs and turning moles into tumors. Without proper care, the affected soon perish and become darkbound (page 327 of the *Rulebook*).
21+	Void-claimed	Unfettered darkness lays waste to the station. Test EMPATHY every hour. On a failure, use the 81-86 result from the Extended portal jump failures table on page 20 and roll to resist hyper sickness. NPCs on board are severely affected and panic breaks out (see "The Fall or Rescue of Masahir Station" on page 145).
21+	The Hounds of Tirides	Page 327 of the *Rulebook*.
21+	Ayaam'sha	Page 183 of *Emissary Lost*.

*** *The Dream Horizon* casualties and Sandjina's lost crew don't count. Start counting casualties after those events.**
† Permanent manias can be cured using MEDICURGY in a trauma lab. You may activate them the same way as personal problems.

SCENARIO LOCATION

MASAHIR STATION

On the edge of the Ash Belt, 7 AU from portal station Khôban, many scavengers and salvage crews call Masahir Station their home. Corsairs, scrupulous merchants and artifact collectors also come here to trade in spare parts, artifacts and destroyed weapons from the armadas of the Portal Wars. The station has been constructed inside the remains of the Miran bulk hauler *Warda-Alnuji*, "Stellar Rose," one of the first freighters that braved the darkness of Odacon after the armistice but never made it out.

The remains of the hauler were recovered by a clan of Vestï humanites and over the years, more and more of the ship has been repurposed from freighter to salvage hub. A smeltery has been added, complete with an automated salvage rig that dismantles and feeds whole spaceships to the roaring furnaces. Niandra, the *Warda-Alnuji's* old ship djinn, oversees the hungry fires that have given the station its name — Masahir, "The Smeltery". The station's reputation has spawned a saying among the Odaconian diaspora: *"Not even our dying sun can still the hunger of Masahir."*

The station has been partially hidden inside a maze of shipwrecks at the edge of the Belt but with the right connections, the trip is relatively safe thanks to a trail of Free League sensor buoys that guide the way for traders and visitors.

HISTORY

A small group of Vestï deserted from a First Horizon battleship at the end of the Wars, just days before the devastating final battle that laid waste to Odacon. Many years later into the Long Night, the deserters had formed three strong clans: Ves-Arin, which chose to stay in Odacon;

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Ves-Nadra, which left for nearby Tarazug, and Ves-Torük which went to the Quadrant of the Pillar in search of a new world, but are believed to have perished in some distant, hostile system.

The Ves-Arin clan lived as scavengers in the Ash Belt for a long time but shortly after the founding of Coriolis, they came upon the wreckage of an old bulk hauler from before the trade routes reopened. The wreckage was repaired and fitted with smelting furnaces to handle the gradual dismantling of the broken hull. Metals, electronics components, and salvaged modules attracted free traders and colonists which eventually brought corsairs. The Ves-Arin negotiated a contract with the Free League for protection resulting in the League's paramilitary wing, the Night Hands, taking over station security.

Anyone looking to trade fairly or break down salvage cheaply are welcome to take their business to Masahir Station — as long as they abide by Odaconian laws.

PLACES

Below are some of the places of interest and important characters described:

⚙ THE SPACEPORT

The spaceport has been constructed out of a long beam from an old battleship. Visiting ships cluster like Miran grapes around the docking modules located along the beam from where airlocks connect to warehouses and the central corridor. The central corridor is crowded with kawah trolleys and peddlers' rugs where a wide variety of food, drink and basic necessities may be purchased at all hours. This is also where visitors first encounter the Night Hands, patrolling the station in their fur lined light battle exos, ready to break up scuffles and unlawful gatherings with their grape rifles and shock gloves.

SANDJINA KOURI

A Firstcome ex-Night Hand who left her post to hunt the Belt for a creature she claims spoke to her in a dream. After a year in the Belt, she returned alone in an escape pod. Her ship and crew are said to have been devoured by an entity known as the Bane of Ashes and Sandjina is now desperately trying to find a new ship to continue her hunt.

ADAPTING MASAHIR STATION

Masahir counts as a Space station in The Nazareem's Countdown on page 93. It is a location of interest for the Order – who maintains several monasteries on nearby Qayna – as well as for other factions with artifact dreams. The Special Branch and the Astûrban most likely have personnel on board, and the Draconites keep an eye on findings brought back by adventurous salvagers. The lure of mythic ghost ships and weapons from the Portal Wars attract more brave souls every cycle.

MORE ABOUT ODACON

***The Atlas Compendium* contains more information about Odacon and its history.**

ODACONIAN CUSTOMS – THE ODAC-WALI

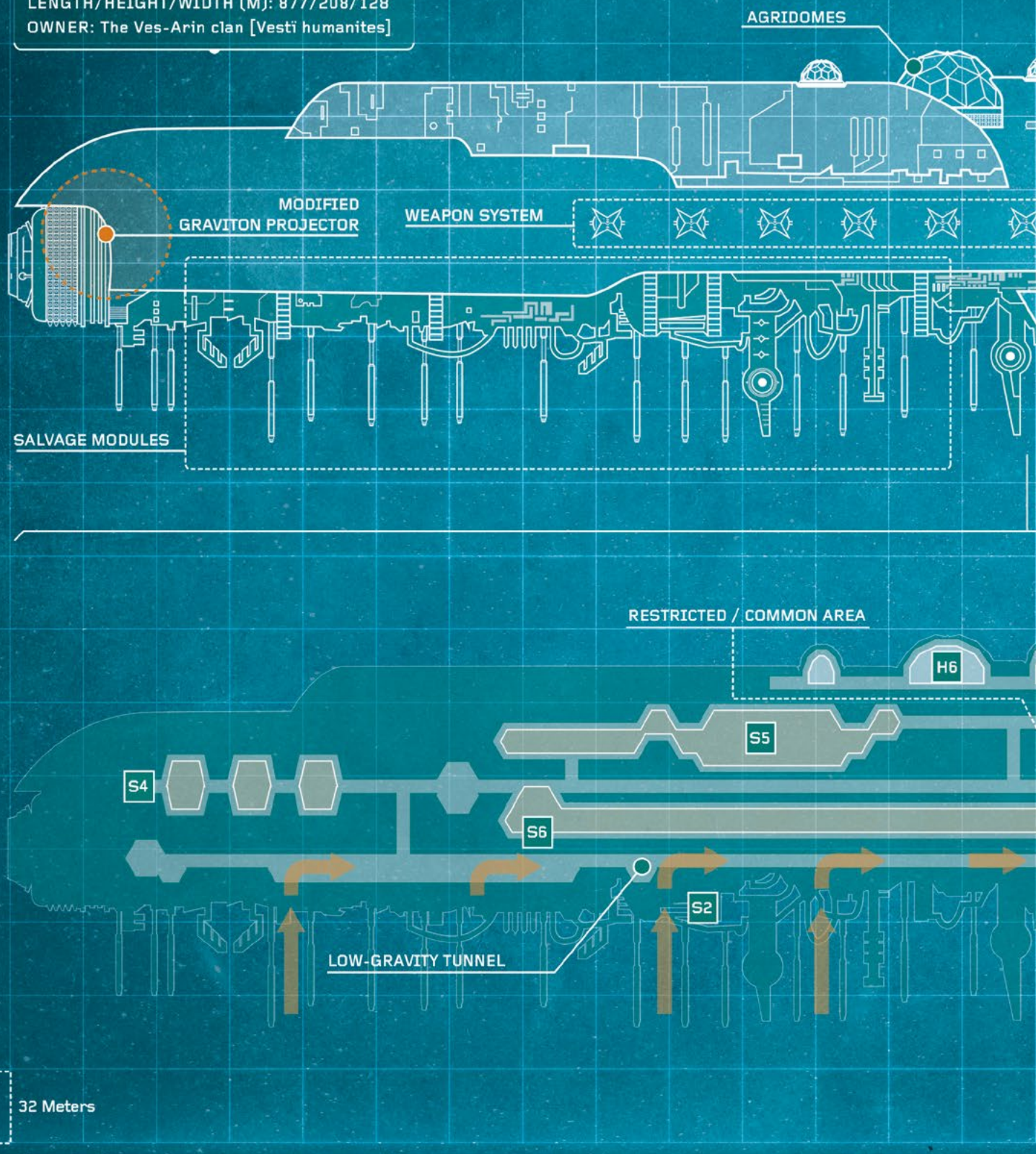
"Odac-wali" is an amalgamation of customs and laws put together to save the system from chaos. It unites the population and provides tools for conflict management in an otherwise lawless sector.

- Be hospitable to those who honor the odac-wali
- Never investigate or question someone's past
- Never negotiate unarmed
- Assist those in need of aid
- In a conflict, accept the will of Fate
- Never break a contract honoring the odac-wali
- Show no mercy to those who dishonor the odac-wali

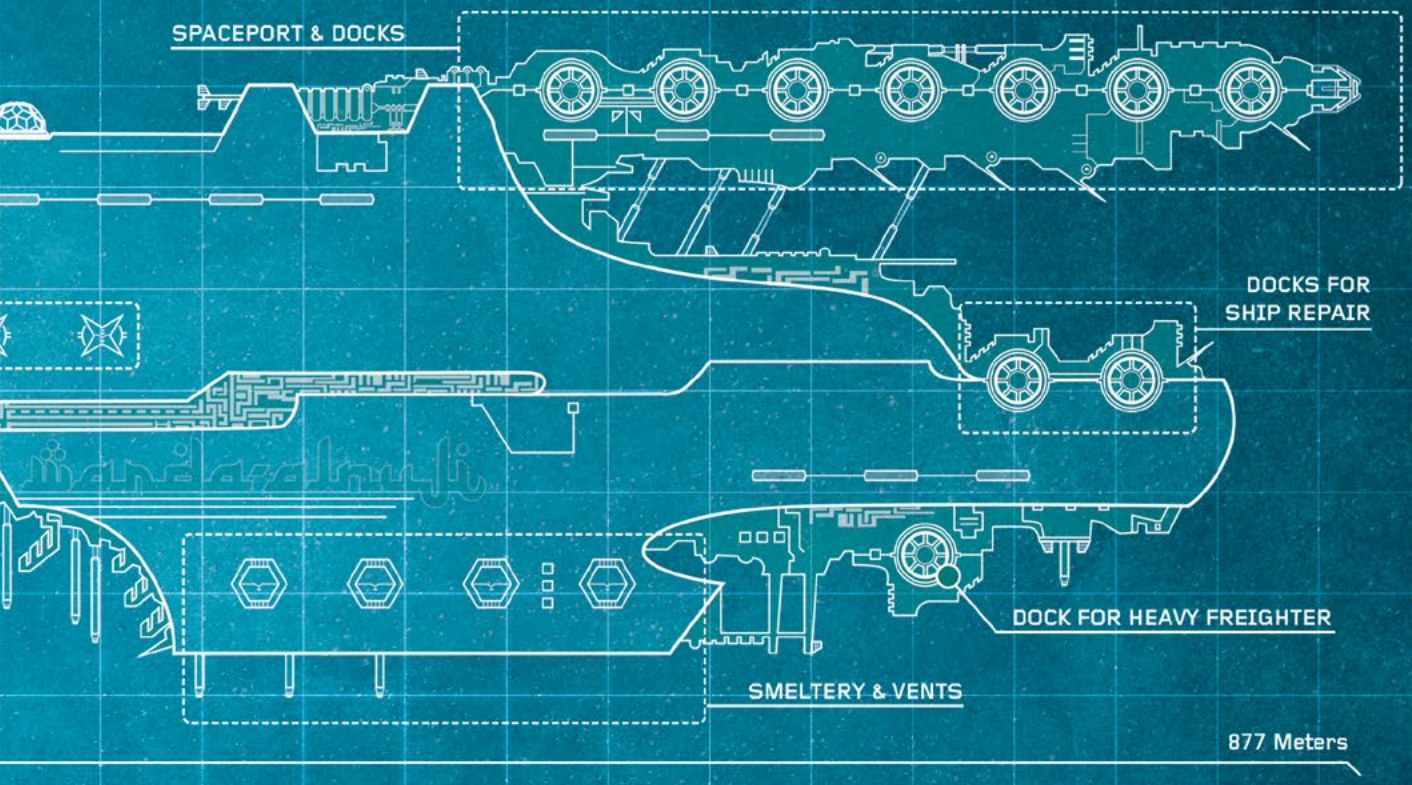
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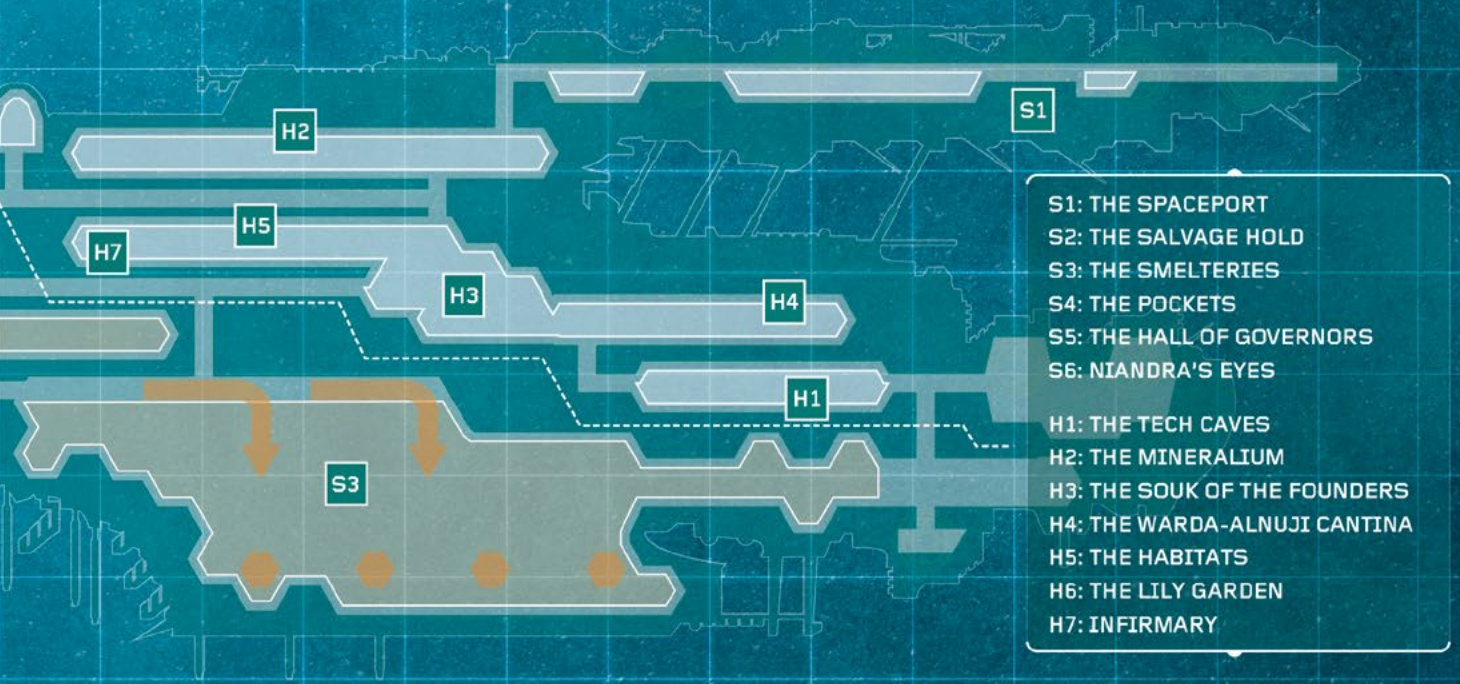
SALVAGE STATION MASAHIR, ODACON

CLASS: V, Space station
DOCKS: Mira, CC -96
(Former bulk hauler Warda-Alnuji)
LENGTH/HEIGHT/WIDTH (M): 877/208/128
OWNER: The Ves-Arin clan [Vestï humanites]



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ZAYN GHORGÛD

Zayn used to be a deckhand of modest means until he deserted from his crew about ten cycles ago and settled on Masahir. Today, he is an outspoken merchant running several successful businesses on board – everything from kawah trolleys and small oporias to workshops for visiting crews and a small coffin hostel in the trade district. He is secretly working for the Order of the Pariah, reporting back to his masters about potential threats to the faction's operations in the system. As of late, Astûrban agents have shown an unnerving amount of interest in the less legal aspects of his business.

⚙ THE SALVAGE HOLD

The old hauler has been dismantled over the course of many decades, naked dura beams now protruding from the bare-stripped inner hull. Grabber arms, cranes and plasma torches powerful enough to cut a ship in half — even one covered in Order glyph armor — are mounted on the spindly ribs of the station, along the dark tunnel that leads to the smeltery. Three large holes protected by ED fields allow for delivery directly from space. The admitted salvage is then pulled toward the furnace by a modified grav projector.

NIANDRA

The bulk hauler's former ship djinn Niandra now controls the salvage modules. Via automated drones, she examines the wreckage admitted for processing to determine how to separate and make use of as much as possible. If she discovers artifacts or the remains of pre-War Odaconian civilization, a Free League exo stevedore crew is dispatched to retrieve the treasures.

ALAM SHAHOUD

Stevedore akbar Alam is a hardworking man whose dark skin and stern smile give him away as a descendant of the nomads of the Quadrant of the Pillar. He rarely leaves his exo and works back to back shifts out in the darkness. He consumes copious amounts of

QUELA-C BATTLE EXO

Quela armor is a light combat exo for use in space or on-board stations and spacecraft. The alloys used in the armor come from previously unknown metals harvested from the remains of the First Horizon armada. It is a favorite among corsairs and bodyguards working for traditionalist Odaconian nobles. It is customary to line the collar with fur to cover the helmet's locking mechanism, and also to wrap arms and legs in thick fabrics.

ARMOR RATING	FEATURES	EXTRA FEATURES	TECH TIER	COST
7	Thermostatic suit, Vaccum suit, Oxygen supply, Micro servos, Special alloy: reduces first hit sustained each turn by one six	1	A*	20,000

VULCAN-ODACA GRAPE RIFLE

The Odaconian grape rifles of old are treasured collector's items. Since the end of the Wars, gunsmiths in the system have improved on the design, enabling the rifles to fire clouds of tiny Vulcan rounds that move in a complex spiraling pattern. The shot looks like a whirling cloud of tiny explosions, earning the weapon its moniker, the "Odaconian sparkler."

BONUS	INIT	DAMAGE	CRIT	RANGE	FEATURES	TECH TIER	COST
+2	0	2	1	Short	Cone, Reliable, Slow	0	1,500

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kambra to keep the voices at bay, voices that whisper of everyone who has died under his command, but also frequents the arboretum for solace. Among the hydroponics there, he can often be seen deep in an intricate tea ritual together with Wafa the courtesan.

THE SMELTERY

The smeltery has been assembled from discarded mining gear taken from lost colonies around the system. The furnaces process minerals and metals in a restricted low-gravity area and thanks to the joint work of Niandra and some of the station's more noteworthy engineers, the station is now capable of refining even the more exotic materials found in Odacon's ship cemeteries. Twelve furnaces melt and separate the materials, Free League workers calmly assisting in loader exos and gravcraft despite the heat and the fumes. The end products, bars of hardened metal wrapped in bio-coded gravnets, are then taken to the Masahir's warehouses for storage until auction day.

DASNI VES-ARIN

Humanite stevedore akbar Dasni is the oldest offspring of the current governors and in charge of the work crews at the smelters. Tending to the needs and wellbeing of the workers becomes extra important in the hot, loud work environment. Dasni's humanite talents allow them to communicate instantaneously with Niandra and gives them exact knowledge of the workflow – which wrecks are slated for dismantling, how much goes into the furnaces, how much available warehouse space there is left and who is present at the site. Recently, mysterious signals from the depth of the Ash Belt have been interfering with this sense, however, something many in the clan find deeply disturbing.

THE POCKETS

The working hands' residential areas are restricted to outsiders. The Pockets are located around the emptied shafts of the old reactor, every nook and cranny of the deep pits converted into housing or stores that climb toward a clear-blue holo ceiling on tall dura beams. The residents of the sector have made it as homey as possible, with plants, vines and fairy lights filling every corridor and staircase, but the entrance floor way down on the bottom is often covered in acrid sludge leaking from ruptured pipes and walls higher up. The League owns the area and keeps foreigners out.

NEW RULE: CONE (WEAPON FEATURE)

Grape weapons fire a cloud of tiny projectiles. Because of this, aiming is not as important at close range. The shooter will hit two targets with a single shot, if they are within Close Range (2 meters) of each other. The weapon damage is divided (shooter's choice) between the two. This rule also applies to Grape Weapons in the core rulebook, page 126.

THE HUMANITE ACT

If your game has progressed far enough for the Humanite Act to be in effect, Masahir Station could become a hotbed for political conflict as the Zenithians are eager to lay claim both to the treasures in the Mineralium and the station as a whole.

THE FIVE GOVERNORS

The Vestï only believe in family units of five: one for each of the three perspectives and experiences of physical aging – youth, maturity and old age – and two for the duality of the soul: one for aesthetics and the passion of the soul, one for administration and reason's perfection. Only families of five have children, with the parents sharing the responsibilities equally. This pentacentric perspective can be found in the station's management as well, represented by the five governors. The administrative post has been ceded to the Free League, however.

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THE HALL OF GOVERNORS

Ves-Arin-Dô, commonly referred to as the Hall of Governors, is a large chamber where the cannibalized remains of smaller luxury craft have been turned into a garden with a couple of terraces and side rooms. The chamber functions as city hall, courthouse, government offices and living quarters for the Ves-Arin elders. Night Hands guard the Hall which is rumored to contain hidden access to the station's defenses otherwise under Niandra's control. A black marble altar over which hovers a cloud of magnetic balls occupies a central part of the Hall. This shrine is dedicated to The Faceless — the only Icon officially praised on board.

NIANDRA'S EYES

The station's defenses, known locally as Niandra's Eyes, can be seen running along the hull like a thin line of thorns — sensor arrays, torpedo tubes and thermal cannons keeping the other factions and the worst of the corsairs at bay. The Eyes also handle incoming debris and drifting salvage junk. Thanks to being linked to the League's network of sensor buoys in the Belt, Niandra's Eyes see extremely far, making it virtually impossible to approach Masahir undetected. The occasional manual maintenance requires partial shutdowns but other than that, the system is all-seeing and as good as fully automated.

THE TRADE DISTRICT

Most of the hauler's old warehouses and machine halls nowadays contain the trade district, which is open to visitors without special clearance. Weapons are allowed but the Odaconian way, the odac-wali, ensures the peace. When fate needs a bit of a push to get its way, Night Hand patrols are always close by.

A newcomer's first look at the station after leaving the central corridor in the spaceport is of two huge chambers supported by row upon row of dura pillars in gold and white. Bright strings of lights high above produce stark shadows down on the ground. The first chamber is often full to the brim with bars of different metals, stacked high inside bio-coded gravnets, making them surprisingly easy to transport after being purchased. Come auction day, the auctioneer takes to a raised platform at the center of the chamber to sell the goods refined by the smeltery to the highest bidder.

The second chamber contains the vast Souk of the Founders where partitions mounted between the pillars create a confusing maze of narrow streets and alleys. Everything from Ash Belt artifacts, ancient furniture excavated from Qayna and hot meals to cattle, exotic pets and narcotics can be found here. Corridors high above the bustling streets lead to the many residential units and coffin hotels that offer cheap accommodations to both temporary and long-term guests. The station's modest infirmary can also be found in the souk, run by the hard-working twin brothers Radi and Samir.

Through a large gate past the Souk of the Founders, one reaches what used to be the bulk hauler's mess hall. Red carpets cover the floors and exotic pelts hang from the ceiling supports like war banners. This is the Warda-Alnuji Cantina, named after the hauler and run by the industrious humanite Ilu Ves-Arin. The furniture is a bohemian mix of Odaconian antiques, rugs from Sadaal and Miran tapestries. The tunnels underneath the cantina house the so-called Tech Caves, a specialized market for tech merchants and engineers ready to sell and mount new modules and weapons on visiting crafts. There are hundreds of vendors in the Caves and newcomers often find themselves lost in the ozone-smelling labyrinth.

Even further in, visitors reach the Lily Garden, the station's arboretum. The module has been assembled over time from various gardens and chapels from scrapped shipwrecks, having grown so much that it now fills several domes on the upper decks, each with its own biotope. The different gardens are brought together by a silvery brook running through them, and the water lilies found on its surface give the gardens their name. They were once planted by one of the original scavengers who found the wreckage.

ILU VES-ARIN

A Ves-Arin elder who gave up their post as governor to be a bartender. Owner and operator of the Warda-Alnuji Cantina, the watering hole everyone ends up in eventually. Ilu has blue facial tattoos, dark honey-colored skin and a wide smile. Rings from distant worlds on their fingers bear witness to a curious nature, but behind the friendly facade of smiles and stiff drinks, Ilu leads another life — as a Nazareem cultist. The faction has members spread out across Odacon searching for lost U'Haya artifacts. They are trying to find their way home to Rusah and the faction's lost temples there.

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BARKHAD ESSA

The Mineralium is guarded both by Niandra and by squads of Night Hands, making sure the precious metal bars only ever leave the station with paying customers. Auctioneer Barkhad Essa is an aging stevedore akbar from Yastapol who traded the ship cemeteries for the Ash Belt when he felt old age start to set in. He now presides over the weekly auctions – the Market of the Fates, held every nine days – covered in thick furs, heavy jewelry and richly embroidered robes. He announces the lots in a deep voice after which three rounds of silent bidding begins. If several bidders offer the same winning bid, chance decides who walks away with the merchandise. Few know that Barkhad has hacked Niandra, allowing him to keep lots off the books and smuggle them out for illegal sales at the portal station Khôban. He is establishing an informal network of contacts for himself, one day hoping to be able to overthrow the vile humanites in power and assume the role of captain of Masahir Station. The Colonial Agency has recently started showing an interest in these dreams of his.

AQIL DIN VAAR

An astronic in early retirement from the portal station in Kua. Nowadays, he tends to the Lily Garden, treating it as holy ground where everyone is welcome for some peace and quiet. Aqil's cousin is with the Special Branch, however, and the Colonial Agency is working desperately to find a suitable agent that could help them pave the way for a takeover of the station.

SANYA NYALA

Freighter captain Sanya and her crew are frequent visitors to Masahir – so much so that they have claimed a residential floor in the trade district for themselves and have started a small protection racket. Bribes and promises of backup in the future have so far kept the Night Hands off their backs. Sanya is secretly working for the Syndicate and her gang, the Ash Corps, are planning to take control of several of the businesses and stores that have popped up over the years. Sanya has a soft spot for gambling, however, and often lets fate spend her birr on careless thrills.

THE FIRE OF THE ICONS

The PCs are sworn into an operation only a handful of people in the Horizon know of. Their patron has analyzed the information they've gathered during previous missions and formed an alliance with some of the other factions. Together, they've mapped out the ancient enemy's bases and put together a plan to destroy the Nazareem's Sacrifice, once and for all.

SCENARIO

"In the name of the Icons and for all our futures, meet us under the lotus in Nharmada. Eyes that see past the mirage may learn our enemy's dark agenda. Your actions have led you here and we're not about to let the children of the Beast manipulate us. We are here to finish what our ancestors began."

The cold light of Nharmada-A and her distant siblings cuts through the endless darkness. Agents, soldiers, corsairs, mercenaries — ship after ship jumps into the desolate system. Your patron and her allies have gathered here for one final mission. Rumors, ancient texts, interrogations — even torture — led you here, but the ends justify the means.

The plan feels plucked straight from the glyph-inscribed annals of the Order of the Pariah: coordinated attacks against the entirety of your unknowing enemy's network. You are the light that will burn away the darkness that is the Nazareem's Sacrifice. The Fire of the Icons that will pave the way for a new future...

BACKGROUND

Many of the Third Horizon factions have been searching for Nazareem bases for several months. They now convene "under the lotus" in a temporary alliance to launch a joint attack and destroy all known cells in one swift strike. Ship after ship arrives in Nharmada, each crew sending a representative to one of the large battleships for their mission orders.

Having found much of the evidence leading to the discovery of the resurrected Nazareem, the PCs are

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WITHOUT BLOODSHED

If the PCs play as a group that avoids combat you can have a strike team assigned to their command that takes care of the fighting. The PCs will then have to stake out and plan the assault on the base before sending in their soldiers. Alternatively, they can infiltrate the cell and plant bombs in the complex.

tasked by their patron to take part in the operation. Their job: wiping out one of the identified cells in a merciless, calculated attack.

THE MISSION

- Travel to the Valley of Death on Ordana.
- Annihilate the Nazareem cell.

THE COALITION

Depending on which patron the PCs work for, the composition of the secret alliance differs:

- **THE COVENANT OF RULERS:** Verion Sidonna of the Special Branch and Faida Din Hrama of the Hegemony have formed an alliance with the Legion and several of the more powerful Dabaran dars.
- **THE COVENANT OF OUTCASTS:** One of the Emissaries (***Emissary Lost***, page 190) has assembled the freedom fighters of the Horizon under one banner. Corsairs from Rimward Reach and the Quadrant of the Pillar, Algolan rebels and the League's armed forces, the Night Hands.
- **THE COVENANT OF THE MERCILESS:** The third alliance consists of the Order of the Pariah and the Draconites together with Black Lotus assassins from Ahlam's Temple.



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THE TRUTH

Analyses of the Nazareem network gives the alliance a pretty clear picture of the cult structure. Twenty-nine groups have been identified all across the Horizon and the forsworn have divided the targets between them. The Nazareem leaders from before the purge after the Portal Wars have been sleeping the centuries away in the shadows of the cadaver clocks — sarcophagi powered by the forces of the dark that keep their occupants safe until the return of the First Horizon. Meanwhile, new generations of cultists flock to the Beast and the sleeping masters. The cells have become integrated into the colonies and towns in which they operate, often to the point of being considered pillars of the community.

The PCs' target is one of these cells. It is made up of eight people, led by chief scientist Basira Al-Sarraf, that have founded and sustained a village in the Myu Valley on Ordana in the Quadrant of the Pillar. The barren soils have been turned fertile and the valley has become an oasis for the residents of the wasteland (see Scenario Location on page 166)



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TABLE 15: NPCS

NAME	STRENGTH	AGILITY	WITS	EMPATHY	SKILLS	TALENTS
Basira Al-Sarraf (Leader)	2	4	3	4	Primary: Command, Culture, Manipulation, Observation, Ranged Combat, Science	Talents: Beautiful, Heart of the Beast (page 113), Vestï Talents (page 103)
Elam Wasema (Botanist)	2	3	5	3	Primary: Medicurgy, Science, Survival Secondary: Culture, Ranged Combat, Technology	Talents: Biochemist (page 128)
Toran Matoush* (Negotiator)	2	3	4	4	Primary: Dexterity, Manipulation, Melee Combat, Ranged Combat Secondary: Data Djinn, Infiltration, Observation	Talents: Judge of Character
Noor Eni-Uáno (Head of security)	4	5	2	2	Primary: Command, Force, Melee Combat, Observation, Pilot Secondary: Ranged Combat, Technology	Talents: Third Eye
Farouk Nôrahk (Chief engineer)	2	3	5	3	Primary: Data Djinn, Observation, Technology Secondary: Force, Manipulation, Ranged Combat, Science	Talents: Intimidating, Tugul Talents (page 103)
Kaali Um-Oaka (Historian)	1	3	4	5	Primary: Culture Secondary: Manipulation, Medicurgy, Observation, Survival	Talents: Soothing
Eala Ubah (Shaman)	3	4	2	4	Primary: Dexterity, Infiltration, Mystic Powers Secondary: Culture, Observation, Survival	Talents: Blessing, Mind Reader, Heart of the Beast (page 113)
Panud Lél (Judge)	2	2	4	4	Primary: Culture, Dexterity, Manipulation, Ranged Combat Secondary: Infiltration, Observation, Science	Talents: Executioner, Seductive, Talisman Maker

*** The Homeguard are armed with Vulcan carbines and have one stun grenade each. They act as security for the elders and wear heavy armor (armor 6). They have the stats of "Soldier" from page 343 of the *Rulebook*. Ordinary farmers have the stats of "Ship Worker" from the same page.**

THE NAZAREEM

The village's eight elders are all followers of U'Haya. The reason for Basira Al-Sarraf coming to Mya Valley is the fact that it contains an ancient Nazareem temple that sunk into the river after the Wars. The cell found the temple completely submerged but has since then managed to drain it and keep it from flooding again by installing sturdy airlocks in the tunnels and a dura steel gate leading to the surface. One of the temple chambers contains a cadaver clock and two ancient masters sleeping in their sarcophagi. The village elders meet in the temple at least once per segment to praise the Beast and continue deciphering more of the ancient glyphs on the temple walls. Criminals sentenced to exile from the village are instead brought here and sacrificed to sustain the cadaver clock.

Instead of introducing NPCs in an event where they feature, the list above contains all the local Nazareem except the ancient masters. The latter are described in the "The sarcophagi" event (page 162).

- The elders have Reputation scores of 8.
- Their skill levels are 4 for primary skills and 2 for secondary (see Table 15).
- They all carry dura knives, acc pistols and light armor (Armor 3) and have access to the tools they need for their profession.

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- They each have a talisman depicting U'Haya that grants them a +1 to a roll of your choice.

EVENTS

The PCs first travel to Nharmada for the mission briefing (see the "A Gathering Storm" event) and then onward to the village of Cachi on Ordana. When they leave the first major event and start heading for the Quadrant of the Pillar, read the Bulletin quote from the following *Shift*:

- **EXODUS (PAGE 107)**

The main events are described below, but feel free to flavor the mission using the situations found under "Other events" (page 164).

BEGINNING: A GATHERING STORM

The PCs arrive in Nharmada and go to the agreed-upon coordinates. For maximum discretion, the forsworn arrive one by one, hours or days apart. You can have the PCs arrive last or keep them waiting a couple of days for the meet in absolute radio silence. The makeup of the alliance (page 156) determines which flagship eventually arrives:

- The *Asarita* battleship with Faida Din Hrama at the helm, escorted by torpedo ships from the Salakhad Flotilla, a couple of light Legion cruisers and a motley swarm of Dabaran warships.
- The corsair cruiser *Alora Pamka* ("The Carrier of Light") commanded by captain Ayna Nantoorah and owned by the leader of Rimward Reach, Akbar Rakiv Fatiman. The fleet around her consists of various rebellion freighters retrofitted for war and ancient nomad ships armed with new heavy weapons.
- At first, it appears as if the dreaded *Hammer of the Martyr* is coming, but it turns out to be her sister vessel, grand master Samesh Alim's flagship the *Naar-Amshaar*. Insect swarms of Order fighters protect the cruiser, the jet-black Draconite fleet and a handful of discreet courier vessels sent by Ahlam's Temple.

The briefing is short. The PCs either receive their target data as an encrypted data pulse or are taken on-board the alliance's flagship for a meeting. Afterward, the unlikely alliance scatters across the Horizon.

Cost: 0 DP (Mandatory)

PREPARATIONS

- **Arrival:** Either let your group play the meet in Nharmada or give them the information as an introduction and start playing as they arrive in Ordana.
- **Dilemma:** Their targets are deeply involved in the community they've created—they have families, children, friends, lovers—but above all: they care about the future of the village and play an important role in keeping it safe. If they disappear, the risks are high that the village loses its independence to the Ayuin Cartel (see the Scenario Location on page 166) or the Consortium.
- **End:** The PCs are left with the decision of how to proceed, but the scenario ends when they leave Ordana, regardless of their actions and choices.

NO SECOND CHANCES

If the PCs are arrested and exiled and then arrested again, they will be taken to the temple as sacrifices to the cadaver clock (See the "The sarcophagi" event on page 162).

COUNTDOWN

Give the PCs enough time to make the journey from Nharmada to Ordana, with margins for any obstacles you've planned along the way. Have them arrive in Cachi with a couple of days to spare, to allow for preparations and getting a read on their targets. Use physical objects to represent the countdown, such as dice or glass beads. Each token represents a full day.

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THE MISSION

The PCs' are given the following information about the targets:

- **LOCATION:** The Cachi fishing village in the Myu Valley in the massive Meng delta on the planet Ordana.
- **TARGETS:** Eight Nazareem agents living in the village. The PCs are given their names, pictures and occupations (page 158).
- **INFORMATION:** The cell is very discreet and cautious, but reports indicate that they are trying to pit the ruling groups of Ordana against each other while encouraging the delta peoples to rise up. The cell is believed to control an ancient artifact or a temple from before the Wars and they may have manipulated or enslaved the people of Cachi. The village elders are careful about who they let into the village and it is believed that they have sensor stations covering the valley around the village. Merchant caravans on river barges or ground loaders appear to be the only welcome visitors.
- **MISSION:** After identifying the targets and coming up with a plan, the PCs are expected to eliminate the cultists at a specific time.

THE VILLAGE OF HOPE

When the PCs arrive in Ordana, they first need to decide on how to travel to Cachi. Sensor posts in the valley do active sweeps, requiring them to pass a **PILOT** test at -2 to land their ship in the nearby mountains undetected. Failure results in being discovered and turned away, persisting to an arrest by the Homeguard.

They can opt for landing in a nearby town instead and acquire other means of transportation there, such as a river barge (2,000 birr) or a secondhand ground loader (8,000 birr). A successful **MANIPULATION** test can lower the cost by about half depending on how many sixes they roll. Going to Myu Valley on foot takes three days and leads through a parasite-infested swamp. Each day of the trek requires the PCs to consume one ration of food and clean water per person. Lack of food leads to a -1 on all physically demanding skill tests. Lack of water results in 1 point of damage per day that cannot be healed during the journey.

- **Survival:** At the cost of 2 DP, each PC must test **SURVIVAL**. Those who fail are stung by venomous insects or come down with a fever (both count as strength 4 poison attacks unless you prefer the "Jungle fever" rules from *Emissary Lost*, page 109). Critically successful rolls may be used to help less fortunate comrades.
- **Arrival:** When they reach the village, they can either hide nearby and monitor the goings-on or try to convince the villagers to take them in by claiming to be lost in the wilds and in need of aid (**MANIPULATION** -1) or by acting as traveling merchants trading in useful things (**MANIPULATION**). If the PCs came in their ship and landed without permission, the roll carries an additional -1 and if they fail, they risk arrest. Being arrested leads to a rudimentary trial ending in exile unless they manage to convince judge Panud of their friendly intentions (**MANIPULATION** -2). In exile, they can still keep watch from a distance.

Cost: 0, 2 DP (Mandatory)

THE LAY OF THE LAND

If the PCs either manage to convince the villagers to let them stay for a couple of days or find a good position from which to spy on the village, they can start identifying their targets, inadvertently also beginning to find out how much they mean to the community. Use the information on the next page to create emotional scenes and rumors.

Cost: 0 DP

NEW ORDERS

For 2 DP, an encrypted data package hidden inside their mission orders is activated on the last day before the attack is supposed to take place. The package contains new orders from the Hegemony through their intelligence agency, the Astûrban. The Zenithians have decided to propose a partnership with the Nazareem to try to benefit from the faction's forgotten artifacts, knowledge and allies. This event may be used regardless of who the PCs' patron is (even if they're already working for the Hegemony).

- ◇ **INFORMATION:** Three members of the cell have been identified as potential allies. The faction is believed to have vast technological knowledge, information about the butterfly ships and caches of ancient artifacts.
- ◇ **MISSION:** Initiate negotiations with the targets and offer them immunity for past crimes. Extract those who agree to cooperate, eliminate the rest. Deliver the targets to a contact on the Altai portal station.
- ◇ **TARGETS:** Basira Al-Sarraf (village leader), Farouk Nôrahk (engineer) and Eala Ubah (mystic).

- **Negotiations:** Approaching and negotiating with the three targets requires opposed **MANIPULATION** rolls. Have the

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cultists act in accordance with their characters, asking for protection for their families, relocation or new identities. Unless the PCs critically won the roll, however, the targets will secretly notify the other elders and prepare to evacuate. If the PCs fail the negotiations altogether, the cultist they tried to convince will either flee or, for 1 DP, assemble and execute a retaliatory strike against them.

Cost: 2-3 DP

⚙ ENDING: NIGHTFALL

The clock eventually strikes the hour for the attack in coordination with twenty-eight other locations around the Horizon. The strike will decimate the faction, hopefully beyond repair.

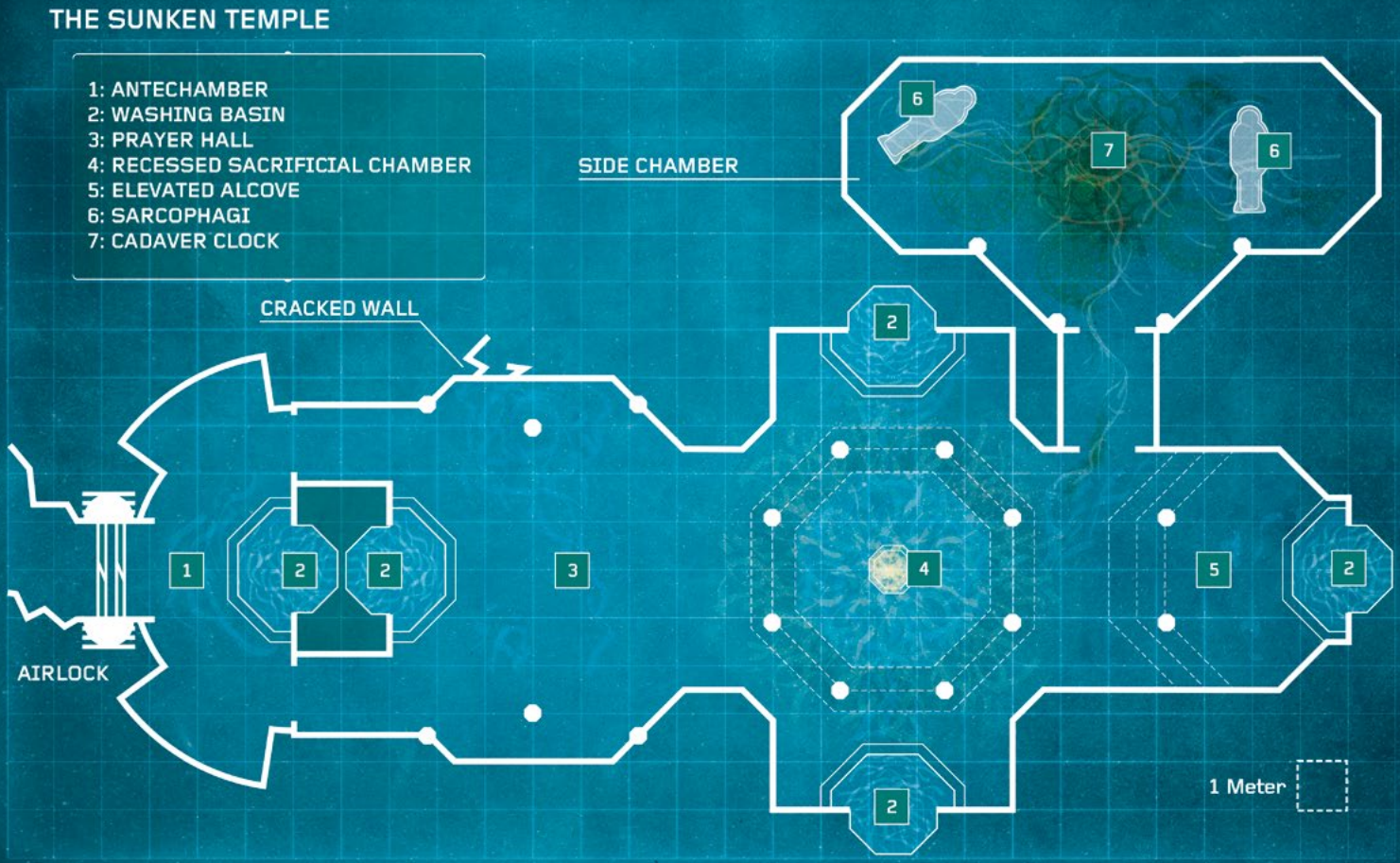
The PCs have put together a plan. As the sun sets, the attack begins. It is up to you to decide if the targets are scattered around the village or perhaps gathered for a council meeting. For 2 DP, you may introduce one or more of the complications below:

- **Ambush**: The Nazareem have figured out or been tipped off to the PCs' agenda. They have set up an ambush together with the Homeguard.
- **Someone's missing**: One or more of the cultists are late or missing, either because of a family emergency or because one of the two with substance issues has passed out in bed or with her drinking buddies. The PCs are forced to improvise or split up in order to hit all targets.
- **A Higher Power**: Two of the members are already at the temple and are waking up their masters from the sarcophagi. See the event "The sarcophagi" below.
- **Envoy**: One of the cultists, for example Eala the seer, contacts the PCs, claiming to know what they're about to do. She wishes to bargain for the lives of her friends.
- **Diversion**: One of the cultists contacts the PCs to negotiate with them or lure them into a trap. The purpose of the action is to stall the hunters to give the rest of the cell a chance to run, either out into the swamps or to their ship.
- **Renegades**: The PCs are contacted during or just before the attack by some of the cultists who wish to negotiate a ceasefire. If they are unable to dissuade the PCs from their violent intentions, they at least buy the others enough time to escape.
- **Collateral**: The Nazareem have figured out the PCs' intentions and gathered their families with them to act as human shields. When the PCs arrive, their targets are surrounded by children, lovers, partners and friends.

TABLE 16: THE PARAGON ELDERS

ELDER	REPUTATION
Basira Al-Sarraf	Leader of the elder council and loved by most. Responsible for developing the village and its resources. Married to botanist Elam Wasema with whom he has a teenage daughter, Piu, who works the silk fields.
Elam Wasema	Family man married to Basira. Improves the harvests through bio sculpting and agri-chemistry. The village's senior medicurg. Considered somewhat harsh and private by the villagers.
Toran Matoush	Police master and negotiator with a reputation for being fair, if somewhat overprotective. Has three young children with Dahak and Safa Matoush, a couple from the Ubah clan. Often accompanies Safa on hunting trips to reduce the number of predatory animals in the valley.
Noor Eni-Uáno	The villagers avoid Noor and whisper about her dark desires. She is short-tempered and prone to punishing her subjects. Her growing paranoia comes partly from her opor addiction.
Farouk Nôrahk	Inventor of renowned wit celebrated by the villagers for his farming machinery. Considered a good teacher but suffers from severe alcoholism and has been the subject of many love triangles and much jealousy.
Kaali Um-Oaka	Loved by the village's children for his stories of Ordana's past. Widower with eight adult children of his own and twenty-one grand-children, most of whom work in the rice fields or at the textile mill.
Eala Ubah	A teenage girl considered marked by the Icons and therefore worthy of a place at the council. As the village's shaman, she is primarily left alone save for in matters of divination or holy medicine.
Panud Lél	Courtesan Panud lives in a grand family with three other men and four women. They have a whole litter of children whom they raise communally. Well-liked and considered a fair judge.

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Regardless of the details, the cultists will fight for their lives but retreat to the temple to seek aid from their masters if the PCs are too powerful. If the PCs manage to capture the targets, they contact their sleeping masters telepathically. This brings the masters out of the sarcophagi at a power level of your choosing (see next event). Unless the PCs are discreet, the villagers will take up arms to defend their elders. Use the "Mob" rules from page 220.

Cost: Varies (See above, mandatory)

⚙ THE SARCOPHAGI

The PCs either find the temple by following the cultists or by searching the lands around the village. They should find it at the end of the scenario.

A massive airlock covers the temple entrance (**DATA DJINN** -1 or **TECHNOLOGY** -2 to breach) behind which lies a vast chamber of black marble. Oxidized copper sheets carved with patterns resembling running blood cover the round ceiling, peppered with thousands of tiny holes set with crystal glass. Faint sunlight filters in through the murky waters of the Sie river above. A second chamber can be found further in.

- **The Sarcophagi**: The second chamber holds two jet black sarcophagi, glowing with an oily luster. Glyphs predating the Portal Wars cover them and they give off an unnerving sense of motion. A mesh of moss-like silvery threads hanging down from the ceiling appears to have fused with the metal lids.
- **The Cadaver Clock**: A series of inscribed, slowly turning discs hangs from the ceiling above the coffins. Three desiccated bodies hang from hooks on the edges of the discs, two of which are no more than dried skin and bones but the third appears to be a much more recent death. Raw darkness vibrates through the room, a shroud of death and decay

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covers everything like a clammy mist, and upon entering, the PCs feel a heavy weight pressing down on them. This is a cadaver clock, keeping the sleeping masters alive by leeching energy from the sacrifices.

- **The Masters**: The sarcophagi contain two ancient Nazareem masters: one man, Rahan, and one woman, Nuaya. At least one of them is still alive and they will use their dark powers to turn or destroy the PCs. See NPC box.
  - **0 DP:** Without DP spending, only one Master is alive, waking up at level two (see "Awakening", page 164), severely weakened.
  - **1 DP:** One Master still lives, waking up at level three.
  - **2 DP:** Both Masters are alive but weak, starting at level one.
  - **3 DP:** Both Master are alive and at level two.
  - You can also start by waking one of the Masters (0-1 DP) and then bring the other into the fight at level one later for 1 more DP.

Cost: 0, 1-3 DP (Mandatory)

RAHAN & NUAYA, MASTERS OF THE NAZAREEM'S SACRIFICE

"Our vision is clear. Surrender yourselves to us and leave society's constraints behind."

Rahan and Nuaya were merchants brought up in the bustling nomad fleet, and became mystics in the Nazareem's Sacrifice just before the Portal Wars. They manipulated and infiltrated the civilizations in the Quadrant of the Pillar and tried to turn the Janhagir fleet gurus against the Order of the Pariah at the end of the Wars, but were too late. When they heard the news of the burning of Odacon and the loss of the fortress on Rusah, they fled to a hidden temple on Ordana and went to sleep in the shadow of the cadaver clock.

APPEARANCE: The years since the Wars have taken their toll. The once enthralling beauty of the Masters has been replaced by sunken eyes in bony faces with leathery skin covered in a thin layer of cracked white ash – a side effect of the sustaining but corrupting power of the sarcophagi. They look old but soon regain their full mobility (see "Awakening" below).

CHARACTERISTICS: At first, the Masters are hunched over and their voices raspy and weak, but as they regain their strength, they stand up straight, majestic, and their caressing, melodic voices reverberate through the chamber.



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NEW TALENT: EYE OF INSANITY (NAZ)

Nazareem talent. For 1 DP, one target within Short range is challenged to an opposed **MYSTIC POWERS** roll. If you beat the target, she suffers a mania (page 337 of the *Rulebook*) plus 1 point of stress for each winning six. If this breaks the target, the mania becomes permanent, available for GM activation in the same way as a personal problem.

NEW TALENT: FIELD OF DARKNESS (NAZ)

Nazareem talent. For 2 DP, dark doubts creep into the minds of all targets of your choice within Long range. Each victim must test **EMPATHY** or **MYSTIC POWERS**. If they fail, all non-permanent talents become unusable for this turn and the next. Each DP generated during these turns, such as from prayer rerolls, adds one turn to the effect. The darkness makes the targets forget what they've learned or makes their synapses unable to communicate with their cybernetics. Only humanite talents, bionics and passive cybernetics (such as Armor) remain unaffected.

ATTRIBUTES:
STRENGTH 1/2/3/4/5, AGILITY 2/2/2/4/5, WITS 1/2/3/4/5, EMPATHY 2/3/3/5/5

HIT POINTS: 5/6/7/10/12

MIND POINTS: 3/5/6/9/10

REPUTATION: 8

SKILLS: Force 1/2/3/3/3, Manipulation 5, Melee Combat 3, Dexterity 2/3/5/5/8, Ranged Combat 3, Observation 4, Command 5, Culture 8, Mystic Powers 2/3/4/4/5, Technology 2, Science 4

TALENTS: Heart of the Beast (page 113), Lover's Embrace (page 113), two of the following per Master (rules found below): Eye of Insanity, Call of the Void, Field of Darkness, War Dance, Kinetic Absorption

ARMOR: 0/1/2/4/6 (also see "Kinetic Absorption", page 166)

GEAR: Dura blade (sword), ancient tunic, worn book in a forgotten tongue containing the Nazareem doctrines.

- **AWAKENING (1 DP):** The Masters awaken gradually, represented by attributes and skills changing as the darkness grows:
  - **FOR EXAMPLE:** "Wits 1/2/3/4/5" means that the attribute score is 1 on level one, 2 on level two, all the way up to 5 on the fifth and final level.

If a PC generates DP or reaches either 0 HP or 0 MP, the energy released can be harnessed by the Masters to progress one power level (affecting all leveled stats). If a Master has been Broken, she can instead use the energy to get back up as each new level gives her additional HP and MP (unless already at level five, of course). If you run out of DP, a Master can devolve to a lower level, giving you 4 new DP.

- **ACTIONS:** 3 AP / 3 AP / 4 AP / 2 initiative rolls per turn (3 AP) / 2 initiative (4 AP)

OTHER EVENTS

Below are some other events that may occur on the mission:

THE RIVER RATS

A group of merchants arrives on a river barge and two ground loaders. After a bit of haggling with the elders, carriers begin loading the barge with dried rice, silks and vats of salt. If the PCs are in the village when this happens, one of the carriers may recognize them from the Bulletin for 1 DP. This makes the elders suspicious but could lead to several villagers asking the PCs for a blessing from the Chosen Ones.

Cost: 0, 1 DP

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EXILED

A local laborer is exiled by the elders for a violent robbery that left the victim dead. A statement made by judge Panud announces the verdict after a short trial: exile. Later in the evening, the convict is escorted out of the village by police master Toran Matoush. A successful **OBSERVATION** test at -1 allows the PCs to follow them to a cave in the hillside without being seen. Failure means Toran notices he is being followed and instead leads the convict a couple of kilometers out into the wilderness where he executes her. This generates 1 DP.

The cave in the hillside leads to a locked airlock protecting the entrance to the temple. See "The sarcophagi," page 162.

Cost: 0 DP

RESONANCE: THE CADAVER CLOCK

Mystic PCs may suffer violent nightmares while in the village or valley:

- **1 DP**: The affected feel lightheaded and shaky. Test **MYSTIC POWERS**. Failure leads to 1 point of stress.
- **2 DP**: The affected are suddenly blinded and hear their heartbeats toll like temple bells in their heads. A stench of death and rot fills their nostrils. Test **MYSTIC POWERS**. Failure means 2 points of stress and one hour of blindness.
- **3 DP**: The affected are overcome by anxiety and thoughts of death. They wish to run far away. Test **MYSTIC POWERS**. Failure results in 2 points of stress after which the person desperately tries to flee out into the wilds, screaming at the top of their lungs.

Mystic PCs also have the following vision:

"Under copper ceilings set with stars lie two dark husks, like scarabs the size of humans, light bending and refracting from their oily elytra. Scrolling patterns glimmer in the faint light and the carvings burn your eyes. Serve the Masters. Praise the Beast. Life from Death. Somewhere in the shadows, you hear a grating wheel turn around and around, and the faint whimpers from a body slowly being consumed by darkness."

Cost: 1-3 DP

THE HOMEGUARD

The Homeguard patrols are more and more frequent in the areas where the PCs move about. If the PCs are outside the village, they will notice hunting parties guarding against predators, and if they instead have infiltrated the settlement,

NEW TALENT: CALL OF THE VOID (NAZ)

Nazareem talent. At the cost of 2 DP, you open a temporary rift to the dark between the stars which creates a corrupting implosion near a target within Short range. Everyone within Close range of the target is also affected. Targets may dodge reactively (1 AP) by testing **DEXTERITY** (critical success may save one additional victim within Close range). Failure results in a strength 3 fire attack (Fire 3, CRIT 1). In your next turn, the fire dies and the rift closes.

NEW TALENT: WAR DANCE

Primarily used by Ahlam's Black Lotuses, Nazareem Masters or Seeker gurus.

At the cost of 1 DP, you give in to the Dancer's ecstasy and enter a frenzy that turns your arms and melee weapons into a whirlwind of rending violence. You lose the rest of your actions but may attack up to five times within Short range. State the number of attacks you're making before rolling any dice. Attack using **DEXTERITY** instead of **MELEE COMBAT**. If you manage to damage your target with an attack you must continue with the next attack, aimed at the same or another target. If an attack fails to deal damage, you suffer 2 points of damage or stress (your choice) and the frenzy breaks.

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NEW TALENT: KINETIC ABSORPTION [BIO/CYB]

This is either a bionic sculpt or full body, subdermal cybernetics.

Your muscles or your skin has been enhanced with alloys or micro djinn that regenerate within seconds if damaged by trauma, explosions, fire or acid. This gives you an ablative armor that automatically reduces the first wound you receive each turn by 2. The cybernetics version of this talent requires extremely straining surgery, tripling the normal recovery time.

- **Cost:** 30,000 birr (BIO), 12,000 birr (CYB)

HOMEGUARD NPCS

Homeguard personnel are armed with Vulcan carbines and have one stun grenade each. They wear heavy armor (armor 6). They have the stats of "Soldier" from page 343 of the *Rulebook*.

they seem to be constantly watched. Evading or losing the Homeguard requires an **INFILTRATION** test.
Cost: 1 DP

AFTERMATH

The PCs eventually leave Ordana, having carried out, abandoned or failed their original mission. Regardless of the outcome, they have taken part in a large-scale attack on the Nazareem, the other parts of which they may come to hear about — strange deaths and murders have apparently occurred all over the Horizon. No one seems to be connecting the dots but local authorities are investigating. Police officials are bribed to keep quiet, or eliminated by agents of the covenant if they get too close to the truth.

NEW PATRON

If the PCs stayed true to their patron throughout this final scenario, they may continue to do so. If they decided to help the Astûrban, however, they could now choose to work for commander Faida Din Hrama instead (page 180).

SHIFTS

After leaving Ordana and reporting back to their employer, they get a few days of well-earned rest. After that, the time has come for the final scenario of this book, *In the Shadow of the Zenith*. A couple of quiet days later, read the Bulletin quote about the following *Shift* to the group:

- **NEW CANDIDATES (PAGE 108)**

SCENARIO LOCATION

THE VALLEY OF DEATH

The planet Ordana, located on the safest route of the Miran chain through the Quadrant of the Pillar, is a world of industrialized farmlands and factories mainly under the control of the Ayuin Cartel. The so-called Valley of Death is located near the equator in the Myu Valley just before the Sie river merges with the fertile wetlands of the Meng delta and the South Merid Ocean. The valley takes its name from being the place where the biosculpted Banzin crops were first tried out — an experiment that ended in an uncontrolled mutation in the crops attracting catastrophic numbers of spider larvae. All other plants suffocated and the valley turned into a dead swamp. Many years later, a group of bionics and explorers from

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Mira, led by a scientist named Basira Al-Sarraf, settled in the area and began reversing the effects of the failed experiment.

Thanks to Basira Al-Sarraf's knowledge of bionics, the growing population of the small village of Cachi has managed to clear the surrounding area of the hungry larvae. The marshland is gradually being turned into rice fields and fish plantations, prompting the Meng peoples to call Cachi "The Village of Hope". Silkworms thrive in the reeds and the mineral water coming off the mountain sides in the spring is collected in large pools for rich salt harvests during the fall. Boats and artfully decorated stilt huts surround the farms. Once per segment, swamp boats from the Meng delta arrive to ferry Cachi's export goods further up the river to the caravan of sand crawlers that once again traverses Ordana's wide plains.

⚙ CACHI

Cachi is the result of hard work. A Miran research team and a couple of colonists have founded a stable, functioning community with the help of some of the farmer and trader clans of the Meng delta. A class III exploratory vessel, the *Em-Noash*, sits in the middle of the village, acting as city hall for the Founders' Council, living quarters and research lab for the Miran scientists, and infirmary for the population.

BASIRA AL-SARRAF

An aging Miran scientist and a wise ruler in the village, acting both as chair of the Founders' Council and as lead developer for the expansion of the village. She is bionically Beautiful (page 76 of the *Rulebook*) which bears witness to the wealth and vanity of her parents.

ELAM WASEMA

A middle-aged man, also from Mira, who works methodically and in silence with the village's crops to develop better fertilizer and ways to combat pests and fungi.

TORAN MATOUSH

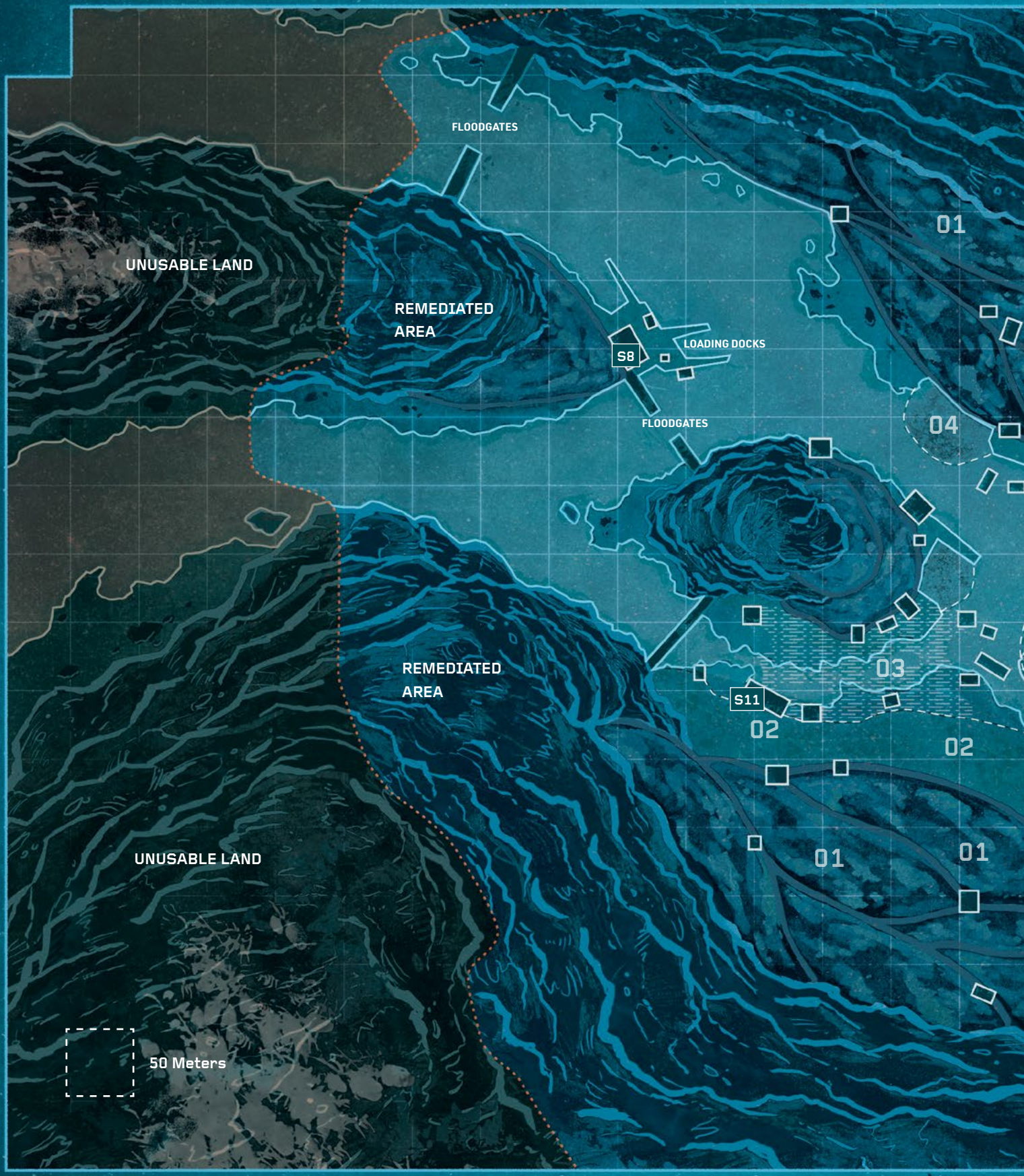
A linguist and silver-tongued administrator with a sterling reputation whose primary responsibility is negotiating trade agreements with the Cartel and the Consortium. He is also the village's police master, commanding the Homeguard militia tasked with keeping

THE PLANET ORDANA

- **DIAMETER:** 9,798 km (approx. 80% of Kua)
- **GRAVITY:** 0.8 standard gravity
- **DAY LENGTH:** 22 hours
- **SIDEREAL YEAR:** 243 days
- **AXIAL TILT:** 16 degrees
- **GOVERNANCE:** The Ayuin Cartel
- **CAPITAL CITY:** Ayuin
- **CONFLICTS:** The Hayrangi Group of the Hayrangi space station. Negotiations with the Consortium. Battle in the Meng delta with the Leopards of Ayyutta.
- **POPULATION:** Farmers, fishermen and factory workers. Descendants of the Tao family whose lineage can be traced back to the ruined city of Ayyutta.

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THE VALLEY OF DEATH, ORDANA



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THE VILLAGE
S1: THE FOUNDERS' SPACESHIP
S2: THE COUNCIL CHAMBERS
S3: THE FOUNDERS' LIVING QUARTERS
S4: RESEARCH LAB
S5: INFIRMARY
S6: WORKSHOP
S7: STILL
S8: BARRACKS OF THE HOMEGUARD
S9: FISH MARKET
S10: TOOL SHED
S11: SPINNING FACTORY

THE FARMS
O1: RICE FIELDS
O2: SALT POOLS
O3: SILKWORMS
O4: PISCICULTURES

THE FOUNDERS' SPACESHIP





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THE MENG PEOPLES

The Meng peoples who sought and found happiness in Cachi are mainly from three local clans: Oaka, Ubah and Lél. The Oaka family are ancient natives of the Myu Valley who after a nomadic period have returned to found a new society together with the river nomads of the Ubah and the fishermen and rice farmers of the Lél. Each of the clan leaders has been given seats at the Founder's Council by the Miran settlers

MAJOR CHARACTERS

The five Miran founders and the heads of the three Meng peoples are the main NPCs in the village. See page 158 for stats and skill levels.

the villagers safe from the local fauna, mediating in village disputes, and arresting and prosecuting suspected criminals.

OOR ENI-UÁNO

The *Em-Noash's* former captain and the leader of the colonist contingent of the Miran expedition. She oversees the work teams in the rice fields and fish plantations and puts her paranoia to good use in keeping the ship sensors maintained and staffed at all hours to spot unannounced visitors.

FAROUK NÔRAHK

A muscular Tugul humanite from the Miran steppes (see "Humanites in the Horizon," page 103). He is Noor's long-time chief engineer and leads a small group of technicians who build and maintain the village's heavy machinery. Farouk also runs the rice wine distillery which has led to him developing a drinking problem.

KAALI UM-OAKA

Kaali is soon turning one hundred years old and is rarely seen outside the council chambers. He has been given his own cabin on the ship and is considered by many to be the village's historian and lore-keeper. Those patient enough to listen can learn a lot about the history of Ordana and about the struggles of the Meng clans since before the Portal Wars.

EALA UBAH

A young woman just reaching puberty. Her clan has elected her as their spokesperson because she is considered to have been touched by the Icons. Eala has the mystical power Mind Reader (page 78 of the *Rulebook*) and she can often be seen leading the rituals that bless new farmland.

PANUD LÉL

An older man with tattoos across his entire, well-shaped body whose training at the Courtesan Academy on Mira makes him respected by all the different groups in the village. He is therefore the village's acting judge and is considered a direct descendant of the fist prince of the mythic Tao family, Achalen Sien Tao. He takes great pride in celebrating the greatness of the Tao.

PLACES

Below are some of the places of interest and important characters described:

⚙ THE FOUNDERS' SPACESHIP

The Miran settlers arrived about ten Kuan cycles ago and began cleaning up the swamp. Their ship, the *Em-Noash*, landed in the middle of the Myu Valley and hasn't moved since. It is an old, pre-War freighter, originally from the Darkos yards in Kua, that has been heavily modified and turned into an exploratory vessel by Chelebs on Mira.

The *Em-Noash* is nowadays covered in stilt huts and landing platforms for gravcraft and small shuttles.

- The reactor is still active, powering the large lab and arboretum where new crop strains and fertilizers are being experimented with. Elam the botanist also keeps one of the corridors lined with terrariums and aquariums full of pests, parasites and fish hatchlings.
- The main cargo hold has been furnished and the walls

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covered in plants. This room functions as council chambers, courtroom, and assembly hall for major statements from the elders or for rituals.
- A modest infirmary can be found near the main entrance.
- The lower decks house several cabins and a rec room with a kitchen. This is where the elders and some of the Miran colonists live.
- An old service module and the engine room function as a workshop for building and tending to the village's farming machinery.
- The bridge is staffed around the clock, despite the landlocked status of the ship. Sections of the sensor rigs have been moved to high poles in the wetlands surrounding the village to give them better reach. Former captain Noor Eni-Uáno doesn't like unannounced visitors and can often be seen personally interviewing newcomers about their business in Cachi.

THE VILLAGE

Most of the buildings around the ship are either warehouses or homes for the locals. The high stilt houses are connected to each other via moored boats, the occasional grav loader or bridges, ladders and rope lifts. The roofs are flat and often have wide terraces used for growing food. Long drainpipes lead the monsoon rains from the houses directly onto the rice fields.
- Near the large rice warehouses just below one of the high cliffs, chief engineer Farouk Nôrakh and his team operate a small distillery where they make very potent rice wine.
- One of a few buildings in the village built directly on the ground is a large concrete house on the outskirts. Originally constructed — and occasionally still used — as a floodgate to divert water from the Sie during the spring floods, it also houses a gym and the offices and living quarters of the Homeguard, the village's militia and police force. Makeshift holding cells for convicts awaiting trial can also be found here.

THE FARMS

Wide rice fields cut through the village itself, extending out onto the flat terraces built by the villagers along the slopes of the mountain. Rice is Cachi's main source of income, but the wetlands allow for other, more lucrative enterprises as well:
- The runoff from one of the mountainsides consists of a salt-rich mineral water that the villagers collect and evaporate in wide pools. Myu salt has become a sought-after delicacy in luxury restaurants in the capital Ayuin.
- The wetlands are rich with life and several families in the village tend carefully to the symbiotic relationship with the Kaori, a carp-like fish that helps keep pests from the crops. If left to multiply freely, however, the fish would destroy the harvest by eating the rice shoots.
- A specialized type of silkworm thrives in the reed fields near the mountain slopes. The children of Cachi often help the village by collecting the cocoons for the textile mill where they are turned into beautiful silk fabrics.

ENDING

Months of secret missions, mystery and clashes with the Nazareem are finally over. *The Cyclade Dance* has left the PCs in a divided Horizon. The First Horizon appears to have been pushed back, but the Council of Factions is in a deeper crisis than ever before.
- The Nazareem's Sacrifice has been severely crippled.
- Aiwaz is under an Order blockade.
- Many humanites have been conscripted or enslaved to break the Free League's strike.
- Ahlam's Temple and the Free League have officially denounced Coriolis.
- The Zenithian Hegemony and the Consortium have joined forces on the secret construction of the Nadir Flotilla in Sadaal.
- The Janhagir Fleet is missing.
- The PCs have potentially made new enemies of one or several factions by turning down or changing patrons over the course of the cycle.

There is talk of a snap election to reaffirm the legitimacy of the Council and the rising of the stevedores has stoked the fire in the hearts of the other hands. The PCs are finally able to rest and may visit friends and family again, but as the Pilgrimaria draws nearer, they are once again contacted by their patron…

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IN THE SHADOW OF THE ZENITH

Oh, Zenith.
A thousand years of night brought you here.
Your light is our light.
Your blood is our people.
Your body is our home.
A bright future emerges from your shadow.
Without you, all is darkness.

SPEECH BY GOVERNOR ABSINA LEKTELI, CORIOLIS, CC26

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INTRODUCTION

The third and final scenario in this book takes the PCs back to Coriolis after a dramatic series of segments. The Council of Factions is preparing for the unprecedented snap election. Promises have been broken. Strikes and riots haunt the Horizon. The Zenithians and the Order of the Pariah appear on the brink of war. The Pilgrimaria is drawing near and the faithful flock to Coriolis to seek the Icons' guidance for the unknown path ahead.

IN THE SHADOW OF THE ZENITH leads both the PCs and the dramatic focus of the Third Horizon back to Kua and Coriolis. Their patron's final mission involves tracking down an important contact somewhere on Coriolis: an influential defector carrying information that threatens both the status quo and the secret plans of the Zenithian rulers. What will the group do once they find their target — eliminate them or keep them safe? And how will the other factions working in the shadows react to the Third Horizon possibly changing for good?

BACKGROUND

The cycle that began after the PCs' return from the portal collapse in Uharu, at the end of *The Uharan Echo*, has seen the Horizon grow more and more politically polarized. Over the course of *The Cyclade Dance*, the Council went through one scandal after another and their grip on power in the cluster is now slipping. Strikes and riots, torn-up trade agreements, border conflicts — the problems stack up and the Council is accused of corruption and misuse of power. The year is CC63 and the Pilgrimaria is at hand, the grand celebration that closes the segment of the Judge and ushers in the cycle's final triad.

POLITICAL SCANDALS

Months of backstabbing and conflict have changed the makeup of the Council and created a new diplomatic landscape in the Horizon. The rumors of corruption are the population's main concern for questioning the role of the Council. See the independent media report boxes under "Shifts in the Horizon" in *The Cyclade Dance*, pages 92 through 108.

ELECTION YEAR

When the Council of Factions cannot neglect the angry voice of the people anymore, a snap election is called for, to be held during the cycle's last triad in an attempt to quell social unrest and get the rioters off the barricades. The election campaign will start after the Pilgrimaria and the makeup of the future Council is on everybody's lips — who will be elected to fill their respective factions' seats? Speculations and analyses flood the news everywhere you go and many dignitaries travel to Coriolis, or send their agents, trying to influence the elections.

OVERVIEW

After months of work for one or more patrons (*The Cyclade Dance*), the PCs are contacted for a final job — the "handling" of defector Nigelia Kurahan (page 176). She is believed to have incriminating information about a secret pact that could rock the entire cluster if it came to light. Depending on the loyalties of the PCs and their patron, they might either be Kurahan's saviors or her executioners.

ACT 1 – THE RETURN (PAGE 184)

The Segment of the Judge, CC63: In the first act, the PCs return to Kua. Coriolis has become an overpopulated pressure cooker because of the upcoming Pilgrimaria, and social tensions run high with everyone holding their breath for the Council candidate announcements. The atmosphere on the station is agitated — a major clash between rioters and Judicators appears unavoidable. Time is short for the PCs to find their target after learning that enemy agents are also looking for her.

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ACT 2 – THE DEFECTOR (PAGE 204)

The PCs finally find the defector and step back in surprise — it is Nigelia Kurahan, their judge patron for the Mysticides investigation during *Emissary Lost*. She is being protected by Draconite Council member Mandragor Ho and the PCs must now make a choice regarding if and how they should proceed with their mission. Meanwhile, a rigged election is rushed through the Assembly — nothing more than a coup to secure the Zenithians' grip on power — and a large group of mystics travel to the Monolith on Kua to prepare for an attack. One of the mystics is Kurahan's youngest son. The PCs must decide if they are to stop, assist or ignore the mystics.

ACT 3 – NEW HORIZON (PAGE 218)

Depending on how the PCs handle judge Kurahan and her information, they will either travel to the Monolith or try to escape pursuing agents on Coriolis. The conflict between Zenithians and Firstcome nears a breaking point and the Children of the Song break into the Monolith to activate the enormous artifact. The PCs must run for their lives as Sky City crumbles and Coriolis falls from the sky in a massive explosion. With the Zenithians' central hub gone, the balance of power in the Third Horizon changes forever.

EPILOGUE

The Legion and the Zenithian fleets have been severely decimated and rally around key Zenithian colonies and business assets. The Rimward Reach asteroid station of Djachroum becomes the temporary seat of power in Kua when several Firstcome factions gather there and form the Horizon Council. The new Council is primarily concerned with mediating in the territorial conflicts bound to arise in the vacuum of power left behind by the destruction of Coriolis.

FACTIONS AND GROUPS

Several groups and factions are active in the events leading up to the snap election and the Monolith's discharge. The main line of conflict is between Firstcome and Zenithians, but the proxy war between the First and Second Horizon simmers in the shadows. The proxy war is far from over and its antagonists continue to move their pawns across the shah board.

POLITICAL DISTANCE

Depending on the PCs' group concept and their interest in the politics of the Third Horizon, different events in the scenario should be emphasized. If they play as correspondents or scheming agents, the political machinations and negotiations of the factions could be central to your campaign – contradictory reports, deals and rumors acting as plot devices for the PCs to investigate. If your group is more salt-of-the-earth adventurers, such as smugglers or mercenaries, the consequences of the changing Horizon could instead become street-level experiences – riots, mass arrests, higher customs fines or closed portal stations. Adapt the level of political intrigue to fit your group.

NEW RULE: MANIPULATED MYSTICS

The leaders of the Second Horizon, the Santulans, are automatically better at manipulating mystics. When using **SPIRIT SHIFT**, **TRANSLOCATION**, **PREVENT**, **FORBID**, **DOMINATE** and **MEMORY STEALER** (*Emissary Lost*, page 193-194), the victim gets a -2 to her roll to resist. Powers that over time require concentration to maintain no longer cost an action for the Santulan, unless she becomes Broken.

If multiple Santulans work together, the mind control can affect groups of people:

- 2 Santulans: 10 victims
- 3 Santulans: 100 victims
- 4 Santulans: 1.000 victims
- 5 Santulans: 10.000 victims

The mind control works over long distances as long as the Santulans meditate. In the group, take the highest individual **EMPATHY** and the highest individual **MYSTIC POWERS** score to determine your dice pool for the roll. Each Santulan after the first one enables one additional prayer reroll.

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THE ZENITHIANS

After years of political skirmishes and economical competition, the Consortium and the Zenithian Hegemony unite behind a single goal — complete Zenithian dominance in the Third Horizon. The agents of the Nazareem's Sacrifice have whispered in their ears about warmongering Zalosian martyrs and about the risks of giving the reactionary Firstcome a seat at the table — they are slaves to superstition, after all. The Hegemony has long felt threatened by the aggressive expansion of the Colonial Agency but new agreements allow for joint growth. Thanks largely to lobbyist Ana Din Eusidia, the two factions have also formed a defensive pact and are using the Consortium dockyards in Sadaal to construct a secret, cooperative fleet: the Nadir Flotilla.

THE FIRSTCOME

Over the last cycles, the Firstcome factions have become more fractured and politically sidelined than ever. The Church of the Icons is trying to increase its dealings with the Zenithian factions and some of the other Firstcome have decided to leave the playing field altogether, preferring to influence the agenda from the shadows.

The Free League: The faction's previously fruitful relationship with the Consortium has taken a turn for the worse after the strike and the breaking of it through the Humanite Act. Vicious attacks at the Council accuse the League of siding with the Firstcome and several heavy names, among them the Bulletin, are starting to refer to the faction as anti-Zenithian.

The Nomad Federation: The Nomad Federation has done its best to stay out of the Horizon's political bloodsports, instead focusing on stopping Zenithian expansion into the Quadrant of the Pillar for many years. After more and more alarming reports of butterfly ships and First Horizon agents, however, the Janhagir fleet vanishes, leaving much of the Quadrant unprotected from the ambitions of the Colonial Agency.

The Circle of Seekers: Despite their connections to the all-encompassing Church of the Icons, the Circle's leaders are becoming worried about their mother faction's submissive attitude when dealing with the Hegemony and the Consortium. More and more of the Circle's mystics are having visions of the Emissaries and it is becoming increasingly clear that the Seekers will have to start acting independently.

THE SPLIT HEGEMONY

To be precise, the Zenithian Hegemony is a strategic alliance between two factions sharing many of the same ideals, rather than a single, homogeneous entity. The Hegemonists are conservative dignitaries adhering to arcane rules of blood purity while the neo-Zenithians represent the part of the aristocracy that over the years married outside the gentry. The latter's politics are closer to those of the Consortium and they are more pragmatic in their view of diluting their ancestry if there's money to be made.



JUDGE NIGELIA KURAHAN

The PCs are hired to find a Zenithian defector. Neither the PCs, nor most of the factions know the defector's name, but she is in fact neo-Zenithian judge Nigelia Kurahan whom the group met during *Emissary Lost*. Through her contacts, judge Kurahan has found out about the pact between the Hegemony and the Consortium, something which has made her a high-value target for the factions on Coriolis.

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Ahlam's Temple and the Draconites: Ahlam's Temple and their courtesans continue to hold sway in halls of power across the Horizon, regardless of factionary alliances. The Temple's infamous assassins have unofficially chosen to join the Draconites' network, however, operating behind the front of Aishan's Emporium. Both the Temple and the Draconites are careful not to divulge their future plans and keep quiet on most public issues. Like the leaders of the Order, they realize something big is coming.

The Order of the Pariah: The Martyr Council is aware of the danger of the situation, suspecting the First Horizon already has agents working in the Third Horizon. They know that darkness threatens to swallow the cluster and debate whether or not they are strong enough to leave their home system and confront the enemy. Intense military spending bolsters the fleets but they aren't yet ready to act. With the enemy still in hiding, they are unsure of where a military strike would be most effective. Years of isolation has made sure that their diplomatic connections are few and frosty and they have no routines for forming lasting alliances with other factions. This weakness is something the Nazareem's Sacrifice has learned to exploit: all attempts by the Order to approach the other factions are sabotaged by the cult.

THE FIRST HORIZON

The Emperor of the First Horizon has a long-term plan for the Third Horizon: creating enough of an imbalance in favor of the Zenithians to initiate military conflicts which will decimate the factions' fleets while at the same time making sure no cooperation and information sharing takes place. The unstable portal in Taoan has so far only let a handful of butterfly ships through and the Vestals are still looking for a way to bring more of Ardha's fleets into the Third Horizon. The devastated Uharu system is empty and closed-off, making it a perfect place for gathering an army. The abandoned Consortium refineries there enable the exploitation of the system's rich resources and in the long run, the system could work well as a base of operations for the invasion. The Vestals are primarily focusing on trying a more subtle approach, however: manipulating the cluster through the Zentithians to remake the Third Horizon in the image of their master's own nihilistic world.

The snap election is their doing. The Vestals have secretly been manipulating groups and individuals, being behind both many of the events that have sparked public outrage as well as the Council's radical plans for all-Zenithian rule. The vanity of the Hegemony and the Consortium's greed are strong, making the factions easy to manipulate, but the Firstcome have so far been cautious and appear more resistant to the First Horizon's invisible hands.

The Nazareem's Sacrifice: Depending on how strong or weak you want the Beast Cult to be in your game, not to mention the actions of the PCs in the previous scenarios, the Nazareem may now be reeling from the terrifying blow the secret coalition dealt them. Even though many of the younger cells were taken out, some of the older, more experienced groups managed to stay hidden and have infiltrated some of the Third Horizon's factions and intelligence agencies. Their focus has been on controlling Zenithian factions to stop all cooperation with the Order of the Pariah and the Circle of Seekers, but Zalos has been tough to penetrate and the cult has had to settle for aiding the Zahedan rebels. Despite strong connections in the corridors of power, it isn't until now that the Nazareem have been able to infiltrate the Council of Factions.

In the elections, the cult manages to get three of their agents elected:

- **Heimekh Vanna** – Kuan captain in the neo-Zenithian fleet.
- **Ana Din Eusidia** – Neo-Zenithian lobbyist in Sadaal.
- **Soba Hurnan** – Operational manager for the Colonial Agency in Uharu.

THE SECOND HORIZON

The Santulans suffered a heavy blow when they lost the Messenger Emissary, their observer at the Council, during *Emissary Lost*. Urni en-Argonnas, the Santulan who lived as Nabi-mu-Qad, remains as a spirit echo in the space around Kua, and the other Emissaries try to use their resonance powers to keep Urni's essence in the Horizon. The Santulans' being in the Third Horizon changes and adapts more and more people to the mystical concept of cosmic resonance. The Symmerty's presence alters the brain patterns of the new mystics, causing them to develop supernatural powers — a truly miraculous gift, if it wasn't for the fact that it also leads to the mystics becoming easier for the Santulans to manipulate or turn into puppets of their will.

The Second Horizon has been trying to discern Ardha's next move for a long time. For a while, they suspected that

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the Emperor was preparing for a full-scale war, but the past cycle has made it clear that the Vestals and the Nazareem have been focusing on political power and the Zenithians rather than invasion plans. After the loss of their observer at the Council, the Santulans instead strengthened the Children of the Song and are preparing their acolytes in the Circle of Seekers for the coming darkness. The mystics of the Third Horizon are being turned into a secret strike force for when Ardha once again shows its true face.

The Children of the Song: The Children of the Song have risen from their humble beginnings as a care community for lost souls in the embrace of the Machine Icon on Coriolis and grown strong. They have claimed abandoned sections of the Cellar and created underground temples and assembly spaces in the Mulukhad and in the alleys near the Ring Plazas.

As the cult grew and solidified their organization, both the Circle of Seekers and other mystic groups reached out to them. New mystics that join up are now sent to train at secret Seeker temples or directly to the armies being assembled by the remaining Emissaries.

BEFORE YOU BEGIN

In the Shadow of the Zenith has a lot of potentially action-packed scenes and takes the PCs back to Coriolis and Kua one final time before everything changes for good. You should play it at least seven segments after *The Uharan Echo* to give the Horizon enough time to change during *The Cyclade Dance*. This final scenario takes places during the Pilgrimaria of CC63 when both Coriolis and Kua are crowded with pilgrims for the celebrations, to make sure the atmosphere is tense and claustrophobic.

⚙ INTRODUCING THE PCS

The PCs' mission and their attitude toward the defector will differ depending on which patron they work for. Make sure to plan ahead and prepare one or more scenes where the patron introduces the PCs to the mission. See The Missions for more.

⚙ IMPORTANT FACTS

As this last scenario is the end of a long series of smaller, group-tailored missions, you need to be well prepared. Determine where the loyalties of your group's patron lie in the bigger picture and read up on the positions of the different factions to make sure you know their role in the changes that come about during these three acts and understand their view on the rush election (or "the coup," if you will).

The patrons all have different opinions of the mission and the defector (see next page) — how will this affect what they ask of the PCs? You are free to change the course of the story and add or remove events as you see fit. Make sure to include the following key events and clues, however:

- Zenithian fleets are protecting Kua and have mined the sector.
- Social tension and unrest risk leading to open hostilities.
- The PCs are pressed for time but run into a rival group.
- The Zenithians execute their coup, leading to violent riots on Coriolis and Kua. The PCs lose their ship.
- The PCs learn parts of the Second Horizon's plans.
- The Monolith is activated and the discharge destroys Sky City, Coriolis and most of the Zenithian fleet in Kua.

⚙ THE MISSIONS

Most of the factions keep their loyalties secret but the underlying long-term intrigue is still colored by their opinions. The texts starting on next page describe how the different patrons regard the purpose of the mission and, broadly speaking, they can be divided into three tendencies:

- **ZENITHIAN SUPPORT:** Some of the people in this group are initiated into the Zenithian Pact, while others turn openly pro-Zenithian upon hearing about the changes at the Council. An example of the latter is the Church of the Icons, which promises full cooperation with the Zenithians.
- **THE PROXY WAR:** There are individuals and groups who know of and are loyal toward the First Horizon's plans for the Third Horizon. The same goes for their opponents, the allies and defenders of the Second Horizon. The depth of peoples' insights vary greatly, however, with both the Nazareem's Sacrifice and the Circle of Seekers acting as foot soldiers for their respective Horizon of choice without knowing their masters' end goal — the worship of higher entities. Other groups are unaware of the older Horizons' plans but are still controlled by their agents. This is the case with The Children of the Song, for example.
- **THE THIRD HORIZON:** There are independent groups who wish to see culture and commerce blossom in a Free Horizon, cut-off from the influence of the older empires. Lastly, some Firstcome groups are actively anti-Zenithian in their views of the status quo.

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FAIDA DIN HRAMA

FACTION: The Salakhad Flotilla (The Zenithian Hegemony)
LOYALTY: The Zenithian Pact
BEFORE THE MISSION: *"Kill the blood traitor. Be discreet and dispose of the body. Avoid contact with the target who is a skilled manipulator. Kill anyone else who possesses the same information."*
AFTER THE ELECTION: Dispatches Astûrban agents to eliminate the PCs and blow up their ship, regardless of their loyalties toward the Zenithians. Kill-or-Capture warrants issued on Coriolis to all Judicators. The PCs must flee the station and Kua.

VERION SIDONNA

FACTION: The Foundation (The Consortium)
LOYALTY: The Zenithian Pact
BEFORE THE MISSION: *"Arrest and surrender the traitor to the Special Branch. Avoid communication as the target is a skilled manipulator. Arrest any accomplices you find."*
AFTER THE ELECTION: The Special Branch and the Consortium pull all support, suddenly leaving the PCs all alone – unless they can persuade the Special Branch to send them on a final job to Kua to track down the defector's relative.

SAHDI BAT-ERDEN

FACTION: Aishan's Emporium (The Draconites)
LOYALTY: Independent (Free Horizon)
BEFORE THE MISSION: *"Smuggle the defector off the station without anyone finding out. Bring the target to the Djachroum auction house for safekeeping. The target can provide valuable political insight, and may need more help from you."*
AFTER THE ELECTION: The Zenithian coup is a dagger in the heart of the Third Horizon. A new objective is added: Find the defector's relative on Kua and smuggle Council member Mandragor Ho off Coriolis.

EMISSARY (KAMA-MU-QAD, KAROB-MU-QAD OR HANE-MU-QAD)

FACTION: The Santulans
LOYALTY: The Second Horizon
BEFORE THE MISSION: *"Question the defector about the plans of the Zenithians and the First Horizon. Relay intel back to me through*

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meditation immediately. Make sure the target isn't captured alive by agents of the First Horizon."

AFTER THE ELECTION: The betrayal of the Zenithians is the work of the First Horizon. A forceful countermove is required. The PCs must escort the new mystics and The Children of the Song to the Monolith on Kua.

MASÂR, ZAHIR & NAWA (AND NABI-MU-QAD)

FACTION: The Children of the Song (cult)
LOYALTY: The Second Horizon
BEFORE THE MISSION: *"Rescue the fugitive and bring her to us. The target is a relative of one of our members. Armed conflict puts her life at risk and may destabilize the entire station."*
AFTER THE ELECTION: The Zenithian betrayal didn't come as a surprise. The Machine Icon has been singing about their lies and about the First Horizon's involvement. The Children must make it down to Kua and the Monolith. The PCs are hired as an escort.

ZAHRIA LABAKI

FACTION: The Night Hands (The Free League)
LOYALTY: Independent (Free Horizon)
BEFORE THE MISSION: *"Rescue the defector and eliminate all hostile agents. Bring the target to Lubau for hand-over to smugglers. Target is to be kept as leverage during negotiations with the Zenithians at the Council."*
AFTER THE ELECTION: There is no hope of negotiations with the new Council but the defector's intel may still be valuable. Eliminate all witnesses and smuggle the target discreetly off the station. No one can know that the defector is alive.

ABYEIA GOHARSHÛD

FACTION: The Nomad Federation
LOYALTY: Anti-Zenithian
BEFORE THE MISSION: *"Rescue the defector even if it means betraying your other patrons. Bring them to the Alabaster Council on Khorsabad in Altai. Will offer the defector sanctuary in exchange for information on the Council members and their political games."*
AFTER THE ELECTION: Spokesperson and patron Abyeia Goharshûd has been arrested by Judicators. Spring her from captivity and smuggle her and the defector off the station. Bring them to Khorsabad.

MAJOR CHARACTERS

The main characters in the scenario are those that are involved in the hunt for the defector:

- **AKOUBA KOSHA/DIONA HASHIM – Field commander for Astûrban's agents on Coriolis (page 192)**
- **NERGÛ BAT-ERDEN – Mandragor Ho's bodyguard or the handler for the Draconites' Coriolis cell (depending on the PCs' mission, see page 194)**
- **MANDRAGOR HO – Council representative for the Draconites and protector of the defector (page 206)**
- **NIGELIA KURAHAN – Former Coriolis judge who has chosen to blow the whistle on the Zenithian pact (page 209)**
- **ARLAIN KURAHAN – The youngest son of Nigelia and a member of the Children of the Song (page 231)**

RICHLY REWARDED

Regardless of which patron they work for, the PCs should be promised a very large sum of birr for the mission – enough to cover the remainder of their ship debt. The reward comes with two conditions, however:

- The mission must be accomplished within twenty-four hours after they land on Coriolis. (You can tailor this by factoring in the time it takes to travel from the Kuan portal, but any tardiness from the PCs' side will cost them precious time.)
- They must handle the defector exactly as instructed – no questioning orders, no hesitation.

Bear in mind that the group's ship will most likely be destroyed between acts 2 and 3 (page 214).

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SAMESH ALIM

FACTION: The Order of the Pariah

LOYALTY: Free Horizon

BEFORE THE MISSION: *"Rescue the defector by any means necessary. The wishes of the Martyr supersede any cost in blood. Turn over target to Martyr warriors at the Aiwaz portal station. Kill the target if it risks falling into enemy hands."*

AFTER THE ELECTION: The Zenithian betrayal is yet another omen of the End Times. The First Horizon corrupts from within. The PCs are asked to rescue Sister Robwah and the remaining Samaritans from Coriolis.

FUTURE ALLIANCES

The different alliances and the factions' views on the future of the Third Horizon will carry over into the third and final installment of the *Mercy of the Icons* campaign.

CHANGES TO THE COUNCIL

THE OLD COUNCIL

Below is a list of the pre-election makeup of the council, containing both active members and those somehow removed. Thanks to the Consortium's dealings with the Free League, Zenithian interests have been defended by seven of the thirteen seats—or eight, if you count Governor Dargosian, despite him being formally independent. Torn-up deals and agreements have shaken the Zenithian dominance, however.

COUNCIL MEMBER	CURRENT STATUS	FACTION
1. Kermal Dargosian	ACCUSED of corruption. Considered weak in the wake of the Mysticides.	Governor, formally independent
2. Terminos Lete	The Courtesan Academy on Coriolis has closed and Terminos THREATENS TO RESIGN to protest the Humanite Act.	Ahlam's Temple
3. Mandragor Ho	Active member. Not a part of the Zenithian pact.	The Draconites
4. Jesibel Niales	DEPOSED after the strike.	The Free League
5. Wasimah Umm	Active member.	The Church of the Icons
6. Tiera Yriedes	Active member.	The Consortium
7. Harnek Mara	Active member.	The Consortium (The Bulletin)
8. Desaron Kai	Most likely MURDERED OR ABDUCTED by the Order at the Aiwaz blockade.	The Consortium (The Colonial Agency)
9. Morwan Pasa	Active member.	The Consortium (The Foundation)
10. Suhaima Taslim	Active member.	The Legion
11. Sister Almas	MURDERED by an angry mob on Coriolis.	The Order of the Pariah
12. Johar Quassar	Active member. Candidate for Governor.	The Zenithian Hegemony
13. The Emissary	MURDERED by the Warriors of the Holy Light during the Mysticides.	Observer, formally independent

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THE ZENITHIAN PACT

The Zenithian pact to take control of the Third Horizon completely changes the political landscape after the rigged election. The Consortium and the Zenithian Hegemony manage to create an almost exclusively Zenithian Council thanks to an unlikely alliance with the Syndicate. All opposition is shut out or arrested. When the election result is suddenly announced during the Pilgrimaria – before the official election process has even begun – the people of the Horizon find themselves governed by a very different Council than before: five seats in the hands of the Hegemony and six somehow controlled by the Consortium. Four of the new Council members come from the military branches of the factions.

POST-ELECTION COUNCIL MEMBER	DESCRIPTION	FACTION
1. Johar Quassar	Re-elected. Replaces Kermal Dargosian as Governor. Dargosian is placed under house arrest pending his corruption trial.	Governor, the Zenithian Hegemony (Hegemonist)
2. Heimekh Vanna	Captain in the neo-Zenithian fleet. Replaces Terminos Lete who is arrested and charged with having dealt with extremist factions within the Order.	The Zenithian Hegemony (neo-Zenithian)
3. Faida Din Hrama	Reputable commander of the Salakhad Flotilla's flagship *Asarita*. Replaces Mandragor Ho who is on the run from the Astûrban and the Special Branch for having ties to anti-Zenithian terrorists.	The Zenithian Hegemony (Hegemonist)
4. Ana Din Eusidia	Renowned lobbyist from Alburz on Sadaal, responsible for the successful Nadir Accord detailing the construction of the new Zenithian fleet. Replaces Jesibel Niales as the League has cut ties with the Consortium and lost much of its power.	The Zenithian Hegemony (neo-Zenithian)
5. Adan Birbasil	After successfully having lowered gang violence on the station, Adan has been rewarded with the seat formerly belonging to the Church of the Icons after their degradation to observers.	The Syndicate
6. Tiera Yriedes	Re-elected.	The Consortium
7. Harnek Mara	Re-elected.	The Consortium (The Bulletin)
8. Soba Hurnan	Operational manager for the Agency's Uharu Office. Replaces Desaron Kai who has been kidnapped by the Order. Wants to expand the Agency's influence in the Quadrant of the Pillar to make up for the loss of the refineries in Uharu, especially now that the Janhagir fleet has gone missing.	The Consortium (The Colonial Agency)
9. Morwan Pasa	Re-elected.	The Consortium (The Foundation)
10. Suhaima Taslim	Re-elected.	The Legion
11. Selab Din Hrama	Cultural attache and the son of Aedon Din Hrama. Replaces Sister Almas after her tragic demise.	The Zenithian Hegemony (Hegemonist)
12. Tehira Markoon	Commander of the Legion's battalion at Foundation station FS-7 at Xene. Takes Johar Quassar's old seat.	The Legion
13. Wasimah Umm	Arch Herat for the Church of the Icons. Degraded to observer after an executive Council order decides to limit the influence of the religious factions on matters of progress.	The Church of the Icons, observer

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ACT 1
THE RETURN

Sleek pleasure yachts and rented pilgrim freighters crowd the Kuan skies around Coriolis. Streets and plazas bustle with life as visitors and residents decorate the station for the upcoming celebration. Families reunite, friends gather in prayer and the dura beams in the hull battle tirelessly to keep the surrounding darkness at bay. The Bulletin broadcasts are full of news and speculation about the election and cheery holos all around the Core Plaza advertise the different factionary candidates. Somewhere beyond the commotion of the alley bars and the boarding houses walks a troubled, wanted figure: a Zenithian renouncing blood and history; a catalyst for hope or blackest despair; a Crossroads of the Fates personified, holding the future of the Third Horizon in treasonous hands.

THE ACT BEGINS with the PCs' arrival in the Kua system. The scenes and events below take them to Coriolis on their quest to find the defector.

OVERVIEW

The PCs' patron reaches out to them about one final job. The Legion has mined the space between the portals and Kua, and the PCs experience the build-up to several coming clashes on the station first-hand while they are trying to find their contact. When they learn of the defector's location, their enemies' involvement becomes obvious and they must deal with hostile agents during the act's final scene.

DARKNESS POINTS

Darkness Points should mainly be spent on establishing an uneasy atmosphere on-board the station or on escalating conflicts the PCs find themselves in. Make sure that the group's mistakes or failures don't corner them in the story, instead leading them forward but with further obstacles to surmount. As usual, you get as many DP as there are players, down to minimum of 4 DP.

STARTING SCENE

A KUAN WELCOME

The cold hissing of the stasis pod and the computer's monotone countdown is muffled as the lid closes and fractal ice roses start to cover the window. Your thoughts touch briefly on the mission — your return to Kua and Coriolis, your target, your crystal clear orders. The moment stretches out eternally as your cells and synapses are suspended in artificial hibernation. Safe beyond the wall of sleep, you pass through the portal. Spacetime collapses in on itself as the darkness bears down on the hull of your tiny craft, desperately attempting to quiet your thoughts forever. In the blink of an eye, you pass through and emerge on the other side, surrounded by swarms of other ships — a vast caravan of pilgrims heading for the green planet in the distance, for the towering Monolith and for the center of the Horizon, Coriolis station.

THE SITUATION

The first scene takes the PCs to Kua from whichever system you left them in. Their arrival after a long time away is necessary to establish the

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drastic changes in the system, from the Legion minefields and high security corridors to the Hegemony's fleets gathered around Kua, all violent gold and chrome. The PCs are escorted through the core of the system and finally make it to Coriolis. Their choice of patron and history with the Zenithian factions determine if they need to sneak their way in without getting caught or if they are greeted as heroes in the Neoptra.

EVENTS

The events mainly revolve around the imbalance of power in the system and the PCs' relationship with the factions. A state of emergency has been declared and the PCs sense large conflicts ahead.

MINEFIELDS

When the PCs enter Kua, their proximity alarms bathe the bridge in red — the surrounding space is full of other craft. Their ship djinn knows more: two Legion destroyers, the *Salema* and the *Ramarah*, are guarding the portals accompanied by a veritable armada of torpedo ships. Unless the PCs tried to enter the system covertly (such as hidden onboard a larger ship), one of the torpedo ships locks its weapons onto them and hails their bridge:

"Incoming vessel in portal field 2, sector 39. This is inspector Shaia Azid of torpedo ship Jinaan-331. The Kuan approach is under Legion protection and safety restrictions are enforced. Transmitting coordinates for a safe corridor. Stand by for escort and be advised that any deviation from approved vectors will be met with deadly force."

Inspector Azid questions the PCs about their destination and business in the system. The Pilgrimaria makes it fairly easy to motivate their visit and they are then instructed to wait in line for their turn to be escorted to Coriolis. If they try to head for the station without an escort or if they stray from the safe vectors they've been given, the torpedo ship will fire an acc warning shot and then launch a torpedo if they don't back down.

- **Minefields:** Inspector Azid does not inform the PCs about the mines that surround the portals and the safe corridor, only an active sweep by the group's sensor operator can reveal them (**DATA DJINN**). Extra sixes rolled become bonus dice for the **PILOT** test necessary to maneuver the minefield

THE TRUE DESTINATION

"Hold us.
Receive our gifts.
Know the true destination.
Fight for the journey there.
The Horizon lives in our embrace."

The Machine Icon

STATE OF EMERGENCY

Emphasize the dangers of the minefield and the trigger-happy Legion guards but don't let a single warning shot lead to full-blown space combat unless the PCs persist in disobeying the commands they're given. If they need to flee through the minefield, make it dangerous and dramatic but still possible for them to reach Kua discreetly and in one piece.

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which carries a base modifier of -3. If the **PILOT** test fails, roll ten dice. Each six rolled represents a mine that activates somewhere along the way to Kua. The PCs get one chance to lock onto each active mine and deploy countermeasures or try to neutralize it with cannon fire (see page 169-170 of the *Rulebook*).

- **Watch Your 6!:** If the PCs stray from their given course, they risk being pursued by Legion ships. At the cost of 1 DP, a single fighter takes up the chase; for 2 DP, two fighters are on them; 3 DP gets you two fighters and one torpedo ship. Losing the pursuers is a **PILOT** test at -1 for each hunter. Desperate or cornered PCs may try to shut down their reactor and engines to disappear, but this will cost them valuable mission time as the reboot after scramming the reactor is slow.
- **Escorted:** If the PCs work for the Consortium or the Hegemony and point out that they are on a mission from their patron, inspector Azid's demeanor changes from stern to very helpful (after first having verified their claims, of course). Within half an hour, two fighters escort them all the way to Coriolis. The same goes for groups containing dignitary PCs or if they have contacts within the ruling strata of either Coriolis or Sky City. Suitable talents such as Faction Standing or Wealthy Family may be used, or **MANIPULATION**. If they try to lie about their patron, the **MANIPULATION** roll carries a -2 penalty. Groups without the right patron or the necessary contacts will either have to lie and get away with it, or simply wait for their turn in the endless queue of restless skippers at the portal station.
- **Costly Delays:** At the cost of 1 DP, it takes almost a full watch for the escort to turn up to take the PCs to Coriolis. For 2 DP, it takes almost two. Use this if you want to be able to pressure the PCs when they finally make it to the station or if you want to force them to do something reckless, such as trying their luck in the minefield.

Cost: 0, 1-5 DP (Mandatory)

⚙ A DISCREET LANDING

PCs with different patrons than the Hegemony or the Consortium might need to sneak their way onto the station. This is luckily something smugglers have been doing since the station's founding and there are plenty of old docks and hangars in the Cellar's mess of service tunnels and vent

JINAAN, LEGION TORPEDO SHIP

CLASS: II

SHIPYARD: Alhudu naval base (See *Emissary Lost*, page 195. +1 to Armor but -1 module slot)

CREW: 4 (see features), rolls six dice for all relevant skill tests

EP: 4

HP: 4

MANEUVERABILITY: +1

SIGNATURE: -1

ARMOR: 5

SPEED: 4

MODULES: Advanced torpedo system (4 torpedoes), ordinary torpedo system (8 ion torpedo mines), countermeasure dispenser, escape pod (single), stasis hold (4 beds)

FEATURES: Ship System (sensor operator WITS 3, DATA DJINN 3), Advanced Countermeasures (+1), Advanced Torpedoes (-1 to enemy countermeasures)

COST: 475,000 birr

MATAH, LEGION FIGHTER

CLASS: I

SHIPYARD: Alhudu naval base (See *Emissary Lost*, page 195. +1 to Armor but -1 module slot)

CREW: 1 (Pilot), rolls six dice for all relevant skill tests

EP: 3

HP: 2

MANEUVERABILITY: +3

SIGNATURE: -2

ARMOR: 4

SPEED: 5

MODULES: Acc cannon, pulse system

FEATURES: Ejector, Tuned Accelerator, Turbo Projector

COST: 275,000 birr

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shafts that can be used if the group wishes to board unseen. The Hegemony's bright, gold-plated ships maintain a tight perimeter around the station, however, with active sensor sweeps and weapon locks. Nighthawk fighters guard the approach corridors to all the spaceports.

- **Discreet Approach:** The PCs could choose to dock at the Net and then travel to the station on an anonymous shuttle (**PILOT** +1). Another option is to hide in the crowds of pilgrims all heading for the bigger spaceports, which requires either a **PILOT** test at -2 (approaching close to other ships) or a **MANIPULATION** test at -1 (convincing flight control that they are a ship of pilgrims). Finally, they could aim for a hidden dock in the Cellar, where a discreet approach and docking requires a **PILOT** test at -1 if they shut down their reactor and use only thrusters for the landing, or a test at -3 if they try to do it without shutting down their systems. Failure means being discovered which leads to a Nighthawk fighter heading out to investigate (see box to the left). A failed landing results in a strength 6 attack leading to hull damage (armor may be tested).
- **Docked:** When the PCs land their ship, they must latch onto the hull itself or find some abandoned docks and then shut down their reactor to cool their signature (page 163-164 of the *Rulebook*). They must then use the service tunnels to find their way up to the Core Plaza.

Cost: 0 DP

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A CORIOLIS WELCOME

If the PCs are dignitaries or employed by the Consortium or the Hegemony, they are given priority clearance and an escort straight from the portal station to the Neoptra. The Legion handles the escort from the portals to Kua, after which two golden Hegemony fighters take over for the final approach on the restricted upper levels of the spaceport. Two Judicators greet them on the platform as they disembark, giving them access tags and licenses that let them carry arms and wander the station more or less at will.

- **The Neoptra Spaceport:** As the PCs step onto the platform and look out across the main hall below they see an ocean of pilgrims, merchants and hands waiting in long lines to be processed through Customs Point 1 (page 19 of *Emissary Lost*). Kawah stands and oporias occupy the limited space that remains, over-crowded with tired travelers deciding to try their luck at customs later in the day. The group can also see that a much shorter queue of dignitaries and courtesans are let in through a side entrance and rushed through customs — the fast lane onboard, available only to the rich and famous. The current circumstances apparently qualify the PCs for this treatment, however, and it isn't long before their documents have been processed by the overworked customs officers and they find themselves on the Promenade.

Cost: 0 DP

OTHER EVENTS

Below are some other events that may occur in the scene:

INCIDENTS

En route to Kua, or as the PCs wait for an escort at the portal station, you may introduce incidents from the table to the right (pick or roll a die). At the cost of 1 or 2 DP, you can escalate the incident into a dangerous situation.

Cost: Varies (see Table 17)

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

Two shadows emerge from the clutter of the residential modules and look up at the Bulletin holo screens above the Amphitheater. Mafra Sarmin's familiar face fills the screen: "... and here is our next candidate, Soba Hurnan. Tell me, why should the voters elect you to the Council of Factions?" The cameras cut away to a middle-aged, light-skinned woman wearing a flat white cap and discreet Zenithian makeup. "Thank you for having me, Mafra. Well, my platform is one of Third Horizon unity — something I'm especially passionate about after the tragedy in Uharu. There are riches and resources out there (she turns to face the camera) that are kept from the people because of cultural bias and ancient conflicts. Now, with the Janhagir fleet's disappearance and all, the time has come for the less developed systems, such as those in the Quadrant of the Pillar, to accept their place in the true community of the Third Horizon. We must evolve and embrace this new era — together."

One of the shadows shakes its head and turns to the other with a sigh. "They're planning something big. I don't think my status can protect her if she's found out. We can't risk waiting any longer — she has to get off the station. Have our agents arrived?"

THE SITUATION

In this scene, the PCs look for their contact on Coriolis and find out more about the defector's possible hiding place. Enemy agents have closed in during the last twenty-four hours and the PCs' mission may force them into combat despite the risks of a firefight turning the narrow, crowded streets into a bloodbath. Their alliances determine the actions of their opponents: Zenithian agents want to find and kill the defector; Mandragor's agents want to protect her. The scene ends in a showdown between the PCs and their enemy's agents at the defector's last safehouse.

THE CONTACT

An agent suitable to the alliances of the group contacts the PCs when they arrive at the Core. If they are here to rescue the defector, Council member Mandragor Ho's bodyguard — a tall Mogul named Mergû Bat-Erden — is their contact. If they work for the Zenithians on the other hand, Astûrban agent and Judicator Akouba Kosha (whom they met during *Emissary Lost*) meets them.

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TABLE 17: CARAVAN INCIDENTS

D6	DESCRIPTION	ESCALATION
1	DISOBEDIENCE: A class III freighter suddenly breaks out of the caravan and heads for the restricted sector. A Legion fighter starts pursuing and fires warning shots. The freighter persists, is hit in the side and after it fails to evade, it activates a couple of the mines and explodes. A DATA DJINN test allows the PCs to map the explosion and log the location of the other activated mines.	DEBRIS (1 DP): Debris from the explosion is flung toward the PCs' ship. Roll an opposed PILOT (+/- MANEUVERABILITY) vs strength 6 test. If the PCs lose the test, they suffer 2 points of hull damage plus 1 extra point for each additional losing six. They may make an Armor roll.
2	SYMPTOMS: An old refurbished class IV luxury cruiser is waiting in line at the portal station. It looks like it hasn't had noteworthy passengers in quite some time, now serving as the home of about twenty families of pilgrims. The cruiser suddenly broadcasts an emergency hail. A child on board has come down with a high fever and they seek aid from someone skilled in MEDICURGY. The PCs may choose to head over to the cruiser to examine the child which requires medical equipment equivalent to a medkit and a MEDICURGY test.	CONTAGION (2 DP): The child has been infected with a mild form of Tacharuk's Lesions (page 337 of the *Rulebook*). Anyone getting close to the patient without protective gear must pass a STRENGTH +2 test to avoid being infected. Those infected start showing signs within D6 hours, starting with 1 point of damage, a sore throat and a taste of blood in the mouth. Roll a die once per day. On a six, the victim suffers another point of damage. Lesions and sores start showing after a couple of days. The disease may be treated with MEDICURGY in a trauma lab (page 113 of the *Rulebook*).
3	INTERVIEW: A freelance correspondent, Said Aziz, recognizes the PCs' ship from having followed their so-called careers. He hails them and asks for an exclusive sit-down on board their ship. He can pay them a couple of hundred birr for their time. If they agree, he interviews them about their achievements followed by a crew of camera drones, two assistants and a producer.	CONTRABAND (2 DP): For two DP, the correspondents are in fact arms smugglers trying to smuggle two heavy breaching chargers and ten Vulcan carbines to freedom fighters on Kua via Coriolis. Aziz is afraid of a Legion inspection and wants the PCs to help him. After a tour of the ship, he says that he has hidden three explosive charges somewhere on the ship that will explode unless the PCs deliver some weapons crates to a dock in the upper Cellar. If the PCs don't comply, he activates the bombs. Randomly determine three modules that suffer explosive decompression. If they play along to stall for time, will they be able to find all three charges?
4	BAD OMEN: Something of religious and sentimental importance onboard – a statue in the chapel, a talisman, a favorite weapon or a tag containing vital information – is broken or missing when the PCs come out of stasis. They must search the ship for the lost item (OBSERVATION) or repair it (TECHNOLOGY).	FALLEN FROM GRACE (1 DP): The object is broken beyond repair. When the group finds the remains of the item, a chill runs down their spines and they suddenly feel watched. They have angered the Icons or some other entity and until each of them makes the proper prayers asking for forgiveness, each prayer reroll they make generates 2 DP instead of 1. Emphasize a feeling of bad luck following them – more things going missing or ship systems malfunctioning.
5	PILGRIMS: A general hail alerts the PCs to a family of Altaian pilgrims whose ship has lost maneuverability in the middle of the approach corridor. The pilgrims (two men and one woman along with two toddlers and a teenage daughters) aren't skilled enough to repair the reactor and they lack the necessary spare parts (requires one ordinary spare part). They need help getting the ship fixed well enough to be able to get back to the portal station for more extensive repairs. If the PCs agree to help, the family will pay them with five, partly domesticated ekilibri with a rare, speckled red and blue coat (page 287 of the *Rulebook*). They have no money.	THE PILGRIMARIA (1-3 DP): At the cost of 1 DP, the teenage daughter contacts one of the PCs while they're onboard helping with repairs (or sneaks back on board their ship). She is pregnant but can feel that something is wrong with the baby and is worried that the Icons are angry with her. She desperately needs to make it to Coriolis to pray at the Dome of the Icons during the Pilgrimaria and asks the PCs to take her with them. The child is in fact dying and she will have the baby on their ship before they get to the station. A MEDICURGY test in a med or trauma lab is necessary to deliver the baby and place it in an incubator to save its life. For 2 DP, the child is touched by the void and covered in strange spots. For 3 DP, the mother turns darkbound directly after giving birth and attacks the PCs (page 327 of the *Rulebook*).
6	SHIP TROUBLE: The maneuver systems and the sensors start to glitch or disconnect. A TECHNOLOGY or DATA DJINN test is required to restart them. If the roll fails, the systems still come back online after about an hour but have been permanently damaged. Until the ship is serviced at a spaceport or station (page 155 of the *Rulebook*), sensor and PILOT tests carry a -1 penalty.	MACHINE DJINN (2 DP): More and more systems fail the closer they get to Kua. A djinn has infested the ship looking for a body to possess (page 333 of the *Rulebook*). It is weakened, however, with only 5 HP left, and it rolls no skill dice, only attribute dice. It cannot possess a human unless invited. A PC with a talisman or who visits the chapel onboard can see the djinn in its true form, like a whirlwind of stardust or a heat shimmer. It is possible to negotiate with it by allowing it to partly possess one of the PCs or by promising it an animal or semi-intelligent host. Unless the djinn gets what it wants, it fuses with the ship, making it CURSED (page 143 of the *Rulebook*). A human or animal that merges with the djinn begins sleepwalking, develops an unquenchable thirst for sweet wine and may use the PREMONITION mystical power (page 78 of the *Rulebook*) at the djinn's level (EMPATHY 4, MYSTIC POWERS 6). A possessed animal develops intelligence and may communicate telepathically in short sentences.

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NIGHTHAWK AIB-ASWAD, FIGHTER
CLASS: I
SHIPYARD: The Harima docks
CREW: 1 (Pilot), rolls eight dice for all relevant skill tests
EP: 4
HP: 1
MANEUVERABILITY: +4
SIGNATURE: -2
ARMOR: 3
SPEED: 6
MODULES: Heavy acc cannon, Auto cannon, Pulse system (data pulse)
FEATURES: Atmospheric Entry, Turbo Projectors x2, Precise Thrusters (+2 to docking, landing and evasion)
COST: 325,000 birr

SPOILED GIFT

"A butterfly beating a single wing cannot fly.
An anthill scattered by the wind isn't a home.
A Horizon spoiling the gifts it's been given isn't united."

The Machine Icon

AKOUBA'S REPLACEMENT

If Akouba Kosha was killed in ***Emissary Lost***, she is replaced with a similarly strong and stern agent, Diona Hashim (page 192). She has been briefed about the PCs' previous adventures but isn't sure about their true agenda. She has ordered two of her agents, Kala and Demshi, to follow the PCs and intervene if their loyalties waver (see page 201).

EVENTS

Start by bringing the PCs to their contact. They then get a series of hiding places to investigate in their search for the target. If they work for the Zenithians, each hiding place they raid gives them a clue leading to the next. If they are trying to rescue the defector, they are given a list of potential safehouses straight from the beginning. At each of these addresses, however, Zenithian agents have beaten them to the punch. The scene describes four potential safehouses, of which the last one is the actual location of the defector. It is up to you to decide how many of the addresses you wish to use.

⚙ OUR CONTACT ON CORIOLIS

Shortly after arriving to Coriolis, their contact reaches out, either on someone's com or via a discreet messenger appearing out of the crowds. The suggested meeting place is a familiar one: the Garden of Seekers (page 59 of *Emissary Lost*).

- **Zenithian Contact**: Judicator and Astûrban agent Akouba (or Diona) leans casually against the railing of the bridge, looking down at the red and turquoise shimmer of the Miran carp in the pond below. She turns to the PCs and gets straight down to business, handing them a tag containing information about a number of potential hiding places used by the defector. She is not sure which one is the correct location.
  - ◇ Mandragor Ho, the Draconites' Council member, is suspected of safeguarding the traitor but he is protected by his diplomatic immunity.
  - ◇ Reports indicate that another group of agents has made it to the station to extract the target, but their current location is unknown.
  - ◇ The locations listed on the tag are all potential hiding places and it is vital that the PCs find the traitor before the other agents make contact.
  - ◇ The traitor is a high-ranking Zenithian from the Coriolis leadership. Their exact identity has not been established.

The Judicator leaves them with some last advice: they can't let past meetings and relationships fool them.

"Remember — the mission is everything. If the traitor is allowed to spread their false propaganda it will jeopardize everything we've built. The people need to respect and trust their leaders. If the Council is undermined, the Horizon falls."

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THE RING AND THE CORE

LOCATIONS OF INTEREST

L1: The Bulletin Complex
L2: The Stairdom
L3: Jasmine Alley
L4: The Biosculptors' Block
L5: Tattoo Alley
L6: Mulukhad District
L7: The Little Horizon Block
L8: Student District
L9: The Dome of the Icons
L10: The Headquarters of the Coriolis Guard and the Judicators

PLAZAS AND MEETING PLACES

P1: Ozone Plaza
P2: Spice Plaza
P3: Market Plaza
P4: Spring Plaza
P5: Core Plaza
P6: The Garden of Seekers
P7: The Stadium
P8: The Amphitheater
P9: University District

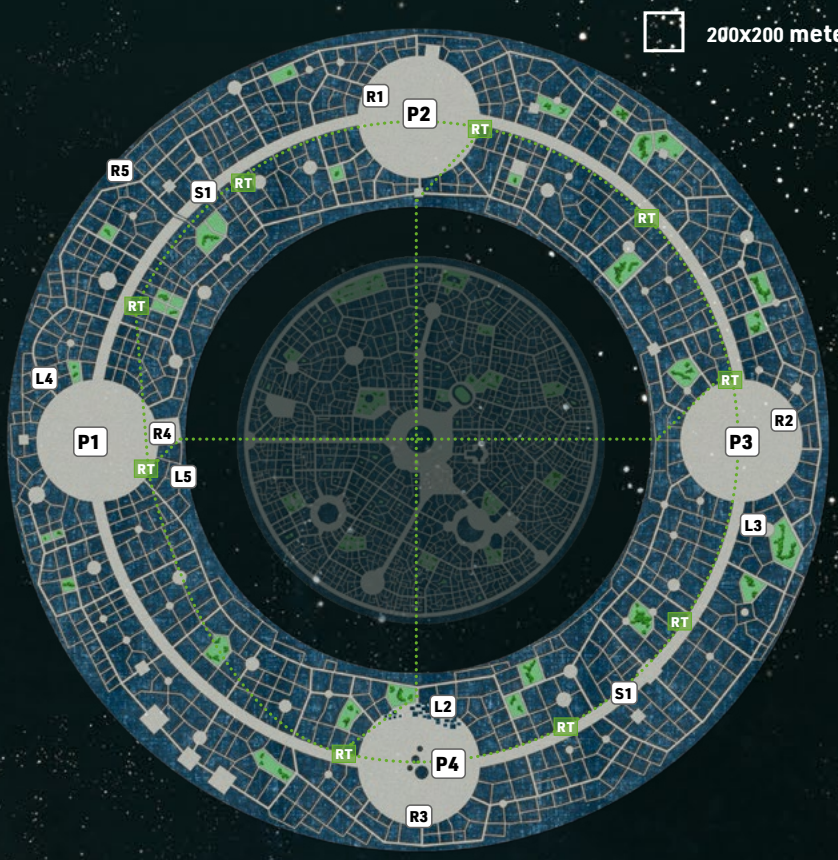
STREETS

S1: The Promenade
S2: The Core Circle

SPACEPORTS

R1: Neoptra
R2: Askerio-val
R3: Vyapaar
R4: Mercanda
R5: Saltaara

RT RING TUBE STATION
T TUBE STATION
V VERTICAL TUBE STATION





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- **The Defector's Allies**: The Draconite agent, bodyguard Nergû Bat-Erden, rests against one of the bridgehead supports, wrapped in a large shawl and dressed in padded, dark silk to cover his armor, energy shield and bulky weaponry. He pokes the water with a shock stick disguised as a walking cane to attract the attention of the curious carp. He waves to the PCs, gets to his feet and introduces himself as the assistant of Mandragor Ho, protector of the defector.
  - ◇ The PCs are given several safehouse addresses and an encrypted communicator they can use to communicate with Nergû during the mission.
  - ◇ The defector is judge Nigelia Kurahan, a well-known face in high society. She is therefore moved to a new location every night by hired couriers, using back alleys and slums.
  - ◇ Each safehouse is staffed by an agent or an assistant acting as Mandragor's eyes and ears.
  - ◇ The last known hideout is documented on the tag, but Nergû suspects that the Astûrban or the Special Branch have gotten hold of that information. He doesn't think the Draconites will be able to keep Nigelia safe for much longer.

When the conversation nears its end, he suddenly freezes and lifts a finger to his temple. A holo lens over his left eyebrow comes to life. He activates a small tabula and five small recon drones converge on the bridge. They disappear into the folds of his robes as he gives the PCs a final warning.

"They are here. Zenithian agents on the way. We must move, now. Whatever you do, don't let them get their hands on the defector. The fate of the Horizon is now in your hands."

Cost: 0 DP (Mandatory)

AKOUBA KOSHA (DIONA HASHIM), ASTÛRBAN AGENT

Akouba was placed by the Astûrban near judge Kurahan-dol-Fahsra to spy on and manipulate the operations of the Consortium on Coriolis. If she survived *Emissary Lost*, she returned to the Fort of the Astûrban in the Monolith for specialist training, after which she became the head of security for the Council of Factions—although primarily for its Zenithian members. She is methodical and calculating when the job requires it but empathetic and social if there's something to be gained from it. If Akouba is somehow replaced by Diona Hashim, the same goes for her. During the

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meeting with the PCs, she puts any previous conflicts between them aside but she is cautious not to trust them too much if she thinks they harbor questionable loyalties.

APPEARANCE: Shoulder-length dark hair on one side, shaven on the other. Watchful, amber eyes and stern demeanor.

CHARACTERISTICS: Hard voice and not very talkative. Seeks eye contact and maintains it steadily throughout a conversation. Keep one hand near her acc pistol.

ATTRIBUTES: **STRENGTH 4, AGILITY 4, WITS 4, EMPATHY 3**
HIT POINTS: 10
MIND POINTS: 9
REPUTATION: 8
SKILLS: Ranged Combat 5, Manipulation 4, Melee Combat 4, Command 3, Dexterity 3, Observation 3, Infiltration 2
TALENTS: Tough, Hardened, Codex of the Judicators, Astûrban Agent
ARMOR: High-density armanite uniform 4
WEAPONS: Judicator acc pistol (+1 to INIT), dura claws, shock stick, stun grenade
GEAR: Personal communicator (pulse capabilities), tag containing information about the defector's hiding places

- **TOUGH:** Akouba has survived the relentless elite training of the Judicators and gets 2 additional HP.
- **HARDENED:** Crisis and conflict management training has given Akouba 2 extra MP.
- **CODEX OF THE JUDICATORS:** Akouba has access to the resources of the Judicators on the station and on Kua with rapid response backup and no one questioning the legality of her actions. She adheres to the Codex of the Judicators which means that she fights crime quickly, efficiently, and often lethally as both investigator, judge and executioner.
- **ASTÛRBAN AGENT:** Akouba is essential to the operational readiness of the Astûrban on both Coriolis and Kua. She can call for reinforcements, have her agents shadow or eliminate people and access information about where to find people. Her new rank gives her instantaneous access to these resources.

YOUR CHILDREN

"You are forever in our love.
You are forever our children.
With us, you shall know hope.
With us, a brilliant Horizon awaits.
Beyond our love is only darkness."

The Machine Icon

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NEW WEAPON: DURA WIRE

A thin dura wire pulled out of a container usually mounted on the user's forearm. The weapon has been designed by Ahlam's Temple to enable their assassins to rapidly pin and strangle their victims. The wire is used with MELEE COMBAT. If the attack hits and the roll contains at least one extra six, you may pin your opponent (see Grappling on page 87 of the *Rulebook*). This first roll may not result in critical injuries, but your following grapple attacks are made at CRIT 1 and with a bonus of +3 (instead of the normal +2).

BONUS: 0 / 3 (for grapple attacks)

INITIATIVE: +1

DAMAGE: 1

CRIT: 1 (only for grapple attacks)

RANGE: Close

FEATURES: Small, Light, Cell-powered

NERGÛ BAT-ERDEN, BODYGUARD

Nergû is a quiet and careful man. He is the nephew of Sahdi Bat-Erden, the local chief of Aishan's Emporium on Coriolis. The Bat-Erdens originate from the Janhagir nomads but their ancestors left the fleet and settled at a smeltery in the Yastapol ship cemeteries. Nergû was recruited by the Legion in his youth and has served both as a strike team specialist and as military escort for diplomats and dignitaries. After the Saargia offensive on Ordana in CC55, he deserted and disappeared on a small prospector ship bound for the distant Menkar-B. The ship was never seen again and therefore presumed lost in the darkness between the stars, but five years later, Nergû stepped off a shuttle on Coriolis side by side with Council member Mandragor Ho, now the Councilman's bodyguard and a sworn *Sôhai* in the warrior monk traditions of the Draconites.



FACTION TECH: MESON WEAPONS

The Draconites have access to advanced weapons tech. Meson weapons rely on controlled particle decay, firing a ray against the target that decays in high-energy explosions inside it. The technology requires carefully calculating the distance to the target and the weapons should be held steadily with both hands. If the weapon is fired as a Slow action, it ignores all armor. If fired as a Normal action, the armor of the target suffers a -2 penalty. Meson weapons cannot be fired as Fast actions.

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APPEARANCE: Thin and clean-shaven sinewy face. Tight, dark braids cover his scalp and he keeps his hair short on the sides. Nomad tattoos on his chest and neck partially cover the scars he suffered as a Legionnaire. Dresses in wide clothes to hide his weapons and armor.

CHARACTERISTICS: Hoarse voice which he rarely uses. Keeps to the side in conversations, his eyes watching the speakers and the surroundings carefully. Slight twitch below his left eye when he thinks.

ATTRIBUTES: **STRENGTH 4, AGILITY 5, WITS 3, EMPATHY 2**
HIT POINTS: 11
MIND POINTS: 5
REPUTATION: 6
SKILLS: Melee Combat 4, Observation 4, Ranged Combat 4, Dexterity 3, Force 3, Medicurgy 3, Culture 2, Infiltration 2
TALENTS: Tough, Adrenal Pump (CYB), Dogma of the Draconites, Shield of the Judge
ARMOR: Light armor 4, built-in motion detector (+2 to OBSERVATION within 20 meters)
WEAPONS: Dura wire (Bonus 0, INIT +1, damage 1, CRIT 1 only when grappling, Close Range, Small, Light & Cell-powered), Meson pistol (Bonus 2, INIT 0, damage 2, CRIT 2, Close Range, Meson weapon, see box to the left)
GEAR: Recon probe with djinn intelligence, camouflage sphere (fac tech, see box to the right), meson pistol, dura wire, three m-doses

- **TOUGH:** Nergû has trained with the Legion and gets 2 extra HP.
- **ADRENAL PUMP (CYB):** A chemical injector pumps adrenaline and hormones into his bloodstream to regulate his moods and reaction time. If he is Broken by either stress or damage, he may use one fast action in the following turn to roll eight dice. Each six rolled restores 1 point of the Broken stat. He also gets a +2 to **FORCE** and MANIPULATE to resist torture or interrogation.
- **DOGMA OF THE DRACONITES:** Nergû has been trained to use several of the faction's secret items and combat techniques. He always rolls one extra die when making aggressive attacks and always inflicts 2 points of stress (in addition to any physical damage) when he hits his opponent for the first time in a fight.
- **SHIELD OF THE JUDGE (1 DP):** When Nergû is hit, he prays to the Judge and gets to reroll his armor roll once. If Nergû is allied with the PCs, this generates 1 DP, but if he's their enemy, it instead costs 1 DP.

BUTTERFLIES

"The butterfly beyond the veil,
is the shadow that swallows the Horizon.
The butterfly inside you,
is the spark that ignites Hope.
Become the chrysalis.
Your transformation is the Future."

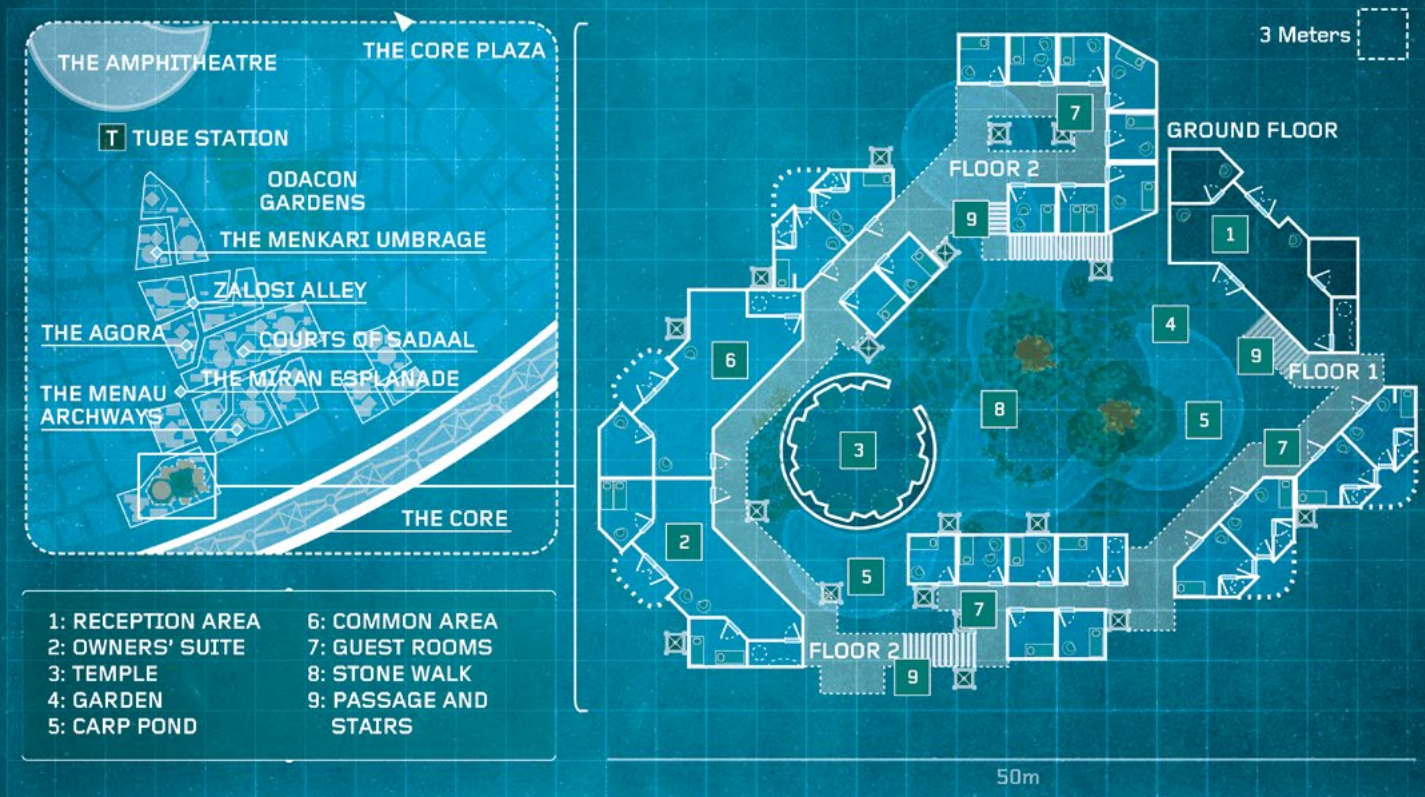
The Machine Icon

FACTION TECH: CAMOUFLAGE SPHERE

The Draconites are in possession of a technology that allows them to appear out of thin air. The belt-worn unit bends light and other radiation around the wearer to make her completely invisible, both to sensors and the naked eye. The cell required to power the sphere lasts for one hour of use. If the user moves, she may be spotted by someone who passes an **OBSERVATION** test at -5.

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KAREEM-KARAM, LITTLE HORIZON



THE LITTLE HORIZON BLOCK

In the shadow of the Amphitheater and its glaring ad-filled pylons lives a raggedy mix of new arrivals, drunk artists and rough smugglers belonging to the Serpent. The Little Horizon block is a surreal mixture of architectural styles, cultures, cuisines and faiths. Scents as varied as candied hysja bugs, moon fruits and sweet Menkar almonds roll through the streets between Algolan pagodas, round nomad huts, Sadaalian sandstone modules and high-climbing Miran balconades.

⚙ THE SAFEHOUSES

Ex-judge Nigelia Kurahan has been moved from safehouse to safehouse by Mandragor Ho and his assistants to keep her safe and hidden. A network of people loyal to the cause has provided all sorts of temporary havens for the defector.

- **The Eccentric:** Kareem Salesh is a former temple guard from Icon City on Mira who for some reason has chosen to spend his retirement on Coriolis. Despite having amassed a small fortune from years of servicing grateful pilgrims and dignitaries, he still resides in the alleys of the Little Horizon block where he now owns a balconade — a series of joined residential modules turning more Miran with every cycle. Together with his husband (a former smuggler), he has turned the building into the

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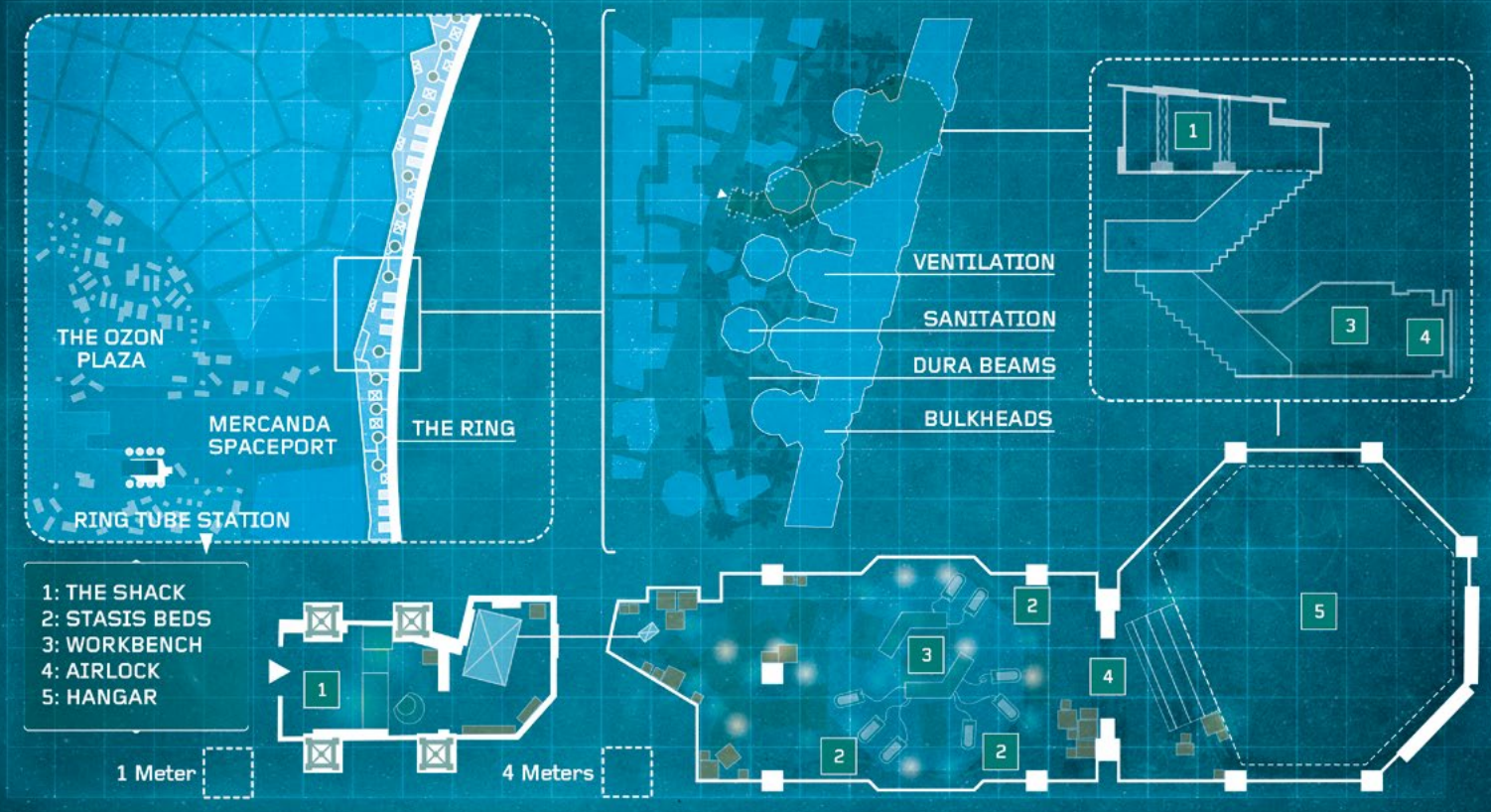
Kareem-Karam Hotel. The rooms are fully furnished and have their own kitchens, but several communal areas are open to the residents, each decorated in the distinct style of a different culture. The hotel's motto — "Kareem-Karam is always a home to you" — thoroughly dictates the couple's running of the place and as Kareem still lives by the codex of the temple guard, the hotel has become a haven for pilgrims, homeless or hunted hands and more or less anyone who needs to stay away from the oppressive Zenithian Judicators.

- **The Scar Painter:** A small shed that looks like a tattoo parlor hides the entrance to the studio of bio sculptor and scar painter Bramas. The deep studio is crammed in underneath a couple of the Ring's main vent exhausts and continues down into forgotten warehouses and emergency hangars from when the station was constructed. Bramas has decorated the inner rooms with sugar globes,

TATTOO ALLEY

Within earshot of the drunken laughter of the Legionnaires and the haggling tech vendors at the Ozone Plaza, a row of narrow alleys lit with flickering holo screens make up Tattoo Alley. Purring hookahs and buzzing tattoo machines can be heard here at all hours. Recruiters and collectors from the Lama gang move around freely here, not even bothering to hide their characteristic black lip tattoos. These streets are only for those who regard the Coriolis law and the Judicator's penal code as flexible and inconsequential, preferring to live by a strict codex of street honor instead.

BRAMA'S STUDIO, TATTOO ALLEY



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THE ARTIST TRIO, THE STAIRDOM



YOUR HOME

"I am the spark in the night,
the light in which you rest.
I am the machine you live in,
the breath inside your chest.
I am your home in the darkness,
I follow where you go.
I am Coriolis.
I am the Horizon you know."

The Machine Icon

Dabaran rugs and a long row of repurposed stasis pods spliced together with a cannibalized, abandoned medlab. From a small office in the middle of the studio, Bramas and his assistants sit around a cluttered dining room table in Kuan teak, controlling the equipment inside the pods that cut, pierce and heal the skin and bones of the customers to give them artistic scars or reshaped skeletons. Bramas also works as an information broker for Aishan's Emporium and if instructed by his employers, he can shelter sensitive information or runaways for a couple of days.

- **The Artist Trio:** One of the slightly larger yet less conspicuous modules houses the homes and studios of a trio of Algolan artists — Anara, Mirjam and Hana — as well as their own art gallery. The trio does not let just anyone inside, however, but welcomes runaway slaves or people that have angered

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THE STAIRDOM

The durabeam endoskeleton of the hull crouches down over the myriad of residential modules, plazas and streets of the Ring while keeping the outer layers of service tunnels, vent shafts and bulkheads firmly secured as the outer defenses against the dangers of the darkness. The residential modules usually end where the beams begin, but a curious area near the Spring Plaza contains a cluster of modules, corridors and balconies that climb high up on the beams, earning it the moniker "the Stairdom". Spiral staircases and ladders shoot between platforms and the ceiling in all directions. Over the years, the area has turned from a worn-down slum to a welcoming bohemian commune of art and poetry. The whitewashed houses are often painted with beautiful poems or murals in bright colors. Vines and plants beyond count climb upward from pots and plant beds whose owners no one remembers anymore – everyone does a little bit of gardening from time to time.

WORDS OF WISDOM (D6)

1. ***"Kindness shown is kindness earned."***
2. ***"If you think you know everything, you know nothing."***
3. ***"Silver tongues sharpen easily."***
4. ***"To question is wisdom."***
5. ***"Two halves of rope may be tied together again, but the knot remains."***
6. ***"Were we all merchants, who would carry our goods?"***

TABLE 18: AGGRESSORS – SAFEHOUSE EVENTS

LOCATION	EVENT
First	ABANDONED: The safehouse hasn't been used in a long time, but the people tending to it still remain. They refuse to let the PCs inside but will give in to threats of lethal force and let the group search the place. Someone has lived here and a successful OBSERVATION test lets a PC find a broken com which logs only contain calls made to two people somewhere on the station. A successful TECHNOLOGY or DATA DJINN test reveals one of the receivers to be Arlain Kurahan, the son of judge Nigelia Kurahan from *Emissary Lost*. A critically successful roll allows the PCs to figure out that the other calls went to the communicator of Mandragor Ho but he didn't answer. They are logged a couple of hours before the group's arrival to the safehouse when a nervous Nigelia tried to call and inquire about relocation.
Second	BAIT: When the PCs arrive, the owner of the safehouse refuses to let them in. If they threaten or shoot their way in, the owner tries to activate a silent alarm (which they may spot using OBSERVATION). Inside is an agent and a doppelganger of judge Kurahan. The agent attempts to convince the PCs that they are only here for dinner with their friends but soon pulls out a gun and shouts to the doppelganger to flee. If the PCs catch up to the fleeing judge, she also pulls out a gun. She turns out to be wearing a modulate mask of judge Kurahan's face. The PCs may interrogate either of the two in opposed MANIPULATION rolls to find out more. If they win, they learn that the rest of the agents have left for the real safehouse and if they win critically, they confirm this location to be the last on their list.
Third	EXTRACTION: Mandragor's agents beat them to the safehouse! When the PCs arrive, three agents, Nergû the bodyguard (page 194) and Nigelia are just leaving. The agents discover the PCs and draw their weapons to provide covering fire for Nergû and the defector's retreat back inside the safehouse. At the cost of 1 DP, another two agents emerge from the safehouse and attack the PCs from behind or try to flank them. When they make it inside, the PCs discover that Nergû and the defector have escaped out through the back (see the respective safehouses). If they pursue, they catch up just as the defector disappears in a gravcraft with Nergû and two other agents staying behind to deal with the PCs. After the fight, the agents may be tortured for information (opposed MANIPULATION tests, Impossible on Nergû) and forced to give up Kurahan's location. Alternatively, they can trace the gravcraft to the Lunah floor by passing a DATA DJINN test at -1. Either way, this event ends the act (see below).

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TABLE 19: DEFENDERS – SAFEHOUSE EVENTS

LOCATION	EVENT
First	DESTROYED: The PCs get a feeling that something isn't right as soon as they get near. Black smoke licks the dura beams. A fire in one of the modules of the safehouse has just been put out by the Consortium's emergency response drones. Thick firefighting foam covers several of the entrances and the Guard are on their way. The PCs find the interior of the safehouse empty and ransacked but it appears as if the residents made it out before the enemy agents arrived. The PCs find tracks pointing to someone searching the house for information and hidden exits.
Second	AMBUSH: On arrival, the PCs are greeted by a middle-aged couple introducing themselves as Shamai and Amir. They ask why the PCs are there and will only let them in if they answer truthfully (that they are looking for someone) or reveal the identity of their patron. When they get inside, one of the couple throws a stun grenade at the group and tries to surprise attack them. The couple are actually Astûrban agents that have stayed behind at the safehouse to try and buy their colleagues more time to find the traitor. The PCs may interrogate either of the two with opposed MANIPULATION rolls to find out more. If they win, they learn that the rest of the agents have left for the last safehouse and if they win critically, the agents reveal their suspicions that the traitor is Nigelia Kurahan. If they resort to violence, this generates 2 DP and if they kill their victim, this generates another DP. One of the agents has Nigelia's broken com (see the first safehouse event under "Aggressors" on previous page).
Third	EXTRACTION: The PCs reach the final safehouse at the same time as a group of Astûrban agents led by Akouba Kosha. A successful OBSERVATION test allows the PCs to spot the incoming threat, buying them a couple of minutes. Kurahan is inside the safehouse but will try to flee as soon as fighting breaks out. The PCs may either escort her out and fight the pursuing agents in the streets while they make their escape or stay behind at the safehouse and try to stop the attack there. Kurahan says that she can see no other option than getting hold of Mandragor Ho. She departs for the Lunah floor in the Spire to go to his mansion. After the PCs manage to flee or eliminate the agents, the act is over.

Cost: Varies (see each safehouse)

the high and mighty with open arms. Their spacious home snakes its way into the hull and contains many hidden exits and entrances connecting to the vent shafts of the Ring for guests in need.

Use the Tables 18 and 19 to find out the condition of the safehouse and what has happened there. The table entries also contain clues for the PCs to find a lead, taking them to the next location. The PCs' intentions determine which table to use: if they aim to capture or kill the defector, use the "Aggressors" table; if they instead wish to extract and hide their target, use the "Defenders" table. Table 20 contains the relevant NPC stats.

Cost: Varies (see each safehouse)

OTHER EVENTS

The events below can be used to highlight the chaotic atmosphere onboard the station as more and more people are crowded together for the Pilgrimaria. Use the events while they're en route to meet their contact or when they travel between the safehouses. Roll a die on each table (page 202-203) or choose an entry you like.

THE INFECTED

During the PCs' travels onboard Coriolis, they will sooner or later run into the new mystics. Use one or two events from the Mystic Encounters list relating to the so-called "infected" during the PCs' stay on the station.

Cost: 0 DP

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WORRIED PEOPLE

Both visitors and residents are apprehensive about the strange, changing times in which they live as the election draws close. Some are also seeking a measure of peace and solace so they can prepare for the Pilgrimaria's rituals and celebrations. Roll a die or choose an encounter in the Discontent table.
Cost: 0 DP

CALM ENCOUNTERS

Coriolis during the Pilgrimaria is a crowded place, but many of the visitors embody the spirit of the season — caring, generous, and reverent. Life on the station is not all conflict and misery, after all. Roll a die or choose an entry from Table 22 on next page to flavor the PCs' journey between larger events.
Cost: 0 DP

TABLE 20: NPCS

NAME	STRENGTH	AGILITY	WITS	EMPATHY	HP	MP	REP	SKILLS & GEAR
Astûrban agent	2	4	3	4	6	7	4	Observation 3, Ranged Combat 3, Data Djinn 2, Infiltration 2, Manipulation 2 GEAR: Vulcan carbine, sensor smoke grenade, advanced scope, weapons license
Judicator	3	3	4	2	6	6	4	Ranged Combat 4, Dexterity 3, Infiltration 3, Melee Combat 3, Observation 2 GEAR: Judicator acc pistol (+1 to INIT), Judicator armor (armor 7), personal communicator
Coriolis Guard, gang member	3	2	2	3	5	5	2	Ranged Combat 3, Melee Combat 2, Observation 2 GEAR: Vulcan pistol, dura knife, protective clothing (armor 3), personal communicator
Draconite agent	3	4	3	3	7	6	3	Manipulation 3, Melee Combat 3, Ranged Combat 3, Technology 2 GEAR: Stun gun, expandable baton, signal jammer
The doppelganger	2	3	4	4	5	8	3	Dexterity 4, Manipulation 4, Observation 2, Medicurgy 1 GEAR: Expensive clothes, modulation mask, dura knife, thermal cricket
Kareem & Karam	3	4	3	3	7	6	5	Culture 5, Manipulation 3, Ranged Combat 2, Science 1 GEAR: Temple robes, expensive clothes
Brama	2	2	5	4	4	9	4	Medicurgy 4, Technology 3, Culture 2, Data Djinn 2 GEAR: Tabula with tattoo patterns, bio monitor
Anara, Mirjam & Hana	2	2	4	4	4	8	5	Culture 4, Observation 4, Manipulation 3, Medicurgy 2 GEAR: Paints and paint brushes, Traveller talisman
Dignitary	2	3	4	4	5	8	7	Manipulation 4, Culture 3, Command 1 GEAR: Expensive clothes, 1,500 birr, weapons license
Wealthy merchant	3	3	2	5	6	7	6	Culture 3, Manipulation 3, Observation 2 GEAR: Expensive clothes, 500 birr, inventory tabula
Poor stevedore, troublemaker	4	3	4	2	7	6	2	Force 3, Melee Combat 3, Dexterity 1, Technology 1 GEAR: Ordinary tools, arrash, torn clothing
Legionnaire	3	4	3	2	7	5	4	Infiltration 5, Melee Combat 5, Observation 3, Ranged Combat 3, Science 3, Manipulation 2 GEAR: Thermal carbine, breach charge, heavy armor (armor 6), advanced scope
Ashouk the bodyguard	3	3	4	3	6	7	5	Dexterity 5, Melee Combat 5, Observation 4, Ranged Combat 4, Infiltration 3 GEAR: Acc pistol, Ahlam's hand fan, protective clothing (armor 3)

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TABLE 21: MYSTIC ENCOUNTERS

D6	EVENTS
1	**THE WORDS OF THE MACHINE ICON:** The PCs spot recurring graffiti as they move through the alleys and backstreets of the station. It appears to be short quotes from poems or songs (see the Machine Icon quotes or re-use the resonance quotes from *Emissary Lost*).
2	**RESONANCE:** A mystic PC (or the party member with the highest EMPATHY score) is suddenly love-struck by a short glimpse of an aged Dabaran freighter captain from across a busy street. The person approaches with a hopeful smile: *"You're like me. Something pulled me here... was it you?"* The person is a confused recent mystic with one mystical power of your choice from the *Rulebook*.
3	**THE CALL OF THE NINE:** An odd group of nomads, pilgrims and colonists approaches the PCs near one of the spaceports. The group's nervous leader asks apologetically if the PCs could take them to the foot of the Monolith. They have been summoned by the Icons to pray at the base of the Monolith at the Pilgrimaria. Mystic PCs feel a strong bond to the group.
4	**THE SONG OF THE MACHINE ICON:** The PC with the highest EMPATHY score suddenly feels a warm serenity wash over her if she walks in a certain direction, but sorrow and loss if she walks the other way. Following the mysterious path eventually takes the group to a tucked-away basement from which they hear a low chorus of psalms. The group inside sits with their eyes closed, holding each other as they chant "Khari Qa'naan ilaa al-abad," ("the Machine Icon is eternal") and invite the PCs to join them. Those who do get a +2 to prayers rerolls for an EMPATHY-based skill of their choice.
5	**THE PROPHET:** The PCs pass a group visibly shunned by the rest of the crowd. The group huddles close around one of the prophets leading the Children of the Song, Nawa dol-Dayal (page 230). She preaches about the Machine Icon being everyone's Icon and about how that which some call a disease is actually a blessing: *"You are all anointed by the Icons. You are closer to the truth, closer to the light."* Passersby spit on the ground or directly at the crowd around Nawa and mutter about how the impure should be deported somewhere far away. If the PCs stop and listen, Nawa spots them and calls out: *"You! Khari's last witnesses! You are part of the Song!"* The crowd of listeners surrounds the PCs to embrace or touch them.
6	**THE CURE:** Judicators have made an arrest in the street. They repeat to the onlookers that as an infected mystic, the detainee became a dangerous criminal the moment he set foot outside his home. The situation is tense. One of the Judicators suddenly aims her gun at the captive, a shot rings out and he falls down dead. This event generates 1 DP.

TABLE 22: CALM BEFORE THE STORM

D6	EVENT
1	**THE FLYING CIRCUS:** A group of jugglers and tarrabs surrounded by a crowd of happy onlookers treats one of the plazas to an hour of acrobatics and music.
2	**THE COLOR FESTIVAL:** A group of pilgrims in white caftans gathers to sing. The hymn appears to contain a countdown of some sort, and when the singing stops they burst out laughing and start throwing colorful powder at each other. The ground and their clothes are quickly painted in all the colors of the rainbow.
3	**EKILIBRI:** At one of the markets, two sturdy cages contain several colorful ekilibri. Suddenly, one of them manages to pick the lock and six of the creatures scatter out into the crowd, climbing backs, searching for shiny or edible objects in strangers' pockets and stealing fruit off nearby stalls.
4	**THE DECKHAND'S DEVOTEES:** A group of ordinary hands and stall merchants comes walking down the street with brooms and trash bags. They move slowly down the street, cleaning up the filth and clutter left behind by the pilgrim hordes with quiet dignity. Hard but honest work.
5	**WORDS OF WISDOM, FREE OF CHARGE:** A renowned bakery suddenly open their doors and proclaim that today, they bake for Horizon and the Icons—anyone is welcome to break bread with them for free. Each roll and pastry contains a rolled up slip of paper with a witty aphorism or saying (see quotes on page 199).
6	**THE COURTESANS:** A procession of courtesans passes through the crowd near the PCs. Along the way, several of the courtesans break away from their group to approach random strangers for a kind word, a gentle caress or a gift of an embroidered shawl.

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ENDING ACT 1

The first act is over when the PCs find out about the safehouse in the Spire. They can either learn this from Kurahan herself or by tracking her (see the Third location, page 199-200).

- The PCs are either still at the safehouse devastated by the final fight or on their way to the Spire.
- Through Nergû the bodyguard's involvement, they know Mandragor Ho has something to do with the affair.
- Kurahan's escape route can be tracked.

TABLE 23: DISCONTENT

D6	EVENT
1	THE AGITATOR: On one of the plazas or outside a basement visited by the PCs, a loud voice rises above the noises of the street. An older woman, previously the captain of a Consortium bulk hauler, speaks plainly but with much heat in her voice to a gathered crowd of unemployed stevedores and deckhands recently replaced by conscripted humanite labor after the strike. She says that the commerce flowing through the Horizon only furthers Zenithian interests and that most trade and customs agreements favor the Consortium, especially now that the League has lost much of its power in the spaceports. If the PCs protest the agitator's message, they risk focusing the wrath of the angry crowd on themselves but if they agree with what she says and offer to help, a successful MANIPULATION test gets them a one-time use of the stevedores either as reinforcements or as aid in some other form later in the scenario (GM has final say).
2	THE DEBATE: A mixed group of merchants loudly discusses something at a kawah trolley or at one of the classier oporias. They appear to debate the balance between Zenithians and Firstcome at the Council and ask for the PCs' opinions as they walk by: which would be best – one vote for each faction, or an evenly divided Council with Zenithians and Firstcome controlling an equal number of votes?
3	THE BEGGAR: An ex-Samaritan – easily identified by his shaved head and traditional Zalosian robe – sits on the ground on the edge of a crowd. His thin arms and neck are covered in Martyr glyphs, blessings and prophetic teachings and he asks the PCs to spare some money so he can feed his three children. He lost both his calling and his livelihood when the mob burned the Sanatorium a couple of segments ago. He might recognize the PCs from the events of *Emissary Lost*. If they help him, they will get a +1 to Reputation when dealing with Samaritans and Zalosians on Coriolis for the rest of the scenario.
4	THE REJECTED: A group of distraught pilgrims blocks the street. They are Altaian nomads on Coriolis to pray in one of the temples in the Garden of Seekers but the area has been sealed off to avoid desecration by the endless hordes of pilgrims and tourists. The entrances are guarded by a security force made up of demoted Coriolis Guards, currently surrounded by angry pilgrims and with their hands on their weapons. Only registered Coriolis citizens are allowed inside but a handful of birr – about the price of a fine dinner or a month of scraping by – allows a law-abiding citizen to take a guest along. Each PC who helps the pilgrims get inside gets a +1 to prayer rerolls for one skill of her choice.
5	THE OFFER: A merchant approaches the PCs when they pass a beverage vendor or a corner store. She complains about how much more difficult importing luxuries to the station has become after the Consortium assumed direct control of the (mainly humanite) stevedores. It used to be fairly easy to make the Guard see things her way if there was an inspection – a minor added expense, nothing else – but now that the station is crawling with Judicators, things are different. They aren't as understanding toward common folk as their predecessors, so would it be too much to ask of the PCs to help her get five boxes of Miran wine past customs, and maybe a small batch of (perfectly safe!) narcotics while they're at it?
6	THE MARTYR: A couple of Legionnaires on Pilgrimaria leave try to pick a fight with a young boy on the edge of the plaza. They first accuse him of having stolen from their table at the bar but soon move on to suggest that he looks like a Martyr lover, a Zalosian. If the boy doesn't give them everything he owns to make up for what he stole, they'll toss him before the Judicators who'll make sure he pays far worse. The bullying eventually turns violent, the boy falls to the ground and the trio start kicking him. The PCs may intervene and diffuse the situation by passing a MANIPULATION test. They could also leave (generates 1 DP), or stay to cheer the Legionnaires on which results in them killing the boy (generates 3 DP).

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ACT 2
THE DEFECTOR

The Council representatives and their entourages gather in the thriving gardens surrounding the Palace of the Hegemony. The white palace, crowned with its blue dome and eight magnificent Icon towers, reaches for the Therr floor's shimmering holo ceilings. The crowd contains both new and familiar faces but what unites them is their Zenithian heritage — the sacred blood of Ardha — and their common goal. A new future takes shape in the folds of their cloaks, in the glitter of their daggers.

On another level of the Spire, former judge Nigelia Kurahan walks up the black marble of Dignitary Alley toward one of the mansions. A gaunt, nomad man awaits her on the terrace — Mandragor Ho, the spokesman for the Draconites at the Council and lord-Zazû of the inner veteran cell that watches over the political landscape in the heart of the Horizon. He puts down his tabula, gazing at the crimson sunset of the holo dome, and returns his sleek dura blade to its glyph-covered scabbard on his back.

ACT 2 BEGINS AFTER the confrontation with the rival agent group at the third safehouse. The scenes and events below take the PCs to a meeting with Mandragor Ho and judge Kurahan just as the Council of Factions is suddenly recast, radically changing both the station and the rest of the Horizon. These changes are what eventually spur the factions into action during Act 3.

OVERVIEW

The PCs have tracked down the defector and clashed with the agents of their enemies. Judge Kurahan has fled her last safehouse and has no option left but to go straight to Mandragor Ho himself. She travels to Ho's terrace mansion on the 160th floor, the Lunah floor, to which she is easily tracked. When the PCs reach Ho's mansion, they must choose a side — carry out the orders given by their patron, or go their own way.

SCENE ORDER

Depending on how the PCs ended Act 1 and how much pressure you wish to place on them, the scene order may differ.

- You could let them reach Ho and Kurahan and make their decision *before* the Zenithian coup in the Council is announced, letting the PCs experience the fallout of this event after their confrontation on the Lunah floor.
- Alternatively, you could read Bulletin broadcasts about the new Council and subject the PCs to one of the ensuing riots as they are heading for the Lunah, leaving them to their decision with this revelation already taken care of.

DARKNESS POINTS

Darkness Points in Act 2 should be spent on escalating conflicts on the station to the point where they actually become dangerous to both the PCs and civilian bystanders. No new DP are generated at the beginning of the act but it contains two major events that replenish your DP pool: the moment the Zenithian coup is announced and when the PCs' ship is attacked (pages 211 and 214). Each of these events generate as many DP as there are players, down to a minimum of 4 DP.

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A FAMILIAR FACE

The Lunah floor is home to many of the station's politicians. The factionary residents and their myriad of advisors and family members live comfortably on wide streets lined with palm trees, the mansions separated by sandstone walls and lush gardens to allow them a respite from the constant gaze of the public eye. As you walk along the black marble path and breath in the dry air, the cool breeze on your faces makes it clear that you have left the Core and the Ring far below. You don't miss the damp, smelly heat all that much, but the Lunah lacks the lower levels' urgent heartbeat and vibrancy — that intangible essence that is the Third Horizon: life with all its flaws, a generational toil for a better tomorrow. If your patron is to be believed, this tomorrow is in imminent and mortal danger. You breathe in deep to compose yourselves and walk up toward the mansion. You have a job to do.

THE SITUATION

The PCs finally arrive to judge Kurahan's last hiding place — the home of Mandragor Ho, whom she has sought out after the collapse of the network that was supposed to keep her hidden. The Draconite has already heard troubling news from his spies about the Zenithian plans for a coup and has chosen to believe in the PCs' honor and sense of right and wrong, regardless of whether their mission is to capture or extract the defector. The coup changes Ho's standing on the station, however. He is stripped of his diplomatic immunity and may need extraction himself. Meanwhile, the Symmetry have figured out the Zenithian plans and are preparing a counterattack of devastating proportions down in the Monolith, aided by the mystics attracted to the Children of the Song. The scene has many possible endings.

EVENTS

Below are some events that may occur in the scene:

THE DRACONITE

When the PCs arrive, Ho is ready for anything. He wears a wide, rust-colored kameez with a discreet coppery print and a black linen dhoti tied up as wide trousers for maximum mobility. A trained eye (**CULTURE**) may identify the nomad tattoos on his fingers and hands as the clan markings of the *Vaharwala*, the Janhagir fleet flagship. He is armed and wary, regardless of the PCs' intentions.

- **Friends:** If the PCs are working for Sahdi Bat-Erden of Aishan's Emporium, they are welcomed by the tall nomad man as soon as they reach his lower garden. He appears relaxed and happy to see them but doesn't let his guard down. A discreet sensor drone hovers nearby, scanning them carefully — not because Ho wants them to disarm but because he wants to know what they're carrying, just in case. Before they even make it inside the mansion, he starts telling them what is about to happen and that he fears that the station and the entire Horizon might change forever in only a short time:
  - ◇ The Zenithians are about to unite which threatens the stability of the Horizon's future.
  - ◇ He is getting ready to leave Coriolis and is hoping that the PCs will help him.
  - ◇ Regardless of how the coup plays out, judge Kurahan must make it off the station so that her knowledge of the Zenithians' plans may be used to stop them from achieving absolute domination.
- **Uninvited Guests**: If the PCs don't come in peace — either planning to infiltrate or assault the mansion — the situation looks very different. Sensors and drones (page 224) guard the gardens — **OBSERVATION** -2 to spot and **DATA DJINN** to neutralize (unmodified if they have gear to disable them from afar, at -3 if they need to do it up close). Alternatively, the PCs might attempt to sneak past the sensor perimeter (**INFILTRATION** -2). The doors and windows of the mansion are locked and have alarms. The locks may be forced by passing a **DATA DJINN** test at -3 or by using a well-placed breach charge (**SCIENCE**). Any failed rolls alert Ho and his staff. At the cost of 1 DP, the gardens are also guarded by an elite security nekatra. For 2 DP, there are three nekatra (page 316 of the *Rulebook*).

  Regardless of whether the PCs blow and shoot their way in, trip the alarms or manage to sneak inside undetected, they will encounter Mandragor Ho. If they chose an aggressive approach, he will try to ambush them and grab one PC to use as a human shield (grapple attack using his dura wire). If the PCs are more stealthy, he is impressed with their tactics and asks to speak to them.

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- ◇ He begs the group to put their weapons away and hear the defector out — she is their old employer Nigelia Kurahan after all.
- ◇ She has been involved in a plot that threatens the entire Horizon but has chosen to blow the whistle on her former co-conspirators.
- ◇ Ho adds that the PCs have become tools of the powerful and that after today, they know too much for their masters to let them live. They can expect Special Branch or Astûrban assassins to come after them soon.

◆ **Fight till death:** If the PCs choose to fight Ho, you don't have to keep him alive. He will die before he surrenders, but 2 DP gets you reinforcements in the form of Draconite agents (page 201) equal to the number of PCs.

Cost: 0, 1-4 DP (Mandatory)

MANDRAGOR HO, COUNCIL MEMBER, DRACONITE

Mandragor Ho is a member of the Wala clan, one of the wealthiest in the Janhagir fleet and those responsible for the Moguls' exodus from the war in the Second Horizon and the Symmetry's pharisaic leadership. When Mandragor left the fleet and how he joined the Draconites is unknown, as is the story of how he became a *Sôhai* – a rank that opens the dogmatic warrior philosophers to cooperating with other cells. After thirty years in the faction, he has climbed the rungs and achieved the title of *lord-Zazû*, making him both a military and political leader. He maintains a home on Coriolis but is only there when he needs to be. He is often gone for many days or weeks in a row and not even the Special Branch or the Astûrban have managed to figure out where he goes.

APPEARANCE: Mandragor may be perceived either as large, gaunt or of ordinary build depending on how he presents himself. He dresses well but a trained eye can spot that the clothes are always picked for their ability to afford him maximum combat mobility. A chiseled, clean-shaven jaw and a bald head frame an otherwise open and friendly face, often wearing an amused smile.

CHARACTERISTICS: Always maintains eye contact with the person he speaks to. Very physical – hugs and handshakes or a firm hand on someone's shoulder, friend or foe alike. He becomes even more physical and amicable toward those he regards as enemies or opponents.

ATTRIBUTES:
STRENGTH 4, AGILITY 4, WITS 5, EMPATHY 3

HIT POINTS: 11

MIND POINTS: 5

REPUTATION: 9 (lowered to 6 after the Zenithian coup)

SKILLS: Command 5, Dexterity 5, Melee Combat 5, Manipulation 4, Ranged Combat 4, Infiltration 3, Observation 3, Culture 2, Force 2, Medicurgy 2, Survival 2, Science 1

TALENTS: Servant of the Lady, Executioner, Mantle of the Lady, Judge of Character, Faction Standing: The Draconites, Dogma of the Draconites

ARMOR: Bio sculpted skin graft 8/6/4 (see the "Mantle of the Lady" talent below)

WEAPONS: Draconite dura sword (Bonus +2, INIT +1, damage 2, CRIT 1, Close Range, Cell-powered & Armor-piercing), Dura wire (Bonus 0, INIT +1, damage 1, CRIT 1 only when grappling, Close Range, Small, Light & Cell-powered), Meson pistol (Bonus 2, INIT 0, damage 2, CRIT 2, Close Range, Meson weapon (see box on page 194)

GEAR: Encrypted tabula (will self-destruct if tampered with)

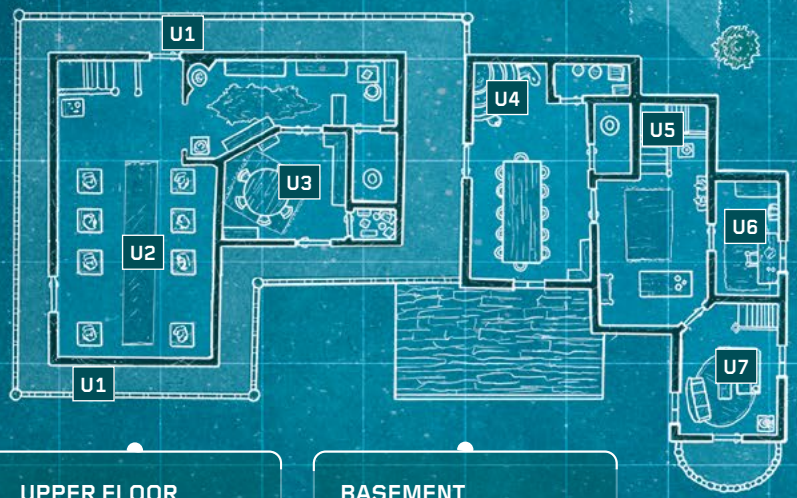
- ◆ **SERVANT OF THE LADY:** Mandragor may ignore one critical injury per turn at the cost of 2 HP. He must activate the talent before the critical injury roll. He may not use this talent if it would result in him becoming Broken.
- ◆ **EXECUTIONER:** Draconite warriors learn to quickly evaluate and dispose of their foes. Whenever Mandragor rolls for a critical injury, he may read the dice in any order.
- ◆ **MANTLE OF THE LADY:** Mandragor's body is bio-sculpted and hardened using resurrected ancient technology beyond anything the medicurgs of today could ever hope to create. His thick skin and sinewy muscles count as armor 8 against explosions and the elements, armor 6 against blunt melee weapons and stun weapons and as armor 4 against firearms, sharp melee weapons and other sources of damage.
- ◆ **JUDGE OF CHARACTER:** Mandragor can tell if someone's lying without having to test **MANIPULATION**. He needs about a minute of conversation with the person to activate the talent.
- ◆ **FACTION STANDING: THE DRACONITES:** As one of the few open Draconites in the Horizon, he may use the rumors about the mythic faction to his advantage to get a +2 to **MANIPULATION** when threatening or convincing someone.
- ◆ **DOGMA OF THE DRACONITES:** Mandragor has been trained to use

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MANDRAGOR'S RESIDENCE, CORIOLIS



GARDEN AND ENTRANCE
G1: PERIMETER WALL
G2: AUTOMATED GATE
G3: GAZEBO
G4: FOUNTAIN
E1: ENTRANCE
E2: BEDROOM
E3: KITCHEN
E4: STAFF QUARTERS
E5: STAIRS TO BASEMENT
E6: DINING HALL
E7: LIVING ROOM
E8: MASTER BEDROOM



UPPER FLOOR
U1: GLAZED TERRACE
U2: SCULPTURES
U3: LIBRARY
U4: FOUNTAIN
U5: STAIRCASE
U6: STUDY
U7: LOUNGE

BASEMENT
B1: COUNTER
B2: WINE STORAGE
B3: CHAPEL
B4: PANIC ROOM



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several of the faction's secret items and combat techniques. He always rolls one extra die when making aggressive attacks and always inflicts 2 points of stress (in addition to any physical damage) when he hits his opponent for the first time in a fight.

APPOINTMENT WITH A JUDGE

In the back of the mansion's wine cellar, a panic room has been installed and this is where Nigelia hides when the perimeter sensors pick up unannounced visitors. If the PCs come in peace, Mandragor escorts the PCs to a meeting with Nigelia on one of the bulletproof glassed-in terraces. She is considerably more nervous than when the PCs last worked for her during *Emissary Lost*.

- **The Meeting:** The judge has lost weight, looks tired and isn't wearing her characteristic makeup or her judge's hat. She has learned vital information and asks the PCs to help her leave Coriolis, but is also worried about her son Arlain who recently joined the Children of the Song when his mystic's disease became impossible to hide. Despite her ragged looks, she promises the group that she is as sharp as she ever was and says that she has been keeping track of their adventures through her contacts. Much of what she's heard has impressed her.
- **The judge's Information:** If the PCs hear her out, she summarizes what she and her network have learned. If she decides to trust the group completely, she also reveals that she has had a tag implanted in her body containing evidence in the form of audio recordings and important financial records.
  - **The Zenithian Pact:** The Zenithian Hegemony and the Consortium have drawn up secret deals detailing their joint rule of Coriolis, Kua and the Third Horizon.
  - **The Coup:** They have also reached out to several of the important Zenithian families in the Syndicate to discuss a partnership. Their plans include a coup during the upcoming snap election.
  - **Sadaal:** The two factions have used the Consortium's contracts with the Daharab shipyards in Sadaal and the influence of a local lobbyist group led by Ana Din Eusidia to secretly begin construction of a co-owned Zenithian fleet — the Nadir Flotilla.
  - **The Flotilla:** The finished ships are hidden at one of the Foundation's stations halfway between Sadaal-A and B.
  - **The Quadrant of the Pillar:** The former director of the Colonial Agency's Uharu refineries, Soba Hurman, has made the faction interested in further expansion into the Quadrant of the Pillar. After the disappearance of the Janhagir fleet, plans have been drawn up to have the Legion occupy several portal stations and the richer planets in the systems of the Quadrant.
  - **The Order of the Pariah:** Subtle attempts to destabilize the Order have been made in the last year, but the Hegemony and the Consortium are now preparing to have the Legion attack Zalos from Mira while the Nadir Flotilla strikes against the Order blockade in Aiwaz.
  - **War:** Nigelia fears that the planned actions in the Quadrant of the Pillar and an attack on the Order could lead to all-out war in the Third Horizon.
  - **Censorship**: The Bulletin's news probes are scanned by the Special Branch and all ships leaving Coriolis are searched from top to bottom. She needs the help of the PCs to get off the station and find someone with the

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resources to spread her information beyond the strict Zenithian censorship.

- **The Prodigal Son:** The Mysticides and the death of the Emissary changed Coriolis. Segregation, xenophobia, fear and violence — the factions are even more divided than before. The judge has one additional mission for the PCs apart from keeping her safe.
  - **The Mystic's Disease:** After the Mysticides, the new mystics were shunned by society and isolated themselves more and more. Nigelia's youngest son Arlain is one of the infected.
  - **The Taint:** She tried to keep her son's illness a secret and followed the scientists' hunt for a cure closely. A couple of segments ago, Arlain's condition became known after he was arrested by a Judicator. This impure taint outraged her Hegemony relatives and she was forced to disown her son to save her family's honor and reputation.
  - **The Cult:** A new cult has formed on Coriolis called the Children of the Song, made up of mystics claiming to hear the whispers of the dead Messenger Emissary. The Special Branch keeps eyes on the group and the Judicators have opened a terrorism investigation. After losing touch with Arlain for a long while, her contacts have recently informed her that he has joined the cult. She fears that he is becoming radicalized.
  - **Her Plea:** She has contacted Arlain and tried to convince him to leave the station with her, but he has declined her offers, saying he has been given *"an important task."* She is worried for his safety and needs the PCs to help her save him.

The PCs may choose to only accept Nigelia's mission of extracting her, or to help find her son as well. They are of course also free to carry out the mission as their Zenithian employers asked, either by alerting Zenithian agents to her location or killing her themselves. Their decision will affect what happens in Act 3.

Cost: 0 DP (Mandatory)

NIGELIA KURAHAN, ZENITHIAN DEFECTOR

Nigelia Kurahan-dol-Fahsra is one of the youngest to ever be appointed judge of Coriolis and she has managed to keep her career successful, productive and praised, despite the scrutiny

NEW WEAPON: DRACONITE DURA SWORD

The Draconites have improved upon the vibrating properties of the dura blade technology and made the weapons lighter and faster than those used by the Legion or sold on the black market. The thin blades are longer than ordinary dura swords but still nimble enough to be pulled from short back scabbards or worn in ceremonial belts. Closest to the hilt, the edge is serrated to be able to break enemy blades and cut through armor. The blades are often compared to the more exotic mercurium swords in terms of combat versatility, but the dura blades activate much quicker.

BONUS: +2

INITIATIVE: +1

DAMAGE: 2

CRIT: 1

RANGE: Close

FEATURES: Cell-powered, Armor-piercing (-2 to opponent's armor roll)

THE JUDGE'S FLATTER

You should let Nigelia mention or comment on heroic or skillful feats performed by the PCs in earlier missions, both as a group and individually. The information doesn't need to be publicly known. She might also offer appreciative comments on personal developments such as personal issues that have been mastered or changes in relationships. Prepare her knowledge about their adventures beforehand and have her bring up specific things to make a point of having followed their exploits keenly

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of her detractors. Her handling of the Mysticides only made her even more liked by her superiors and among the Zenithian establishment, and as the judiciary world's new golden child, there was talk of her being given the role of court president and maybe one day a seat at the Council. The only fly in the ointment was the rumor about her son Arlain being infected with the mystic's disease, which – if proven true – would seriously derail her career. The taint springs from the Firstcome corruption in the dark between the stars and true Zenithians simply don't catch the disease.

Denouncing her son was one of the hardest things she has ever done and although it gave her career room to blossom again, it robbed her of the most important family relationship of her adult life. For a long time, she has heard rumors and whispers in the halls of power that have led her to suspect that some secret cabal is scheming to create a Third Horizon ruled exclusively by Zenithians. When several of these rumored initiatives reached a point where they were ready to have the peoples of the Horizon go to war against each other, Nigelia decided to expose the conspiracy.

APPEARANCE: The judge is a large woman, but the stress she has been under has worn her out, leaving her face thinner than before and marked by many sleepless nights. She no longer dresses in her judge's robes and has cut her graying hair short. Her gold makeup is gone and her eyes look tired.

CHARACTERISTICS: Courteous and correct, even under pressure. Clicks her lips when she speaks.

ATTRIBUTES: **STRENGTH 3, AGILITY 1, WITS 4, EMPATHY 5**
HIT POINTS: 4
MIND POINTS: 9
REPUTATION: 8 (counts as 4 when dealing with Coriolis Zenithians of higher rank)
SKILLS: Manipulation 5, Culture 4, Observation 3
TALENTS: Judge of Character
PERSONAL PROBLEM: Broken bloodlines
GEAR: Communicator (lost), simple clothing, surgically implanted evidence tag

- **JUDGE OF CHARACTER:** Her years in the courtroom have exposed her to every kind of lie there is. If she talks to someone for more than a minute, she can tell if they're lying without having to test **MANIPULATION**.
- **BROKEN BLOODLINES (1-2 DP):** The Kurahan family is part of one of the few clans that regard themselves as neutral in the conflict between the Hegemonists and the neo-Zenithians, although with slight Hegemonist leanings. Her once privileged position has now become a burden, however, especially since Arlain's disease became known. Large parts of her clan have distanced themselves from her and after the terrorism allegations (see next scene), they will use their considerable network of political

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TABLE 24: DEALING WITH THE TRAITOR

PATRON	REQUEST
Faida Din Hrama	Wants the traitor and everyone she has met with killed. Discretion is paramount and the PCs may therefore call in "cleaners" that dispose of evidence and bodies for them. Murders in public places generate 2 DP.
Verion Sidonna	A group of Special Branch agents (see Astûrban agent on page 201) show up for the prisoner and escort her away for interrogation.
Ana Din Eusidia	The Hegemony wants the traitor executed as brutally as possible to deter others from repeating her crime. If the PCs murder her in a public place, this generates 2 DP but because of their immunity to prosecution, the responding Judicators will only take care of the body and let the PCs go.
The Emissaries	The PCs should question the judge and then contact the Emissary through meditation. They are then instructed to make sure the enemy can't catch her alive. If they use torture during the interrogation, this generates 1 DP. If they then decide to kill her, this generates another 2 DP.

and military connections to assist in her capture. At the cost of 1 DP, a group of Guards or gang members recognize Nigelia as she and the PCs are traveling through the station. At the cost of 2 DP, they are instead spotted by a small group of Judicators.

IN THE NAME OF THE ZENITH

If the PCs choose to capture Nigelia, her life is in their hands. If their patron wants her dead or imprisoned and they somehow communicate to them that they have apprehended their target, a group of agents arrives shortly after with a specific request for treatment of the prisoner.

Cost: 0 DP (may generate DP)

OTHER EVENTS

Below are an other events that may occur in the scene:

ENEMY AT THE GATES

If the PCs arrive at Mandragor Ho's mansion as allies and accept the mission to rescue Kurahan and help her flee the station, you could have a small group of Astûrban agents (page 201) attack them as they leave the Lunah floor. At the cost of 1 DP, they are one fewer than the PCs (but at least two), for 2 DP they are as many as the PCs (at least four) and at the cost of a third DP, the team is led by Judicator Akouba Kosha or her replacement, Diona Hashim (page 192).

Cost: 1-3 DP

BREAKING NEWS

The commercials on the holo screen are abruptly cut short by a rising sun, the logo of the Bulletin's News at Dawn. The show's telltale theme blares across the Core Plaza. A fast-cut montage of landscapes from different planets is soon replaced by dawn hostess Nana Eliades wearing a neatly pressed caftan. "Welcome, people of the Horizon, to a special live broadcast from Coriolis. We know that many of you have questioned the Council of Factions and our great leadership, but we have just been informed that those dark days are finally over. Over to our reporter in the Spire, Mafra Sarmins…"

"Thank you, Nana. I am standing outside the Faction Hall where a press conference is about to begin with none other than his excellency Johar Quassar, our new Governor and chairman of the Council of Factions. The rest of the Council members are emerging from the Hall now… They are about to speak. The press conference begins…"

Camera drones follow a group of dignitaries lining up at the stairs and former ambassador Johar Quassar addresses the station: "Citizens. People of the Horizon. Children and wards of the Zenith. Today is a momentous day. We have heard your prayers and honored the wisdom of the Icons. A divided and weakened Council threatened our very existence. Corruption at the highest level of government forced us to act." He steps off the podium and descends the white stairs toward the waiting seas of select guests, reporters and photographers.

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"Your former Governor, Kermal Dargosian, failed to keep you safe from the crimewave that recently plagued the station. The rot in the Coriolis Guard allowed anarchy to prevail over law and order. To give us a chance to rebuild, the Council has today elected me as the tenth Governor of Coriolis. My first act in office will be to restore order to our streets. I hereby announce the formation of a new law enforcement directorate, the Sentinel Brigade, who will answer directly to our faithful Judicators. The Sentinels consist of those of our dear siblings in the Syndicate whose esteemed families have renounced their illegal ways to unite with us in the light of the Zenith."

Armored Judicators march down the stair behind him, followed by former Syndicate gang members clad in the dark uniforms of the Sentinel Brigade.

"It is our right to celebrate the Pilgrimaria and the greatness of the Third Horizon in peace. We shall wash away the filth and the troublemakers from our streets and plazas."

Johar turns to point toward a parted group of Judicators guarding an impeccably dressed androgynous courtesan in handcuffs. The new Governor raises his voice:

"Moreover, the Council's investigation of the corrupt, anti-republican interests that have tried to destabilize our society has yielded fruit. Terminos Lete of Ahlam's Temple is hereby placed under house arrest and a warrant has been issued for the so-called spokesperson of the Draconites, Mandragor Ho. Both will be charged for their unpatriotic activities and dealings with the Zalosian Martyr thugs. This investigation has also led us to rule that the Order of the Pariah no longer deserves a seat at the table, regardless of the tragedy of Sister Almas' death during the Core riots. The followers of the Martyr are to be regarded as terrorists and a threat to the Third Horizon — a threat we aim to deal with swiftly and effectively as an alliance of true Zenithians between the Consortium and the Hegemony.

Lastly — a poll conducted at an emergency meeting of the Popular Assembly clearly shows that your faith in the operations and financial stability of the Free League has deteriorated to the point where we can no longer in good conscience cooperate with them in matters of macro-politics. The League's costly strike earlier this cycle forced the Consortium to restore balance by way of the Humanite Act — somewhat controversial legislation, perhaps, but absolutely vital for our survival as a civilization. We cannot risk another disruption like the strike again. Let me therefore introduce to you our new, strong and loyal Council — representing safety and security for the Third Horizon..."

The holos cut back to the Bulletin studio. Dawn hostess Nana smiles at the camera and the screen behind her lights up with portraits and presentations of seven uniformed and bejeweled military and political dignitaries: "News at Dawn have been given the honor of introducing you to your new leaders, elected with a landslide majority at the Council earlier today. First up are Heimekh Vanna, Faida Din Hrama and Tehira Markoon whose selfless service in the neo-Zenithian fleets and the Legion has kept us safe during many dark days. An infusion of military blood will strengthen the Council's resolve... And you of course know our next name from her visit to our broadcast earlier this cycle — Soba Hurnan, former operation manager of our interests in Uharu. She is followed by two well-respected names: Ana Din Eusidia, the Council's former mediator and lobbyist in the otherwise difficult system of Sadaal, and Adan Birbasil who has paid for the creation of the Sentinel Brigade out of his own pocket to stop the violence haunting our streets. Our seventh name is Selab Din Hrama who is leaving a career as an esteemed cultural attaché and negotiator in the Conglomerate on Kua."

The names and accomplishments of the new Council members appear before their portraits on the screen and the images are then sorted into a pyramid shape with Governor Johar Quassar at the top. "Dear viewers, these are your new, strong leaders — a Council that will bring us forward, together. The thirteen seats are once again filled and as you can see, the Icons are with us — revered arch-herat Wasimah Umm of the Church of the Icons will take over the observer seat previously occupied by the Emissary. Keep watching for more interviews and expert commentary on each of the representatives throughout the day..."

As the news sink in, the Core Plaza goes quiet. Some fold their hands in relieved and hopeful prayer, others stare up at Nana Eliades' enormous face in despair.

A large group of the shunned mystics in the Children of the Song stand in the Neoptra spaceport, looking for a shuttle to take them down to the Monolith and away from all the hatred of Coriolis.

Angry cries rise from the protestors and pilgrims outside the Garden of Seekers, rocks and makeshift clubs are made ready for a dance of rage. The black visors of the Judicators glimmer coldly and the acc pistols' safeties are disengaged. The Guard is relieved and their positions taken over by Sentinels recruited directly from the Syndicate, sporting tattooed lips and scarred heads, dura claws and stun guns. The Horizon holds its breath. The first shot echoes through the darkness, a tiny spark in a vast powder keg...

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THE SITUATION

During the PCs' search for the defector on the station, the Zenithian Council members and their factions have executed the secret coup they have been planning over the past cycle. The Bulletin suddenly announces "fantastic news" and an end to the turmoil and uncertainty that has tormented both the Council and the Horizon. Enthusiastic news anchors cover the events as Judicators and the station's new security force come down hard on the demonstrators gathered on the Coriolis plazas and in the different districts down in the Conglomerate. During the ensuing riots, several former Council members are arrested and replaced by new representatives of the Consortium, the Hegemony and the Syndicate (see the new Council on page 183). The Council of Factions has overnight become a Council of Zenithians, and all opposition is to be silenced as fast as possible.

EVENTS

This scene can be played either before or after the PCs' meeting with Mandragor Ho at his mansion. The second act ends when the group reaches their ship to leave Coriolis, either to go and look for Arlain Kurahan on Kua or for a destination of their own choosing. Try to make their journey to the spaceport dramatic and eventful, culminating with their ship being blown up right before their eyes.

⚙ BROADCASTS FROM THE BULLETIN

The Bulletin's special coverage of the coup interrupts whatever the PCs and the rest of the population are doing. Holo screens across the station fill up with new Governor Johar Quassar's press conference about the new Council and the initiatives he has taken to restore order to the station. The scene's introductory text (above) can be read aloud in its entirety. As the news sinks in, a tidal wave of erupting tension engulfs the station in mayhem and disorder (see the next event).

The broadcast chills the PCs to their core, making them anxious and scared for the future. The announcement generates as many DP as there are players, down to minimum of 4 DP.

Cost: 0 DP (Mandatory, generates DP)

⚙ RESONANCE: CHILDREN OF THE ZIGGURAT

The PCs have been mysteriously linked to the Messenger Emissary after their dreamed conversation on Argonnas, the Second Horizon's temple world in *Emissary Lost* (page 180). After the Zenithian betrayal breaks in the news at Coriolis, it spreads like wildfire to the rest of the Horizon. Common people everywhere fear what it may mean, and they aren't the only ones — the Symmetry mystics acting in the Third Horizon soon learn of the coup and decide to take action. Their first move is to contact the PCs again, with another dream vision through their link to Nabi-mu-Qad. Read the following text aloud to the group or use it as inspiration for a text of your own, either just before or after they make it to their ship:

The commotion of the crowded streets and the rioters' chants for justice suddenly becomes muffled as you appear to fall into yourselves. Everything turns dark and then very bright. You open your eyes and see rolling, terraced fields. Two familiar pale suns warm your face and you recognize the world around you from a dream from long ago. This time, you are standing at the foot of one of the mighty temples. Gray granite steps lead up the side of the towering ziggurat. You hear footsteps and a familiar voice:

"My friends, at last we meet again."

Golden floral tattoos on dark skin, an embroidered, multicolored hat, a bright smile. The singer welcomes you as they descend the stairs, the wind over the field tugging at their red shawl:

"Our enemies have burrowed deeper inside your society than we thought. You must awaken and see the forces at play for what they are."

The Symmetry mystic stops and takes each of you by the hand. Their touch crackles with static electricity.

"You have been chosen. You carry the seed that could save your Horizon. Let us guide you — give you eyes that see, strength that does not fail, the right to condemn or redeem. The servants of the butterfly have infiltrated your Council. You must stop the corrupting infestation that spreads through your cluster. You must stop the growing dark. Heed my words and go to the Monolith. Together with the Children of the Song, you will be more powerful than the Zenith. Become their shepherds and embrace your calling. Seek the heart of the Monolith and let its fire cauterize the darkness."

You look up at the twin suns that seem to expand and swallow you. A distant rumbling echoes across the plains, far-off thunderclaps wandering over the ridge at the horizon. You suddenly find yourselves back on Coriolis. The station creaks and moans under your feet as the riots intensify. You have awakened and

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hear the heart of the Monolith calling out to you. Thousands of voices unite in prayer, singing your names as the prophets that will lead the people into a new Third Horizon.

When the PCs wake from the dream, they feel different — a powerful calling echoes inside them, urging them to travel to the base of the Monolith. Something about this mighty artifact calls to them, making them yearn for it as passionately as they would a reunion with a long-lost lover.

The PCs may try to ignore the Emissary's request, but if they do, they suffer 1 point of stress for each time unit (TU) that passes. PCs with at least 1 point in **MYSTIC POWERS** may try to test the skill successfully to avoid the MP loss.

Cost: 0 DP (Mandatory)

⚙ HOME AT LAST

After the Bulletin broadcast and the meeting with Mandragor Ho, the PCs travel back through the station toward their ship, with or without judge Kurahan in tow, depending on the choices they've made. Regardless of what destination they have in mind after reaching their ship, they eventually find it either at the spaceport or in some hidden warehouse in the Cellar.

- **Takeoff Preparations**: When they get onboard, the PCs need to test **TECHNOLOGY** to complete all the necessary warm-up protocols for the reactor. This procedure usually takes a couple of hours — the result of a die roll with as many dice as the ship's class (three dice for a class III ship and so on). A critically successful **TECHNOLOGY** test reduces the warm-up time to one hour. If the PCs have kept the reactor hot and ready for their return — for example if they landed in the VIP section of the Neoptra, or if they accepted the risk of being found after having to land covertly in the Cellar — they only need to power up the bridge (**DATA DJINN** test at +1).
- **Discovery**: If a nervous PC checks the ship when they return (**OBSERVATION**), she may discover that someone



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has been onboard since they left. The signs are especially obvious around and inside the engine room. Anything above a limited success on either of the rolls above or on the **OBSERVATION** test reveals that someone has tampered with their systems but scrubbed all security logs afterwards.

- **Passengers**: If the PCs were carrying passengers whom they left onboard, they are found bound and hidden somewhere, or killed in one of the cabins (for 3 DP).
- **Sabotage**: When the PCs initiate the warm-up sequence or power up the bridge, the Astûrban's sabotage of their reactor risks leading to a reactor detonation (page 172 of the *Rulebook*). PCs in either the engine room or the bridge discover the threat before it is too late and get a short window of time to act. They can alert the crew via the intercom, giving everyone about two turns to get out.
- **Lethal Heroics**: The reactor has been rigged to blow. A successful **TECHNOLOGY** or **SCIENCE** test enables a PC to keep the ship from being completely torn apart by the blast. If they fail the roll, they may try again or use their final action to escape.
- **Escape**: A character who only tries to run away doesn't have to roll any dice. If she uses her first turn to try and grab something from her cabin or unsuccessfully tried to stop the detonation, she needs to pass a **DEXTERITY** test to make it out with her second action or die in the detonation.
- **Further Explosions**: Even if the PCs manage to control the reactor collapse, 2 DP gets you additional explosive charges that go off throughout the ship. This leads to the destruction of two random modules. Any character caught in those modules after the two turns suffers a strength 10 (damage 2, CRIT 1) attack.

The attack shocks and traumatizes the PCs. This event generates as many DP as there are players, down to a minimum of 4 DP. If Mandragor warned them about the Zenithian betrayal, his words now repeat in their heads, over and over. This event or the preceding resonance dream concludes Act 2.
Cost: 0, 2-5 DP (Mandatory, generates DP)

OTHER EVENTS

After the press conference, Governor Quassar declares martial law on the station to try to limit the riots that break out in response to the coup. The PCs may become directly involved in these riots and the escalating violence through the events

MORTAL DANGER

As the GM, make the danger of the situation and the precious few seconds left before the detonation perfectly clear to the PCs. Each PC gets two actions. If they remain in the ship and the reactor detonates uncontrollably, they are automatically killed.

The PCs may be able to stop the ship from being completely destroyed, but it will still suffer severe damage. They may get a chance to salvage or repair the ship during Act 3.

DARKNESS POINT SPENDING IN CONFLICTS

In addition to the escalation of violence on the following pages, you can add the following events for an even deadlier clash:

- **1 DP: One side sees the PCs as responsible for the clash and concentrates on attacking them. It is up to you to determine the level of violence in the situation and how much of a heads-up you give your players.**
- **2 DP: If the PCs are accompanied by judge Kurahan or ex-Councilman Ho during the clash, they are identified by law enforcement officers and either hunted or attacked.**

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below. These events could also be used during Act 3, both on Coriolis and down in Covenant City on Kua.

⚙ CIVIL UNREST

Whenever the PCs visit public places after the Bulletin's special broadcast, the population's anger and despair becomes blatantly apparent. Judicators, scattered Coriolis Guards and new groups of Sentinels clash with mobs of protestors and pilgrims. The slightest hint of resistance is met with brutal violence and mass arrests. The Bulletin's coverage of the riots speaks of small bands of criminals trying to create chaos in an otherwise calm station.

The screens again show the familiar sun logo of News at Dawn accompanied by the news anchor's perfect smile:

"Follow the News at Dawn direct feed for all the latest news around the clock. Reports are coming in of criminal gangs disregarding the Syndicate's calls for ceasefire and militant groups led by anti-republican terrorists from the Order of the Pariah that threaten our beloved peace. Minor clashes with the Governor's new peacekeepers have apparently taken place both in the Core and out on the Ring plazas. Protests also turned violent earlier today outside of Covenant City at the base of the Monolith. The public is advised to remain indoors and let the Judicators do what they do best — keep us safe. On-board security has been tightened and we are currently in a state of emergency until these violent lunatics have been arrested and dealt with."

When you have determined a location (Table 25), choose the clashing groups. Roll twice on Table 26 and pick a group from either column (see NPC stats on page 201).

Determine the threat level and escalation by rolling a die and reading the first column of Table 27. Then, roll again and read the second column to determine the number of civilians involved. Thirdly, roll a die to determine which law enforcement group size entry to read in column three: 1-2) One level lower 3-5) The same level 6) One level higher.

If you're playing with groups larger than eight people, use the "Mob combat" rules on page 220 if the PCs are active participants in the conflict.

Cost: Varies (see Tables 25-27)

TABLE 25: SCENES OF CONFLICT

D6	LOCATION
1	ALLEY: Shady alleys near one of the Ring plazas. Residential courtyards or trash-filled stairwells. The clutter of Little Algol near the floating market. The forgotten palace ruins in Covenant City. Warehouses and service tunnels near a spaceport.
2	STREET: The crowded Promenade on the Ring. The Core Circle's long open streets in the shadow of the high hull beams. Sweaty platforms at a ring tube or metro stop. The bustling nightlife near the Esplanade of Thousands or the Ijadra Complex. The stairs spiraling around the base of the Monolith.
3	PLAZA: The Market Plaza on the Ring. The wide Core Plaza near the grav shafts leading to the Spire. The Neoptra's never-sleeping main arrival hall.
4	PARK: The Garden of Seekers or the wide green lawns at the Core campuses. A modest arboretum in some Ring backyard. The terrace parks of Covenant City.
5	TEMPLE: The Church of the Icons in the Core. A Seeker temple. A Firstcome clay pagoda at the edge of the Core or on some Conglomerate factory island.
6	CLOSE QUARTERS: A Guard Point near the Core Plaza. The colonnades of the Stadium. The stairs to the Palace of the Council. The walls surrounding the Palace of the Hegemony.

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ENDING ACT 2

As the second act wraps up in the smoldering remains of the PCs' ship, they have met with the defector, seen the Zenithian coup come to fruition and potentially carried out their main mission or capturing of killing judge Kurahan. The third and final act will lead them away from Kua and Coriolis, but the details of their escape are for them to decide...

TABLE 26: CLASHING GROUPS

D6	CIVILIANS	LAW ENFORCEMENT RESPONSE
1	A group of angry pilgrims trying to reach their sacred Pilgrimaria destination.	Pro-Zenithian workers and company employees.
2	Worn-out humanites from the dangerous loading docks or cramped warehouses of the spaceports rising against the Consortium slavers.	Trigger-happy units from the Sentinel Brigades.
3	A couple of nomad or Firstcome families provoked by the Zenithians' abuse of power.	Coriolis Guards hoping to score points with the Judicators with a show of force.
4	Unemployed stevedores or religious fanatics planning an action to make the Bulletin finally take notice of their hardships.	Judicators trying to defuse the situation.
5	A small group of new mystics heeding the Icons' call. Heading for the Monolith without knowing it.	Large posse of Judicators and Guards or Sentinels. A third of the group are Judicators.
6	Factionary agents on secret missions or insurgent groups such as the Warriors of the Holy Light (*Emissary Lost*).	Agents, assassins or Legionnaires.

TABLE 27: CONFLICT MAGNITUDE

D6	ESCALATION	NUMBER OF CIVILIANS	NUMBER OF LAW ENFORCEMENT
1	UNDER CONTROL: A controlled confrontation limited to verbal interactions.	Three to five people	Two to four people
2	THREATENING: Angry shouts, threats and weapons being made ready.	Five to nine people	Five to twelve people
3	SKIRMISHES (1 DP): Erupting tensions leading to scattered melees where both parties try to route or scare their opponent.	Eight to twenty-one people	Eight to twenty-four people
4	BLOODSHED (1 DP): Violent assaults with injured people in handcuffs being beaten with shock sticks or wrestled to the ground.	Sixteen to forty people	Ten to thirty-six people
5	LETHAL FORCE (2 DP): Both parties armed with firearms and live ammunition, shooting from cover or trying to ambush each other. Many wounded and some casualties.	Twenty to one hundred and twenty people	Fifteen to sixty people (at least fifteen riot police with riot armor 8 and trained nekatra)
6	MASSACRE (3 DP): A clearly unfair fight where heavy weapons, grenades and gas being used indiscriminately. One side has a crushing advantage (most likely law enforcement but you decide).	Two hundred to twelve hundred people (at least twenty-five tactical operators with an armored gravcraft)	Twenty-five to one hundred and twenty people

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NEW HORIZON

ACT 3

Echoes of anger and desperation are drowned out by rattling Vulcan fire and the roaring engines of the attack craft. The Core Plaza has become a war zone where riot fences and barricades keep the rioters from reaching the Guard Point. The emergency response drones are putting out fires in trashed residential modules and looted stores as battle-trained nekatra tear at the arms and legs of fleeing protestors to bring them to the ground. Martial law. Blaring alarms. Despair. Mayhem. The peoples of the Horizon brutally subjugated under the boots of the Judicators.

A crowd of outcasts is forming around the base of the Monolith. They look up at the towering Predecessor artifact — an obelisk as black as the Void itself — cold and quiet in the midst of a burning sea of violence. Their leader transmits a message from mind to mind. They all feel a yearning, a calling for the warm glow of the heart of the Monolith, in the Forbidden Sector. The light of the Icons flows through their veins and that which some call a shameful disease is now a blessing. Together, they will finally bring the voice of the Icons to the people of the Third Horizon. They leave the chaos of the Conglomerate behind and follow the words of the Messenger upward, toward a better tomorrow.

THE FINAL ACT BRINGS the PCs to the edge of the abyss. They can either travel to Kua to look for the mystics, stay on Coriolis to try to save the captured dignitaries or attempt an escape from the system.

OVERVIEW

The Consortium, the Zenithian Hegemony and the Syndicate are trying to stop the riots on Coriolis and restore order. The former Council members not deemed loyal enough are hunted down and arrested. Both the fleet of the Hegemony and the Legion's foremost flotilla keep guard around Kua.

THE DISCHARGE

The Symmetry realized what the Zenithians — and by extension the Vestals and the Nazareem — were up to when it was too late to stop the coup. The events now force the Emissaries into action to try to limit the Zenithians' influence in the Third Horizon. They assume control over a large majority of the station's new mystics as well as many in the Conglomerate. The mystics gather for a pilgrimage to the Monolith. Under the influence of the Emissaries, they gather at the black obelisk and activate the cleansing force in its heart — an ability to purge the darkness in the surrounding systems with a massive burst of energy. This discharge is inevitable — the only question is what the PCs will be able to accomplish before it happens.

A TIMEBOMB

As the previous act ended with the disabling or destruction of the PCs' ship, they must now find

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another. Act 3 follows the structure below and will reach the final scene when the allotted time runs out. The Time Units (TU) used during the act represents half a watch for each unit (of which a full twenty-four hour day contains four). The recommended countdown to the Monolith discharge is 4 TU (two watches)

- **Without a Ship (1-2 TU):** The PCs need a ship to take them down to Kua or away from the station. If they are only looking for shuttle passage to the planet below or if they have a very good relationship with a patron capable of giving them a ship, this costs only 1 TU. If they need to negotiate or possibly steal a ship, it costs 2 TU. See page 219.
- **The Saviors (1 TU):** Rescuing an arrested dignitary or Council member costs 1 TU, provided that they carry out the operation successfully. See page 222.
- **At the Base of the Monolith (2 TU):** Traveling to Kua to convince Arlain to leave the Children of the Song — or to help the cult reach the heart of the Monolith — costs 2 TU. See page 225.

DARKNESS POINTS

After the attack on the PCs' ship, the influence of the dark between the stars becomes deathly apparent. Each TU that passes in Act 3 now generates 2 DP. Your DP pool should be spent on emphasizing a general atmosphere of stress and despair, and to add complications to the events.

THE COUNTDOWN

To really pressure your group, you could give them only 2 TU which means they won't have time for anything but arranging transportation off the doomed station. 4 TU gives them a little bit more freedom to make other choices and if you really enjoy exploring the chaotic situation on the station or on Kua – or if you want to throw in a small side quest – you could give them 6 TU. Preparatory prayers now require 1 TU.

THE MISSION

Lengthy combat, hospitalization or general indecisiveness can cost the PCs up to 1 extra TU.

WITHOUT A SHIP

"Our reporter comes to you live from the Core where some of the bloodiest riots took place..."

The holos cut away from the News at Dawn studio and show a war zone of burning barricades, smashed windows, and trashed cafe furniture. A Judicator in full armor stands next to the white-clad reporter behind a low wall of riot shields. Piercing eyes from behind the open visor watches something in the distance as the reporter nervously begins the interview:

"Thank you, Nana. I am standing inside the cordon at the Judicators' HQ together with response coordinator Cami Attali. Tell me, how are things looking out there? Is there cause for public concern?"

The Judicator stands up straight: "We have the situation under control. Citizens are, however, cautioned to remember

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THE COUNTDOWN

To really pressure your group, you could give them only 2 TU which means they won't have time for anything but arranging transportation off the doomed station. 4 TU gives them a little bit more freedom to make other choices and if you really enjoy exploring the chaotic situation on the station or on Kua—or if you want to throw in a small side quest—you could give them 6 TU. Preparatory prayers now require 1 TU.

THE MISSION

Lengthy combat, hospitalization or general indecisiveness can cost the PCs up to 1 extra TU.

NEW RULES: MOB COMBAT

Rules-wise, a mob is an endless horde of opponents, either unarmed (0 DP), armed with makeshift melee weapons (1 DP) or carrying basic firearms (2 DP). Use the "Stevedores" NPC stats on page 141. The PCs fight the mob in waves or groups of attackers.

- **Each group in the mob the PCs are fighting contains either two people (careful mob, 0 DP), four people (aggressive mob, 1 DP) or six people (furious mob, 2 DP). The mob is immune to stress.**
- **If any individual in the mob is injured (regardless of the group size), she retreats from combat at the end of the turn but will act until then.**
- **Each group in the mob eliminated by the PCs earns them a victory die.**
- **If any individual in the mob is Broken or receives a critical injury, the PCs add 1 extra victory die to their next victory check (see below).**
- **If a PC is Broken or critically injured, this emboldens the mob and the PCs lose 1 victory die.**

VICTORY CHECK: When the PCs eliminate a group of opponents they perform a victory check by rolling all of their current victory dice. If the roll is successful, the mob is routed. If the roll fails, the PCs lose 1 victory die and a new mob group attacks them after D6 turns.

the station-wide emergency curfew and remain indoors. Most of the rebel elements have been eliminated and we have several of the leaders surrounded on the Ring and on the Core outskirts. A small number of terrorists remain at large, however, and we need the help of a cautious population to bring them in. If you see any of the wanted criminals, report it to your local Guard Point immediately."

The conversation is followed by a short montage of security feeds and census data. A row of assistants of arrested former Council members, stevedores and agitators flashes by until the screen pauses on a final group of faces. Your faces. The Judicator's voice again:

"The Uharan Survivors have been exposed as allies of the Order of the Pariah. They are behind many of the murders and bombings on the station in the last twenty-four hours. Consider them armed and extremely dangerous. Do not approach. We have agents preparing to arrest the group as we speak..."

THE SITUATION

The situation onboard is rapidly spiraling out of control and people now rush for the spaceports to arrange departure clearance, negotiate passage on outbound freighters or simply hire a ship. The riots in the Core and on the Ring plazas are getting worse. The Judicators are relying more and more on the Sentinel Brigade to deal with the masses and the inexperienced and untrained gang members have started threatening and attacking without discriminating between agitators and innocent bystanders. Meanwhile, the Astûrban or the Consortium are hunting the PCs whom the Bulletin has announced to be wanted terrorists and murderers. The PCs need to get hold of a new ship, or — if they did really well at the end of Act 2 — repair their own.

EVENTS

The events in this scene make the PCs known throughout the entire station and give them multiple getaway options. When they find a ship, the scene ends. They may wish to do other things before leaving, however, such as rescuing arrested Council members or completing other smaller tasks. In this case, make sure that they become wanted fugitives early on in the scene.

⚙ WANTED

As the PCs are crossing Coriolis to find a ship or a shuttle to Kua, they are suddenly named in a Bulletin broadcast. The holos give the residents an update on the current situation

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and falsely accuse the PCs of being behind many of the recent acts of violence on the station. Use the introductory text above or make up your own.

After they become wanted, you can spend 1 DP at any time to have a mob in the street recognize them (see box to the left). To make it even harder, law enforcement respond to the sighting after D6 turns if you spend additional DP — 1 DP for Judicators and 2 DP for factionary agents. The responding units number one more than the PCs. See page 201 for NPC stats.
Cost: 0, 1-3 DP

A NEW HOPE

The search for a new ship can play out in several ways. Let the PCs use their contacts and imagination to come up with a clever way to either manipulate some desperate skipper for passage or make use of the chaotic situation to simply steal a ship. As most of the station's citizens are still allowed to travel to Kua without special clearance, finding a small shuttle is much easier than finding a spaceworthy freighter. Passage anywhere but to Ara-Ara, Suldamei or Tugul (see the map on page 226) — even to the Monolith spaceport — requires special permits, and larger spacecraft need departure clearance to leave the station at all — clearance that only a certified Zenithian captain can get, or a craft transporting Zenithian dignitaries.

- **Repairs:** If the PCs' ship survived the explosion in Act 2, spare parts and some hard work can restore it to working order. Affecting repairs costs 1 TU per repair attempt or about one hour if they roll a critical success. The main problem is, however, that the enemy agents know their location which makes it virtually impossible to repair the ship unless they manage to barricade themselves in the Cellar. If they are docked in the Neoptra, the platform is shut down by Judicators and Legionnaires.
- **Contacts**: The right contacts — such as a benevolent patron outside the Zenithian pact (and a holding cell) or the Faction Standing and Wealthy Family talents — allow the PCs to find someone willing to lend them an inter-atmospheric shuttle for free. The Everything is for Sale and A Friend in Every Port group talents can also work (a discreet customs officer can let them inside the shuttle docks and clear them for departure). If the PCs need an actual spaceship, however, they need to bribe someone with far-reaching influence.
- **Judge Kurahan**: The judge has a class III courier ship standing by at one of her plantations down on Kua. If the PCs escort her safely there and save her son, they can leave the planet in the judge's ship free of charge.
- **Bribery**: Bribing their way onto a spaceship with departure clearance is a very costly affair. Depending on how resourceful the PCs are, it will cost them between 5,000 and 20,000 birr. Access to the docks alone is 5,000, unless they test **MANIPULATION** well enough to reduce it (opposed roll, each winning six reduces the cost by 1,500 birr). Failure means they have to pay 5,000 birr and are secretly reported to the

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Judicators. When they've made it inside, the next hurdle is finding and convincing a captain with departure clearance. They will likely have to bribe someone in traffic control or a high-ranking officer within the Zenithian fleets. This is a regular **MANIPULATION** test. The Faction Standing, Wealthy Family and Intimidating talents each add 1 automatic six to the roll. Failure still gets them what they want but at the cost of 15,000 birr. Each six they roll reduces the cost by 5,000 birr.

Regardless of their earlier alliances, the PCs are now wanted criminals and risk a confrontation with either Judicators, agents or the Sentinel Brigade if they are recognized. At the cost of 1 DP, a small squadron of Sentinels spots them. For 2 DP, they are recognized by Judicators and at the cost of 3 DP, Zenithian agents or Legionnaires have set up an ambush for them. Use the NPC stats on page 201.

Cost: 0, 1-4 DP

CORIOLIS: THE SAVIORS

The station's recently removed Governor, Kermal Dargosian, stands on his terrace and looks out across the palm groves and fountains below. The Therr floor's holo projected horizon in the distance is broken by the white spires of the Palace of the Hegemony. The garden around "the Seraglio" — the common name for the Governor's mansion — is guarded by house guards in colorful uniforms and a perimeter staffed by Judicator outside the walls makes sure his house arrest isn't violated.

The deposed ruler turns to a discreet courtesan wearing a gold mask who offers him a jug of sweet wine and a tiny capsule on a small tray. A soothing whisper comes from behind the mask: "Your excellency, here is the suicide pill you requested. We've heard rumors about Johar Quassar hiring several Legion strike teams to silence you and other former Council members as soon as the riots in the Core subside. We are working on an exfiltration plan."

Kermal picks up the pill, pensively turning it between his thumb and index finger. "Thank you Ashouk, but that won't be necessary. I'm getting tired of this charade. All the good I've done for this station and its people is about to be undone. I feel the Zenithian steel cutting into my back. My own family… My sisters and brothers… Soon with my blood on their hands. But know that I won't be the only one bleeding tonight…"

THE SITUATION

During the Council coup, several former Council members and important dignitaries or spokespersons are arrested to keep them from rallying the opposition. They are confined to their homes as diplomatic hostages until the Hegemony, the Consortium and the Syndicate have finished their coup and assumed control of all of Coriolis. Depending on the PCs' wishes and patron history, they may want to rescue one or more of the captives and help them escape the station. Successfully rescuing any of the captives gives them strong allies for the future and potential new patrons for their adventures between *The Last Cyclade* and the next episode of *Mercy of the Icons.*

EVENTS

Use the NPC stats from the list on page 343 of the *Rulebook* or from the table on page 201. Most of the Council members use the "Dignitary" stats.

⚙ THE CAPTIVE COUNCIL MEMBER

The Council member has been kept under house arrest and been interrogated about her anti-Zenithian leanings. The Legionnaires haven't been able to break her yet, however, and are planning to move her to the Fort of the Astûrban in the Monolith for further questioning. A Legion shuttle has been prepared in a Spire hangar and the PCs are pressed for time if they are to be able to rescue the captive. At the cost of 1 DP, the dignitary they mean to rescue has suffered a critical injury from entries 61-64 in the critical injuries table and is in need of emergency **MEDICURGY** to survive. Choose a dignitary from among the following:

ARRESTED COUNCIL MEMBERS

KERMAL DARGOSIAN

Coriolis' former Governor until Johar Quassar usurped the title. Is accompanied by his bodyguard Ashouk, a courtesan from Ahlam's Temple.

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- **REWARD:** Several neo-Zenithian families and much of the station's pro-Dargosian population now support the PCs. They get a +1 to their Reputation scores and might have an easier time finding a ship to get off the station (you decide). If Ashouk survives, Ahlam's Temple contacts the PCs and helps them flee the station.

TERMINOS LETE

A former courtesan rumored to have left the Black Lotuses for a seat at the Council of Factions.

- **REWARD:** The Temple is a discreet but powerful faction with members in the halls of power throughout the Horizon. The PCs' assistance won't be forgotten. All PCs may now purchase the Faction Honors: Ahlam's Temple talent (see box to the right).

MANDRAGOR HO

(page 245)

Spokesman for the mythic Draconites who up until the coup has had an extensive contact network and intimate knowledge of the other Faction members.

- **REWARD:** If the PCs manage to rescue Mandragor and get him off the station, they may purchase the Faction Honors: The Draconites talent (see box to the right).

JESIBEL NIALES

The Free League's former Council representative who has been suspended since the League's strike earlier in the cycle. One of her stevedore akbars, Xiu Xichama (see *Emissary Lost*, page 23), has also been arrested after having organized several of the larger protests on the station.

- **REWARD:** The League has access to ships, both official freighters and shady smuggling vessels. If the PCs manage to rescue Jesibel or Xiu, they can take the group down to the Cellar where an abandoned hangar hides a simple shuttle or a class III courier ship. If you go with the courier vessel, prepare it beforehand as the PCs' reward and feel free to tailor it to their needs and play style.

SISTER ROBWAH

(Emissary Lost page 53)

Formerly the head of the Samaritan Sanatorium and the highest-ranking representative of the Order left on the station after the murder of Sister Almas. Has been arrested together with three other Samaritans.

NEW TALENT: FACTION HONORS

You have strong connections with a faction and are either considered to be an honorary member or as very trustworthy by both the rank-and-file and the leadership. You get a +2 to Reputation when dealing with people who are either allies of, or fear, the faction.

REWARD INGENUITY

The PCs may come up with an idea of their own for getting their hands on a ship – old contacts from previous scenarios, a rumor they've heard about an old rustbucket out on the Net or hiding as stowaways on a freighter or bulk hauler. It is your job to make them understand their desperate position, but you should reward a clever idea with a successful escape.

NEW GROUP TALENT

Faction Honors may also be purchased as a group talent if all PCs spend 5 XP at the end of a session. After that, they may activate the talent once per session in a city, colony or some other more or less civilized location to automatically find a member of the faction in question willing to help them. Depending on the size of the location they're in, finding the contact takes between one and two watches. The contact will help them for free. The contact may also be willing to risk her life for the PCs, but this generates 1 DP unless the PCs are visiting a system or location completely under the faction's control.

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- **REWARD:** If the PCs rescue Sister Robwah and make it off Coriolis, they will be held in high regard by the Martyr Council on Zalos and are allowed free travel through all Order-controlled systems. They may purchase the Faction Honors: The Order Of The Pariah talent (see box on previous page).

ABYEIA GOHARSHÛD

Spokesperson for the Nomad Federation on Coriolis. The Hegemony is afraid that she will get the nomad and Firstcome peoples onboard to rise up and have therefore spread false rumors about her having been bought by the Order to destabilize the station. False bank statements showing large transfers to her accounts from Zalosian businesses are leaked to the Bulletin, her family is accused of being slavers and doctored security feeds showing Zalosian agents visiting her home are distributed.

- **REWARD:** The PCs may now purchase the Faction Honors: The Nomad Federation talent and are welcome in the Quadrant of the Pillar, both on-board the nomad clan ships, in the corsair

TACTICAL DRONE

Nestera-Parr developed a light combat drone a couple of years ago meant for active war zone deployment. It has primarily been used by Legion strike teams but a new series of defense agreements has made the drones available to the Hegemony's Judicators and Kuan brigades. The drone is armed with either a thermal carbine or a stun gun fitted with advanced scopes (+1 to RANGED COMBAT, *Rulebook* page 121) and three stun grenades, making it very effective in neutralizing its targets.

The drone can be controlled remotely via a control helmet but it has an AI installed that allows it to behave in accordance with preprogrammed commands. It can fly in zero-G but cannot withstand the vacuum of space.

ATTRIBUTES
AGILITY 3, WITS 2

HIT POINTS: 8

MIND POINTS: –

SKILLS: Dexterity 6, Observation 6, Infiltration 3, Ranged Combat 3

GEAR: Thermal carbone/stun gun, stun grenades, armor 6, advanced scope



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havens, to the halls of the Alabaster Council and to the flagship of the Janhagir fleet (when it returns).

The Situation: The dignitary in question and her entourage are brought through the streets to the Spire spaceport by a squadron of Legionnaires and one Astûrban agent (page 201). For no DP, there are four Legionnaires and for 1 DP, there are seven. 1 additional DP also gives them two tactical drones (see textbox to the left).
Cost: 0, 1-2 DP

KUA: AT THE BASE OF THE MONOLITH

The ship shakes as the atmospheric pressure outside rises. The Coriolis station floats quietly in stationary orbit over the black Monolith far below, but in her belly, the streets are aflame and soaked in blood. The peoples of the Horizon are rising — words turn into action and action into conflict as the factions stake their claims to power, worth, survival. The same situation awaits you down in the fly-infested districts of the Conglomerate, in the narrow alleys snaking their way up toward the palaces of Covenant City and through the nightlife of the Esplanade of Thousands where the inhabitants of the Monolith see storm clouds gather over the green jungle floor below. Monsoon season has come at last.

The first heavy droplets hit the observation window in the airlock as you land at Marza Khalas spaceport. This former merchant city used to be at the heart of the Conglomerate and home of the commerce classes. As you start walking, you hear foreign words echoing in your heads, like slivers of half-forgotten dreams. The charred body of the Emissary, whirling soot, then calm terrace fields and two pale suns in a clear blue sky. The wandering singer's warming hymn and prophetic words. "Without the song, there is no hope for the Third Horizon. Seek the heart of the Monolith and let its fire cauterize the darkness."

You step out into the crowded heat of the Conglomerate and look up at the black artifact on the horizon. Your bodies vibrate with the presence of the Messenger like the walls of a temple at the height of a chorale prayer. Your minds are drawn toward the white stairs of Covenant City and the vertishaft that leads to the Forbidden Sector. You feel the Children of the Song anxiously awaiting your arrival, siblings in harmony in the shadow of the Monolith.

THE SITUATION

The Symmetry Santulans represented in physical form by the Emissaries are chanting from their hideaways throughout the Horizon. Using their combined strength, they have taken control of the new mystics — people linked through the Symmetry's power and thereby reprogrammed to become part of the Second Horizon's weapon against the darkness of Ardha. Mystics or not, the PCs are also linked to the Emissaries but aren't mind controlled like the others. They instead feel a strong yearning for the rest of the mystic community and want to travel to the heart of the Monolith. The Children of the Song also shelter the person they may have been hired to rescue — judge Kurahan's mystic son, Arlain.

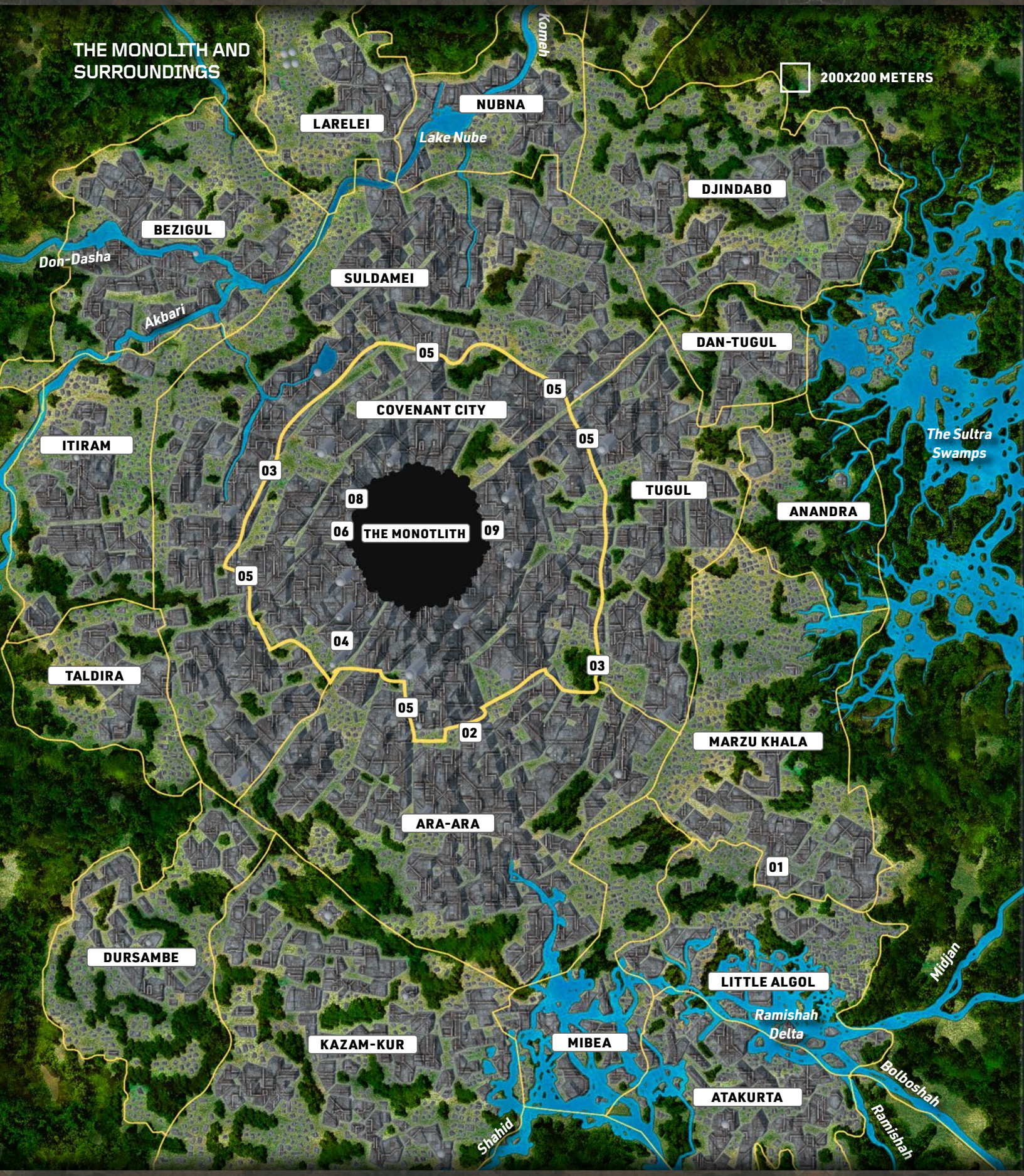
THE CHILDREN OF THE SONG

The outcast mystic cult is key to the Second Horizon's plans. The Children are led by three prophets chosen for their strong bond to the song of the Messenger that reverberates through Coriolis: Masâr, a Cellar outcast; Zahir the recovering, ex-Guard opor addict, and Nawa, a Consortium arms dealer who chose a life of homelessness in the Core after feeling the call. They have gathered the Children at the Panje-maan Water Plaza where fountains and colorful vendor stalls trail the canal that leads to the murky waters of the Ramishah river through Ara-Ara. The Emissaries gradually assume control of more and more mystics as new groups arrive every hour from chartered shuttles landing at Marzu Khala spaceport, from far out among the workers' blocks and merchant palaces in the districts and from the mines and plantations of the factory islands.

THE COVENANT WALL

Covenant City rests in the shadow at the base of the Monolith on a plateau full of palaces, aqueducts and decorated arch-ways from earlier civilizations rising above the rest of the metropolis. The so-called Covenant Wall has sandstone sides with beautiful high relief decorations and a row of statues

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DISTRICT LOCATIONS OF INTEREST

01: MARZU KHALAS SPACEPORT

02: PANJE-MAAN, THE WELL PLAZA

03: THE COVENANT WALL

04: THE HEADQUARTRS OF THE NESTERA DEFENSE FORCES

05: ENTRANCES TO UPPER COVENANT CITY

THE BASE OF THE MONOLITH

06: THE PARONA KUI HOSPITAL

07: VERTISHAFT TO THE MONOLITH

08: THE SULDAMEI COLUMN

09: THE TUGUL COLUMN

INSIDE THE MONOLITH

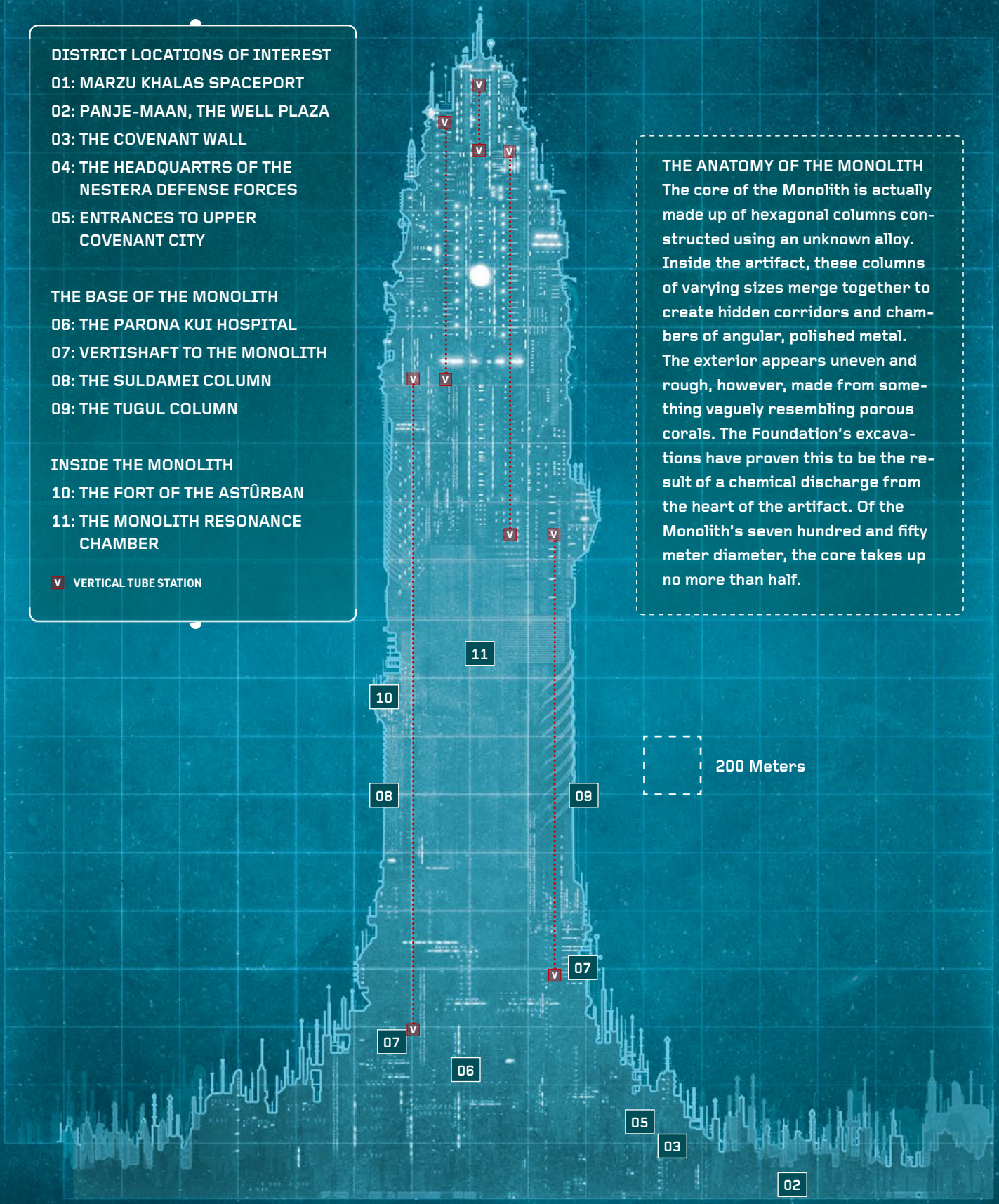
10: THE FORT OF THE ASTÛRBAN

11: THE MONOLITH RESONANCE CHAMBER

V VERTICAL TUBE STATION

THE ANATOMY OF THE MONOLITH

The core of the Monolith is actually made up of hexagonal columns constructed using an unknown alloy. Inside the artifact, these columns of varying sizes merge together to create hidden corridors and chambers of angular, polished metal. The exterior appears uneven and rough, however, made from something vaguely resembling porous corals. The Foundation's excavations have proven this to be the result of a chemical discharge from the heart of the artifact. Of the Monolith's seven hundred and fifty meter diameter, the core takes up no more than half.



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AN INEVITABLE END

As the GM, you should know that no matter what happens in this final act, a group of mystics will make it inside the heart of the Monolith and activate it. Although unstoppable, this event can be made more or less dramatic depending on your play style.

- Will a small group manage to infiltrate the Monolith while their comrades attract and perish in a hail of Astûrban gunfire?
- Will the mystics fight their way in en masse, through droves of defending agents?
- Will the mystics charge head on to be slaughtered as human shields for the chosen one who makes it inside, utterly alone?

HEEDING THE CALL

The Children of the Song and the other mystic groups assemble from different parts of the surrounding city or from Coriolis to carry out the Emissaries' tasks. None of them can describe exactly what is expected of them or why they have been called, but they all feel an instinctive pull drawing them toward each other and the heart of the Monolith. During combat, have the mystics use some of the more visual mystical powers from the *Rulebook* (pages 77-78).

NEW MYSTICAL POWER: MATERIA SHIELD

You can attract loose objects and fragile matter by force of will, turning the attracted matter into a shield around you (armor 4 against ranged attacks and fire). Each extra six on your **MYSTIC POWERS** roll adds 2 to the armor rating of the shield and allows you to protect one extra person within Close Range. People may attempt to force their way through the shield by rolling an opposed **FORCE** attack vs your armor rating. Creating the shield is a Slow action and maintaining it is one Normal action per turn.

and silk banners crowning the battlements. Marble stairs and ramps cut into the side of the plateau lead up to about twenty enormous and heavily guarded gates along the wall that are the only ways inside this small slice of high society far below the sun-kissed avenues of Sky City. The Hegemony house guards that staff the gates with soldiers and customs inspectors are commonly referred to as the Covenant Watch.

THE PILLARS OF THE MONOLITH

The Monolith rises above the fertile Kuan soil like a glittering, dark spear visible all the way from beyond the jungle plateaus of the equator and the wide river deltas (page 288 of the *Rulebook*). Two enormous pillars, the Suldamei and Tugul Columns, built from dura steel latticework hug the Monolith on either side, containing ventilation shafts, meteorology gear, seismic sensors and, most importantly, the vertishafts. The elevators resemble those in the Core and Spire on Coriolis and carry passengers with clearance past the Forbidden Sector to Sky City, the spaceport and the Esplanade of Thousands.

EVENTS

The events below deal with the gradual progress the mystics make inside the Monolith and how this may involve the PCs. They are of course free to focus only on finding Arlain Kurahan and then leave the planet.

THE SPACEPORT

In long since forgotten days, Marzu Khalas was a city of diplomats but the flooding of the Sultra caused much of the district to collapse into the rotting swamplands below. The elevated plazas and upper level colonnades are the only parts that remain above water, now neighboring the floating markets and docklands of Little Algol. New duralite foundations and stone docks have transformed the half-sunken district into a large spaceport.

Despite Nestera troops patrolling the streets, Syndicate gang members openly sell fresh-cut arrash to the highest bidder here. The many oporias and taverns in the area are full of tired deckhands and fiercely haggling freighter skippers.

This is the only currently open spaceport in the immediate vicinity of the Monolith, with all other docks having been closed or placed under guard by Zenithian house guards until order is restored in the outer districts and on Coriolis.

- **The Customs Office**: The spaceport's customs and admin office is located in an old garrison on the grounds of a

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half-submerged palace. The office is staffed by about ten officers handling everything from trade licensing to docking clearance and customs fees. A machine djinn named Khal-Alaain, "the Eye of Khal," handles traffic control via three huge sensor masts. The PCs may need to negotiate and pay for docking clearance by talking to customs officer Jamal Naleem. If they pass a **MANIPULATION** test at -2, they only have to pay 200 birr; failure may increase the fee up to 2,500 birr, but this also gets them a promise of maintenance from the spaceport's overworked engineer, Rayyan. The spaceport counts as standard (see page 155 of the *Rulebook*).

- **Wanted**: If the PCs are wanted as they negotiate with officer Naleem, they might attract the attention of a Nestera patrol. This costs 0 DP if they failed the negotiation roll, but 2 DP if they passed.

Cost: 0-2 DP

⚙ THE MYSTICS

The PCs wander through the streets and alleys of Marzu Khalas and Ara-Ara, crossing bridges over swollen canals and rivers. There are people everywhere and they need to push their way through the crowds to get to the Panje-maan Water Plaza near one of the Covenant Wall checkpoints. They feel drawn to the place somehow, regardless of whether they know where the Children of the Song are convening or not. The plaza is raised on stone arches that form a high, wide bridge over the dark waters of the Ramishah.

- **Rumors**: The PCs might hear people along their way talk about how infected fanatics and cultists are flocking to the shadow of the Covenant Wall in Ara-Ara. Small groups of those gathered have apparently already begun clashing with Nestera forces and rumors about the incidents travel fast.
- **The Congregation**: Two of the prophets of the Children of the Song, Masâr Roubah and Nawa dol-Dayal (page 230), are gathering a growing crowd of mystics at the Water Plaza. The two leaders welcome the PCs with open arms and bless them in the names of the Emissaries and the Machine Icon. As they believe the PCs to be the Machine Icon's chosen, the PCs are revered by the Children who fall to their knees in united prayer when they arrive.
- **The Vanguard:** The third prophet Zahir, a former Coriolis Guard detective, has assembled a small team and gone off to find a way inside Covenant City and the Monolith. As the PCs arrive, Masâr and Nawa have just received word of a route that appears safe.
- **Finding Arlain**: The plaza is full of smaller groups deep in prayer. The mystics are drawn to the Monolith but are trying to discern the Emissary's will, the reason for their calling. If the PCs ask around, they eventually find out that Arlain appears to have gone with Zahir's scouting party to find a way inside the Monolith.
- **The Song of the Icons**: Those gathered on the plaza all experience the same strange phenomenon — like the PCs, something inside the Monolith calls to them and they must fight the strong urge to just start running up the stairs in the Covenant Wall.
- **Mystic PCs**: One mystic PC is especially affected. For 1 DP, you can activate the calling as you would a personal problem, forcing the character to pass a **MYSTIC POWERS** roll to avoid being overcome by a powerful longing for the heart of the Monolith, which results in 2 points of stress. For 2 DP, the whole group is affected, mystics and non-mystics alike.
- **Nestera Defense Force**: The gathered cultists have attracted the attention of the Nestera Defense Forces and it isn't long before a squadron of soldiers arrive to disperse the crowds. They might start out authoritatively non-violent but at the cost of 2 DP, they start arresting people and using their power gloves to forcefully scatter the cultists. For 3 DP, they arrive in full riot gear (heavy armor 6 with ablative pads) and immediately start shooting (see table on next page).

It is up to you to decide if the entire crowd starts moving up the stairs toward the Covenant Wall checkpoint or if the prophets send the PCs ahead to join Zahir's vanguard.

Cost: 0, 2-5 DP (Mandatory)

⚙ A WAY UP

The narrow stairs that cut into the Covenant Wall lead to large ornate metal gates. Each gate depicts an ancient Kuan ruler surrounded by floral wreaths.

- **The Wall**: Skilled climbers may attempt to scale the walls, of course. This requires some form of grappling hook and successful **RANGED COMBAT** and **DEXTERITY** rolls. Free climbing the side of the wall without the help of rope is a

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DEXTERITY test at -2. The entire mystic gathering cannot climb, however, and most will try their luck at one of the gates.

- **The Gates**: The gate checkpoints at the entrances to Covenant City are guarded by a handful of Nestera Defense troopers. Successful COMMAND and INFILTRATION tests allow the PCs to lead the mystics up the stairs without being spotted. Failing either of the rolls results in arriving at a closed gate. The gates may be penetrated using breaching charges or over time using coordinated mystical attacks if the group can be organized effectively (COMMAND). The latter approach gives the guards enough time to climb the wall on the other side and shoot down onto the stairs and at the PCs. Climbing the gate post is a DEXTERITY test at -1 and may lead to being fired upon (1 DP).
- **Reinforcements**: If the PCs lead the mystics without being discreet or if the gates close for some reason, the guards call for reinforcements. Four members of a senior Hegemony house guard arrive just as the fight begins. At the cost of 2 DP, this happens even if the PCs managed to surprise the guards at the checkpoint.
- **A Way of Their Own**: The PCs are of course free to use the main group of mystics as a distraction and try to find another way inside. This generates 3 DP but gives the PCs a +1 to all rolls required to climb the walls or enter through another gate.

When they make it inside Covenant City, small skirmishes break out between mystics and guards. The attacking crowd quickly scatters into smaller groups that swarm upward through the alleys to the gardens and palaces of the upper levels. The way up to the vertishafts at the Suldamei Column takes them through the Parona Kui hospital where the PCs were treated after *The Uharan Echo*.

When the PCs finally reach the base of the Monolith and the vertishaft elevator station, they see that the entire area has been cordoned off and the elevator cars are locked high up in Sky City. At the cost of 1 DP, the lift station has been fortified with riot fences (armor 8). A long row of Janissaries from Abarren Quassar's personal guard keep watch in their glittering suits of opal armor (page 73). For 2 additional DP, they have also had time to construct a Vulcan machine gun nest on an elevated platform (armor 8, ablative pads 3). The gunner has a cybernetic Targeting Scope and is a Combat Veteran (pages 76 and 72 of the *Rulebook*, respectively).

- **The Elevators**: Breaking the elevator lock (DATA DJINN -2) allows the PCs to call the elevator cars down. Inside the car, it may be reprogrammed to make a stop at one of the entrances to the Monolith core in the Forbidden Sector.
- **The Long Way Up**: The dura steel lattice of the Suldamei Column supports the vertishaft on its way up the rough exterior of the Monolith. An arduous climb (DEXTERITY -1) up the side of the Column leads to a service ladder

TABLE 28: CONGLOMERATE NPCS

NAME	STRENGTH	AGILITY	WITS	EMPATHY	HP	MP	SKILLS & GEAR
House guards	3	5	2	2	8	6	Melee Combat 4, Ranged Combat 4, Dexterity 3, Infiltration 3, Observation 3, Manipulation 2 Talents: Hardened (+2 MP) Gear: Acc carbine, light armor (armor 4)
Nestera Defense trooper	3	4	3	2	7	5	Dexterity 3, Melee Combat 3, Observation 3, Ranged Combat 3 Talents: Combat Veteran Gear: Nestera Parox acc rifle, ablative vest (reduces damage by 3 from one attack), power glove
Mystic	3	3	2	3	6	5	Infiltration 2, Melee Combat 2, Mystic Powers 1, Ranged Combat 1 Talents: One mystical power Gear: Simple melee weapon or acc pistol
Masâr Roubah	5	3	3	3	8	6	Melee Combat 4, Dexterity 3, Infiltration 3, Mystic Powers 3, Observation 1, Ranged Combat 1 Talents: Materia Shield (see previous page) Gear: Vulcan cricket
Nawa dol-Dayal	2	3	4	4	5	8	Science 4, Infiltration 3, Mystic Powers 3, Observation 3, Manipulation 2, Ranged Combat 2 Talents: Thought Transference (see box) Gear: Dayal-3 Legionnaire carbine, protective vest (armor 3)
Zahir Laytana	2	5	3	2	7	5	Mystic Powers 4, Melee Combat 3, Observation 3, Ranged Combat 3, Infiltration 2, Manipulation 2 Talents: Puppeteer Gear (see box): Stun gun, protective vest (armor 3), gas grenade

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connecting to a network of docking platforms used by the Foundation for their excavation or for maintenance work on the seismic and meteorological sensor arrays. The rest of the way from there requires no rolls.

Cost: 0, 1-3 DP

ARLAIN KURAHAN

The PCs catch up to Zahir Maytana and Arlain Kurahan just as the battle of the Suldamei Column begins. Zahir believes that he has found a way past the fighting and Arlain is preparing to try to enter the Monolith. He only knows the PCs by their general reputation but also remembers them working for his mother during the Mysticides in *Emissary Lost*. Arlain is completely dedicated to his task of entering the Monolith. The PCs may try to dissuade him by winning an opposed **MANIPULATION** test, but Arlain gets a +3 thanks to his flaming zeal. Alternatively, they could offer to take his place in the group that is to go inside or choose to simply go with them.

ATTRIBUTES: **STRENGTH 2, AGILITY 3, WITS 4, EMPATHY 4**
HIT POINTS: 5
MIND POINTS: 8
REPUTATION: 3
SKILLS: Dexterity 3, Manipulation 3, Mystic Powers 3, Culture 2, Infiltration 2, Ranged Combat 2
TALENTS: Regeneration (*Emissary Lost*, page 193)
GEAR: Transactor with 5,000 birr, Vulcan cricket

INTO THE MONOLITH

Some of the Foundation's largest excavation sites are situated just below the Fort of the Astûrban. The platforms of the Suldamei Column here are full of drilling gear and workers' barracks hugging the side of the artifact. A plasma cut tunnel has been painstakingly dug into the side of the coral-like metal, twisting inward in a way that reminds the PCs of the fractalized damage done to the *Zafirah* in Uharu. The surface of the alloy is damp and feels increasingly porous, spongy somehow, the deeper they go. A metal bar walkway has been fastened to the walls. The leaders of the Children of the Song turn to the PCs and offer their farewells.

NEW MYSTICAL POWER: THOUGHT TRANSFERENCE

You can project your thoughts into the minds of other people in sight. The recipient automatically understands that the thoughts came from you. Extra sixes on your **MYSTIC POWERS** roll allow you to communicate with your PC Buddy regardless of distance or project your thoughts onto one extra person per six. A critically successful roll allows you to communicate with a person you know somewhat well regardless of distance.

NEW MYSTICAL POWER: PUPPETEER

Using a Slow action, you may assume control over a person you have known for some time or have shared a traumatic experience with. Your target may let you control her or try to resist. Resisting is an opposed **EMPATHY** or **COMMAND** vs your **MYSTIC POWERS** roll. You get a -1 if your target is out of sight but on the same planet as you, and a -3 if she is further away than that but still in the same system. Maintaining control is one Slow action per turn. If the person you are controlling suffers damage, you immediately suffer 2 points of stress. If your target becomes Broken, you suffer 4 points of stress and the connection is severed.

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"We don't know what gifts the light of the Icons will bestow on us at the heart of the Monolith, but I feel that this is where my path ends. You too have an important role to play, but not here, not now. You have become tarrabs for the whole Horizon, the new Messengers, children of the Machine Icon. Leave us here and go tell our story to the people."

- **The pull:** The PCs feel a strong tug inward as well as a painful pressure over their temples. At the cost of 1 DP, all PCs must pass a **MYSTIC POWERS** test or suffer 2 points of stress. Their hearts race and they hear strange whispers in their rushing blood.
- **Radiation:** The other mystics wander deeper without hesitation. One by one, they collapse in epileptic seizures, start to lose their hair or begin bleeding from their noses and mouths. The whole area is extremely irradiated and all characters who stay suffer 1 point of radiation per minute (see page 99 of the *Rulebook*). Although the walk through the maze takes only ten minutes, many collapse or die on the way. A few of the mystics appear strangely unaffected, however, and anyone walking close to them is also somewhat shielded.
- **The Corridor:** The final stretch to reach the resonance chamber of the Monolith isn't long, but all the more trying. The first hundred meters are an even, slight descent but after that, the walls change — the porous coral-like structure is replaced by hard, jagged metal columns fused together in clusters, here and there revealing a perfect hexagonal tip or bottom. The surface of the walls is now warm and vibrates softly, like the throbbing of a heartbeat. The corridor turns sharply at odd angles and becomes a tight maze between the dense, angled formations. Radiation sensors, geological survey gear and spent plasma cutters lie scattered on the floor — evidence of the Foundation's failed attempts to cut or drill through the warm metal alloy. After a couple of minutes, the group reaches a pair of thick duralite gates blocking the way, covered in yellow warning text and rapidly flashing radiation alarms.
- **The Chamber:** The heart of the Monolith is an enormous chamber made from the jet black geological clusters. The floor forms a surface of jagged, exposed hexagonal columns, each about half a meter wide, set at varying levels around a bottomless chasm in the middle of the chamber. The abyss is a few meters wide and appears to run up and down the entirety of the Monolith. The surviving mystics stop at the chasm and start chanting. Their song reverberates through the chamber, the walls start shaking and a deep rumbling can be heard from beneath the floors (see "Dying for the Emissaries").

Cost: 0, 1 DP

OTHER EVENTS

These other events can be used to add drama to the PCs travels through the Conglomerate or to give them a hint of what is about to happen inside the Monolith. If the PCs are accompanied by the secret Nazareem agent from the previous scenario, you can activate her now to try to hinder the PCs and remind them of the long reach of the Vestals.

⚙ RESONANCE: ACKNOWLEDGMENT

As the PCs are closing in on the Monolith or when they reach the Foundation's excavation level, the song of the Machine Icon may become clear. The Emissary is letting them know what is about to happen, albeit somewhat cryptically. PCs without mystical powers hear only whispers and cannot make out more than the first sentence of each paragraph (page 234).

- **Collapse**: To a mystic PC, the entirety of the quote is intelligible, but at the cost of 1 DP the experience gives her an epileptic seizure. She must pass a **MYSTIC POWERS** test at -1 or lose consciousness and suffer 2 points of stress. When she wakes up again, she feels a strong calling *away* from the Monolith rather than towards it, now feeling convinced that she is meant for something else and that entering the Monolith means only death. If she tries to convince others of her new vision, she may be able to get some of them to turn around, but many of the mystics are so completely dedicated that they will continue on, no matter the risk.

Cost: 0-1 DP

⚙ NAZAREEM

If the PCs are accompanied by a Nazareem NPC (such as the fugitive from the City of Foreigners, page 130), you may spend 2 DP to have the agent attempt to stop the PCs from reaching the Monolith. Use the NPC stats from page 68 of *The Uharan Echo* unless you have constructed your own agent. The person will get a weapon or some explosives and then surprise attack (**INFILTRATION**) a PC or an important NPC (such as one of the Kurahans).

If the agent's attack is successful, the victim of the attack is pinned to the ground (grappling, page 87 of the *Rulebook*) and the agent demands that the PCs drop their weapons and

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DYING FOR THE EMISSARIES

PCs who refuse to turn back and instead make it all the way inside the resonance chamber may be seriously injured when the quake begins (see "The Quake" below) and will die if they remain inside the heart of the Monolith during its final discharge. Everyone in the chamber is ripped apart by the energy and resonance generated and as their souls are torn from their bodies, they get a brief sensation of what it's like to travel through spacetime as the Santulans do. Their minds eventually dissolve in the darkness between the stars and they disappear forever. If this affects any of the PCs, read the following text out loud:

The whispers in your mind finally turn into song—a song you share with the other survivors that made it all the way inside the Monolith. The quakes grow stronger and you press your hands to the floor to avoid being flung against the shaking walls. A chorus of sharp notes cuts through the chamber and into your mind. You feel as if you are being torn apart. Your skull presses hard on your brain and your skin feels too tight.

Suddenly, everything stops. The vibrations become one with your body and you feel a great calm come over you. The chamber falls away and you float through the air high above the Monolith. Bodiless, you travel upward as Sky City falls from its foundations and into the raging mists forming around the shaking artifact that appears to be shedding its fragile exterior. Above you, the Ring is torn from the Core and Coriolis loses its orbit above the Kuan equator and starts falling through the atmosphere. The ships in the Legion and Hegemony fleets light up like Miran fireflies and disappear in brief, sharp flashes as they disintegrate.

Farther out, you feel a presence. You are together with the others now and you feel a warm embrace. The smell of wheat fields on the breeze on an alien world. A memory of a meeting. The Messenger's true form smiling at you, deep in a courteous bow.

In the dark heart of the Monolith, only dust remains—soot and ash where once stood people pledged to the Emissaries. Lives laid down to kindle the flame and the hope of a new tomorrow. One of those lives was yours.

gear. If they do not comply and instead attack, the agent tries to kill her pinned victim and scores an automatic hit unless the pinned victim passes a **FORCE** test at -2. The agent will spend any extra sixes rolled on trying to achieve a critical hit, or — if she doesn't roll enough — on inflicting extra damage.
Cost: 2 DP

ASTÛRBAN'S DRONES

As the PCs are scaling the vertishaft, riding the elevators or on their way through Covenant City, they are spotted by an Astûrban scout. A handful of tactical drones (page 224) are dispatched to eliminate them in a targeted strike. For 1 DP, two drones arrive and try to perform a sneak attack (test **INFILTRATION**, see page 85 of the *Rulebook*). If they pass the test, the drones get one free Normal action before the combat begins and a +2 to their Initiative scores for the first turn. At the cost of 2 DP, the drones are as many as the PCs (or at least four) and have set up an ambush (+2 to **INFILTRATION**).
Cost: 1-2 DP

THE QUAKE

As the PCs ascend the Suldamei Column or when they first enter the corridor that leads inside the Monolith, the artifact is hit by a small earthquake. Depending on the severity of the quake, use one of the following effects:

- **Vibrations (0 DP)**: The ground suddenly shakes and all characters risk losing their footing. Anyone with less than **STRENGTH** 3 falls to the ground.
- **Shakes (1 DP)**: The quake is a bad one. All characters must pass a **FORCE** or **DEXTERITY** test or fall to the ground and suffer 1 point of stress from fear.
- **Violent Quake (2 DP)**: The vibrations grow and the ground suddenly shifts and cracks. Debris falls from the lattice above or shards of the coral alloy come crashing through the darkness of the tunnels. All PCs and significant NPCs must pass a **DEXTERITY** or **OBSERVATION** test at -1 to avoid being hit by a strength 5 (damage 2, CRIT 3) attack. D6 other mystics in the group are hit as well. If you roll a four or more, one of the injured is badly wounded (Internal bleeding, entry 54 on table 5.6, page 97 of the *Rulebook*).
- **Catastrophic Quake (3 DP)**: The quake begins as the "Violent quake" above but also leads to the ground or platform collapsing beneath the feet of the PCs. All affected characters must pass one additional **DEXTERITY** or **FORCE** test or fall six meters down and suffer a strength 4 attack of falling damage (page 97 of the *Rulebook*). For 1 additional DP, the fall becomes ten meters and the attack is at strength 8.

Cost: 0-4 DP

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KURAHAN DOWN

The PCs might have come this far with judge Kurahan in tow. When they enter combat and are accompanied by either Arlain or Nigelia, you may spend 1 DP to have an enemy specifically target either of the Kurahans. Don't hold back—the judge and her son may be injured or even killed. The PCs should take to heart that no one is safe during the climax of the scenario.

THE MACHINE ICON'S ACKNOWLEDGMENT

From the fields of Argonnas,
to the jungles of Kua.
The world is infinitely vast
and yet strangely small.
You are our children, as we were
to those who came before.
Icons wandering the stars.

We are heralds and protectors.
The guardians that banish
the darkness of Ardha.
The glass that keeps the butterfly out.
We are hope and peace and life beyond.

Today we reclaim what has been.
Today we stop the clock and take a stand.
Today we cull the growing dark.
With light, through fire,
we bring about a new Horizon.

Nabi-Mu-Qad, The Machine Icon

DARKNESS POINTS

The Monolith's discharge depletes your DP pool completely.

ENDING ACT 3

Conflict and riots have raged onboard Coriolis and in the Conglomerate throughout the final act. When the Children of the Song and the other Emissary-controlled mystics reach the resonance chamber in the Monolith, the ancient obelisk's defense systems are activated. Aeons ago, it was constructed as a lightning rod to diffuse and repel the growing influence of the dark between the stars that spread when living matter travels through the portals. Each monolith is a guardian that keeps the surrounding systems clear of corruption as they activate once every couple of centuries.

THE ACTIVATION

Read the text below out loud to your group or use it to inspire your own. Begin the closing scene and introduce the beginning of the collapse to the PCs and then read the text to your players when they are out of immediate danger. Coriolis and Sky City are destroyed but the Net and the Conglomerate remain (see the Epilogue, page 237).

The interior of the Monolith shakes and pulsates. Crackling discharges shoot out from the planet. The artifact's protective shell of coral metal breaks apart and is pulverized in a rain of dust and falling rocks. The mists sink to reveal the dark core — a sword measuring four kilometers in height and three hundred meters in width, made from perfectly cut hexagonal metal columns fused together and gleaming in the sunlight. The Conglomerate is covered in glittering mineral dust and the rivers in the delta turn black.

As the shell falls, Sky City and the capital of the Hegemony falls with it. Rippling outward from the fall of the Zenithian leadership, new quakes open up the earth and new plateaus rise along the equator. Deep wounds in the ground lead the rivers to form new lakes, but the cataracts — the enormous dams that protect the districts of the city from flooding — stand firm. Perhaps they are gifts from earlier generations who experienced the power of the Monolith for themselves. Across the Conglomerate lowlands, valleys are flooded and underwater caves drained, exposing ancient ruins and hidden treasures.

The Monolith's discharge travels upward through the atmosphere and strikes the Coriolis station high above the city with a lance thrust of fire. The Ring is torn from its spokes and crashes into the tip of the Spire. The waters and forests of Lake Abhrra freeze in the vacuum as the fleets of the Legion and the Hegemony burn and disappear

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in bright flashes of light like a swarm of fireflies. The station hangs in silence for a second and not all hope seems lost — then, the lights go out, section by section, and the enormous grav projectors in the Cellar give up.

The station, now spinning, starts falling into the atmosphere. As its hull catches fire, the reactors explode and a blinding light flashes across the jungle — the Zenith's dying breath, as bright as a star. The explosion turns the rest of the station into a rain of burning meteorites. Parts of the Core crash into the Gyrides Sea and bring it to a boil, the rest is scattered over the woods of the Vasma Valley and the Verkâna Plateau. The bombardment leaves forest fires, earthquakes and leveled cities in its wake — wounds that, given time, might heal but that will scar the Third Horizon long after the end of the last cyclade.

CLOSING EVENT

The PCs could be in a number of places when the activation of the Monolith is finalized — in the Conglomerate, inside the Monolith, onboard Coriolis or out in space, heading for the portals or the safety of Rimward Reach.

- **Earthquakes**: If the PCs are on Coriolis or Kua, they experience increasingly powerful tremors and quakes as they desperately try to make it to their ship. Everyone around them is panicking and they may have to fight their way forward or risk being held back by people pleading for help. Previous alliances become null — both Zenithians and Firstcome do whatever they can to rescue their loved ones. The captains of overflowing ships fire madly into the desperate crowds to be able to close their airlock doors. Use the riot and quake events earlier in the act to set the atmosphere but give your players a fighting chance to make it to a ship — any ship.
- **In Space**: If the PCs had already left Kua or Coriolis, they are burning through space, possibly trying to negotiate with the Legion for an escort or free passage to the portals. If they were on the run, they might have been spotted and are now being pursued by Nighthawk fighters. When the final blast erupts, they become caught in the shockwave and risk being pulled inside the discharge. A **DATA DJINN** test reveals the shape of the shockwave and a **PILOT** test at -2 gets them through it unscathed. Leftover sixes from the **DATA DJINN** test become extra dice for the **PILOT** test. If they fail one of the rolls, their ship is hit by an attack equivalent to a plasma torpedo. If they fail both tests, they suffer the equivalent of an antimatter mine explosion (*Rulebook*, page 150). After the shockwave passes, they drift through a graveyard of what used to be the Zenithian fleets and hear the desperate emergency hails from other survivors trapped on disabled ships.



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EPILOGUE

Let me tell of the fall of the Zenith,
when the faithless of Kua defied the Icons.
Termites reaching for the heavens.
Arrogance beyond reverence.
Bound by the Lady, under the sword of the Judge,
crushed in an instant, devoured by light.
A fate sealed. A threat. A promise.

AKBAR RAKIV FATIMAN, INDEPENDENT STATION DJACHROUM, C163

Josh Overbeek (Order #46093754)

The PCs have become witnesses to a clash between the old Horizons. The agents of the Eternal Emperor used the Zenithians' lust for power, and the Symmetry responded with its first open show of force since the arrival of the Emissaries at Xene. The balance of power has shifted and the factions of the Third Horizon are trying to fill the void left behind by the Zenithians. People flock to the safety of the Church of the Icons. Beyond the graveyards of the Kuan core, Firstcome dignitaries and leaders assemble in the darkness of the Kandah gap on the independent station Djachroum and form the Horizon Council. The Third Horizon continues its journey into a new tomorrow.

THE DESTRUCTION CAUSED by the collapse of the Monolith and the fall of Coriolis leads to suffering beyond imagination. Kua is bleeding and the peoples of the Conglomerate mourn the many millions lost to the wrath of the Icons. The space between the planet and the star becomes a debris field of drifting mines and wreckage. The Legion tries to assume control of the portal station with the help of the Foundation's astronics but a small nomad fleet arrives before they are able to cement their hold, and the sharifs of Lubau revolt soon after and throw in with the nomads. In the following weeks, a volunteer fleet of Rimward Reach corsairs arrive and set up a blockade around the system's core. The portals are opened and may be used freely by all the peoples of the Horizon, but military vessels not allied with the Rimward Reach corsairs are only allowed to leave, not enter. Kua becomes a neutral system under the protection of the Horizon Council and the independent station Djachroum.

AFTERMATH

The second installment of the *Mercy of the Icons* campaign ends in the debris field formed by the remains of the fleets of the Legion and the Hegemony. The PCs are left to either try to carry out the orders of their patron as best they can or — if they ended earlier alliances during the scenario — go their own way. It becomes your job as GM to let them experience the consequences of the fall of Coriolis and the Monolith. The Third Horizon plunges into deep despair, leading to a deepening of faith in much of the distraught population.

DJACHROUM

In the darkness of Rimward Reach, far from the foul stench of Kuan politics, Governor Akbar Rakiv Fatiman has ruled the independent station of Djachroum for a long time (page 296 of the *Rulebook*). Many of the system's surviving colonists and stationaries now find refuge here and surviving Council members that weren't part of the Zenithian coup use Rimward Reach as their new base of operations for trying to organize aid for the system's suffering population.

Tensions onboard the contested portal station are too high for it to function as a political hub, making the remote Djachroum good neutral ground for coordinating the relief efforts. Fatiman founds the new Horizon Council to which all the Firstcome factions send representatives. If former judge Nigelia Kurahan survived the scenario and hasn't been imprisoned, she also joins the new Council as a representative of Zenithians who believe in a diverse Horizon.

THE CHURCH OF THE ICONS

The Church was on the brink of collapse and chose to step back from a seat at the table after being pressured by the Zenithians. In the new power vacuum, however, they go on the offensive again, speaking boldly of a united Horizon blessed by the Icons. Broadcasts of joint sermons by the Church's matriarch and patriarch from Temple City on Mira are distributed by devout pilgrims to the most remote outposts across the cluster. The faction rallies the despairing people under their banner, urging those of outdated and erroneous faiths to give in to the ways of the one true Church and live by the Declaration of Sacred Rites (page 238 of the *Rulebook*). Mira grows strong again and establishes itself as the Third Horizon's center for religion and

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culture. A deal is soon struck with the Martyr Council that once again opens Zalos to pilgrims in return for Miran contributions to the Order's fleets holding Aiwaz and Zib.

THE ZENITHIAN DIASPORA

It isn't just the loss of Sky City and Coriolis that weakens the power of the Zenithian factions. The districts of the Conglomerate rise up and soon both plantations and mining towns burn with the fires of revolution. The Zenithian nobility flee to vacation homes on Dabaran or join the Sadaalian aristocrats to be near to the Nadir Flotilla. The Expatriates of the domed city of Xhi on Amedo (page 225 of the *Rulebook*) open their arms to the homeless families of the Hegemony and the system quickly becomes the new home base of the Astûrban.

THE FLEET OF THE LEGION

No one knows how much of the Legion's fleet was destroyed by the Monolith's discharge. The faction formally severs its ties with the Consortium shortly after the incident except for a select few crews who remain on expensive contracts to protect the Consortium's remaining industries and research centers. Rumors say that most of the fleets retreated to secret bases in the Kuan asteroid belt or into the far reaches of the Kandah gap, beyond Djachroum.

THE NADIR FLOTILLA

The Nadir Flotilla turns into a ghost fleet in the empty darkness outside the Daharab dockyards on Bahram. A targeted recruitment drive among shipless Legionnaires and other survivors from the Kuan debris fields slowly crews the flotilla again, readying it for future deployment but with the Consortium's presence in Sadaal severely weakened, Aremerat the supreme ruler starts throwing covetous looks at the partly abandoned fleet.

GROWING POWERS

After the fall of the Zenithians, the Firstcome take to the stage again. The Nomad Federation speaks of harmony and the corsair akbars of Khorsabad unite at the Alabaster Council but without the missing Janhagir fleet, they aren't strong enough to hold their own against the Consortium's more well-established colonies. Mogul descendants with knowledge of astronics, so-called Kahin or "star seers," take over many previously Consortium-owned portal stations to break the Foundation's costly monopoly on portal travel. On a decree from the Horizon Council, portal fees are reduced to about a third of the price to further trade and travel in the Horizon.

THE NAZAREEM AND THE FIRST HORIZON

The Nazareem cells have lost their leadership and many of the old masters have been killed but the cult still has eyes and ears in the halls of power, although its members are forced to rely more on their First Horizon masters than before. As young cells carry out bloody terrorist attacks to destabilize the other factions, the Vestals assume control of and start rebuilding the closed systems of Uharu and Taoan. Using enslaved colonists from Tsurabi and the Consortium's refineries, new space stations and shipyards are constructed to prepare for the Eternal Emperor's next move in the struggle for dominion over the Third Horizon. The unstable portal leading back to the First Horizon is examined carefully and the servants of Ardha once again enter the impossible realms between the portals to lie in wait for when the fields stabilize.

THE SYMMETRY AND THE MYSTICS

Many of the mystics used to activate the Monolith died, were burned out or received mortal injuries. The mystic population of Kua is severely decimated and the Santulans now refocus their energies on turning more people, leading to a new wave of mystic resurgence throughout the Horizon. New powers manifest — stronger, more volatile powers — and both the Circle of Seekers and the Children of the Song start growing again. Foundation station FS-7 near Xene in Kua suddenly suffers a blitz attack by what appears to be unaffiliated corsairs, but is actually something entirely different. One of the Emissaries takes over the station and starts transforming the resonance patterns of the nearby gas giant to once again open the node to the Second Horizon.A powerful defense system is activated to blind the prying eyes of the other factions. Any ship coming within 1 AU from Xene has their sensors go blind, and the interiors break from increasing vibrations in the ship's hull, unless the trespasser retreat: Lose D6 HP/watch, armor does not apply. Also roll a die each watch: On a six, the ship suffers critical ship damage (see *Rulebook*, page 172).

THE ORDER OF THE PARIAH

The Martyr Council realizes that isolationist policy has become too dangerous. A nervous non-aggression treaty is signed with the Church for free passage through Zalos, the short way

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of the Miran chain is once again reopened and the Order's fleets start providing protection in some of the neighboring systems. The faction slowly starts acting as peacekeepers in systems other than their own and the Samaritans once again become synonymous with emergency aid and peace talks. A small peace fleet called the Salam Flotilla is founded, led by the temple cruiser *Anar-Salam* on a special mandate directly from the Martyr Council.

C163, A NEW TIME

The Coriolis Cycles established as the Third Horizon's official calendar after the arrival of the *Zenith* began with the construction of Coriolis station. CC63 marks the end of the station's life and although many systems keep using the term out of old habit, the Horizon Council chooses to return to the old calendar beginning after the fall of Odacon at the end of the Portal Wars, ninety-eight Kuan years before the arrival of the Zenithians. On the first day after the Cyclade celebrations ending CC63, the Council reintroduces the old calendar in a special communique from Djachroum, denoting the new year Cycle 163, or C163. The change is made to remind the cluster of the unity forged in the fires of the Portal Wars and to warn of how easily old enemies can destroy an isolated, divided Horizon.

THE MYSTIC'S DISEASE

Rumors about the role the infected played in the fall of Coriolis spread throughout the Horizon. Soon, people start talking of surveillance and even summary arrests of mystic citizens. When the infected protest and fight back, the hatred of the mystic community grows stronger.

THE FUTURE

It will take time for the First Horizon to prepare for their next move and the Third Horizon enters a time of great uncertainty. The final episode of the ***Mercy of the Icons*** campaign begins in early CC65 (C164). Open war between the Horizons finally arrives and threatens to destroy the Third Horizon for good.

EXPLORING THE NEW HORIZON

The Third Horizon has been rocked to its core and there are many new locations and events for the PCs to explore. The new era presents many points of departure for new adventures in the wake of the fall of the Zenithians.

- **Explore previously flooded cave systems on Kua to find ruins from forgotten civilizations.**
- **Dive for salvage amidst the wreckage of Coriolis station in the dark waters of the Kuan seas. Zenithian exiles pay handsomely for the recovery of heirlooms and artifacts.**
- **Locate the scoured pieces of the Net from the Kuan jungle and assist in putting the skeleton of Zenith back together in orbit of the expatriats' system of Amedo.**
- **Visit Zalos or Temple City on Mira and enjoy the grandeur of these ancient cultures now once again open to foreigners.**
- **Participate in the War on Heresy on Zalos-B—or try to mediate in the Nazareem-infested conflict.**
- **Join the Samaritan peace corps as part of the Salam Flotilla as it journeys across the Horizon.**
- **Find hidden Legion cells in the darkness of space or discover abandoned Foundation stations orbiting strange, remote moons.**
- **Look for clues as to the reason for the Janhagir fleet's disappearance.**
- **Work for the Alabaster, Martyr or Horizon Councils or for Akbar Rakiv Fatiman himself. All are potential new patrons.**
- **Try to stop Nazareem terrorist attacks or assist those affected.**
- **Encounter more new mystics and see the growing influence of the Santulans for yourselves.**
- **Visit the Expatriates on Amedo and work for the Zenithian Hegemony or the Astûrban to try to rebuild the Zenithian organizations.**

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Ash falls like snow over the mourners lining the shores of Dar Bahri, while smoke from the funeral pyres rises toward Dabaran's bloodred sun. Far above in the darkness of space, a lone ship waits to enter the portal to Uharu. Its crew stands ready to complete their mission: the ghost ship Zafirah has been found – those who reach her first will most likely unveil the truth behind one of the horizon's most ominous mysteries…

Many months ago, the destroyer *Zafirah* vanished during the same event that sent the cruise liner *Ghazali* crashing into the Hamura star. Now she is back, in a time when both the aftermath of the Mysticides and the death of the Emissary have shaken the horizon to its foundations. The Coriolis Council and Zenithian authority are questioned, and more and more people revolt against their oppressors. The throat of the Third Horizon is exposed, and this is when something ancient rises from the shadows.

The Last Cyclade **is the second part of *Mercy of the Icons*, the epic and richly illustrated campaign for *Coriolis – The Third Horizon*. This book contains:**

- **Extensive background information for the Game Master, describing the events which threaten the Third Horizon and its inhabitants**
- ***The Uharan Echo:* an adventure set in the darkness of space; a quest to solve a grand and terrifying mystery**
- **Mission Generator Tables that let you tailor your campaign and create your own adventures, dealing with the hunt for a foe whose power is rising**
- ***The Children are the Future, Forked Tongues, Curse of Rusah,* and *Fire of the Icons:* four adventure landscapes that expose the player characters to these troublesome times**
- ***In the Shadow of the Zenith:* a race against time, where the characters return to Coriolis and find themselves at the heart of the horizon's escalating conflict**

"The game's authors describe it as 'Arabian Nights in space' and it fulfills that brief marvelously. Style 5/5, Substance 5/5."

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